

Over 1 lakh

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and Nawabganj upazila of Dhaka are likely to be inundated.

Reports from Comilla said onrush of water from upstream through the River Gomti and incessant rain of the last five days further flooded the low laying areas of about 15 villages in two upazilas there.

Water Development Board (WDB) sources said due to a strong tide in the Gomti, several parts of Daudkandi spur in Titas upazila collapsed again, although workers of WDB under the supervision of army personnel are working there day and night to protect the spur.

Meanwhile, over 25,000 people of the area became marooned in the second onslaught of flood during the current monsoon. The worst affected villages are Goskandi, Das Kandi, and Maniknagar in Titas upazila, and Khanaybari, Kowriarchar, Horipur, and Narayanpur in Daudkandi upazila.

District Agriculture Extension Department sources said seedlings of aman paddy, vegetables and jute on about 1,800 acres of land in those areas were damaged totally or partially due to the flood.

Almost 36 educational institutions, located on low laying areas and shoals, remained unofficially closed as the premises went under water. Thousands of weavers of the areas became jobless passing hard days without food.

Our correspondent from Gaibandha reported that onrush of water from upper catchments of the Teesta, Karotoa and Brahmaputra basins and unceasing rainfall since Friday deluged a vast tract of area in seven upazilas of Gaibandha district inundating many houses.

Water level in four river basins continued to swell at all points. The River Ghagot rose by 24cm, Brahmaputra by 10cm, Teesta by 8cm, and the Karotoa by 5cm during the 24 hours preceding last night.

Fresh cracks developed along newly constructed Baguria counter embankment along the western bank of the Brahmaputra and three more cracks surfaced along the town protection embankment by the River Ghagot.

With the rising water level, erosion of the banks of the Brahmaputra intensified at Baguria, Chirakuthi, Analer Chara, and Uadakahi under Gaibandha Sadar and Fulchhari upazilas. Moreover, a 100 feet stretch of Singra embankment under Fulchhari upazila was devoured by the rising Jamuna in the last three days.

Nearly 150 dwelling huts were washed away by the surging water of the Brahmaputra rendering 300 people homeless at Ratanpur and Kalasonaer Char under Fulchhari upazila.

Our staff correspondent from Rajshahi reported that swelling water and erosion of riverbanks started to wreak havoc on the banks of the Padma in Rajshahi city and Bagha upazila while a vast tract of low lying areas of the district and its adjoining Natore and Chapainawabganj were flooded following torrential rain of the last several days.

The Padma swelled by some 241cm in the last 5 days submerging many small shoals. However, the river was flowing at 15.41 metre height, 3 metres lower than the danger level yesterday.

The riverbanks were eroded at Talaimari and Tangon areas around the city causing housing

BNP reformists

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reformist leaders. Some of them think that ZA Khan, also an adviser to the chairperson, should not have made such arrogant remarks.

Earlier, the BNP chairperson, during a teleconference with leaders of Australia chapter of BNP, strongly criticised pro-reforms leaders saying those conspiring to break the party are betrayers.

In response to this, ZA Khan, on Monday told reporters, 'It is like a drowning person clutching at straws'.

Sources said a group of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leaders yesterday met Mannan Bhuiyan and told him that such arrogant comments about the party chief is creating misunderstandings among field level party leaders and workers.

Bhuiyan also talked with party leaders working with him to implement reforms and urged them not to make any comment attacking anyone personally.

Later, Ashraf Hossain told reporters that they don't want to make personal attacks on anyone, and they will not do anything beyond the party conclusion.

"We are working for a representative party council with the consent of all to make the party stronger but some people in the party misunderstood us," he said. Councillors will decide which would be better for the country as well as the party, he added.

Meanwhile, Dhaka city unit BNP General Secretary Abdus Salam also met Bhuiyan at this residence.

problems for slum dwellers. Several hundred people of ward no 17 and 18 in the city became marooned.

The erosion of the banks of the Padma took a serious turn at Bagha upazila where major portions of three villages -- Chalkrajapur, Jotnashi and Laxminagar -- got washed away.

During a spot visit to the villages yesterday, the villagers said standing crops of paddy and jute on some 2000 bighas of land went under water in only three days.

