

Flood victims

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sites, is now struggling to survive with her sister and mother -- a panhandler.

Two health workers of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) were seen surrounded by around 50 destitute mothers on the terrace of the school. The mothers said they had been living on flattened rice and rice cakes only since cooking facility is not available in the shelter.

"We are running short of drinking water as the supply water lines went under water," they added.

"We generally work as 'busas' [domestic help], but now we cannot go to work as almost all the roads in this area are under water. We also cannot leave our small kids unattended fearing that they might drown," said Nasima Akter, adding that her husband, a rickshaw puller, is also unable to plying rickshaw because knee-deep water on the roads. "Only Allah knows what will happen to us," she sighed.

A rickshaw puller by the name of Umar Rashid said scores of rickshaw pullers in the surrounding areas went jobless due to the floods.

According to DCC health worker Rahima Akter, the DCC medical team is providing medical assistance to around 60 patients everyday -- mostly to women and children. They are being treated for diarrhoea, cold, fever and skin diseases caused by drinking contaminated water.

"We have been distributing water purifying tablets, but the stock is too little," she added.

According to District Civil Surgeon's office, over 1,500 individuals received medical treatment from their medical teams since August 1. At least 86 medical teams were at work in flood-affected areas yesterday.

So far, most low-lying areas in the eastern part of the city including East Razarbagh, Basabo, Kalibari, Baghpara, Begunbari, Amulia, Maniknagar, Shekherjaga, Shahbagh, Dakkhina, Daspara of Sabujganj, Nandipara, Trimohoni, Nasirabad, Badra, Rampura, Banasree and Khilgaon have been flooded.

Some parts of old and western Dhaka including Kamrangirchar, Jaulahati, Khalmura, Baragram, Ali Nagar, Muslimbagh, Koilagh, Tannery Mor and Munshirhat also went under water.

Dhaka City Corporation Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka yesterday decided to set up camps and provide foods to the flood victims.

The DCC also opened a control room with a telephone-- number 9563508.

Twenty-eight more people died yesterday due to flood-related reasons raising the death toll to 192.

Meanwhile, a total of 3,648 people across the country were affected in diarrhoea and other diseases in 24 hours ended at 12:00 noon yesterday raising the total number of affected people to 18,972 with diarrhoea, 2,543 with cold and fever, 2,574 with skin diseases and 704 with eye infections.

Nine out of 65 people who received snakebites died so far since July 31.

Abdul Kader, executive director of Samata, an NGO involved in relief operation in Sirajganj, told the BBC Radio yesterday that water-borne diseases might take a serious turn, as there are shortages of drinking water, water purifying tablets and oral saline.

Meanwhile, river erosion took a serious turn in the affected areas, according to reports received from different districts.

Water in all the major rivers of the north and northeastern parts of the

country continued to recede yesterday.

Meanwhile, water in the rivers around Dhaka and Narayanganj, except Buriganga, remained static though were flowing above danger levels yesterday evening, according to Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre.

Mozammel Hossain, a duty officer of the centre, told The Daily Star that water in Balu river was flowing 66cm above danger levels yesterday.

The Shitalakha was flowing 41cm above danger level and the Turag 6cm above red mark yesterday.

"Though these rivers are flowing above danger levels, water level is likely to go below danger levels in 24 to 48 hours," he said adding it would not be a problem even though there is some rain.

Our Pabna correspondent reported that floodwater caused damage to Faridpur-Bhangua highway and Chatmohar-Sylhola road.

At least 27 people were admitted in different hospitals in the district yesterday with diarrhoea, health department sources said.

Akter Hossain, 40, of village Chak-Dighir under Bhangua upazila died of diarrhoea yesterday while a 7-year old boy Ekramul Raishimul under Sujanagar upazila drowned in floodwater.

According to our Manikganj correspondent, three members of a family including a navy officer died in boat capsizes on Bohora Beel under Daulatpur upazila on Tuesday night.

The victims were identified as Shahidul Islam, 38, the naval staff, his seven-year old son Badhon and his brother's eleven-year old daughter Taru.

Daulatpur Police Station sources said the bodies of Shahidul Islam and Badhon were recovered yesterday morning but Taru's body was still missing till filling of this report.

Our Munshiganj correspondent reported that the flood-affected people in the district are facing shortages of food and drinking water.

A total of 1.5 lakh people are still marooned while road communications between Louhajang, Sirajdikhan and Srinagar upazilas and district sader are still disrupted.

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Water in all the major rivers of the

Rampant graft eats away

FROM PAGE 1

Boro Sarder [senior most post of workers], who joined the Crescent Jute Mills Ltd in 1955 and retired in 1989.

"I fear the other state-owned jute mills will also be shut down soon only because of corruption," he added.

SHUTDOWN OF PJML

Though once profit making, Peoples Jute Mills Ltd (PJML) in Khalishpur in Khulna began to incur loss immediately after independence as individuals made quick bucks and raised huge property.

Even on the closing day on August 1, hundreds of labourers demanded the high officials of Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) should submit wealth statements to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

CORRUPTION BY BJMC OFFICIALS

Rampant corruption shrouded the PJML in 1972, one year after independence, with the launch of agencies throughout the country for purchasing raw jute. The concerned officials began to buy low-standard jute and rotten jute at low cost showing higher prices. Since then the mill began to incur heavy loss.

"Setting up of raw jute purchase centres opened the road to corruption. And none hesitated to tread on it," said Shahadat.

