

Flood approaches

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Earlier, in 2004, 78 unions including Dohar, Nawabganj, Keraniganj, Savar, Dharmati and Dhaka city were inundated. Thirty-nine people died during that time.

At least 81 people have so far been killed in floods across the country and the flood situation is likely to deteriorate further in the country's central parts as the water levels of all major rivers remain above the danger mark.

Around 70 lakh people have been affected by the floods. The floods hit 215 upazilas of 38 districts, causing colossal damage to life and properties.

Flood situation in Manikganj, Munshiganj, Rajbari, Madaripur and Shariatpur, and Dohar and Nawabganj upazilas of Dhaka is expected to further deteriorate in the next 24 hours.

The swelling of Tongi canal and Turag and Shitalakhya may also increase aggravating the flood situation in Bhabar and eastern part of capital Dhaka.

However, the flood situation in Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Rangpur, Gaibandha, Bogra, Netrakona and Sunamganj will improve in a couple of days as water levels recede. The flood situation in Jamalpur, Sirajganj, Pabna and Tangail districts is expected to remain unchanged, UNB reports.

Our Manikganj correspondent reports: The overall flood situation of the district deteriorated yesterday even though the water level of the Jamuna went down 2cm at Aricha.

Around eight lakh people have been marooned in the district. They are facing food and drinking water crisis as most of the tube wells went under floodwater.

Jukhia, 35, wife of a farmer of Mohadepur under Shibalaya upazila, said her house went under six days ago. She with her husband and two children took shelter at Mohadepur Girls School. She said she sold her goat and spent her savings on food.

Anura, 60, a widow and a labour, had no money to buy food. She said nobody came to her with any relief until yesterday when army chief Moeen U Ahmed gave her relief materials at Borongai Gopal Chandra High School.

Our Munshiganj correspondent reports: The flood situation of the district deteriorated yesterday and a section of the Munshiganj-Baligong-Louhajang-Maoa-Dhaka road was washed away.

Road communication between Baligong and Louhajang snapped. A section of Dhaka-Dohar bypass was washed away at Kamargao.

Rising river waters inundated the approach road to the Muktarpur ferry pontoon threatening to snap communication between Dhaka and Munshiganj.

Due to a breach in Maoa-Bhagyaluk embankment at Louhajang, 50,000 people have been marooned.

Five flood shelters have been opened but relief distribution is inadequate in comparison to demands. According to government officials concerned, 38 unions of six upazilas have been inundated.

Our correspondent in Netrakona reports: Flood situation slightly improved in Netrakona but sufferings of the affected people continue due to lack of food, drinking water and medicines.

The affected people of different flood-affected areas alleged that the distributed relief materials distributed by the government were insufficient.

The flood inundated about 400 villages in 10 upazilas of the district affecting at least four lakh people. Many have taken shelter on higher grounds and flood shelters, while some are still living under the open sky.

Our correspondent in Nilphamari reports: The flood situation of the district improved as the floodwater from the Teesta was receding and all rivers of the district including Charalkata, Jamuneswari, Deurnai, Burikhola, Buriteesta, Dhajian started to withdraw.

The erosion of the bank-protection of the Teesta at Uttar Dauwahri in Jaldhaka upazila has taken a turn for the worse. Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) officials with the help of joint forces were trying to repair the damage.

Diarhoea and other water-borne diseases have been reported in many areas. An army mobile medical team is moving to the affected areas.

Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service (RDRS), an NGO, distributed 1,500kg of flattened rice, 500kg of molasses, 84-dozens candles and 84-dozens matchboxes among 500 flood victims.

This NGO also sanctioned 10 tube wells to be set up to provide drinking water. All temporary flood shelters have been closed down and the flood victims are returning home.

Our correspondent in Pabna reports: Sufferings of the flood affected people in Pabna increased as the victims continue to deal with drinking water and food shortages and insufficient relief distribution.

More areas were flooded in the district. The Padma is swelling rapidly and at least 50 villages of Shujanagar upazila went under floodwater yesterday.

