

Few people come forward to help flood victims  
*Says Adviser Tapan*  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Food and Disaster Management Adviser Tapan Chowdhury yesterday said limited number of people have come forward to help the flood-affected people of the country but he expects more people to come forward soon.

"People are coming in aid of the flood-affected people, but it is limited. I am sure they will help their fellow brothers and sisters," he said at a joint press briefing of the flood and disaster management and local government and rural development ministries at the latter's conference room yesterday.

Tapan, however, said he does not think that such limited response from people is due to the state of emergency.

Asked if political parties could help the flood-affected people, he said all are welcome to help those who are in need. But it does not need a political banner, he added.

In reply to a question, Tapan said the flood situation is not

SEE PAGE 19 COL 6

# Biman flight schedule about to crash-land

*Only 4-5 aircraft operative now; desperate flight-cut not helping situation*

RASHIDUL HASAN

Despite canceling flight on several routes, Biman Bangladesh Airlines is frequently failing to maintain its flight schedule as only four to five aircraft of its 11-member fleet can be kept operative a day.

Schedule collapse in Biman flights to 18 international destinations cause untold sufferings to the passengers, eventually contributing to the loss of the organisation's market share.

As an 'easy remedy' for schedule chaos, Biman cut its flight on eight international routes in last one year and recently reduced flight frequencies on five profitable routes to Riyadh, Jeddah, Kuwait, London and Rome, Biman officials said.

"When market shares of other airlines are increasing, Biman is losing

its share," Abdul Mamdud Khan, General Manager (GM), flight operations (Central Control) of Biman Bangladesh Airlines Ltd told The Daily Star last night.

Biman's current market share of passengers has shrunk to approximately 32 per cent from 57 per cent in 1991, Biman's planning department sources said.

In 2005-06, Biman carried only about 14 lakh passengers out of the 30 lakh that boarded different airliners at Zia International Airport (ZIA), the sources added.

Biman now has air service agreement with 42 countries, but it can use only 18, Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of Biman Dr MA Momen said.

Reduction of flight on international

routes has not helped better maintenance of timetable as the condition of the fleet is too poor, said a Biman official wishing anonymity.

"No flight of Biman, whether domestic or local, can fly to its destination on schedule. Six or seven hours flight delay has now become usual events for Biman," said a Biman official.

During the last few days the situation has so worsened that there have been incidents of flight delay for more than a day, even flight cancellation.

On July 7, some 200 Biman passengers faced untold sufferings remaining stranded at the ZIA as the flight scheduled to carry them was delayed for 39 hours due to technical glitches and no alternative flight could be arranged.

SEE PAGE 14 COL 1

## US again backs anti-graft drive, reform measures

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The United States has reiterated its strong support to the caretaker government's drive against corruption in Bangladesh and commended the announcement of election roadmap as well as the reforms measures.

"Success of reform measures taken by the caretaker government will benefit the people," said US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State John Gastright at the House Committee on Foreign Affairs in the Capitol Hill in Washington on Wednesday during a testimony given in the US Congressional Committee.

His remarks came a week after US President George W Bush appreciated Bangladesh's election roadmap. Bush made his statement on July 26 when new Bangladeshi envoy to US presented his credentials at the White House.

According to a release issued by Bangladesh Embassy in Washington, Gastright said the caretaker government

SEE PAGE 19 COL 7

## Green chilli costs Tk 200 a kg!

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

The price of green chilli shot up to Tk 200 per kg from Tk 120 in the capital yesterday, as the usual daily supply of 250 tons to city's Karwan Bazar wholesale market came down between 5 and 6 tons in last two days.

Kitchen markets in the capital saw the shortage of local green chilli, which was being sold mostly at Tk 200 per kg in most of the markets yesterday evening. Only a day back, it was sold at Tk 100 to Tk 120 per kg.

However, Indian green chilli was available at Tk 100 to Tk 130 per kg in those markets.

A mixture of both types of green chilli was being sold at Tk 160 per kg.

