

Floodwater recedes but future of the homeless looks bleak

STAR REPORT

The immediate future of the low income group people, whose homes as well as livelihoods were lost in the devastating flood in the northern parts of the country, is looking bleak.

With much improvement in the flood situation, except in the south-central parts of the country, the affected people have started returning home, but the landless and the destitute are finding no choice but to remain under the open sky on flood protection embankments.

"We have no home left to go to, as all our huts were washed away by strong currents of the Brahmaputra River. We will have to stay on the flood protection embankment for an uncertain

period," said Raghu Nath of Par Baguria village in Gaibandha, reported our correspondent from that district.

Over 30 families are still staying under sheds made of sticks and plastic sheets on the Brahmaputra flood protection embankment since floodwater inundated their homes.

"We are not thinking of propping up our damaged huts, but of our survival itself," said Jamat Ali, a landless farmer who has been living on the embankment with his three other family members. Many of the flood victims are staying under sheds made of banana leaves.

They said they are now fully dependent on relief materials, as there is no work anywhere, said Shankar, a marginal farmer from

Par Baguria village under Gaibandha Sadar.

A local NGO, Gano Unnayan Kendra, however set up an entertainment and day care centre in flood hit Baguria area funded by Save the Children, UK, providing lunches and toys to flood affected children.

According to the District Agriculture Extension Department a total of 3.73 lakh people of four upazilas are badly affected by the flood which also destroyed 6,730 houses completely and 67,465 partially, while a total of 25 cattle died.

A total of 12,745 metric tons of crops worth over Tk 15 crore got damaged due to the flooding, said Abdul Matin, deputy director of the Agriculture Extension Directorate of Gaibandha.

Our Correspondent from Sirajganj reported that about seven lakh loom owners and workers in the district are now living under utter miseries, as their factories were either completely destroyed or partly damaged.

The government officials said at least 1.5 lakh handlooms and power looms in nine upazilas of the district had been operational before the flood, but almost all of those are now dysfunctional in the loom rich areas of Belkuchi, Shahzadpur, Kazipur, Sirajganj Sadar, Raiganj, Ullapara, Kamarkand, and Chowhali.

Strong currents of floodwater washed away many looms and their raw materials.

The affected weavers failed to save their looms due to the sudden

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Prices of fishes, vegetables fluctuate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prices of different essentials, especially of vegetables and fishes, repeatedly fluctuated on both wholesale and retail markets in the capital in the last two days as supply of vegetables was disrupted due to the curfew.

Although the city's wholesale and kitchen markets have been experiencing a shortage of supply due to the recent flood, varying prices of produce were seen on many kitchen markets in the city yesterday, as traders had to purchase goods at varied costs at different times of the day due to the curfew.

Traders at Karwan Bazar, the largest wholesale kitchen market of the capital, told The Daily Star that after the declaration of the indefinite curfew on Wednesday afternoon

vegetable traders from SEE PAGE 11 COL 6



A seller at Karwan Bazar in the capital demands Tk 1,600 for this Hilsa weighing over 2kg.

PHOTO: STAR

UNDOCUMENTED BANGLADESHIS IN UAE Thousands rush for amnesty as Sept 2 deadline nears

PORIMOL PALMA

Thousands of Bangladeshi undocumented workers in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are running against time to either regularise their immigration status or to leave the country under the three-month amnesty ending on September 2.

The race, unwelcome by the workers because of their debts and poor financial conditions back home, started following the UAE's declaration of the amnesty in the first week of June.

Bangladesh foreign ministry asked the civil aviation authorities to be prepared with more flights to accommodate the workers returning from the UAE, a ministry official

told The Daily Star yesterday. Emirates, Etihad Airways, and Air India are offering special rates for carrying undocumented workers to different destinations including Bangladesh, and are considering increasing the frequency of flights to accommodate the rush, reported Dubai-based newspaper the Khaleej Times.

The workers however are more likely to get their status regularised, the foreign ministry official said adding that the Bangladesh mission in UAE is now busy registering the names of the amnesty seekers.

"Our ambassador Nazimullah Chowdhury is visiting various places in the UAE, and collecting everyday around 600 applications

from the workers who want to take advantage of the amnesty," the official said.

The mission is meeting community leaders to explain various aspects of the amnesty for the undocumented workers, he noted.

The offices of the mission in Dubai and Abu Dhabi also remain open during the weekends to render consular services to the amnesty seekers.

