

## Diarrhoea continues

**FROM PAGE 1**  
areas is compounding the misery of the people. At least 4,110 people were diagnosed with diarrhoea during the 24 hours ending at yesterday noon.

"We are struggling... we have treated the highest number of patients yesterday [Friday], in the ICDDR,B's history," Prodig Bardhan, acting chief physician at ICDDR,B, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He, however, denied that cholera has broken out. "There is no doubt that patients are coming here with severe diarrhoea, but we need two or three days to see if it is cholera."

Even though diarrhoea patients are usually treated with saline only, the doctors are giving antibiotics as patients are coming with severe diarrhoea. Doctors at the ICDDR,B had to introduce a new group of medicine (Azithromycin), as Tetracycline or Toxicity were not working well.

"As the germ became resistant to those antibiotics, we had to switch to the new group", ICDDR,B sources said.

Since last week, tents had been set up at the ICDDR,B hospital to accommodate the onrush of diarrhoea patients.

Dhaka Medical College yesterday launched a Dhaka Medical College Unit at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). Health Adviser Maj Gen Matur Rahman inaugurated the new unit at the emergency and burn units of the hospital.

DMCH Director Brig Gen Abdus Shahid Khan told The Daily Star that the 100-bed unit was initiated due to the onrush of diarrhoea patients. A 20-member team was looking after the patients there.

All government hospitals of the country started running oral rehydration therapy (ORT) corners. "All hospitals in flood-hit districts, upazilas and thanas are treating patients from the designated corners," he said.

In the 24 hours ending at yesterday noon, Diarrhoea Control Room under the directorate of health recorded 323 deaths since July 30. Of them, 292 drowned, 20 died of snakebites and seven died of other respiratory track infections (RTI).

Apart from diarrhoea, 1,352 people were suffering from RTI, 205

from eye infections, 11 from snake-bites, 194 from different injuries and 4,816 from other diseases--mostly common cold.

Meanwhile, all five small rivers surrounding Dhaka and Narayanganj observed a fall in their water levels. The water levels are expected to fall further in the next 24-72 hours.

The water level of the Buriganga at Dhaka had a 7cm fall, the Balu at Demra had a 5cm fall, the Lakhya at Narayanganj 4cm and the Turag at Mirpur 7cm. The Tongi canal marked a 6cm fall at Tongi and was flowing 67cm above danger level yesterday morning.

The water level of the Jamuna went down significantly at all points and the river flowing 25cm above danger level at Aricha. It is likely to go below danger level in the next 48 hours. The Padma was flowing 51cm and 45cm above danger levels at Goolundo and Bhagyakul. It is likely to recede significantly in the next few days.

All flood-affected districts are expected to mark improvements in the next few days.

At least four people drowned in floodwaters and another died of snakebite in Sirajganj district yesterday.

Hafizul Islam, 8, Salman Shah, 7, of Raiganj upazila, Shadia, 2, of Chowhali upazila and Yusub Ali, 3, of Belkuchi upazila drowned in floodwaters, while Mujibur Rahman, 70, of Kazipur upazila died of snakebite.

Sirajganj Civil Surgeon's Office sources said at least 443 people contracted various water-born diseases in nine upazilas in 24 hours ending yesterday evening. Of them 213 were diagnosed with diarrhoea, 22 with skin diseases and 23 with pneumonia. The total number of diarrhoea infected in the district now stands at 2,322.

District administration sources said relief distribution and treatment of patients are continuing in flood-affected areas with NGOs helping the government in this regard.

In Gaibandha, 161 people were diagnosed with diarrhoea yesterday raising the total to 2,489 in the district. The diarrhoea situation in Fulchari upazila is the worst in the district with around 820 infected with the disease.

Shamsul Huq, civil surgeon Gaibandha, however said the rate of people getting infected with the disease is decreasing.

Abdul Matin, Deputy Director, Agriculture Extension Department Gaibandha, said aman seedlings should be supplied immediately as the time for transplanting is close to its end. The floods damaged crops on an estimated 8,265 hectares of land, he added.

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## Maoist-hit Indian state halts work of medical charity MSF

AFP, New Delhi

International medical charity Doctors Without Borders has been stopped from working in a Maoist-hit area of a central Indian state, after being accused of treating banned rebels, the group said.

