

Double whammy

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south-eastern hill basin, the misery of the flood-hit people is likely to be aggravated.

Indian meteorological department forecast widespread rainfall with scattered heavy to very heavy rainfall in Bihar, Sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Gangetic West Bengal, Eastern Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, and Arunachal Pradesh in the next 3 to 4 days.

As Sub-Himalayan West Bengal is discharging a huge runoff through the Teesta, Dharia, and Dudhkumar, the northern districts of Bangladesh including Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Rangpur, and Gaibandha are experiencing flash floods.

A fairly widespread rainfall with isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall is also likely in Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, and Tripura in the next 2 to 3 days.

Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) also forecast heavy to very heavy rainfall in different places of the country in the next 24 hours.

The prevailing flood situation in Sylhet is likely to deteriorate further with the likelihood of spreading over to Sunamganj, Habiganj, Moulvibazar, and Netrokona districts in the next 24 to 48 hours.

The south-eastern districts including Feni, Chittagong, Rangamati, Bandarban, and Cox's Bazar are experiencing flash floods and the situation might deteriorate in the next 24 hours.

Our Niphamari correspondent reported that the Teesta River is now flowing at a record highest point above the danger level. The Dalia division of Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) said heavy rainfall in the upstream made the river swell. Besides, India opened up all the gates of a dam at Goral Doba point to release excess water.

A 500 feet stretch of the flood bypass road on Teesta barrage was damaged. The BWDB authorities issued red alert there. BWDB men are trying hard to protect the embankment by placing sand bags and CC blocks into the breaches.

Over 2,000 families were marooned and many took shelter on the embankment. Shoals were also submerged.

Our Sirajganj correspondent reported that the flood situation in the district deteriorated further yesterday, as the Jamuna continued to rise in the upstream. The Jamuna was flowing 45cm above the danger level last afternoon at Sirajganj point.

About 800 metres of the flood control embankment at Shuvogachha in Kazipur upazila collapsed last morning letting the water of Jamuna gush into the town. Due to strong currents of the Jamuna many huts and trees were washed away.

District Relief Office and the Civil Surgeon's Office sources said at least 69 unions out of 81 under 9 upazilas were flooded afresh affecting about 5 lakh people.

District Agriculture Extension Department said ropa aman and vegetables on 8,000 hectares of cropland went under water. Khandaker Hasibur Rahman, deputy director of the Agricultural Extension Department (AED) said if the water level continues to rise, newly planted aman paddies and vegetables will be damaged.

Our Rangpur correspondent reported that most of the major rivers and their tributaries crossed their respective danger levels at many points and others were just touching the marks yesterday morning.

BWDB sources said the 400m long cross dam on the Teesta at Mohipur under Gangachara upazila went under water on Friday leaving the barrage in a very vulnerable state affecting 35,000 families of 38 villages, the upazila administration sources said.

In Lalmonirhat 75 villages were inundated as the 350m long flood by-pass road adjoining the Teesta barrage at Dowani point under Halibandha upazila was heavily damaged inundating the homes of

15,000 families. About 30,000 families of 16 unions under 3 upazilas including the district headquarters were affected.

Our Gaibandha correspondent reported that floodwater rolled into more areas and submerged 4 upazilas there as the Brahmaputra was flowing 35cm above the danger mark while the Ghagot already crossed the mark yesterday.

Through the cracks formed on the Brahmaputra flood control embankment and on Sonail embankment, water gushed in inundating aman seedbeds on 200 hectares of land, and transplanted aman and vegetables on 12,000 hectares of land in 4 upazilas.

Our Pabna correspondent reported that ropa aman paddies on several thousand acres of land went under water there while the Jamuna and the Padma have been flowing there above the danger level for the last few days.

Official sources said the Jamuna is rising sharply with a 30cm rise yesterday. It is now flowing 34cm below the danger level.

Newly transplanted ropa aman paddies on several thousand acres of land went under water in Sujanager, Pabna, and Bera upazilas. Farmers of the district fear a huge loss of crops.

Our Chandpur correspondent reported that standing crops on over 25,000 hectares of land inside the Chandpur irrigation project went under water.

Our Rangamati correspondent reported that two-thirds of the low lying areas there were inundated as the water level in Kaptai Lake rose sharply.

People of 8 upazilas including the district headquarters left their homes after the office of the deputy commissioner urged them to leave their homes and take shelter in different educational institutions.

Our Khagrachari correspondent reported that due to surges in the Chenchhi, Mainee, and Feni rivers at least 85 villages were inundated. At least 50,000 people took shelter on high lands and in 28 flood shelters in 8 upazilas, while another 50,000 are spending their days under the open sky.

