

CRIME INVESTIGATIONS

# Too many cases bog down cops

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Probes into different sensational cases have run into a snag as investigation officers (IOs) at different police stations, particularly in Dhaka metropolitan area, are assigned with cases seven times the number of their officially recommended quota.

The Police Regulation of Bengal, a

British-era law-enforcing guideline, recommends a maximum of eight cases for a sub-inspector (SI) to be tasked with at a time. Whereas, in some instances, SIs at crime-prone and large police stations in the capital are assigned to probe as many as 50 cases, officials concerned said.

Officers-in-charge of the city's police stations said an SI at a large

station has an average load of 25 cases. SIs at some metropolitan police stations like Hazaribagh, Kamrangirchar and Kafrul however are investigating 10 to 12 cases, while those in remote areas do not have even the official limit of eight cases to investigate, police officials said.

Against this backdrop, the home ministry plans to introduce a separate

investigation unit comprising two SIs at each of the 669 police stations across the country to ensure proper and prompt probes into criminal cases.

Besides, the IOs, already burdened with more cases than they can properly handle, are also required to take part in

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## Army to help distribute VGF food from Aug 25

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has asked army personnel to carry out the massive food assistance programme in flood-hit districts beginning from Wednesday under Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) scheme.

"The VGF programme begins from August 25 on an emergency basis in six flood-ravaged districts and army personnel have already been asked to move," Siddiqur Rahman Chowdhury, secretary-in-charge of Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, told the Daily Star yesterday.

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## 1.15 lakh more under old-age allowance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has brought another 1.15 lakh people under the old-age allowance scheme pushing the number of beneficiaries to 13.15 lakh and decided to pay them from October instead of January considering the deluge.

The Cabinet Committee on Old Age Allowance yesterday at a meeting chaired by Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman took the decision.

The government in the current budget had earlier raised the

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# Health project uncertain for donors' conditions

## Development partners want to see 36 audit objections before further funding

NAIMUL HAQ

Financial contribution of about \$70 million for the three-year Health, Nutrition and Population Sector Programme (HNPSPP) has become uncertain as the development partners (DPs) and the World Bank (WB) have set certain conditions for further agreement on the funding.

The decision imposing the conditions was conveyed to the government yesterday at a high-level meeting at the

Planning Commission, attended by officials of the government, the WB and the DPs.

The WB and the donors at the three-hour meeting informed the government that before making a fresh financial commitment, they would like to see 36 audit objections on the previous five-year health and population sector programme (HPSP) resolved by the end of next month.

They also proposed launching independent audit of the 36 unresolved

areas but the government declined.

"Earlier, we had requested the government in writing many times to resolve the audit objections on 36 areas of spending during the HPSP but they still remain unresolved. As a result, the visiting WB mission and the donors cannot make a specific pledge on the funding," said a source present at the meeting chaired by Economic Relations Division (ERD) Additional Secretary Bodiur Rahman.

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PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Sixty-year-old Abdul Hai, a rickshawpuller from Jhalakathi, takes a nap in hours of hunger near Jagannath Hall after he migrated to the capital in search of job.

## Secy-level JRC meet in Dhaka next month

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A secretary-level meeting of the Joint River Commission (JRC) between Bangladesh and India will be held in Dhaka on September 14 to 15 to resolve water-sharing issues of seven common rivers including the Teesta.

Upon repeated requests of Dhaka for a ministerial meeting on water sharing of common rivers, New Delhi finally agreed to hold the secretary-level talks, the BBC Bangla

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## Businessman gunned down in Shyampur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Masked criminals yesterday gunned down a businessman at IG Gate in Shyampur apparently for his refusal to pay illegal toll.

The deceased identified as Sheikh Abdus Salam, 50, was the owner of Rocky Market on Jaynal Abedin Road at IG Gate.

Witnesses said three of a gang of up to 10 stormed a timber shop where Salam was sitting and sprayed

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# Wild elephants on the loose

## Habitat loss in India forces them to wander inside Bangladesh, ravage villages

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Driven by habitat loss in India, more than 100 wild elephants have crossed into the forests in the central region and are trampling life and property in frequent village raids.

After making the shrinking Sherpur and Mymensingh forests their homes two years ago, the giant animals are killing about 40 people and damaging property worth about Tk 3 crore a year on average.

"The elephants have emerged as a new scourge. They are raiding villages as their habitats have fragmented," said Syed Zaker Hossain, a leading wildlife expert.

He said herds of the beasts used to visit Sherpur from northeastern Indian state of Meghalaya to drink water and eat fresh rice in the fields.

But fragmentation of the habitat has forced them to stay in Bangladesh and raid villages for fodder.

Focusing on the damage, a joint

study of the Department of Forest and IUCN, the world conservation union, says the animals mostly damage crops, fruits and fruits trees, bamboo, houses and roads apart from killing people.

"To stop these, elephant habitat needs to be preserved in Bangladesh," the study, Action Research on Conservation of Asian Elephants in Bangladesh, which will be launched soon said.

"Local residents say the elephants don't want to return to their habitat because of disturbances such as vehicle movements on a newly-built highway and installation of search lights on the other side of the borders," said Monjurul Hannan Khan, programme coordinator of the IUCN.

"A study should be carried out to find out the ways to settle the animals in Bangladesh permanently."

Experts pointed out 10 threats to elephants: habitat loss, scarcity of

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## Minister blames Basila erosion on brick kilns, DCC road

### Rules out dumping protective sandbags into the river

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Unplanned and illegal construction of several brick kilns and a one-kilometre-long Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) road caused the erosion in Basila, which recently devoured 11 houses on the outskirts of the capital, the water resources ministers said yesterday.

M Hafiz Uddin Ahmed ruled out dumping sandbags into the river to protect the area from further erosion. "We have done it elsewhere but to no avail," he said. He urged locals to learn to live with it as each year rivers gobble up 10,000 hectares of land in Bangladesh.

"The illegal brick kilns have redirected the course of the river Buriganga and the Basila road (built without effective drainage system) has caused river waters to create more current in the river," the minister noted.

He pledged a flood-protection embankment along the river during the next dry season.

Asked when authorities would

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# Fresh drug shame hits Games

AFP, Athens

A weightlifting drug scandal and yet another twist to the saga of disgraced Greek sprinter Kostadinos Kenteris overshadowed US swimming star Michael Phelps' Olympic gold medal hunt Thursday.

Phelps' drive for a record-equalling

seven gold medals was ended at the hands of Australian rival Ian Thorpe this week, but the 19-year-old can still wrap up his Athens campaign with a remarkable six golds.

He will seek to add the 200 individual medley title to his 400m

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