

Floodwaters snap

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All major highways in the district, except Sirajganj-Dhaka and Sirajganj-Bogra, remains snapped," they added.

District Civil Surgeon's office sources said around 300 people have been infected with diseases like diarrhoea, dysentery and skin infections, mainly due to lack of drinking water which had forced them to drink impure water.

Water Development Board (WDB) sources said at least five lakh people in nine upazilas of the district have become marooned and 98 percent of the Sirajganj town went under water. About 90 percent businesses in the town have been closed.

Our correspondent from Nilphamari reports: The repair work of a bank-protection of Teesta Irrigation Project at Jhunagach Chapnai union, damaged Sunday afternoon, has been stalled due to lack of concrete blocks and sand-bags.

The 150-foot bank-protection was damaged by gushing water and resulted in the inundation of around 1,500 houses and paddy fields of Uttar Sonakhuli and Dakkhin Sonakhuli chars.

Gaibandha town may go under floodwater any time as cracks developed at many points on the Gaibandha Town Protection Embankment along the Ghagot while seepage continues at three points, our correspondent in Gaibandha reports.

Army personnel of Gaibandha camp have been working round the clock to stop the seepage at different points of the embankment by sandbagging.

Road communication between Gaibandha and Shaghata and Fulchhari snapped as two kilometres of road went under floodwater.

Road communication between Gaibandha and Palashbari was disrupted as a gigantic banyan tree fell over the highway early Monday due to incessant rain and storm. Roads and Highways Department was trying to remove the tree.

A 200-metre stretch of Brahmaputra Flood Control Embankment at Counsiler Bazar was washed away by surging floodwater. At least 85 villages in seven unions of Fulchhari Upazila were inundated yesterday.

According to district Agriculture Extension Department, seedbeds on 805 hectares of land, transplanted aman on 120 hectares and vegetables on 2,105 hectares in four upazilas went under floodwater.

Kazi Mohammad Anwarul Hakim, deputy commissioner of

Gaibandha, said he requires more dry food and drinking water for flood victims.

Flood-affected people in Sariakandi, Sonatala and Dhunat upazilas are in severe food and drinking water crises, our staff correspondent in Bogra reports.

People, especially the children, are in serious risks of suffering from malnutrition and diseases like dysentery and diarrhoea.

According to district WDB, the Jamuna was flowing 125cm above danger levels at Sariakandi yesterday.

Our correspondent in Rangpur reports that around 10km of roads in three upazilas were completely damaged and 50km of roads were partially damaged by the floodwater, an official sources said.

The flood-affected people in chars of Teesta alleged they were in acute food and drinking water crisis.

Agriculture Extension Department said crops, mainly vegetables and aman seedlings, on around 10,000 hectares of land in the district have been inundated.

Deputy Director Mokbul Hossain of Manikganj Agriculture Extension Department said paddy on 2,900 hectares and vegetables on 1,200 acres went under floodwater, our Manikganj correspondent reports.

The water level of the Jamuna yesterday rose at all points and flowed 61cm, 80cm, 84cm, 99cm and 85cm above danger level at Noonkhawa, Chilmari, Bahadurabad, Sirajganj and Aricha deteriorating the flood situation in Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Rangpur, Bogra, Jamalpur, Sirajganj, Pabna and Tangail.

The water level of the Padma rose at all points and flowed 105cm and 66cm above danger levels at Goalando and Bhagyakul threatening to inundate more areas of Manikganj, Munshiganj, Faridpur, Rajbari, Madaripur, Shariatpur districts and Dohar and Nawabganj upazila of Dhaka.

The water level of Meghna at Bhairab Bazar continued rising and was flowing 14cm above danger level yesterday and is likely to rise further inundating low-lying areas in Narsingdi, Brahmanbaria and Narayanganj, FFWC reported. The flash flood situation in Netrokona, Sunamganj and Sylhet is, however, likely to improve.

Ex-BNP MP Salim sued for extortion

UNB, Bagerhat

Ex-BNP lawmaker MAH Salim and 14 other BNP leaders were sued Sunday night for extortion and grabbing a shrimp farm.

The owner of the shrimp enclosure, Mejbahuzzaman Tipu of Koighardaskathi village in Rampal upazila, filed the case with the Rampal Police Station.

In his case statement, Tipu alleged that the accused, at the behest of the ex-MP and district BNP president, had demanded Tk 10 lakh as toll from him.

