

## Tk 65cr plan to help flood-hit farmers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Ministry of Agriculture has prepared a Tk 65 crore programme to rehabilitate six to seven lakh flood-devastated farmers by providing them seeds and fertiliser free of cost, Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock Adviser CS Karim yesterday said.

"We have already started preparing seedbeds on 500 acres of land under a Tk 1.40 crore programme so that we can provide the farmers with aman seedlings by September 15," he said while speaking at a press briefing at the conference room of Press Information Department (PID).

According to the latest statistics of the agriculture ministry, around 27 percent of crops and vegetables on 7,63,167 hectares of land were damaged by the floods.

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## Khaleda wants to visit flood-hit areas at 'her own risk'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former prime minister and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia wants to visit flood affected areas to join the relief operation at her own risk, if the government continues to be reluctant to allow her on security grounds.

"The government should not bar Khaleda Zia from visiting flood affected areas as party leaders and activists will ensure her security if the government fails to do so," BNP Chairperson's Adviser Brig Gen (ret'd) ASM Hannan Shah told reporters yesterday during a news

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## FALLOUT OF FLOODS

# Diarrhoea, pneumonia take alarming turn

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The spread of water-borne diseases in the capital have taken a turn for worse with around 1,000 patients with diarrhoea and cold-related diseases being admitted every day to the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Diseases and Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR, B) alone. This number is around 500 at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

A total of 840 diarrhoea and pneumonia patients were admitted to ICDDR, B in 20 hours ending at 8:00pm yesterday. Around 901

patients were admitted in the 24 hours before that, said ICDDR, B scientist Shahadat Hossain.

Meanwhile, according to the control room of the Directorate General of Health, a total of 4,146 people contracted diarrhoea across the country in the last 24 hours ending at yesterday noon.

During the same period, 45 people drowned in floodwaters, three diarrhoea patients died, three people died of snakebites out of 14 who were bitten, 1,190 people were diagnosed with respiratory diseases, 209 with eye infections and

4,133 with various water-borne diseases.

Experts say the outbreak of diarrhoeal and respiratory diseases started as floodwater is receding and it is evident in the hospitals of the capital as well as in other flood-affected areas of the country.

Most patients are seriously ill, almost 50 percent of the patients admitted could be cholera patients, Dr Azharul Islam Khan of ICDDR, B told journalists. "The number of patients is more than

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PHOTO: STAR  
The number of diarrhoea-affected children taken for treatment at ICDDR, B in the capital are on the rise as water-borne diseases have taken a serious turn with scarcity of safe drinking water.

## AL launches relief operations

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League yesterday formally launched relief operations in the flood-affected areas.

Awami League central leadership, split in seven teams, started distributing relief goods among the flood-hit people. Swadhinata Chikitsak Parishad, doctors' wing of Awami League, provided medical services for the affected people.

Acting AL President Zillur Rahman started party's relief operation from Satarkul in the city's Badda area in the afternoon on behalf of the detained party chief.

While distributing relief goods among 400 families in Satarkul Union, Zillur said: "We are conducting the relief work on instructions of our leader Sheikh Hasina."

Presidium member Abdur  
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## 50kg chunk of ice falls from the blue!

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A chunk of ice said to weigh around 50 kg fell from the sky on a house near Biraldaha Shrine in Puthia upazila yesterday.

"At about 9:30am, the ice chunk fell on my corrugated tin-roofed house badly damaging it. The sky was clear with no trace of clouds at the time," said owner of the house Abdul Mazid Sheikh.

"It (ice) was so big it would weigh around 50 kg and it fell causing a big bang," he added.

None was injured in the incident. Hundreds of local people rushed to the spot to see what had

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PHOTO: STAR

Claiming ownership of a Forest Department land, a grabber sets a signboard that refers to a High Court judgement in his favour.

# Land grabbers gobbling up Bhawal forest

Around 15,000 acres encroached in Gazipur, Savar, mostly thru' forged documents

PINAKI ROY

Bhawal forest, one of the prominent sal forests in the country, is slowly turning into an industrial and recreational zone due to encroachment on forestlands through tampering of land records and forging of other land documents.

Slowly the forest, where once different wildlife including tigers, deer, bears and peafowls used to roam, is becoming occupied by

different industries, picnic spots, recreation centres and auto repair workshops, already gobbling up one sixth of the forest.

Local people, and industrialists and politically influential people from the capital got hold of more than 10,000 acres of forestland by the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway in the last two decades, forest office sources said.

According to an official estimate of the Department of Forest,

a total of 10,366 acres of forestlands in Gazipur and Savar remain in the hands of encroachers, 9,792 acres of which are in Gazipur alone. But other sources said the amount of forestlands in the hands of the encroachers, is no less than 15,000 acres.

According to a government account 2,62,492 acres of forests in the entire country remain in the hands of encroachers.

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## ROADMAP TO ELECTION

# Donors concerned at lack of progress

REZAUL KARIM

The international community that has all along been supporting the caretaker government may reconsider its stance if there is no tangible progress in the next few months towards holding the long-stalled election as per the roadmap.

Diplomats in Dhaka said they felt happy when the Election Commission (EC) unveiled the roadmap to the ninth parliamentary polls, but they are now doubtful if it would be possible to hold the election by the end of 2008.

The reason for their concern is the interim administration's not being able to carry out the political and electoral reforms that are an imperative for a free and fair election even after passing seven months.

They said the government has done some impressive job by cancelling the election set controversially for January 22, reconstituting the EC, Anti-Corruption Commission and Public Service Commission, taking a number of important measures for electoral reforms, and campaigning against corruption.

Among others, the US president has welcomed the roadmap and the caretaker government's commitment to hold the election by the next year.

Taking testimony of US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State John Gastright on August 1, the congressional committee on foreign affairs hoped that the government would soon lift the ban on political activities and stick to the time limit for the polls.

Talking to The Daily Star, a number of diplomats stationed in Dhaka said there has not been any progress evident in the preparation of voter list, electoral code of conducts and election rules.

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## CTG JUTE MILL CLASH

# 22 arrested, 500 unidentified workers sued

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, Ctg

The authorities' arrangement to pay one week's wage out of the dues for eleven weeks has failed to lessen frustration of the workers of Amin Jute Mills where a series of clashes with police left one killed and over 80 injured on Thursday.

Many of the depressed workers of the jute mill, the largest in the country after the closure of Adamjee Jute Mills, are now trying to go into voluntary retirement offered by the authorities earlier.

At an emergency meeting after Thursday's bloody incident, the mill authorities arranged payment of one week's wage to the workers.

But the workers, living in abject misery, find it too scanty to meet their requirement.

Meanwhile, a case was filed with

Panchlaish Police Station accusing 22 people arrested on Thursday and another 500 unidentified workers of the mill.

A Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) camp has been set up near the entry of the staff quarter while a large number of police including Armed Police Battalion have been deployed at the main gate of the factory to avert further violence.

Assistant Commissioner Mizanur Rahman of Panchlaish Zone said the situation was under their control.

The authorities formed a three-member committee to probe the Thursday incident.

During a visit to the mill workers' colonies where some 3,000 workers live in some 29 rows of quarters in a miserable condition,

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