Our Bandarban correspondent reported that the Shankhya and Matamuhuri rivers are still flowing below the danger levels, but due to heavy downpour mudslides occurred at some places of Ruowangchhari, Ruma, and Thanchhi.

The deputy director of the Agricultural Extension Department said harvesting of paddies was interrupted and the jum farmers are fearing heavy damage to their crops.

Our Sylhet correspondent reported that with heavy rainfall the flood situation worsened in Sylhet and Sunamganj regions. All the rivers in the regions were flowing above the danger levels at all points, Water Development Board officials said. The water is rushing in from the hilly regions of India.

Newly transplanted aman paddies in 8 upazilas of Sylhet went under water. The affected areas are the district headquarters, and Gowainghat, Kanaighat, Zakiganj, Beani bazar, Balaganj, Osmaninagar and Golapganj upazilas.

Water was gushing through the breaches at different points along Kushiyara Dyke in Zakiganj and Beani bazar upazilas. Local residents started repairing the breaches, sources said.

Meanwhile, Director General of the Disaster Management Bureau KH Masud Siddiqui said the government took all out preparations to face the fresh bout of flood.

When asked if the army will be deployed to tackle the situation, he said, "The armed forces are still in the flood affected areas. The civil administration and the armed forces will work jointly to help the flood affected people."

He added, "We didn't withdraw the flood shelters from the flood hit districts and we've put all our officials and workers on high alert."

85 pilgrims killed

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Shikhar Agarwal, who was driving by half an hour after the accident.

"The wireless phone was not working so we could not even call for help from there. We started sending people to hospital in private cars."

Passersby also alerted the nearest police post.

About 10 cranes were brought to the accident site overnight as rescuers using searchlights scrambled to find survivors and recover bodies.

After dawn Saturday the police operation had been scaled back to recover the badly damaged truck as survivors searched for scattered belongings.

The truck driver lost control on a sharp bend in a mountainous region and smashed through a protective roadside wall, plunging into the 80-foot (25-metre) deep gorge, said police officials.

Anxious villagers thronged hospitals where the injured had been taken.

"We knew the truck driver who was going and he told us to come too. So 54 of us went with him," said 25-year-old Manji Lal, as he lay in a bed

with a bandaged foot in Rajsamand's main hospital during the night.

"It all happened so suddenly we had no idea where our family members ended up. People were screaming for a long time until someone came and rescued us."

Television channels showed the patients attached to intravenous drips, including one boy in a blue shirt with a thick bandage around his head.

"Suddenly the brakes failed," the boy told the Aaj Tak channel.

Some villagers had already taken the bodies of their family members back home to perform last rites Saturday, while others were still trying to identify the dead.

At least three people were so badly mutilated that their bodies could not be identified, police said.

Rajasthan's home minister has asked district officials to investigate how the 10-wheel truck — meant for hauling cars and heavy equipment — was allowed to transport people.

Hasina demands

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under the jail code," Tawfique Nawaz said. "As a prisoner not convicted, she [Hasina] has the right to talk to anyone over telephone, but she is not getting the right," he said.

He said, "According to the jail code, under section-682, Sheikh Hasina has the right to communicate to anyone verbally."

"There are many irregularities in the way things are being dealt with," Tawfique alleged, adding, "There are many things going on which are beyond the constitution."

He said during the one-and-a-half hour meeting with Hasina, she talked about her cases and other current issues.

ADVOCATE TAPOSH'S BRIEFING
"Sheikh Hasina expressed her surprise and disappointment over a judgment in the Mig-29 case," Fazole Noor Taposh, another lawyer for the AL chief told reporters after meeting her at the sub-jail.

"The Mig-29s were bought to ensure the sovereignty of the country and keep our airspace free from enemies," Taposh quoted Hasina as saying.

He said the Anti-corruption Commission failed to bring specific allegations in the charge sheet of the case against Hasina.

DIG ON JAIL'S HEALTH
DIG (prison) Maj Shamsul Haider Siddique yesterday said physical condition of detained AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil remains stable.

"His [Abdul Jalil's] blood pressure fluctuates sometimes," he told reporters at the sub-jail gate. The DIG yesterday paid a visit to Abdul Jalil at the LabAid Hospital in the capital.

Mother-in-law of Jalil passed away on Friday.

Koko

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adding, "He has been suffering from conjunctivitis since this (yesterday) morning."

However, the patient's breathing problems are not as serious as present as before, Dr Sirajul said. "Examination of the cranialogical problem (relating to skull) is going on and the actual condition will be known from the test reports," he added.