"As I did not pay the money, the accused ransacked my shrimp enclosure at Koighardaskathi on May 7, 2002 and took away Tk 5.50 lakh from the cash-box. They also beat up the workers, drove them away and occupied the shrimp enclosure," the plaintiff alleged in the case statement.

So far 13 cases have been filed against the former MP of the immediate-past ruling party, BNP, with different police stations in the capital and this southwestern district on charge of extortion, and grabbing land and shrimp farms.

Army-led joint forces arrested Salim in Dhaka on March 7.

Hasina seeks

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statement in time. Asked if there would be special arrangements for Hasina, he replied, "Law is equal to all."

When his attention was drawn to the fact that Hasina cannot submit a flawless statement since documents have been seized from her residence and Bangladesh Bank refused to provide her accounts details, the ACC secretary said, "ACC has nothing to do with the

Bangladesh Bank in this regard. Now she has time till August 8. Wait and see."

The ACC on July 17 issued notices to two former prime ministers Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia directing them to submit their wealth statements within seven working days. Khaleda's notice was sent to her residence while that of Hasina to the sub-jail.

Khaleda received the notice the following day (July 18) and Hasina received it a day later because of a controversy over its (notice) language. Hasina had written a letter to the Commission claiming that the notice was full of mistakes.

Leaders loyal

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ensure transparency and accountability in political parties.

Criticising remarks made by Brig Gen (retd) Hannan Shah asking dissident leaders to apologise for their "anti-party activities", Ashraf Hossain, joint secretary general of BNP, said such remarks are creating confusion that could lead to a split in the party.

"Attempts to divide the party in such a way is unwanted," he said after meeting Bhuiyan at his Gulshan home. He said each and everyone in the party want the implementation of the reforms.

"The party secretary general announced a proposal for overall development of our political system and anyone can speak on the proposal, they can even bring in new proposals," he added.

"Those who are speaking against us, instead of speaking for reforms, do not want any good to happen in the party," Ashraf said.

When asked why the booklet containing Bhuiyan's reforms proposal did not mention the provision that a secretary general would not be able to occupy the post for more than two terms, he said a new booklet would be published soon and the provision would be included there.

According to party sources, many district, upazila and city unit committees' terms have already expired but the BNP failed to make any changes to those committees. So, the dissident leaders are facing difficulty in finding out who the legitimate councillors are.

A number of leaders think that only the president and general secretaries of valid committees would be treated as councillors while others reckon a committee would remain valid until the formation of a new committee.

"Central leaders of BNP had not bothered about field-level committees and that is why they did not reconstitute many committees on time even though those were long overdue," a BNP leader told The Daily Star yesterday.

Deep-sea port

FROM PAGE 1
and Mohekskhali and Kutubdia in Cox's Bazar as possible sites for the proposed deep-sea port.

The adviser said the meeting decided to seek recommendations from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) on removing sediments from the Karnaphuli River and send a proposal on commissioning a riverine route around Dhaka City to the Planning Commission for its approval.

The meeting also decided to find out the reason as to why no tender was submitted to remove sediments from the riverbed of Pashur.

Voter list

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Muhammed Sohul Hussain told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said the EC is moving to amend the Electoral Rolls Ordinance 1982 for preparing the voter list with photographs in such a way that it will not come in conflict with the court's directive.

Asked what measures the EC will adopt to avoid a conflict with the court directive, the election commissioner said, "Just wait for a couple of days and you will know."

He however said the court issued the directive based on the existing electoral rolls ordinance. "We are going to change the existing ordinance eliminating the bar on preparing the voter list with photographs," he added.

Sohul said there is no scope for taking the voter list of 2000 into consideration in preparing the voter list with photographs, which will be the first of its kind.

Asked whether the law ministry sent back the proposals for amending the electoral rolls ordinance with some queries, the election commissioner said the ministry asked them to change the language of the proposals to Bangla.

Sources in the EC Secretariat however said the ministry sought clarifications on some points too, and the commission is now preparing the answers.

"We will send those to the ministry in a couple of days. We hope, an ordinance will be promulgated in a week to amend the electoral rolls ordinance," a senior official in the EC Secretariat said.

If the process takes a week, the field level work of preparing a voter list with photographs for Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) area is unlikely to begin on August 5, the official tentative date for launching the task, although distribution of voter registration forms started in the RCC area yesterday.

The EC also planned to begin the field level work of voter listing in Khulna City Corporation and eight municipality areas by mid-August. Sources in the EC Secretariat said the municipalities are -- Bogra, Rangpur, Comilla, Savar, Mymensingh, Sitakunda, Rauzan and Jessore.