A building of a private primary school in Laxminagar village was declared abandoned as it is on a piece of land facing erosion. Students of the school have been attending classes under the open sky in the courtyard of the head-master's house.

About 400 hectares out of 930 hectares of cultivable lands in Chalkrajapur village, 160 hectares out of 230 hectares of land in Laxmipur village, and 120 hectares of land in Jotnashi village were inundated.

Our Sirajganj correspondent reported that the flood situation in five upazilas and Cholon Beel area deteriorated yesterday, as incessant rain and onrush of water from upstream swelled the Jamuna and its tributaries further.

About 30,000 people in around 120 villages covering different shoals and Cholon Beel areas were marooned.

Water Development Board sources said about 35 more new villages in Belkuchi, Kazipur, Sirajganj Sadar, Chowhali and Shahjadpur upazilas were affected by the flood. Vast parts of the main structures of two spurs on the western bank of the Jamuna at Enayetpur and Meghai collapsed again, although WDB workers under the supervision of the army are throwing sacks filled with sand and bricks there to protect the spurs from the erosion.

The fisheries department sources said about 2000 ponds in greater Cholon Beel area were inundated by a flash flood that might cause a loss of about Tk 1 crore.

District Agriculture Extension Department sources said newly transplanted aman paddy, vegetables and Jute on about 1,200 hectares of land were damaged due to the flood.

Meanwhile, many people of the shoals and low laying areas took shelter on different highlands, railway lands and educational institutions.

District Civil Surgeon Office sources said the flood affected people have been facing crisis of drinking water since the beginning of the flood. Drinking unhygienic water, most of the people especially children and the elderly are being affected by different water-borne diseases like diarrhoea, dysentery and skin infections.

Meanwhile, 200 people of different flood affected areas were affected by diarrhoea and they were admitted to different health complexes, the sources said.

When contacted, Ibrahim Khalil, deputy commissioner of Sirajganj, said relief and rehabilitation programmes will be launched soon after they get an estimate of the affected people.

Under the Company Act, Biman's board of directors from now on would take its own decisions including procurement of new aircraft. Due to red tape, Biman could not buy new generation aircraft before, airline sources said.

Momen earlier told The Daily Star that replacing antiquated aircrafts with new generation ones is imperative to remaining competitive in the aviation business. The CEO and MD hoped that the independence of the CEO would not be compromised through government intervention.

Biman's aircraft got grounded frequently due to technical faults. The aging fleet is made up of mostly 17-19-year-old aircraft and two relatively new planes.

Biman owns three types of aircraft--four McDonnell Douglas DC-10-30s, four Fokker F-28, and three Airbus A310-30s. Production of DC10-30s and F-28s has been discontinued as airlines do not find it viable to run these aircraft anymore.

Of the 11 aircraft in Biman's fleet, only six are operating and the rest are grounded.

A competent source in Biman told The Daily Star yesterday that the \$22 million Biman is expected to get from an insurance company as compensation for the Airbus accident in Dubai on March 12, will be used for buying new planes.

"Biman will get two aircraft from Phuket Air on lease to run Hajj flights; Biman might extend the duration of lease of those two Boeings to run its international flights," the source said.

Rehana

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"A conspiracy has been plotted to destroy the entire family just like on August 15. Nothing can be worse than this. It's an ill-motivated case. My name has been included in the charge only to weaken Sheikh Hasina and to demean Bangabandhu and his family before the countrymen," Rehana, who is currently in Florida, USA, told The Daily Star last night over phone.

Coming down heavily on the interim government for implicating her with the extortion case, she said although she had not been living permanently in the country for the last ten years, her name has been incriminated in the case deliberately. "This false case will not fly and we hope that we will get justice," she added.

Rehana alleged that the caretaker government is not going by the law and running its affairs following the saying -- 'might is right'. She was firm to say that the false case would be battled out in the court of law and the justice would be on their side.

"History says, untruth never wins. Truth will prevail anyhow some day," she boldly said asking, "Why would Bangabandhu's daughters resort to extortion anyway if they need money?"

Our father did not teach us to collect money from others by any means, Rehana said adding that even the present chief adviser and the law adviser, who used to go to their residence, know the family very well. They know that the Bangabandhu family did not commit any crime let alone extorting money.

"It is crystal clear that, that the government has lodged the extortion case against us abusing power," said the AL chief's sister.