"We have been stopped by district authorities from providing medical care," said Hans van de Weerd, India director for the group, also known by its French name Medecins sans Frontieres (MSF), in New Delhi on Saturday.

The humanitarian aid group had been providing health services to thousands of people in government-run relief camps and in villages in Chhattisgarh state's southern Dantewada district for the last year.

But questions began to be raised about the group's work some three weeks ago, escalating this week, van de Weerd said.

"On Wednesday, the district official made allegations that the reason for that is that we are supporting Naxalites," he told AFP.

"We of course deny that in the strongest form. It goes completely against our principles."

The state is the worst-affected of the 14 of India's 29 states where Maoist rebels, known locally as Naxalites, are waging an insurgency.

The accusations against the group were also carried in local news reports Saturday.

"The administration has constantly been receiving information about MSF's volunteers providing treatment to the injured and ailing Maoist cadres," Dantewada official Krishna Ram Pisdad told the Times of India.

But officials, including Pisdad, denied making the accusations when contacted by AFP, citing other reasons for halting MSF's work, including the security of aid workers, the lack of needed paperwork and heavy rainfall.

"It has rained heavily and the areas away from roads are flooded," said the state's most senior bureaucrat Shivraj Singh in capital Raipur, praising the group's work.

"In such a situation the security problems are there. I think they were advised: 'If you can, limit your activities to roadside villages.'"

For the mean time, the health group says it is not providing any health services.

"It is a very sensitive area, where the conflict is very raw. When these accusations were being made publicly we feared for the security of our staff," said van de Weerd.

## 65 DU students

**FROM PAGE 1**  
admissions of 158 students in two phases and sent the list to the respective departments.

The DU authorities launched a drive in March following the probe committee's interim report on forgery in the admission of students of academic year 2004-2005.

The committee was formed in the wake of allegations of inconsistencies in admission papers of 11 students of Public Administration Department.

The interim report found 30 cases of fake admission in Public Administration, Economics and International Relations Departments in 2004-2005 academic year.

## Strong dollar

**FROM PAGE 16**  
even lower than the official rate," the source added.

In April, the price of dollar in the kerb market was even less than the official price, he said.

During the first week of May, the official and kerb market exchange rates of dollar were the same -- Tk 69 per US dollar. The rate started to rise since then and stood at Tk 71.60 on July 18 while the bank rate was Tk 68.60.

Since February this year, Bangladesh has been receiving over \$500 million in remittances per month on an average. In July, the country witnessed a growth of 38 percent in remittance inflow when a total of \$567 million was sent from overseas, according to the BB.

## Gen Moeen

**FROM PAGE 1**  
"Let us find out these frauds, identify them and put them to trial under the existing law of the land," said General Moeen.

In an address to the flood victims near Amulia Model Town, he said, "The government has started work for preparing seedbeds on 500 acres of land, which will be distributed among the farmers for free after the floods.

Amulia is one of the worst-hit areas in the eastern part of the capital, where more than one lakh people have been affected by flood, sources in the 14 Independent Brigade of Bangladesh Army said.

General Moeen distributed rice, edible oil, pulses, ORS packets, matches, candles and water purifying tablets among the flood victims.

"I am really shocked to see the sufferings of people of the flood-hit areas and I request the well off people to stand beside the flood victims," the army chief said, adding, "Individuals should donate part of their income for the affected people."

Local administration officials and Commander of the 14 Independent Brigade Brigadier General Nizam Ahmed were present.

## The Daily Star roundtable

**FROM PAGE 1**

that a national consultation should be held on the draft ordinance and recommendations considered for incorporation.

Former IGP Mohammad Nurul Huda said the police should have a vital role in supervising themselves so they could be more accountable and independent.

"If we want a responsible police force, we must allow them authority on various matters including the financial affairs of the organisation," he said adding that he hopes the national police commission that has been proposed in the draft would help to that end.

Slatting the provision of having police on duty for 24 hours under the Police Act 1861, Huda said they are meant to uphold human rights, "but how come they do that when their minimum rights are not honoured."

Citing an example, he said there are 1,500 policemen to ensure security in the city's diplomatic zone; whereas one third of those are enough if they were well-equipped. He questioned the size of the budget for training of the police.

Focusing on the functional and pro-people role of the police, Attorney General Fida M Kamal said their job is not only to maintain law and order, but also investigate crimes and help judges convict criminals.