Asked whether the ongoing flood situation in the country will create any problem for having the voter list ready in October next year in line with the already announced electoral roadmap, Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) M Sakawat Hossain said they prepared the roadmap keeping in mind possible flood situations, the Ramadan and the Eid vacations.

COURT'S DIRECTIVES
Adjudicating two writ petitions on voter lists, the High Court (HC) on January 4, 2006 asked the EC to update the voter list prepared in 2000.

The erstwhile EC led by Justice MA Aziz however did not comply with the court's directive and prepared a fresh voter list instead by filing an appeal against the HC directive. The then commission also published a draft of the fresh voter list.

The Appellate Division of the SC on May 23 of last year declared the draft voter list null and void asking the EC to comply with the HC directive.

Then the EC updated the voter list prepared in 2000, but widespread allegations that the commission did not properly followed the directive, plagued it.

In response to another writ petition, the HC on March 27 this year declared null and void the updated voter list published ahead of the now stalled ninth parliamentary election, ordering the EC to update the electoral roll in compliance with the SC directive, relevant election rules, and the constitution.

The court order also directed the EC to introduce transparent ballot boxes and voter ID cards for free, fair and credible elections in the future. The EC however did not appeal against that directive.

Now the EC has no plan to prepare voter ID cards, rather it will issue national ID cards. The chief election commissioner (CEC) on Thursday also brushed aside the possibility of introducing transparent ballot boxes in the upcoming national election.

Officials in the EC Secretariat said the commission will soon clarify the reasons for not being able to comply with the court's directives thoroughly in the process of preparing the voter list with photographs for the upcoming election.

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ARF meet

FROM PAGE 16
reporters at the foreign ministry yesterday.

Bangladesh became the 26th member of the ARF in 2006 after a long diplomatic effort to gain membership to the influential forum, which was established in 1994 to strengthen security ties between Asean and the wider region.

The foreign adviser also said that he is scheduled to meet with the Chinese and Indonesian foreign ministers on the sidelines of the meeting, with a number of other bilateral meetings likely.

Iftekhar will call on Philippines President Gloria Arroyo today, according to a foreign ministry press release.

The foreign adviser will sign the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation on the sidelines of the July 31-August 2 Forum that renounces the use of force and calls for greater economic and political cooperation.

Asean's 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation is the grouping's founding non-aggression pact aimed at promoting regional stability.

The ARF will be attended by the foreign ministers of the 10 Asean member states, and the 17 other ARF members, including Bangladesh, the United States, European Union, India and Pakistan.

The United States, however, has decided not to send Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, as the Asean secretary general said that it would "dampen" the forum.

Obaidul Karim's group

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contract with a 45-day consultation period.

With the termination of the PPA, the other contracts with BON -- a Land Lease Agreement, Gas Sales Agreement and an Implementation Agreement-- will also have to be terminated simultaneously, he said.

The legal adviser added that under the Implementation Agreement (IA) with BON, the PDB may liquidate BON's project proposal security money.

The PDB has come to this decision although it had tried its best to pursue this contract with BON Consortium after its chief scamster Obaidul Karim of Orion Group fled the country in January to avoid arrest for misappropriating Tk 590 crore from Oriental Bank.

In the absence of Obaidul Karim, a representative of the UAE-based Belhasa group visited Dhaka assuring the government of continuing the project financing. But the company failed to meet various deadlines one after another while giving the government an impression that it was working on the project. The government kept its options open but asked BON to provide a \$10 million security deposit against the project by July 15.

In mid-July, BON's main financier Bahrain-based Capital Management House (CMH) wrote to the power ministry that it would be unable to arrange the financing or provide the \$10 million security deposit before December 2007.

This has prompted the power ministry to ask the PDB to follow due legal process regarding the Meghnaghat-2 power project.

On May 28, the consortium failed to meet its deadline for financial closure for the project, blaming "political stability in the country. A day before, it requested the govern-

ment to allow it an additional seven and a half months time for financial closure, pushing the deadline to December. The BON plea was accompanied by another letter of CMH.

The power ministry agreed to extend the deadline. In early June, the PDB asked BON to provide a performance security deposit of \$10 million immediately and said the financial closure deadline will be set after that. The PDB even agreed to amend the contracts to accommodate these exceptions.