With the mercy of Allah and the support of the people of Bangladesh, it won't be possible to annihilate us through filing even hundreds of such false cases, Rehana added.

Asked whether she would come to Bangladesh to face the charge, Rehana said, "Of course, I will go to my country. My lawyers have been looking into the charge. If they need me to, I will go to the country," she added.

Defending her sister Hasina, Rehana said the AL chief did not commit any crime and the government itself knows also that she did not commit any crime. People of the country are with her, she said seeking support from the countrymen and the media.

Asked whether she would join politics, she said she has no interest to join politics as a member of a political family. But I will contribute for the welfare of the nation and its people, she added.

Rehana said the prosecution of the charges should be held in an open court in a transparent manner and if due process of law is followed, Hasina will win. "If my sister wins, it would be our victory, people's victory," said Rehana.

Conspiracy is being hatched against Hasina because she speaks for the country, democracy and for a free and fair election, she said.

Since a government survey predicted that the Awami League (AL) might win the next election, ".... they filed the false extortion case against Sheikh Hasina only to keep her out of elections," claimed Rehana.

She prayed for Hasina's well-being so that she can serve the countrymen in future whether her party is in power or not.

ZILLUR'S REACTION
AL acting president Zillur Rahman confidently said that Hasina did not extort money and the charge against her is completely false and fabricated.

The charge sheet was prepared with ill intention and Hasina might not get justice, he feared.

Expressing surprise over inclusion of Rehana's name, Zillur asked how her name could be included in the charge sheet when she was not even accused in the case. She was not even present in the country at the time of the alleged extortion, said the AL leader.

Tehran accused

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Maliki said, according to a statement from his office.

Photographs from the meeting showed the three delegations sitting around a triangular arrangement of tables in conference room in Maliki's offices inside Baghdad's heavily-fortified Green Zone.

The US was represented by Crocker, while Tehran's envoy Hassan Kazemi Qomi headed the Iranian delegation in the talks attended by a delegation of Iraqi officials led by Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari.

As at May's meeting, officials said the talks had only dealt with the security situation in Iraq, leaving aside a roster of other disputes between the United States and the Islamic republic.

The United States broke off relations with Iran in 1980, when Islamic revolutionaries seized the US embassy in Tehran and held its diplomats hostage for 444 days.

The two countries remain at loggerheads over a range of issues including Iran's nuclear programme, which the United States claims is aimed at producing nuclear weapons, an accusation vehemently denied by Tehran.

US forces also accuse Iran of arming and training Iraqi militias, allegations Iranian officials have also denied, and which a government spokesman again rejected on Tuesday.

"These accusations are without basis and do not help the atmosphere of the negotiations," Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Mohammad Ali Hosseini told journalists in Tehran before the meeting.

"These declarations aim to deceive public opinion which is troubled by the United States' warlike policy," Hosseini said, adding that the "Americans would be better off finding ways to get out of the Iraqi crisis."

Relations have also been chilled by the detention in Iraq by US forces of at least five Iranian officials whom Tehran insists are diplomats, but Washington says are covert operatives from Iran's elite Revolutionary Guard.

Ivorians want ties

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Medicines are very expensive in Ivory Coast. For instance, a single tablet costs about Tk 10. Garments are likewise costly.

Elected as independent lawmaker, Bitah said he has heard that Bangladesh's high-yielding agriculture technology is up-to-date and he is interested to introduce that to his country.

Known to be close to Ivorian President Laurent Gbagbo, he added that his country would pursue establishing diplomatic and commercial relations with Bangladesh once the Ivorian war is over.

Meanwhile, former president of Ivory Coast Henry Konan Bedie, who is planning to contest the upcoming presidential election, said, "If elected once again, I wish to establish a diplomatic relationship with Bangladesh. Now we have an embassy in New Delhi and hope to establish one in Dhaka if I assume power."

To hasten the process of restoring peace an agreement was signed between the Ivorian government and the rebels in April this year. The agreement is known as "Ouagadougou Agreement".

According to the agreement the presidential election is supposed to be held by January, but it might be deferred.

A Bangladeshi Army delegation led by Brigadier Gen Mohammad Rafiqul Islam made a courtesy call on Bedie at his residence in Daoukro. Ousted through bloodless coup in 1999, the former president hailed the role of Bangladeshi peacekeepers in restoring peace in Ivory Coast.