"Mill authorities transferred labourers and officers to the raw jute purchase centres in exchange of bribes ranging from Tk 20 thousands to Tk 40 thousands. Besides, the authorities received regular money from the centres through the CBA leaders," he added.

The authorities had to count extra money to ferry the raw jute purchased from distant, often out-of-the-way places, and used to submit fabricated transportation bills.

Earlier in pre-independence times, the authorities used to buy raw jute at the mill entrance or jetties on the bank of river Bhairab through whole-sale traders.

After signing of the JSAC agreement when the BJMC officials became sure about the government

men's apparent reluctance in jute sector, corruption increased further. As a result, raw jute supply to the factory was forced to delay regularly causing late production and irregular supply to the buyers and loss of international markets, sources said.

Following the agreement production decreased sharply as number of labourers and looms in operation decreased, while supply of raw jute was also inadequate, the sources added.

To show its activities, the BJMC had sometimes taken measures too little to do any good. It terminated deputy general manager of PJML Krishna Dulal Roy and another finance official for buying rotten jute in 2005. The Corporation changed the project chief of the factory thrice that year.

"I saw the officials buying cheap mechanical parts made in China and showing those made in European countries in the vouchers during submission of bills," said a mechanic section employee. The PJML employee declined to be named as he is still to be paid his dues.

CORRUPTION BY CBA LEADERS

While being involved in other anomalies, the CBA leaders also misappropriated money allocated for repairing factory jets.

"The CBA leaders also took money amounting from Tk 10,000 to Tk 50,000 from different people and their relatives in case of recruiting employees and labourers," said Abdul Malek, president of CBA, PJML.

"They along with many of their relatives usually did not take part in work but took bills. And our general secretary Azizur Rahman Akram is missing since the state of emergency was declared," he added.

Akram took overtime bills for 110 days from January 6, 2005 to March 1, 2007 when the mill remained mostly closed due to workers' agitation and lack of raw jute supply.

The workers alleged both the CBA president and the general secretary recruited many employees and labourers receiving bribes.

The PJML labourers demanding

Malek's son also supplied electronic parts, yarn holders and other materials through a process plagued with corruption.

Malek, however, denied the allegations of corruption in recruitment.

The CBA leaders also misappropriated more than half of Tk 7 lakh taken from the factory on different occasions in the name of giving loans to the workers. The CBA after the PJML was laid off in a letter to the authorities recommended cutting of Tk 265 from each worker's dues to realise the money.

The workers also alleged the CBA leaders supplied labourers to political programmes during the tenures of different governments in exchange of money. Though in political programmes, the labourers were shown at work in the attendance sheet.

ROAD TO CLOSURE

The situation worsened when the government stopped giving subsidy to the jute sector in 2003-2004 fiscal year, resulting in immediate stop to payment of labourers' wages.

After the JSAC was signed about 100 labourers were retrenched and about 200 looms were reduced from PJML in phases.

In August 2003, three mills including the PJML and Star Jute Mills Limited were laid off for 45 days without any prior notice. In September the labourers agitated demanding opening of their work place.

The PJML remained closed for over a year in phases in 2004 and 2005 for want of raw jute when the labourers remained workless and arrears began to be piled up.

During the period only 300 out of over 3,000 labourers worked and the production came down to 10-15 tonnes a day against the target of about 70 tonnes.

The then government opened the mill fearing workers' unrest without taking any measures to make the mill effective. The mill resumed operations in the beginning of 2006 but partially.

The PJML labourers demanding

their dues agitated again in April 16 this year and stopped working in the factory.

As the three other state-owned jute mills experienced the same, workers of Platinum Jute Mills Ltd, Crescent Jute Mills Ltd and SJML took to the street on April 17 and staged agitations. The mills were laid off on April 19, triggering huge labourers' unrest that left several hundreds injured.

Around 5,000 labourers were retrenched from the factories including 300 from the PJML following the movement.

At long last the PJML was shut down on August 1.

Workers stopped operation in SJML on August 6 demanding wages, while CJML and Platinum Jubilee Jute Mill is in operation with workers hired on daily basis.

When attempted to contact, the DGM of PJML denied meeting the reporter, who was not allowed to enter the BJMC zonal office in Khulna.

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A preparatory meeting is to be held in the inter-Korean border city of Gaeseong as early as possible to fine-tune the details. The government plans to launch a summit promotion committee headed by the presidential chief of staff and a separate preparation team led by the Unification Minister.

Cheong Wa Dae will present the summit plans to the National Assembly and also to the Cabinet meeting for approval before the president makes an official announcement.

The presidential office declined to comment on the summit agenda, but experts have narrowed it down to the North Korean nuclear program and discussion for declaring a peace regime on the peninsula.

"There is the possibility of the two Koreas issuing a declaration of some kind to reaffirm peninsular denuclearisation," said Kim Tae-woo, senior research fellow at Korea Institute for Defence Analyses.

Earlier, Roh had said while the government was open to a summit with the North, Pyongyang's nuclear issue would have to be resolved.

There has been considerable progress in the six-party talks for denuclearising North Korea, but it is still an on-going process, as a timeline has yet to be set for the complete disablement of the North's nuclear weapons programme and the corresponding economic and political incentives that would be provided to the North are still unsettled.

Working level meetings of the six nations negotiating to end North Korea's nuclear ambition are scheduled for next week, ahead of the six-

Koreas hold

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leader and former President Kim Dae-jung.

The Uri Party and liberal politicians welcomed the announcement but the Grand National Party condemned the summit as a political