Praising the draft ordinance, he said involvement of the Attorney General's Office however should have been more in the process of formulating the ordinance. "I call on all concerned not to abuse the power. Power correlates with responsibility and so it must be balanced."

The proposed commission should be a truly independent body to take care of the issues concerned, added Fida Kamal.

Law Commission Member M Enamul Haque said one-third of the police force that constitutes the armed branch has been completely ignored in the draft policy.

Besides, he said, the words like 'Chief of Police', 'Police Chief' and 'Police Zone' should be clearly defined. The officers-in-charge who do a mammoth job should be ranked as class I officers.

Former IGP Azizul Haque observed that the village police should be brought under the district superintendent of police for better performance.

He said the draft ordinance should cover the issues regarding the posts of head constables and nayeaks, and the sergeants.

Law professor at Dhaka University Asif Nazrul hailed the upgrading of police rank, but noted that the junior rank police whose salary is not that high should be allowed to do other jobs to compensate for the poor pay.

"They cannot do that as long as their time of duty is not definite," he said.

Nazrul suggested that words like 'competent authority', 'emergency', 'appropriate authority', and 'lawful order' should be explicated since those might cause confusion when it would come to application.

"The draft does not say clearly that the law enforcers will not behave cruelly with those under custody," he said, adding that it also does not specify whether the ones who investigate cases should be engaged in other duties as well.

## BNP's 2 groups

**FROM PAGE 1**  
government did not allow her to stand beside the flood victims--a duty she has always performed before.

"I wanted to stand beside the flood affected people but the government did not allow me to do so," she said during a teleconference with the BNP leaders and workers of Sirajganj.

Urging them to stay united, the BNP chairperson said, "I have sent Hannan Shah to the people as I could not go myself."

Local BNP leaders gathered at the residence of district unit General Secretary Humayun Islam in the town to take part in the teleconference.

Khaleda was scheduled to distribute relief in different flood affected areas in Sirajganj and Tangail but the home ministry did not give her the permission on "security grounds".

Hannan Shah, adviser to the BNP chairperson, distributed relief materials at different places in the two districts. Former lawmaker Kamruddin Yahya Khan Majlish, Sirajganj district BNP Vice-President Abdus Salam Khan and General Secretary Humayun Islam Khan accompanied him.

Later, Hannan Shan addressed the flood victims and said Khaleda Zia wanted to stand by them but did not get the government permission.

"A conspiracy has been on to break up the party but we will resist success of any such conspiracy," he said. Hannan later made a phone call to Khaleda and she spoke to the people over phone.

BNP Standing Committee member Lt Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman, a close aide of the BNP secretary general, distributed relief materials among the flood victims at different places in Brahmanbaria.

Maj Gen (retd) ZA Khan, an adviser to the BNP chairperson and close aide of Bhuiyan, yesterday told reporters that they will continue

The law teacher praised the proposal for a national police commission to be comprised of chief justice, comptroller general of audit and chairman of Anti-Corruption Commission, four members of parliament, two each from the ruling party and the opposition, and four independent persons. The commission will oversee the process of appointment, promotion and postings.

He however said he wonders why there will be no representation of the Law Commission and added that it should be revisited if the police commission would settle an issue on the basis of simple majority.

Nazrul suggested decentralisation of the proposed police complaint commission and provisions for protection of the victims. "The complainants could otherwise be victimised," he said.

Apart from the police personnel, human rights activists could also be involved in the Police Policy Group, he observed.

Former IGP Ismail Hussain said the ordinance should explain clearly what will be the post of police head in a district--senior superintendent of police or only superintendent of police.

He suggested that the proposed tenure of the Chief of Police should be extended from two years to three and the authority who can suspend police personnel for any misconduct or offence should be specified.

The idea of community policing in the draft ordinance should not be limited to the metropolitan areas, rather it should be expanded up to the district level, added Ismail Hussain.

DMP Commissioner Nayeem Ahmed said the draft ordinance seeks to be a service-oriented legal framework to curtail the government's autarchic control over police.

"After January 11, now there is no such control, and which is why we have been able to work independently. We could therefore make some very significant changes in the way we operate. Currently, most of the arrests are made on genuine grounds," he said.

Referring to the provision of a six-month time limit in case of complaining against any police personnel, Dr Faustina Pereira of Ain O Salish Kendra said there is no such provision when complaining against common people so the time limit should not be there.

A provision should be incorporated so that the police cannot engineer any investigation, she said adding that the annual report on police activities should be made public.

The "serious" and "ordinary" offences should also be defined, Faustina Pereira noted. "The power of the district magistrates and superintendents of police should be carefully defined, otherwise there might be clashes of power between the police and district magistrates."

Supreme Court lawyer Tanjibul Alam suggested omission of too many adjectives from the draft ordinance and advocated using specific and well-defined words instead to avoid ambiguity and complexities in the application process of the ordinance.

Criticising the provision of "public safety fund" for better performance of police, he said, "It appears to be some sort of 'statutory extortion'..."

which may make room for more corruption and provoke evil quarters to subscribe and remain out of legal bindings."

Former IGP Ashraf Huda said the authorities' attitude towards police should have to be changed. Otherwise, police might not be able to deliver their services, he said.

Insisting on a clear demarcation between the chief of police and the IGP, he said, "The IGP and additional IGP bear the same badge, which creates confusion. This should continue no more."

Zafrul Hasan Sharif of Manusher Jonno Foundation said there should be arrangements for aggrieved police personnel and female members of the police force should be given priority in the National Police Commission.

Former IGP ABY Siddiqui said police are not provided with sufficient funds for carrying out their duties. "There should be direction in the ordinance for allocating regular funds for them," he said.

On the issue of superior police personnel's supervision over their junior colleagues' duties, he said the superior police officials should be answerable to higher authorities for any offences conducted by the junior policemen.

He also insisted on prioritising seniority along with merits in appointing the chief of police.

Welcoming the proposed Police Complaint Commission, Barrister Sara Hossain said there should, however, be provision of hearing of the under-trial persons. She stressed the importance of including vulnerable groups including women, minorities and indigenous groups in the ordinance.

Diiruba Sharmeen of Bangladesh Legal Aid Services Trust (BLAST) said women and children should be given emphasis separately in the Police Ordinance 2007.

The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam emphasised the importance of building an efficient and honest police force, which is indispensable for the maintenance of law and order.

He said good results cannot be expected unless a favourable working condition is created and it was a good opportunity to make a difference through inputs in the draft police ordinance.

He said steps should be taken to enhance efficiency of the police. Infrastructure development should be brought under ADP (Annual Development Programme) instead of under only the revenue budget.

Among others, Major General Golam Quader and Farida Yasmin of BLAST spoke at the roundtable moderated by Brig Gen (retd) Shahedul Anam Khan of The Daily Star.

## Graft case

**FROM PAGE 1**  
emergency rules continued being denied the opportunity of seeking bail at any stage of case proceedings -- from the first information report to the judgment.

Due to the stringent provisions, women and children, who had been co-accused in graft cases along with the prime accused, were also detained, giving rise to criticisms again. Amid such a situation, the government now is moving to amend the rules once again.

About the amendment pertaining to transferring cases to special courts, sources in the home ministry said around 700 cases have been filed under the emergency powers rules.

"Once the rules are amended, the government will decide which cases filed under the emergency rules will be sent to special courts established under the Criminal Procedure Court Act 1958 for trials," said a senior official.

The cases filed by the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) are being tried by five special courts set up on the premises of Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan. But it is not possible to send any case filed under the emergency powers rules to the special courts for trials, unless the emergency powers rules are amended, the sources said.

A good number of former ministers and lawmakers including some heavyweights have been sued under the emergency powers rules during the ongoing state of emergency since January 11.

They will not be able to contest in any poll including the next parliamentary election if they fail to get their convictions overturned before the elections.

Filing of appeals against trial court verdicts will not remove the bar until and unless one's conviction is thrown away by the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

## SC to rescue nation

**FROM PAGE 1**

who gives us the guarantee that the recruitment committee members will work independently?"

Earlier, former CJ Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury proposed a committee involving chief justice, attorney general and president of SC Bar Association to ensure appointment of qualified judges, discarding the present system where president appoints higher court judges and chief justice plays no role other than courtesy consultation.

But Ruhul Amin opposed the idea of inducing chief justice in the committee to keep his office out of controversy. "Chief justice is the head of an institution. If head of the institution becomes subject to discussion and controversy, he loses neutrality and right to judge."