Quoting the physicians, DIG (prison) Maj Shamsul Haider Siddique told The Daily Star that Koko's condition has improved and his blood pressure is normal.

Koko was arrested in the early hours on September 3 along with his mother Khaleda Zia in a corruption case filed by Anti Corruption Commission (ACC).

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court approved a seven-day remand for interrogating Koko later that day. He was, however, sent to jail on Thursday before the remand period was over.

DU violence

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in two cases and JCD president Helal in one case filed with them.

Charge sheet against the science faculty teacher will be submitted in one of the two cases, Shahbagh police said.

Prof Anwar and Prof Harun were arrested on August 24 at their campus residences and remanded for eight days in two phases for questioning about the recent student unrest that prompted the caretaker administration to clamp an indefinite curfew on the capital and five other divisional headquarters.

Police sources said probe reports of five cases filed with the Newmarket Police Station will also be submitted today. But it could not be learnt immediately if the investigation officers will submit charge sheets or final reports of the cases.

Ranna police said final reports will be submitted in two cases filed for demonstration and damaging public properties in the area during the unrest.

Police sources, however, said despite the final reports there will be scope to revive the cases and if any accused is detected and arrested they will be charge-sheeted.

Police officials said although 82,000 unnamed persons including students were made accused in all the 53 cases, the government will leave out names of most students from the cases in a bid to reopen Dhaka University.

An intelligence official seeking anonymity told The Daily Star on Friday, "All students except the identified ones will be cleared of the charges so that the government can reopen the university."

Council okays

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Commission Ordinance 2007 placed by the Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Ministry. It asked the ministry to re-examine and place the ordinance afresh.

Regarding the fertiliser ordinance, the meeting observed that farmers are being cheated in buying organic fertilisers, which are not at all organic fertilisers.

In the new Fertiliser Management Ordinance, definition of organic and mixed fertilisers, inscription of manufacturing date and maximum retail price of fertiliser on bags have been proposed.

All members of the Advisory Council, cabinet secretary, press secretary to the chief adviser and the secretaries concerned were present in the meeting at the CA's Office.

Abul Hasnat

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fired in connection with graft.

Abdullah's family and other sources said Rahela Khatun, deputy director (DD) of the ACC, on Friday lodged the case with Dhanmondi Police Station in Dhaka.

According to the complainant, Abdullah in his statement only mentioned the house he has at Dhanmondi worth Tk 52.55 lakh. The complainant said the ACC found that Abdullah had concealed movable and immovable properties worth crores of taka and that the anti-graft body failed to find any legal source of income through which he had obtained the wealth.

He had submitted his wealth statement to the ACC through his wife.

Trial of the other two cases filed against Abdullah started at Barisal Divisional Special Tribunal on September 5 and the charge framing date was fixed for September 11.

Reform talks

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"If the government by this time does not decide to allow the political parties to meet formally, then we will discuss the proposals in an informal way," Siddiqui observed.

The Krishak Sramik Janata League has been requested to be present at the EC for discussion on September 16.

The council of advisers to the caretaker government had a meeting yesterday but they did not take any decision in this regard while the home ministry officials waited in vain for instructions regarding restrictions on indoor politics.

The same day Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda told news agency UNB that if the ban does not go by September 11, the dates for the dialogue might need to be rescheduled.

He said the commission would meet the government again to discuss how to remove the roadblocks to the planned talks.

The military-backed interim administration slapped the ban on March 7 amid a state of emergency declared on January 11 prohibiting outdoor political activities.

Law Adviser Mainul Hossain yesterday told The Daily Star that the government is working to relax the restrictions so that the EC can hold its dialogue with the political parties.

"A decision will be there in a day or two," he added.

Senior leaders of the political parties that have already been invited said they have not yet

DU classes to resume

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Research work, the library, transport services and all offices of DU including the dean's office, dormitory offices, and department and institute offices will resume operations from today (Sunday).

The dates for first year honours admission tests would be fixed on September 12 in the meeting of the DU General Admission Committee, added the release.

The decisions taken by the Syndicate were recommended by the Deans' Committee in its meeting held earlier in the morning yesterday.

Despite the authority's different messages to improve the situation, a number of eyewitnesses reported continued police harassment on the DU campus. The police have been prohibiting more than two people from assembling on the campus, the witnesses added.

The government on August 22 closed DU along with all educational institutions in the country for an indefinite period to pacify the nationwide violent protests that were sparked over assault on DU students by law enforcers during a soccer game at DU gymnasium ground on August 20.