Until July 19, the Bangladesh mission issued over 900 departure passes, according to a Khaleej Times report. The foreign ministry however could not provide the latest number of departure passes issued by the mission.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Second phase of Khulna voter listing stalled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Work on voter registration with photograph in Khulna City Corporation (KCC) remained stalled on Thursday due to imposition of curfew.

It will resume when the situation becomes normal, said District Election Officer (DEO) Mohammad Mujibar Rahman.

"Curfew forced us to suspend the first phase of work, which began in six wards under the city corporation. We could not begin the second phase of voter registration work in wards 7, 8, 12, 18, 19 and 24 due to imposition of curfew," he said.

The first phase of voter registration with photograph and preparation for national ID cards began in wards 5, 11, 13, 14, 16 and 17 from August 17 with assistance of the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Verdict in extortion case against mayor Minu tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The verdict in the extortion case against Rajshahi City Corporation mayor and former BNP lawmaker Mizanur Rahman Minu and 10 of his cohorts will be announced tomorrow.

The Third Court of Rajshahi Additional Sessions Judge on August 21 fixed the date after hearing daylong argument between the state and defence lawyers.

Additional Public Prosecutor Masum Ahmed Tipu told the court that the prosecution proved the allegations beyond doubt with enough witnesses and evidence. He demanded highest punishment against the accused under the law.

The defence lawyers argued that the place of occurrence was not identified and the plaintiff could not justify his delay in filing the case. They claimed the accused persons to be innocent. Ankur Sen, Ashraf Ali, Kabir Hosain, Mizanul Islam and several other lawyers pleaded for the accused.

Minu and nine other accused in the case were produced in the court dock during the argument. The nine are - district BNP vice president Nazrul Huda, BNP adherents Mainul, Ranju, Islam, Ashraf, Shamsul, Tajuddin Sentu, Babu and Abdullah al Mamun.

A key accused, former city BNP

general secretary Shafikul Haque Milon is absconding.

The plaintiff of the case, Shamsul Alam Khan, a governing body member of Evergreen Model College, lodged the case with Rajpara Police Station on April 21.

The court framed charges against them on July 26 after Sub-inspector Abdur Rahman Sarkar of Rajpara Police Station pressed charges against the 11 people on May 16.

According to the charges, the accused people waylaid Khan at Baharampur bypass intersection and demanded Tk 4 lakh toll assaulting him on March 29 this year on orders of mayor Minu.

Earlier in 2006, Minu called Khan and college Principal Abu Yusuf Selim in his office and requested them to incorporate his men Nazrul and Milon in the college governing body, Khan said in his complaint.

Minu also threatened them with dire consequences in case of failure.

But Khan and Abu Yusuf did not comply with the request of Minu and on July 4, 2006, Nazrul, Milon and Sentu went to the college and demanded Tk 1 lakh toll, Khan said, adding that the three also forcibly took away bricks worth Tk 25,000 and furniture worth Tk 13,000.

Sharif vows to go back home, fight Musharraf in vote

AP, London

Immediately after Pakistan's highest court ruled he could return, former Pakistani prime minister Nawaz Sharif said he would go home soon to lead his party's campaign to oust President Gen Pervez Musharraf, who exiled Sharif eight years ago.

Speaking to The Associated Press in his London office on Thursday, Sharif, who once dominated Pakistani politics, confirmed he planned to run for a third term as prime minister.

The ruling by Pakistan's Supreme Court on Thursday and Sharif's promise to return and run for office further complicate life for Musharraf, who as an army general overthrew Sharif in a bloodless 1999 coup.

Musharraf's recent failed attempt to fire the Supreme Court's chief justice triggered widespread pro-democracy rallies. He also faces US pressure to crack down on Islamic extremists in Pakistan's volatile northwest region near the Afghan border, where attacks on soldiers have increased and the security situation has deteriorated.

Sharif and Benazir Bhutto another banished former premier with strong popular support plan-

ning a comeback insist Musharraf must let them compete in year-end parliamentary elections if the vote is to be considered democratic.

"If the people of Pakistan elect me to serve the country, I'll be honoured to do that," he said.

Washington has made clear that its war on terrorist groups takes priority over the speed of democratic reform in Pakistan. However, it appears to be growing impatient with Musharraf and has been prodding him toward a power-sharing deal with Benazir and her political party.

On Friday, Sadique al-Farooq, a senior leader of Sharif's party said "there is no chance for any reconciliation" with Musharraf. "It is out of question," he told the AP. "Democracy and dictatorship cannot go together."