The role and quality of judges also came under severe criticism. "Judges should work without fear and favour. They should deliver judgment without considering future gains and brow-beating," said Mahmudul Amin, adding that some judges in his time suffered a lot because of intimidation.

"We hear carrot and stick policy is used for judges. But judiciary and judges are not to be intimidated. While sitting as a judge in the court, we don't afford to be intimidated," he said.

The present chief justice said those who care for carrots must go. "Those who work for carrots not only lands the nation in trouble but also harm themselves."

Former CJ Mahmudul Amin also played down the fear and pressure factor on judges. "In our country, an atmosphere is usually created to get desired judgment. But the judges have to deliver verdict independently. Otherwise, it will never be possible to bring independence to judiciary by enacting any laws."

Meanwhile, eminent jurists Dr Kamal Hossain dwelled on the popular belief that some judgments are delivered considering 'something else', not basing on case arguments.

The chief justice did not brush aside the belief, blaming it also on some laws. "I won't say this occurrence is totally absent...Some points of laws are being relaxed for some people and made tougher for some others. As a result, what verdict a judge delivers on a point today gets changed the next day," Ruhul Amin countered.

The CJ declined to hold the judges solely responsible for this disparity. Those who are involved with the judiciary have their share in the blame, he said.

He also vented his frustration over lack of assistance in addressing some irregularities in judiciary. "I receive complaints through secret letters but neither members of the Bar nor litigants show up when I invite them to help me address those."

He said some punitive measures were taken despite the non-cooperation. "But whenever we go to take punitive action, requests from some people really catches us off guard. (Following request not to take action) We get stunned whether this person is the same person we know of."

Flooding of such recommendations is the main reason behind corruption, observed the chief justice, citing

## Iraqi governor

**FROM PAGE 16**

Hamza, and the police chief, Major General Khalid Hassan, had travelled to Akak to attend a funeral, he added.

Iraqi state television said the deputy governor had ordered an indefinite curfew from 7:00 pm (1500 GMT) on Diwaniyah, following the killings in what the channel called an isolated area without security protection.

Diwaniyah has proved a flashpoint for rival Shia factions battling for supremacy in the region, and has regularly witnessed heavy clashes between Shia militiamen and US and Iraqi security forces.

## Korean hostages

**FROM PAGE 16**

contact from undisclosed locations.

Taliban negotiators resumed face-to-face talks with a South Korean delegation Ghazni early Saturday after the two sides met late into the night Friday, apparently without breakthrough.

With talks with the Afghan government over the hostages apparently deadlocked, direct negotiations between the rebels and the South Korean team are seen as one of the last hopes for the group.

The headline rebels have already shot dead two hostages and threatened to murder more.

Seoul has pleaded with Kabul and Washington to do what it can but is powerless to guarantee a prisoner exchange. A government negotiator said last week South Korea could only offer a ransom.

Presidential spokesman Humayun Hamidzada told AFP Saturday he could not reveal details of Kabul's efforts to end the crisis.

But there had been "no change of the position of the Afghan government regarding the release of Taliban prisoners," he said.

President Hamid Karzai's administration came under heavy criticism, notably from Washington, when it freed five important Taliban fighters in exchange for an Italian journalist, whose two Afghan colleagues were beheaded.

The government has been trying to persuade the rebels to free the 16 women in the group on the grounds that it is "un-Islamic" to hold female captives. Other Taliban demands could then be considered, they have

some instances of judicial irregularities where judgment copy from higher courts were changed keeping the case number same, letting the accused walk away on bail.

"I won't say judges are all innocent, there might be some lapses. But those who could have helped me sort it out did not come forward," he said.

Ex-CJ Mahmudul Amin meanwhile urged the Bar members to come out clean along with the judges to uphold judiciary. "The lawyers in no way can destroy an institution for the sake of clients. Self-purification is self-protection. Lawyers must go through purification."

Dr Kamal meanwhile dubbed the integrity of the Bar as a pre-condition for independence of judiciary. "We should go for soul-searching whether we try to influence judges unconventionally for favourable verdicts."

Former SC Bar president Habibul Haque Bhuiyan meanwhile spoke to correct the political divide among the lawyers. "I think, the Bar becomes more political these days. Let us not make Bar as a politicised one."

Most of the speakers observed that the onus is on the judges to have an independent