The government also imposed curfew on six divisional cities the same evening and later formed a one-member judicial inquiry commission led by retired High Court Judge Justice Mohammad Habibur Rahman Khan to investigate the violence.

A total of 34 cases were filed by police against 82,000 unknown accused, mostly students, for their alleged involvement in the violence.

A statement of the DU Syndicate issued with the press release expressed great regret over the situation on the DU campus and other parts of the country on August 20 and onwards. The Syndicate condemned the violence that followed and said the assault on an army personnel as well as the arson attack on an army vehicle adjacent to the DU campus were provocative, resentful and a serious offence. The Syndicate expressed deep sympathy and compassion for the assaulted army personnel.

The Syndicate also urged the government to be compassionate and considerate toward the two respected and elderly DU teachers who had been under arrest.

Social dignity of the DU teachers is at stake and the investigation into the violence is being hindered as a few newspapers in the country are publishing confusing stories relating some DU teachers with the violence on August 20 and onwards, observed the Syndicate.

The DU authorities urged the newspapers to refrain from publishing such harmful, fabricated and ill-motivated reports of this sort.

Court sources said the two other cases were lodged against him after law enforcers on October 22, 2002 raided his Barisal home and seized 355 blank freedom-fighter certificates, Tk 6.13 lakh in cash and some gold ornaments.

Sub-inspector Borhan Reza lodged both the cases with Barisal Police Station and Inspector Zillur Rahman, the then officer-in-charge of the police station and investigation officer (IO) of the cases, submitted the charge sheet against Abdullah on April 13, 2006.

Meantime, Abdullah obtained an ad interim bail from High Court until the submission of the charge sheets. He was declared absconding after he failed to surrender before a court.

Abdullah allegedly went to India two days before the state of emergency was proclaimed on January 11, 2007. He is allegedly living there with his daughter and daughter-in-law.

decided whether to opt out of the talks in the event of the ban continuing.

"We will decide a day before the scheduled date whether we will join the dialogue," the IOJ secretary general said. He said they are now waiting for a government decision.

Quader Siddique said his partymen would decide the next course of action.

The EC announced the timetable on August 28 on assurance from the government that the ban would be lifted or relaxed. It has chosen 15 political parties for the dialogue.

Unveiling the schedule, the CEC said the commission would send out invitations in a way that ensures each of the political parties gets at least two weeks' time for preparation.

But the invitees so far—IOJ and Krishak Sramik Janata League—have not had a chance yet to discuss the proposals or determine their approach while time for them to do so runs out fast.

Election Commissioner Muhammed Sohul Hussain yesterday told The Daily Star that the EC still hopes that it would be able to begin the dialogue on schedule.

The poll chief at a meeting with the law adviser on April 4 first asked the government to lift the ban to pave the way for talks with the political parties. Since then, the commission has kept calling for a partial if not a complete withdrawal of the ban to create an environment conducive to holding fruitful discussions.

EU parliament

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"Parliament is concerned about the arrest and justification for ongoing detention of Awami League President Sheikh Hasina and Bangladesh Nationalist Party President Khaleda Zia and about the case of Sigma Huda, who has been sentenced on bribery charges," read a resolution adopted on Bangladesh by the Members of European Parliament (MEPs) on Thursday.

According to the resolution posted on the EP's website, the European Parliament urged the authorities to conduct the trials transparently and according to the rule of law and allow access by international observers to all tribunals.

The MEPs called for a return to democracy and lifting of the state of emergency in Bangladesh.

They also urged the government to lift the ban on all political activity to enable all parties and political organisations to prepare for open and fair elections.

The MEPs viewed that the caretaker government has made progress on tackling corruption but has been far less assertive on political reform.

The EP asked the government "to reconsider its present roadmap for elections and to speed up its preparations" and also "to make progress with the creation of a National Human Rights Commission".

The EP also welcomed the EU's commitment to grant technical support to the Bangladeshi authorities for the elections and called for the EU election observation mission to resume its long-term activities as soon as possible.

"The Council and the Commission are asked to monitor carefully the human rights and political situation in Bangladesh in the light of recent events and to make representations over the continuing use of the state of emergency," read the resolution.

BBC Sanglap

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both the Army and the Anti-Corruption Commission speak over a matter with coordination, then it will help to lessen panic among the people," said General Secretary of Women for Women Prof Mahmuda Islam.

The businesspeople could not do business smoothly as there was panic among them during the recent months, former BGMEA president Annisul Huq said, adding, "To bring back confidence among us the army chief has said that no fresh list of corruptionists will be prepared."