Akoussi Patrick, a primary schoolteacher in Gohitafla, told The Daily Star the interest the Ivorians have developed in Bangladeshi garments and medicines is the result of the Bangladeshi peacekeepers' assistance to them.

Bangladeshi peacekeepers in different areas provide free medical assistance to the Ivorians twice a week. In addition to that, Bangladeshi medicines are also given to them for free during treatment.

The peacekeepers also distribute Bangladeshi garments to the Ivorians for free.

"Both the Bangladeshi garments and medicines are good in quality and we have known it by using them" Patrick said.

"We have also heard that Bangladeshi garments are not costly and quality of medicines is better than the medicines of China which we are using in the country now," he added.

The African countries where Bangladeshi peacekeepers are working have developed an interest in Bangladesh in both diplomatic and commercial affairs.

For an instance, in 2003, President of Sierra Leone Dr Ahmed Tejan Babbar paid a three-day visit to Bangladesh and invited investment from Dhaka in his country.

Unfortunately, the then

Bangladesh government did not explore the possibility.

Troops from other countries working under the UN missions also have a good impression about Bangladeshi peacekeepers.

The deputy sector commander of sector east of UN mission in Ivory Coast Colonel Adams of Ghana said, "The moral standard of Bangladeshi peacekeepers is very high."

Force Commander of the Mission Maj Gen Fernand Marcel Amoussou, who hailed from Benin, said, "I want the Bangladeshi peacekeepers to continue the contribution with the same high standard."

In Ivory Coast around 7,000 peacekeepers from 54 countries are working under the UN Mission with the highest number of troops from Bangladesh numbering 2,747.

The UN Security Council adopted a resolution for establishing UN mission in the 3,22,500 sq km country on May 13, 2003. In June the same year a 26-member team of military liaison officers was initially launched in the country.

The then Brig Gen Hafiz (presently major general) of Bangladesh Army served as the deputy force commander of the mission. In June 2004, Bangladeshi contingents started to flock in Ivory Coast to perform duty on behalf of UN Peace Keeping Mission (ONUCI).

Each Bangladeshi contingent is sent to the country with one year of work responsibility in Ivory Coast. Presently the fourth rotation of Bangladeshi contingents is going on.

At present eight military contingents are taking part in peacekeeping mission in Ivory Coast along with members of military observers and staff officers. Apart from the army, two Bangladesh Formed Police Units, each of which has 125 police personnel, are working there to rebuild the country.

Since 2004, about 9,000 military personnel of Bangladesh Armed Forces have taken part in the peacekeeping mission in Ivory Coast.

The mission is being conducted in Ivory Coast dividing the working areas in two sectors -- East and West. The sector West is known as Bangladesh Sector and Brig Gen Md Mainul Islam is its sector commander.

Apart from the two Bangladeshi battalions, Pakistan, Benin and Senegal have one battalion each working under the sector.

On the other hand, Bangladesh along with other countries has battalions in sector East.

Bangladesh earns \$57.2m every year from the mission in Ivory Coast.

BCL men

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out a brief procession in front of the Institute of Social Welfare and Research at around 9:40am dodging the vigilance of law enforcement agencies.

They chanted slogans demanding release of Hasina and resignation of the law adviser for his 'biased activities'.

Later they burnt the effigy of Mainul for 'breaching the oath of office by favouring some specific groups'.

The demonstrators managed to flee before members of the law enforcement agencies reached the spot.

Since the detention of Hasina, the BCL has adopted a strategy to hold programmes at different places of the campus eluding the law enforcement agencies' surveillance.

BCL President Mahmud Hasan Ripon said they demanded Mainul's resignation as he lost his right to stay in office. They will continue their programmes until the release of Hasina, he added.

UNB adds: Some 30 students have been sued for burning an effigy of Law and Information Adviser Mainul Hossain on the Dhaka University campus yesterday.

The officer-in-charge (OC) of New Market Police Station said the case was filed under the Emergency Rules.

Mainul

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remain vigilant so that the law and order is maintained. "The government is still concerned over the law and order situation," he said.

The law adviser also said the protests that are happening on the Dhaka University campus are of little significance. "We do not want to create anarchy in this situation by injudiciously responding to the incidents."

The advisory council meeting expressed concern over the rise in the activities of 'Aggayan' and 'Malam' gangs that snatched belongings after drugging and applying ointment to the eyes of people.

It instructed the police and other law enforcement agencies to take all out steps to arrest members of such gangs.

The meeting also discussed the incidents of at least three arrests of the government officials, investigation into which proved later that the arrestees were innocent and they were in fact trapped.

The council meeting instructed the intelligence officials to arrest people after getting sure that allegations against them are true.

The meeting was attended by, among others, communications and education advisers, cabinet secretary, home, energy and fisheries secretaries, inspector general of police, director generals of Rab, BDR and Ansar and top officials of different intelligence agencies.

Tigers

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On the other hand, it is the last chance for Mohammad Ashrafur's men to make some point in the otherwise disastrous tour but they will need runs on the board for avoiding another embarrassing defeat.

After below par performances in the Test series, Bangladesh's improved standing as a one-day team are also at stake after spineless batting in the first two games which they lost by 70 runs and then by five wickets.

Bangladesh batsmen completely failed to cash in on the absence of two champion Lankan bowlers Muttiah Muralidaran and Chaminda Vaas.

Bowlers created an opportunity for the Tigers in the first game to draw first blood but the batsmen threw away the initiative. In the second game the batters were again clueless in overcast conditions.

For Sri Lanka it is an opportunity to test their reserve strength but home skipper Mahela Jayawardene did not disclose his plan yesterday.

Both teams kept away from outdoor practice ahead of the match.

TEAMS
BANGLADESH: Javed Omar, Tamim Iqbal, Mohammad Ashrafur (captain), Shakib Al Hasan, Aftab Ahmed, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mahmudullah Riyad, Forhad Reza, Shahadat Hossain, Syed Rasel and Abdur Razzak.

SRI LANKA (from): Sanath Jayasuriya, Upul Tharanga, Kumar Sangakkara, Mahela Jayawardene (captain), Chamara Silva, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Chamara Kapugedera, Jehan Mubarak, Farveez Maharoof, Dilhara Fernando, Lasith Malinga, Malinga Bandara, Nuwan Kulasekera and Upul Chandana.

12 to die

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Those awarded death penalty are Jahiuril Islam, Shamsul Alam, Nazimuddin, Abul Kashem, Alamgir, Yusuf, Jashim Uddin, Nasiruddin, Abdul Malek, Ayub Ali, Syed Ahmad and Kalim Ullah.

The lifers are Nur Nahan Begum, Saheda Begum, Safia Akhter, Anwara Begum, Yasmin Begum, Taslima Akhter, Razia Begum and Raju Begum.

Of them, Anwara Begum, Razia Begum and Yasmin Begum were arrested in the courtroom immediately after the verdict.

The court, however, acquitted an accused named Nurul Alam of the murder charge.

According to the prosecution, the accused hacked Jane Alam to death near his house at Amirabad in Lahogara upazila on March 30, 2002, while he was coming to the port city by a CNG-run autorickshaw.

Sub-Inspector (SI) Udayan Chakma of Lahogara Police Station filed a case on the day. The charge sheet in the case was submitted to the court on September 5 in 2002 and charges were framed on June 9 in 2004.

A total of 17 witnesses were examined during the trial of the case.

Pak clashes

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AUS defence official who was present at the meeting in Germany said Pace talked about US military and intelligence assistance to Pakistan in the context of a long relationship with Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf.

"He did say 'kinetic.' He also said 'intel sharing,'" said the official, referring to notes.

The official said that when asked later what he meant by 'kinetic,' Pace said, "Air support, supporting fires. If he (Musharraf) were to ask, we would see how we might be able to help. I'm not predicting anything."

Pace said the offer did not include US ground troops.

Islamic militants kidnapped two Pakistani soldiers from a troubled tribal region, slit their throats and dumped the bodies with a warning note to others, officials said Tuesday.

The soldiers from the paramilitary Frontier Corps were abducted late Monday from a checkpoint near Khar, the main town in the northwestern Bajaur tribal district bordering Afghanistan, local official Sardar Yusuf told AFP.

The militants slashed their throats and dumped the bodies near a bazaar early Tuesday, with a note saying "Those who support Musharraf and Bush will meet this fate," he said.

A wave of Islamist suicide attacks has claimed over 200 lives in Pakistan since US-Ally President Pervez Musharraf ordered a raid on the pro-Taliban Red Mosque in the capital on July 10-11 and vowed to uproot extremism.

Amid a recent troop build-up in the troubled northwest, militants in North Waziristan eight days earlier tore up a shaky truce reached with the government last September, launching a spate of new attacks.

Pakistan's chief military spokesman Major General Waheed Arshad told AFP Monday that at least 30 rebels died in a series of clashes since late Sunday, and five more were killed in a battle that continued Monday evening.

Two soldiers had been killed and another 12 wounded in the violence over the past 24 hours, he added, but gave no further details.

A peace delegation made up of Pashtun elders from Pakistan's six other semi-autonomous tribal agencies returned empty handed late Sunday but was scheduled to resume talks Tuesday in Miranshah, North Waziristan's main town.

However, pamphlets distributed

there Monday did not bode well for peace.

Entitled "Till Islam Lives in Islamabad" and signed by a group calling itself the Mujahideen-e-Islam (Islamic holy warriors), they threatened that suicide bombs would again bring Pakistani soldiers the "gift of death."

They warned that suicide attackers "love death more than you love your 5,000-rupee salary, nude pictures of Indian actresses and liquor."

"We know that you have become America's slave and are serving infidel (non-believer) Musharraf and have become a traitor to your religion for food, clothes and shelter."

Another 19 rebels were killed in weekend clashes in North Waziristan.

The truce, signed in September, was heavily criticised by Washington and Kabul. Militants tore it up amid complaints about new military checkpoints and a lack of compensation for damage in previous army operations.

Washington has said the truce was a failure that allowed al-Qaeda and the Taliban to regroup across the border from war-torn Afghanistan, and has warned it was considering military strikes against them inside Pakistani territory.

US national intelligence chief Mike McConnell earlier said he believed al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden was alive and sheltering in the frontier zone.

White House Homeland Security Adviser Frances Townsend told CNN: "No question that we will use any instrument at our disposal to deal with the problem of Osama bin Laden and (his deputy Ayman al) Zawahiri and al-Qaeda."

Pakistani foreign ministry spokeswoman Tasnim Aslam on Monday called the latest comments from Washington "irresponsible and dangerous."

"We have stated in the clearest terms that any attack inside our territory would be unacceptable," she told a weekly media briefing.

"We do not want our efforts to be undermined by any ill-conceived action from any quarter that is inconsistent with the principles of international law and would be deeply resented in the tribal areas and generally in Pakistan."

Suicide bomb

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insurgent attacks.

And in the western Anbar province a marine was killed in combat operations on Saturday, the military said in a statement released on Monday.

The latest fatalities took the US military's losses in Iraq since the March 2003 invasion to 3,633, according to an AFP count based on Pentagon figures.

The attack came a day after at least 16 people died when four car bombs rocked the center of the capital. Three of the blasts took place in one 30-minute span.

Police, morgue and hospital officials reported a total of at least 59 people killed or found dead nationwide Monday.

The continued fighting and deaths of Iraqis and American forces in the sixth month of the American bid to calm Baghdad and the center of the country illuminate the stubborn resistance to a political solution in Iraq.

The government and legislature are under heavy US pressure to overcome sectarian differences and agree to measures aimed at promoting national unity as Americans are engaged in a fierce debate over calls to bring US troops home from the unpopular war.

Hundreds of demonstrators, meanwhile, marched in the predominantly Shia district of Shaab in northern Baghdad to protest a US-Iraqi barricade of Husseiniyah, a town on the capital's northeastern outskirts that is known as a Shia militia stronghold. Police issued calls for residents to leave the town, and some said they were running out of food and fuel.

The Shia-dominated parliament has said al-Maliki should intervene to end the crackdown by US and Iraqi forces on Husseiniyah. The town is dominated by the Mahdi Army, the militia loyal to radical cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, and straddles the highway to Baquba, where US forces are in the second month of a drive to cleanse that region of al-Qaeda in Iraq.

State-run Iraqiya television said the Husseiniyah blockade "would have serious consequences on people's lives there."

Rangs Bhaban

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