

Waterlogged, they see no end to misery

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Wading through waist deep water, Rina Khatun, a middle aged woman of the Dhaka-Narayanganj-Demra dam area, angrily told this correspondent that she was not interested in talking to the media.

"Look, we are very happy with the situation, we have been living in this sorbet everyday since last week and the level of it is rising day by day, we have built bamboo structures inside the houses and the children got a field to play, we hardly cook and every day we are giving interviews to TV channels and newspapers...but is there any information you have that might save us?" Rina blurted out.

In the low lying Dhaka-Narayanganj-Demra dam area the level of trapped rainwater rose by three inches, and the four pumps with their very modest combined capacity of pumping out 512 cusec of water everyday, have completely failed to tackle the situation.

Shimrail pump house sources yesterday said the water level at different points of the DND dam area reached to 10-12 feet above

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Million marooned as rivers keep swelling

STAR REPORT

Continuous rise of water in almost all the rivers in the country's north, northeastern and middle parts left nearly a million people marooned causing immense sufferings to them and damage to crops.

Low-lying areas in the eastern part of the capital, which is already facing waterlogging, are likely to be inundated in the next 48 hours, as small rivers surrounding Dhaka and Narayanganj are about to approach danger levels.

Buriganga water yesterday flowed 107 cm below danger level. Mira, a minor girl of Velakopa in Kurigram and two people in Nilphamari yesterday died from snakebite. Two people also drowned in Kurigram.

Our Mymensingh correspondent reported that Chan Miah, 85, of village Bhatpara under sadar upazila, was washed away by the huge current of Brahmaputra river yesterday.

State-owned news agency BSS

reported that three people, including a woman and a child, died in Netrakona yesterday.

Police said Sayed Ali, 62, and Sakawat, 7, of the village Ojanga of Barhatta upazila drowned in Singair Beel, when a boat carrying them capsized.

A middle-aged woman, Rekha Saha of village Shimulkandi under sadar upazila, died from snakebite.

Breaches in the flood protection embankments in some areas of the country also contributed to inundation of fresh areas disrupting road communications between the district sadars and villages.

More and more people are taking shelters at the higher places, mostly embankments, where scarcity of food and drinking is becoming acute by the day, while water-borne diseases like diarrhoea, cholera and skin diseases have become almost a regular phenomenon.

This situation is most likely to deteriorate as the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) yester-

day reported that water flow in the major rivers, which are already flowing above danger levels, may rise further in the next few days.

According to the FFWC, Jamuna flowed 40 cm, 57 cm, 68 cm, 80 cm and 65 cm above danger levels at Noonkhawa, Chilmari, Bahadurabad, Sirajganj and Aricha yesterday.

Dharla and Teesta flowed 33 cm and 29 cm above danger levels at Kurigram and Dalia.

Flood situation therefore will deteriorate in Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Rangpur, Bogra, Jamalpur, Sirajganj, Pabna and Tangail.

Padma rose at all points and flowed 87 cm and 50 cm above danger levels at Goalundo and Bhagyakul, the FFWC reported adding that more areas in Manikganj, Munshiganj, Faridpur, Rajbari, Madanipur and Shariatpur upazilas of Dhaka are likely to inundate.

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Moitree Express leaves for Kolkata

UNB, Dhaka

A train carrying a 35-member Bangladesh official delegation left Dhaka yesterday morning for India on a trial run for introducing Dhaka-Kolkata passenger train service.

Railway officials said the train was flagged off from Dhaka Cantonment Station at 7:00am. It reached Darshana station on the southwestern district of Chudanga at about 12:45pm before it whistled past the border into India.

The train, styled as Moitree Express, left the station at about 1:57pm after the delegation, led by Additional Secretary for Communications ATKM Ismail, had a lunch break there.

A two-day meeting between Bangladesh and India begins today in the West Bengal capital for finalising the formalities of commencing regular Dhaka-Kolkata-Dhaka train service, said Shafiqul Alam Khan, director, Public Relations, Bangladesh Railway.