Al-Farooq said their party will meet in the capital, Islamabad, on Saturday to consider dates for the return of Sharif.

Sharif told the AP he had a cordial relationship with the United States while he was in office, but said Washington must reconsider its relationship with Pakistan and not give its support just to Musharraf if it wants to quell religious militancy.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4



PHOTO: STAR

In defiance of orders of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police, buses often halt at Jatrabari intersection, disturbing smooth passage of traffic and pedestrians.

13 killed as US troops battle Iraq militants

AFP, Baghdad

US soldiers battled Shia fighters in Baghdad yesterday, killing 13 people, a day after a fierce clash between al-Qaeda militants and a rival group left dozens dead.

US attack helicopters fired on Shia militants in Baghdad's north-western Shuala neighbourhood in the pre-dawn firefight, killing 13 people, including two women, a medic and security officials told AFP.

Shuala is one of the main strongholds of the Mahdi Army, the Shia militia loyal to anti-American Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr.

Doctor Mohammed Abbas from the Al-Noor Hospital in Shuala said

the facility had received 13 corpses of those slain.

"Those dead were killed by shrapnel and two of them are women," he said, suggesting that some of the dead could be civilians. "We have also admitted 15 wounded people."

The US military said eight militants were killed after one of its patrols came under attack.

"We have initial reports that an American patrol was engaged by small arms fire in Shuala this morning resulting in eight enemy killed in action," it said in a statement to AFP.

An Iraqi security official said US troops clashed with militants between 3:00 am (2300 GMT

Thursday) and 5:00 am (0100 GMT) Friday.

"American soldiers in helicopters fired at militants in Shuala area before dawn," he told AFP on condition of anonymity.

Hamdallah al-Rikabi, a spokesman for Sadr's movement in western Baghdad, confirmed the clashes.

Pictures by an AFP photographer showed a car riddled with bullets, its window panes completely shattered.

Hundreds of Iraqi Shias later took the dead to the central holy

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Outlaw held in Bagmara

RU CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested a leader of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-Janajuddho red flag) from Taherpur Bridge area yesterday.

The criminal, Nawsad Ali of village Ramrama under Bagmara upazila of Rajshahi, was arrested from Taherpur Bazar, Bagmara police said, adding that he was a regional leader of the killing squad of PBCP red flag.

Nawsad was the planner of the murder of Gaolkandi UP chairman Jahangir, Bagmara Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Mirza Golam Sanwar said.

PBCP men killed Jahangir, also an Awami League leader, when he was watching television at a local club on December 10, 2006.

Nawsad will be produced before the court tomorrow, the OC said.

Arms trader arrested in Jessore

BSS, Benapole

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) personnel arrested an arms trader and recovered arms and ammunition from his possession at Shahjadpur under Chaugachha upazila of Jessore district early yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of 22 Rifles Battalion went to Shahjadpur village at around 3:00 am, picked up Kamruzzaman, 31, from his house and recovered two revolvers, one pipe gun and four bullets from his possession.

BDR later handed over Kamruzzaman and the recovered firearms to Chaugachha Police Station. A case was filed in this connection.

Nepal nationalises king's palaces

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's government nationalised on Thursday seven palaces owned by King Gyanendra as a first step in seizing all of his royal property, a minister said.

The blow was the latest for the monarch who has been already stripped of most of his powers, including his position as head of state and army chief, in the wake of an historic peace pact with rebel Maoists and political parties.

"The cabinet meeting decided to nationalise seven palaces being

used by the king. The process of registering those palaces under the name of the government of Nepal will proceed soon," culture minister Prithvi Subba Gurung told AFP.

But Gyanendra - viewed by supporters as the living incarnation of a Hindu deity - will be allowed to keep those properties that he owned before ascending the throne in 2001, Gurung said.

He took the throne after the massacre of his brother and most of the royal family by a drunken crown prince who later killed himself.

The nationalised palaces include the sprawling Narayahiti Royal Palace in the heart of Kathmandu where the monarch and his family live.

The fiercely republican Maoists ended a bitter civil war with a peace deal in November 2006 that saw them emerge from the hills and enter government to challenge royal privilege, including the king's control of the army.

The fate of the 238-year-old royal Shah dynasty is decided in November in elections to vote for a body to rewrite Nepal's constitution.

Prayer Timing		
August 25		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-30	5-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-33	6-36
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation