

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 Khanabari, Kowriachar, 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 swimmers 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 Udkahli 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 Ranpur and Kalasona 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 24cm 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 Talaipuri 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 constitution.

"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 his residence.

Rehana

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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 -- Chalkrajpur, 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 headmaster's house.

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

Our Sirajganj correspondent reported that the flood situation in five upazilas and Cholom 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 Cholom 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 Enayeturp and Meghali 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 Cholom 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.

Asked whether she would come to Bangladesh to face the charge, Rehana said, "Off 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 intent 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.

Unfortunately, the then

Ivorian want ties

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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 a Bangabandhu and his family before the countrymen," Rehana, who is currently in Florida, USA, told The Daily Star last night over phone.

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

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 asked, "Why would Bangabandhu's daughters resort to extortion anyway if they need money?"

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 Daakou, ousted through bloodless coup in 1999, the former president hailed the role of Bangladeshi peacekeepers in restoring peace in Ivory Coast.

"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, "Off 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.

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

"Both the Bangladeshi garments and medicines are good 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 Kabbah paid a three-day visit to Bangladesh and invited investment from Dhaka in his country.

Unfortunately, the then

Bangladesh government did not explore the probability.

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."

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".

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BCL men

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From 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 Hosein 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."

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 fulfil the UN Peace Keeping Mission (ONUCI).

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