Fixation of the date, frequency of the service, Indian-proposed

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PHOTO: STAR

The Moitree Express carrying a Bangladesh delegation leaves Dhaka Cantonment Railway Station for Kolkata yesterday morning. The delegation will have the final rounds of talks with India to start Dhaka-Kolkata passenger train service.

Declare Aug 15 as national mourning day

AL asks CG

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) yesterday demanded that the government officially declare Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as the father of the nation and observe August 15 as national mourning day announcing it a national holiday.

The demand came at a meeting of the AL Presidium at the Gulshan residence of acting party president Zillur Rahman. It was the first meeting of the highest policymaking body of AL since the arrest of the party chief Sheikh Hasina on July 16.

The meeting also agreed in principle that they would move together to free the AL president through legal procedures.

"We are united over freeing Sheikh Hasina and we will continue our legal battle to free her," Zillur Rahman told reporters. He also demanded the government release Hasina immediately.

In the morning, six available AL presidium members and some of the central committee leaders, including dissident reformists, sat for chalking out different programmes marking the 32nd death anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Out of 12 presidium members, Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Abdur Razzak, Tofail Ahmed, Motia Chowdhury and Ataur Rahman Khan Kaisar were present at the meeting along with Zillur Rahman.

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BNP rebels bin Hannan's no support claim

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dissident BNP leaders once again claimed that most of the party councillors are in favour of the BNP secretary general's reforms proposal.

Rejecting comments made by Brig Gen (ret'd) ASM Hannan Shah, an adviser to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, pro-reforms BNP leader ZA Khan yesterday said they contacted at least 75 percent councillors of the party and 60 to 70 percent of them supported the reforms proposal.

"He [Hannan Shah] does not know the real situation as he was in jail," ZA Khan told reporters after a meeting with BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan at his Gulshan home yesterday.

"We know the situation as we have been working on it for two months. I can say that at least 60-70 percent grassroots-level leaders supported the proposal as they want to implement reforms," he added.

On July 25, Shah Abul Hossain, a former BNP state minister, claimed that two-thirds of the party councillors already expressed their support for the "reformists".

Hannan Shah on Saturday told reporters that not even five percent of the party councillors would support the so-called reformists led by Bhuiyan. He said there was

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PHOTO: HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU

An elderly woman of Dhanbandi in Sirajganj town leaving her home on a raft as the locality goes under floodwater.

Many women may not be interested in photo Fears EC, asks DCs to ensure listing of all eligible voters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) is apprehending that women of families with persuasions of religious conservatism might avoid visiting voter registration centres to have their photographs taken for the voter list on grounds of "religious restrictions".

Based on the apprehension, the EC is sending directives to deputy commissioners (DC) across the country to initiate measures to ensure registration of all eligible women as voters, sources in the EC Secretariat said.

"We started sending written directives to deputy commissioners from Thursday asking them to take proper measures to ensure that eligible conservative women are registered as voters," a senior official of the EC Secretariat told The Daily Star yesterday.

The number of women voters

was about a half of the total voters on previous electoral rolls, which were prepared by sending the EC staff to door-to-door visits.

But this time around, the EC decided to prepare the voter list with photographs and national identity cards simultaneously, initiating a new procedure making it mandatory for all prospective voters to visit the voter registration centres to have their photographs taken for the voter list.

"The Election Commission received information from many areas that some people are talking about religious restrictions regarding registration of women as voters. Such negative discussions might discourage women with persuasions of religious conservatism from visiting the voter registration centres," the senior EC official said.

If women in religious conservative families do not register their

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ACCOUNT DETAILS BB turns down Hasina's request

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Bank (BB) yesterday turned down detained Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina's request for her bank account details, saying that the existing rules do not permit the central bank to provide such information to any individual.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday sent a similar letter to the BB, but sources said that she, too, is likely to receive the same answer from the central bank.