Orion Group's Obaidul Karim, who had bagged many large-scale contracts during the five-year BNP-led alliance rule, formed BON Consortium. BON initially stood for Belhasa (UAE), Orion Power (Bangladesh) and Nisso Eiwi (Japan), where Nisso was the lead bidder in the project's tender. Neither Belhasa nor Orion qualifies for this power project, while Nisso's experience qualified BON's bid. But after the bid selection, Nisso was replaced by German company Steag.

Officials and power industry players were too doubtful whether BON would ever be able to carry out this project as Obaidul Karim and the consortium's "official" leader German Steag were nowhere to be seen.

Earlier, BON had missed a deadline to pay up land rental and other fees on January 21 and faced a notice for "Project Company Event of Default" to pay up Tk 6.22 crore by February 22 or face cancellation of the contract. A representative of Belhasa group paid that money at the last minute and evaded the cancellation.

SERVICE RETURN CASE

Court summons Sheikh Helal, his 4 brothers

COURT-CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday summoned former Awami League lawmaker Sheikh Helaluddin and his four brothers to appear before it in person on September 18 in a case filed for not submitting service return of the Tungipara Paribhan Limited for years.

Metropolitan Magistrate AJM Abdullah Baqui passed the order after Abdul Mannan, deputy registrar (current charge) of the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms (RJSCF), filed the case under the Companies Act 1994.

Four others are Sheikh Salahuddin, Sheikh Soheluddin, Sheikh Jamaluddin and Sheikh Belaluddin.

The complainant said the accused were directors of the Tungipara Paribahan Limited, registered with the RJSCF, and did not submit service return for the fiscal years between 1995 and 2006.

According to the Joint Stock Companies and Firms Act, it is mandatory to submit annual returns, schedule of annual general meetings, audit reports, director reports and other documents of the companies.

But the accused did not submit those for the years, the plaintiff

India focuses

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Ministry EA Ahmad, told newsmen in Kolkata.

His remarks came after a round of talks with a Bangladesh delegation led by Additional Secretary of that country's communications ministry ATKM Ismail.

He said India wanted to be satisfied about proper fencing from the Zero point to 150 metres into both sides of the border before the service begins.

India and Bangladesh, however, agreed yesterday on matters like the train's name, the number of compartments, crew members and their areas of operation, he said, adding that issues like customs and immigration infrastructure, creation on the Bangladesh side and the frequency of trains still remained unresolved.

Pointing out that home secretary-level talks between India and Bangladesh was scheduled in Delhi for August 1, he hinted that the remaining issues were likely to be ironed out at the meeting.

Ismail said his government had initially decided to conduct customs and immigration checks at Dhaka but would now have it at border station Darshana, since India has created customs and immigration facilities at its border station Gede.

"I have observed the improvements at Gede. Your preparations are better than ours," Ismail, who arrived in Kolkata through Gede yesterday on the trial run of the Mooltree Express, said, adding that work for creation of infrastructure at Darshana would be completed before the start of Ramadan around the middle of September.

Mooltree Express, to carry 300 passengers initially, would have five coaches and a pantry car. Its fares have been fixed at eight, 12 and 20 dollars each way, exclusive of VAT. The train would cover 615 kilometres in eight hours, excluding the time taken for customs and immigration checks, Ismail said.

He said Bangladesh had imported the Mooltree Express coaches from Malaysia.

Revenue sharing between Bangladesh and India on the train service would be on a 75:25 per cent basis.

Asked about reports that Bangladesh wanted the train to be run daily, Ahmad said a daily service would require laying of an additional track and construction of an additional platform at Gede to enable smooth traffic operations.

Reiterating India's commitment to begin the service "as early as possible," Ahmad said, "we met twice this month. The frequency of the meetings is an indication of how serious we are in starting the service."

Security alert

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Panic gripped the workers and employees residing in colonies of the jute mill, as they fear eviction by the security forces soon after the mill's final closure.

Sources said the mill authorities are continuing pressure on workers to vacate colonies.

However, workers are determined not to leave colonies until the BJMC authorities pay their wages and other financial benefits.

Large blue whale

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"In the morning we went to the shore again to have a glimpse of the animal. It was so big, really awesome!" Sujana said.

The spot at Rani Rasmoni Ghat assumed a festive look as people from neighbouring areas rushed to see the whale. Some boys climbed on it and started dancing.

There were injury marks on the whale's abdomen.

A grown-up blue whale (vaelenoptera musculus) can be 110-foot long and can swim up to 50 km per hour, Prof Kibria said.

He urged the authorities to preserve at least the bones of the whale at some museum.

Pahartali police said they had informed all the authorities concerned about the whale.