Abdul Latif Miah, president of the city corporation wholesale market at Karwan Bazar, told The Daily Star that most of the green chilli plants had been damaged in recent flood resulting in a crisis of

the chosen ingredient of cooking across the country. He said the price soared steeply due to

SEE PAGE 19 COL 3



PHOTO: STAR

MEGHNAGHAT PLANT

## Hasina's graft case hearing now Aug 8

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court has deferred the long-pending hearing of an application for quashing the Meghnaghat power plant graft case against detained former premier and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina and set August 8 for hearing.

When the matter came up for hearing yesterday, Barrister Fazle Noor Tapash, a counsel for Hasina, moved a time petition for engaging a competent lawyer for Hasina whose original counsel is Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud.

The caretaker government has recently appointed Barrister Rokan as one of a big panel of heavyweight lawyers to fight corruption cases for the Anti-Corruption Commission in the current combat against high-profile corruption suspects.

A division bench, comprising Justice Nozrul Islam Chowdhury and Justice M Ataur Rahman Khan, rescheduled the date of hearing.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 3

## 3,000 PEOPLES JUTE MILL WORKERS Not paid off as quick as they laid off

EMRAN HOSSAIN, from Khulna

The 3,000 laid off workers of Peoples Jute Mills Ltd, which shut down Wednesday with Tk 300 crore due in wages, found nobody at the factory in Khulna from whom they could know when they would get their dues.

Since the notice regarding the closure of the factory was issued July 10, the authorities in Khulna failed to notify the workers when they would get their arrears. However, industries Adviser Geeteara Safiya Choudhury in Dhaka recently said the arrears would be given by the end of August.

The workers are passing their days in anxiety as they do not have money or livelihood and are in constant threat of being forced to leave the factory colony.

In the closure notice of the factory nothing was mentioned regarding payment of the arrears. The notice

only said measures would be taken as per the rules of the Labour Law, 2006.

Jobless workers roam around the factory in the hope of getting news about their payment and government steps to mitigate their sufferings.

Journalists are not allowed inside the factory compound and Zone Office of Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) in Khalishpur, Khulna. Deputy General Manager of the factory Mahbubul Alam refused to meet newsmen and the post of Zonal Coordinator of BJMC remains vacant since the former occupant of the post retired on July 17.

"The government does not talk to us and I do not know who to ask about our salaries and other issues," said Ektiar Uddin, to whom the factory owes Tk 8 lakh.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 2



PHOTO: STAR

Suspected JMB militants held yesterday with grenades, bombs, and bomb making materials from their mess in Mirpur in the capital, are seen at the Rab Headquarters.

## Musharraf-Benazir 'deal' gets cabinet backing

*Benazir plans to run in election*

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, AFP, Islamabad/ Dubai

Pakistan's federal cabinet has endorsed President Pervez Musharraf's "recent contacts" with exiled former prime minister Benazir Bhutto and extended full support to the president for his re-election.

The cabinet meeting on Wednesday, with Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz presiding, ruled out imposition of emergency and cleared the way for contacts with political parties for "free and fair elections", first to the presidency and later to the National Assembly and provincial legislatures, the media reported on Thursday.

The cabinet approval was on

expected lines, political observers noted, despite reservations of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League's (Qaid) leadership about the prospects of having to share power in future with the Pakistan People's Party.

The Abu Dhabi meeting between Musharraf and Benazir Bhutto has already triggered defections from PML(Q) and other parties to PPP. Information Minister Mohammed Ali Durrani dubbed them 'routine'.

The presidential election is likely to be held between Sept 15 and Oct 15, media reports said.

There has been speculation about Aziz being replaced and a deputy prime minister, a nominee

SEE PAGE 19 COL 6

## Boy helps avert train accident

UNB, Comilla

A boy's presence of mind averted a train accident on Dhaka-Chittagong rail route at Chanpur in Comilla Sadar South upazila yesterday.

Rakibul Hasan, a class X student of Chanpur, went to cut grass from beside the railway line. At this time, a man showed him a one-foot gap in the rail track due to displacement of the welded joint that could cause an accident any moment.

Rakib then promptly informed an employee of Paduar Bazar rail crossing of the matter and returned to the spot. Seeing the arrival of

SEE PAGE 19 COL 6

Prayer Timing		
August 3		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-20	4-55
Juma	12-30	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-47	6-50
Esha	8-15	8-45
Source: Islamic Foundation		