"The central bank has responded to Sheikh Hasina's letter through the home ministry," said a BB official, adding that the letter has clarified the rules and said those do not allow the BB to provide individual account details to the person concerned.

On Thursday, Hasina wrote a letter to the BB governor requesting detailed information of her bank accounts after the Anti-Corruption Commission asked her to submit wealth statement.

In her letter, Hasina said it is

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Probe finds massive graft at BSMMU

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

A probe committee report submitted on Saturday identified a large number of corruption incidents and irregularities in Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) while the committee members and many of the teaching staff have expressed doubt about the proper implementation of the recommendations.

The seven-member probe committee that was formed on May 6 to investigate corruption in recruitment and procurement since the inception of the university found the involvement of the current administrative officials including Vice Chancellor Prof Tahir.

The 250-page report made some 80 recommendations, especially suggesting measures against the incidents of malpractice. The recommendations might be diluted if placed before the Syndicate, as several Syndicate members are out to serve the

interest of the administrative officials who were found involved in corruption, they said, adding that even the report may not be sent intact to the health ministry.

There is also possibility of partial action as the members of the Syndicate that was formed during the previous government's tenure are still holding the posts, they said.

While talking to The Daily Star, Prof Tahir, who was the pro-vice chancellor during the period of immediate past government, said he would place the report before the Syndicate within two weeks.

"Decisions from the Syndicate will be executed, even if it goes against me," said Prof Tahir.

A member of the probe committee, on the other hand, sought direct intervention of the higher authorities that initiated formation of the committee to investigate the issues.

"The Syndicate did not form the investigation committee. Rather it was formed following orders of the

Hasina challenges extortion case at HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detained Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday filed a writ petition with the High Court (HC), challenging the government move to bring the Tk 3 crore extortion case against her under the emergency power rules.

On her behalf, Barrister Rafique-ul Huq turned in the petition likely to be heard today.

In another development, the former prime minister has been shown arrested in the case that AL leader and businessman Noor Ali filed against her for a Tk 5-crore extortion over a power plant deal 10 years ago.

Earlier in the day, Barrister Rafique took permission from the

court for filing the writ petition where Hasina said bringing extortion charges against her under the emergency power rules is illegal.

Her lawyers told the press that the alleged extortion had taken place before the state of emergency was declared, and so the charge does not warrant its being taken under the emergency rules.

Former law minister Abdul Matin Khasru, one of the counsel, said, "She was shown arrested in an extortion case on July 16, but later in the evening the case was placed arbitrarily under the emergency power rules."

He added that all this was done to make sure Hasina does not get bail.

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Tk 12,581cr stuck up in absence of PAC

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The move to recover Tk 12,581 crore from individuals and organisations that were held responsible for the loss of public money faces uncertainty as there is no mechanism to monitor the progress in absence of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC).

During the tenure of immediate past parliament, the PAC detected the huge financial anomalies while discussing the annual reports of the office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), which were prepared on income and expenditure of 15 ministries and divisions.

The PAC made several ministries recover only Tk 63.77 crore from individuals and organisations during its three and a half years'

tenure and its efforts to recover the misused government money were put to rest as its tenure expired with the dissolution of eighth parliament on October 27 last year.

The non-functioning of the PAC offered scope for the ministries and divisions assigned to recover the money to remain indifferent to the responsibilities, sources concerned said.

Resumption of functions of the PAC, which can monitor the progress of recovering the huge amount of public money, is unlikely before early in 2009 as the next general election to constitute parliament is scheduled for December 2008.

"The possibility of recovering the huge amount of money is slim as there is nobody to monitor the

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Yunus made adviser to provincial govt in China

BSS, Dhaka

Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus has been honoured as an adviser to the government of Hainan province of China.

His role as an adviser will be formalised at a ceremony scheduled to be held in Hainan in December next, officials at Dr Yunus's secretariat said.

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