Musharraf may quit

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However the 54-year-old could be jailed on the corruption charges that she still faces upon re-entering Pakistan.

Nazi, a former Benazir ally who left the PPP after the last general elections in 2002, said if that if the two agreed on a deal, the constitution could be amended to allow prime ministers to serve a third term.

The ban was inserted into the constitution by Musharraf in 2003, with support from an alliance of hardline Islamist parties which have since turned against him.

The amendment was aimed to prevent Benazir and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif -- whom Musharraf ousted in a bloodless coup in 1999 -- from taking the office for a third time, as both have ruled the country twice.

"An alliance between Benazir and Musharraf is a necessity in the prevailing situation. It is also the desire of the international community, particularly the United States and Britain," Nazki said.

Musharraf met Monday with his current allies, the ruling Pakistan Muslim League, to brief them on his talks with Benazir, officials said on condition of anonymity.

Benazir's contacts with the president have drawn severe criticism from other opposition parties which are accusing her of trying to shore up Musharraf's regime.

Sharif, who also lives in exile, has reminded Benazir of a pledge she made in a pro-democratic charter they both signed last year against any dealings with the military ruler.

Islamist leader Maulana Fazlur Rehman also criticised Benazir and said any deal with Musharraf would be contrary to Pakistan's national interests.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's Supreme Court is to begin hearing a challenge to President Pervez Musharraf's military role in the first such case since the country's top judge was reinstated, officials

AL hails

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for Hasina, he said he knew that such 'false and politically motivated' cases never stand in court.

The AL president has been insulted and harassed by filing such cases against her, he added.

Over the other case against Hasina filed by businessman Noor Ali, Zillur said the authorities know very well that it lacks merit. This case is simply intended to prevent her release on bail in the previous case.

The acting AL chief said if any other case is filed against Hasina, they would appeal to the highest court seeking that without its prior permission, no case should be lodged against her. The highest court could give such directives, he added.

He asked the government if it wants to rule the country by making people furious at its activities.

He distributed sweets among party leaders and journalists.

Zillur also sent a bouquet to the AL chief at the special jail. Party leaders Dr Hasan Mahmud, Dr Rauf Sardar and Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury carried it and the jail authorities received it, sources said.

AL leaders Motia Chowdhury, Maj Gen (retd) Subid Ali Bhuiyan, Advocate Rahmat Ali, Habibur Rahman Siraj, Dr Dipu Moni, Dr Hasan Mahmud, Advocate Abdul Matin, Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, among others, were present at the press briefing.

Meanwhile, Hasina's son Sajeeb Wazed Joy has welcomed the HC verdict granting bail to his mother. But he questioned the legitimacy of still keeping her in custody in another case of similar nature, reports UNB.

"It is an appropriate judgement," Joy said giving his instant reaction to UNB over phone from US, where he lives. He also thanked the lawyers who moved the case in the court.

Bombings, attacks

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creating some of the very policies it now criticised.

The Accordance Front said Monday that al-Maliki does not seem to have any intention of dealing constructively with their demands, which include a pardon for detainees not charged with specific crimes and the disbanding of militias.

"He is simply slamming shut the door for reform, and in the light of that the front will be justified if it goes ahead with its plan to quit the government," it said in a statement.

Black smoke rose into the air after the blast struck a transit point near Tayaran Square at about 1 pm, damaging several cars and kiosks selling clothes, fruit and juice, police and hospital officials said. The minibus was waiting for passengers heading to predominantly Shia areas in eastern Baghdad.

At least 31 people were wounded in addition to the six killed, according to the officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorised to release the information.

The bombing came hours after the expiration of a vehicle ban imposed in the capital and several other cities Sunday ahead of Iraq's soccer final against Saudi Arabia in the Asian Cup. Iraq won the championship 1-0 and tens of thousands of Iraqis poured into the streets for largely peaceful celebrations, welcoming the unexpected victory in a show of pride and unity.

Chants of "Long live Iraq" and "Baghdad is victorious" rang out across the country. Some revelers took their shirts off to display the red, white and black colours of the Iraqi flag painted on their chests.

Within seconds of the final whistle, celebratory gunfire echoed across Baghdad and elsewhere despite a government ban. Authorities said in Baghdad alone, at least five people were killed and nearly 30 wounded by celebratory gunfire after the game.

There were no reports of bombings such as those that killed at least 50 and wounded dozens in Baghdad during celebrations of Iraq's seminal win over South Korea on Wednesday. But bombings, shootings and mortar attacks striking other targets killed at

said Monday.