According to a source, Sagarkandi union of Shujanagar upazila has totally gone under water. Manikhat, Shatabria, Bhauna and Najirganj union and three wards of Shujanagar municipality were flooded.

District Relief and Rehabilitation Office (DRRO) sources said at least 38 unions of six upazilas of the district were flood affected. Around 1.77 lakh people of Bera, Faridpur, Bhangura, Chatmohar, and Ishwardi upazilas were marooned.

Only 96 tonnes of rice have been distributed in Faridpur, Bera and Bhangura upazilas of the district. DRRO officials said the allocation of relief is insufficient for the huge number of people.

Rajuk, Rangs

FROM PAGE 16

ber of flood-affected people.

The district administration has only 100 tonnes of rice and Tk 2 lakh for relief distribution, sources said. The administration sought 100 tonnes of rice, Tk 13 lakh, 20,000 saris and lungis for the flood-affected people, said Abdul Hosssain, an official of DRRO, yesterday.

A total of 23,480 acres of cropland have been damaged in Pabna while 19,801 acres crops were partly damaged, official sources said.

O U C O R R E S P O N D E N T I N B r a h m a n b a r i a reports: Two infants d r o w n e d i n f l o o d w a t e r a t B r a h m a n b a r i a yesterday.

They were identified as Rakib Mia, 3, of Potoi in Nasirnagar upazila and Priti Akter, 2, of Araishda in Ashuganj upazila of the district.

Sixty-five villages including several areas of Brahmanbaria municipality were inundated yesterday.

Our correspondent in Tangail reports: The overall flood situation in Tangail remained unchanged yesterday but scarcity of food and drinking water continues.

According to district administration sources, about 5.36 lakh people of 95 unions in 12 upazilas were flood affected. Besides, crops on 25,410 acres of land were completely damaged while crops on 59,809 acres were partially damaged, they added.

The district administration distributed 100 tonnes of rice, Tk 5 lakh in cash and Tk 1 lakh for building houses so far.

Several cracks developed in the Tarakandi-Bhuapur flood-control embankment at Bhuapur upazila and repair works were going on with the help of joint forces.

The repair works of the Bhuapur flood-control embankment at Gala of Sadar upazila are also going on. A total of 32 shelters were opened for the flood-affected people in the district and so far 8,500 people took shelter in those.

Six people including five children drowned in floodwater at different places in Sadar and Dhabaura upazilas of Mymensingh in the last 24 hours, UNB reports.

The deceased were identified as Ankhi Biswas, 5, Moslem, 4, Kasu, 45, Rubel, 16 and Sahida, 7, of Sadar upazila, and Nur Banu, 7, of Dhabaura upazila.

Our Jhorecorrespondent reports: Heavy downpour and over-flowing rivers inundated 2,100 hectares of croplands of Bhaghrara upazila in Jhorecor.

Many pieces of furniture and other materials were still seen piled up on different floors of the building while normal activities from first to fourth floor seemed paralysed due to the demolishing activities.

Some heavy equipment like air-conditioners were being drawn down with the help of crane.

As only two lifts of the building are running, it was hard for the workers to bring down things and heavy materials from upper floors to the ground.

RANGS STAFFS PRESS BRIEFING

In a press conference at a Chinese restaurant near Rangs Bhaban officials and employees of Rangs Group yesterday said the government should reconsider the decision to demolish Rangs Bhaban.

Ratna Roy, secretary to the managing director of Rangs Group, said, "Still there are alternatives to demolishing the huge structure. A Y-shaped road can be constructed in the area. We appeal to save the structure even if Rangs has to make due compensation."

Although the office spaces up to the 5th floor were to be kept intact, authorities disconnected electricity, gas and water supply to those floors where the staff had to work all day long yesterday, Mahbuba Islam, Deputy Manager of RanksTel, told the press briefing.

"We went to the local police station to file a general diary seeking security for the valuables that remained in the six floors, but police refused to record it," she said.