He said there should be coordination between the army chief and the ACC chairman over combating corruption as "their comments sometimes create panic among the businessmen".

Former opposition chief whip and AL leader Abdus Shahid and former BNP lawmaker Maj (ret'd) Akhtaruzzaman also took part in the Sanglap as panellists.

BBC Bangla Service in conjunction with the BBC World Service Trust organised the event moderated by BBC's Kamal Ahmed.

Akhtaruzzaman said the army chief should leave it up to the ACC to make lists of corrupt businessmen who "used politicians to indulge in corruption to earn money." "It will not be right to stop listing corrupt businessmen," he said.

There is no reason to stop the drive against corruption, AL leader Abdus Shahid also said, adding, "The army chief might have made the comment to pacify the businessmen."

Replying to a query, Maj Akhtar ruled out any possibility of BNP splitting following expulsion of Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan. "BNP won't split even if its chairperson is expelled," Akhtar said adding that Bhuiyan's expulsion has cheered the people.

The three other speakers, however, observed that the BNP is going to break up.

Asked by the audience whether the army chief's statements on different policy issues go beyond the accepted norms, Maj (ret'd) Akhtar said with the mandate of the people the current army chief has been giving statements. He also said that as the president who is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces is sick, Gen Moeen should be given the charge.

Responding to a query whether the government is playing double standards by giving one group of politicians the opportunity to hold meetings, Abdus Shahid said if the government resumes indoor politics the question over double standard will not arise.

Maj (ret'd) Akhtar said, "The law adviser himself is not balanced. He has been putting the government in an awkward situation."

England

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India's innings had started badly and got progressively worse. Sourav Ganguly was dismissed by James Anderson for just 15. Anderson had already hit Ganguly on the helmet, before he had him caught at 30.

Tendulkar (30) never really got going, and only a brisk 50 from Mahendra Dhoni gave India a respectable total.

Rudra Pratap Singh then gave India a great start, taking two wickets in three balls in his first over, but Pietersen and Collingwood held their nerve to see England home.

Sharif urged

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"Nawaz Sharif must honour his commitment," Hariri told reporters after a meeting with President Pervez Musharraf.

"Such (an) agreement was made to facilitate and ensure the stability of Pakistan," Hariri said.

"For the sake of the national interest of Pakistan we hope that he will honour and adhere to the terms of the agreement," the Saudi intelligence chief added.

Hariri arrived here early Saturday following a London meeting with Sharif, who was toppled in Musharraf's 1999 military coup and plans to return to Pakistan on Monday.

Hariri said his family was involved in the Saudi-brokered 2000 exile deal, which compelled Sharif to live in oil-rich Middle East country.

Sharif was sentenced to life in prison on tax evasion and treason charges but released in December 2000 on condition that he and his family live in exile in Saudi Arabia for 10 years.

"The custodian of the two Holy Mosques helped the Sharif family to get out of imprisonment under such agreement," Hariri said, referring to Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah.

He said the king "hopes for the sake of the national interest of Pakistan that all parties concerned with the agreement will honour and adhere to the terms of the agreement."

Sharif and his younger brother Shahbaz, who left Saudi Arabia for London last year, won a Supreme Court battle in August against their banishment and said they were returning home on September 10 to challenge Musharraf.

Hariri said they respected the Supreme Court decision but "would like to see Nawaz Sharif honour his exile commitment also."

Musharraf, facing the worst political crisis at home, has asked Sharif to abide by the agreement as his return would destabilise the political environment ahead of general elections expected in next five months.

"They should honour their commitment. Their commitment was with the leadership of a third country which has very close ties with Pakistan," Pakistan Information Minister Muhammad Ali Durrani told AFP on Saturday.

"If Nawaz Sharif breaks this commitment he will create a bad perception about Pakistan in the Middle East."

Laden mocks US

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"The first is from our side, and it is to continue to escalate the killing and fighting against you," says bin Laden.

The second is to do away with the US democratic system of government, which he says merely serves the interests of major corporations.

In the rambling message bin Laden attacks US President George W. Bush, the US neoconservative thinkers that support him and global corporations for fomenting the Iraq war. He also attacks the US Democratic Party, which he claims has done little to halt the war, makes references to global capitalism and climate change, and invites Americans to embrace Islam.

US intelligence agencies confirmed the tape's authenticity. "I think people are pretty confident it is his voice," said a US intelligence official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The tape was probably produced as recently as early August because of a reference to the 62nd anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima on August 6, the official said.

It is bin Laden's first such appearance since October 2004, when he threatened new attacks against the