Head of Enterprise Business Development at Ranks IT Ltd Zia Uddin Pasha said due to hasty moves of some Rajuk officials, thousands of subscribers and clients of Rangs Group had to suffer. This could be easily averted if three more days were given to their offices, he said.

"During the flood last year we donated a portion of our salary to help the destitute, but now we need donation as our job here has become uncertain," said Halim, who has been working with Rangs Group since 1989.

Eight thousand people have been marooned in Bholia while 30,000 people have been affected in Muladi upazila of Barisal.

In Barisal Sadar, different areas under Charbaria, Charmonai, Sayestabad, Charabda and Charomudi unions were inundated by the Kirtankhola and more than 1,000 families were affected.

A breach in an embankment led to the inundation of different areas in Donarkandi, Magura, Duniarkandi, Chalbol under Khanjupur union of Gourjandi upazila.

Our correspondent in Chandpur reports: Many new areas of Chandpur were inundated yesterday.

In Rajeswar union under Sadar upazila, around 20,000 people have been marooned during the last few days. In Matlab Pura area, all the educational institutions were declared closed.

Due to tremendous currents in the Meghna and the presence of whirlpools, Water Development Board, Chandpur officials sealed off the Town Protection Embankment on the Meghna for people yesterday.

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COAST said the newspapers ran the reports carrying quotes of Shahidullah, general secretary of Chakaria Human Rights Commission, who is also the lawyer of the accused of the case.

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Meanwhile, fresh disputes arose yesterday between Rajuk and the building authorities on marking the 'upperarea' for demolishing.

Rajuk said they would demolish all the floors beyond 60 feet of the building while the building authorities said the Supreme Court ordered destruction of the upper 16 floors of the building.

Employees of Rangs Group at a press conference yesterday appealed to the government to reconsider the decision of demolishing most part of the Rangs Bhaban.

Several organisations that bought or rented floors of the building, said they would file case against Rangs Group for their hugloss.

At about 8:00am, around 150 workers started work to demolish the remaining internal structures like walls, false ceilings and furniture in presence of Rajuk supervisors and engineers. Structures like lintel and window were also removed.

At one stage the workers started drilling the floors with drill-hammers.

Talking about Rajuk's method of demolishing the building, Deputy Assistant Engineer of Rajuk Abdul Kalam Azad said, "Primarily we will make 22 points (hole with 5 feet on each side) on each floor and then use a crane to pull the parts down. Then we will start breaking the columns from topmost floor to the down."

Rajuk Magistrate ASM Emdadul Dastagir told journalists that they have nearly completed demolishing all the internal walls of the building. "Drilling the floors of the building is going on."

A meeting at public works ministry today will decide which method to follow in demolishing the structure, he said.

Regarding the latest controversy about whether 60 feet or fifth floor, he said, "So far as I know, as the attorney general said, the court direction is to keep the lower 60 feet of the structure intact and demolish the remaining. On that consideration, we have to demolish some parts of the fifth floor too."

"As lawyers of Rangs Group objected to this, we will take the decision after getting certified copy of the courtorder," he added.

Employees of Rangs yesterday were seen removing materials of different floors including the fifth floor where Rajonk Engineering is situated.

Many pieces of furniture and other materials were still seen piled up on different floors of the building while normal activities from first to fourth floor seemed paralysed due to the demolishing activities.

Some heavy equipment like air-conditioners were being drawn down with the help of crane.

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The same court on July 25 issued arrest warrants against seven, after Kadirul Islam, deputy tax commissioner of Circle-8 filed a case for evading Tk 8.48 crore income tax between the financial years 2003-04 and 2006-07.

The accused are Bashundhara Industrial Complex Ltd, Bashundhara Group Chairman Ahmed Akbar Sobhan Shah Alam, wife Afroza Begum, their sons - directors Sadat Sobhan, Safayet Sobhan and Sayem Sobhan, deputy director Mostafizur Rahman and MM Kuddus, proprietor of Kuddus & Company.

In the press conference, Mohsena said she was compelled to take legal recourse as the local union parishad member threatened her when she approached him to settle the matter.

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