

# Pakistan kills 70 militants during Negroponte trip

AFP, Miranshah

Pakistani troops backed by gunships have killed up to 70 militants in two days of heavy fighting during a visit by US Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte, officials said Thursday.

The latest clashes claimed the lives of up to 30 insurgents in the North Waziristan tribal area bordering Afghanistan, where US officials say the al-Qaeda network and the Taliban have regrouped since 9/11. The fighting in the rugged frontier region, which also left nine troops wounded and is still ongoing, came a day after the military said it had killed another 40 rebels nearby.

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, a key US ally, has come under increasing pressure from Washington to crush extremist fighters who fled to the tribal zone after the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in late 2001.

Musharraf held nearly two hours of talks with Negroponte on Thursday, officials said. The US diplomat arrived here from Kabul a day earlier for discussions focusing on counter-terrorism.

Negroponte on Wednesday reiterated Washington's full backing for military ruler Musharraf and played down indications that the United States could launch unilateral strikes against militants on Pakistani soil.

In Pakistan's latest confrontation with the insurgents, troops fought back militants who attacked an army checkpoint in North Waziristan's Nawaz Kot district overnight, top military spokesman Major General Waheed Arshad said.

"The security forces retaliated using gunship helicopters. Local sources are reporting 25 to 30 militants are killed but the toll could go higher," Arshad told AFP.

He did not confirm local reports that 10 soldiers also died.

## Tight security

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will patrol their designated areas by vehicles. There will also be 100 motorcycle teams for patrolling the city areas.

Besides, Rab will deploy 100 motorcycle teams in addition to 100 mobile teams who will patrol the city by vehicles.

After Ramadan 10, the additional forces will be posted to different shopping malls, markets, shops and places where there will be public gatherings.

"We will decide later how much additional forces will be deployed with the increasing rush in Eid shopping," DMP Commissioner Naim Ahmed told The Daily Star.

"The step has been taken to check crimes, like mugging, that occur more with the increase in shopping," Abdul Jalil, joint commissioner of detective branch of police, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Special forces will be posted in different areas so that criminals cannot rob off the Eid shoppers, he added.

The police officials also said that alongside the uniformed policemen, 24 plainclothes police detective teams will be deployed at the marketplaces after Ramadan 10, to keep round the clock vigil and thwart crime.

In addition, block raids will be conducted at the city slums to nab criminals, they added.

### NEW TRAFFIC PLANS FOR RAMADAN MULLED

At an inter-ministerial committee meeting yesterday, the idea of a drastic cut in the bus routes through the capital was considered to ease traffic congestion during the Ramadan.

If approved, the plan will trim down the city bus routes to around 50 from the existing 138.

Home Secretary Abdul Karim chaired the meeting, held at the home ministry.

The committee is also considering to make the road through Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) Headquarters in Plikhna available to people for four hours during office commuting hours, two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon.

"A scientific redistribution of the bus routes may help ease congestion, though we need an overall city planning to address the problem," Saidur Rahman, deputy commissioner of South Traffic Zone, said after the meeting.

The meeting also directed the authorities concerned to repair 12 digital traffic signals at key city points including Manik Mia Avenue, Malibagh intersection, Mouchak, Kakrail, Kalabagan and Science Laboratory.

The meeting asked the traffic authorities to work on whether the vehicle stoppage time at traffic signals, now two and half minutes on an average, can be reduced to one or one and half minutes.

A proposal of rescheduling the goods trains to night, which pass

"The fighting is ongoing. Ground troops are advancing towards the militants' positions, but I have no information of soldiers being killed in the attack," Arshad said.

Pakistan has been rocked by violence since troops stormed the radical Red Mosque in Islamabad in July, with suicide attacks killing nearly 250 people since then and scores of militants dying in clashes with the military.

The army said Pakistani helicopter gunships and artillery also pounded militant hideouts in part of the tribal zone of South Waziristan on Tuesday and Wednesday, killing up to 40 militants.

Dozens of Islamist fighters also attacked a checkpoint on Wednesday and kidnapped 12 troops in the country's northwest.

A militant spokesman warned on the same day that they would start killing more than 200 soldiers who surrendered without firing a shot in South Waziristan nearly two weeks ago.

There was no new information on the fate of the soldiers Thursday. Militants abducted another 15 soldiers in August in South Waziristan. One of the troops was beheaded by a group of teenage militants in a killing recorded on video, and the rest were freed later.

Musharraf meanwhile faces a political crisis ahead of his widely opposed attempt to be re-elected for another five-year term as president in uniform in coming weeks.

He sent former premier Nawaz Sharif back into exile on Monday just hours after he arrived in Pakistan, a move Negroponte said was an "internal matter" for Islamabad.

In a sign of his growing unpopularity, a poll released Wednesday showed that al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden is more popular among Pakistanis than Musharraf himself.

through the city during daytime, was also submitted at the meeting. Seventy-four trains pass through the city every day, causing closure of roads at different points for a total of around six hours.

The meeting also asked the authorities concerned to strictly apply traffic rules, stop halting vehicles in the middle of streets for checking papers and removing unlicensed rickshaws, about 3 lakh in number now, and unfit vehicles from city streets.

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## Local tsunami

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earthquake-prone area that has recently witnessed a number of earthquakes of different magnitudes, they said.

Recently the issue of tsunami risk for Bangladesh has become a much-talked issue among the geologists following an article written by Phil Cummins published in 'Nature' magazine about possible tsunami in the Bay of Bengal due to an undersea earthquake along the Arakan coast.

Leading geologists in the country said Bangladesh is under the risk of a local tsunami and it poses the threat of a massive disaster as there will be very little time to warn coastal inhabitants about the tsunami.

However, many factors have to work at the same time for occurrence of such tsunami, said the experts.

"If such a tsunami is caused, it would hit Bangladesh coast within 20 minutes and it would be dangerous for the country due to the vast extent of the low elevated coast plain," said ASM Maksud Kamal, national expert, Earthquake and Tsunami Preparedness project.

Aftab Alam Khan, a leading geologist of the country, said, "Analysing the tectonic and geographic conditions of the Bay of Bengal, I find very low possibility of a tsunami here. But massive submarine landslides may occur due to earthquake in the Bay of Bengal which would be destructive for the country's coastal belt due to sea turmoil."

Inhabitants of coastal islands could be swept to death in case of any local tsunami, the two experts said.

However, any transoceanic tsunami originating in Java-Sumatra region or somewhere else would not harm Bangladesh, as the velocity of giant waves would weaken before reaching the country's coastal zone, they said.

"Before reaching the country's coast the velocity of the tsunami water column would reduce by hitting the sea slope lying as far as 100 kilometres from the shore. Then it would float over the sea shelf and when it reaches the coast the velocity of the waves would be so little that it would hardly do any harm in our coastal belt," said Maksud Kamal.

Right now the country does not have any expertise to predict earthquake or tsunami.

## Ex-BNP MP Shamsuzzoha arrested

UNB, Naogaon

Former BNP lawmaker Shamsuzzoha Khan was arrested yesterday under Emergency Power Rules.

The law enforcers picked up Khan from the court premises at the district headquarters at 5:30pm.

Police Superintendent Sarder Nurul Amin said Anti-Crime Regional Committee of Bogra and local law enforcers jointly arrested Khan, former MP from Naogaon-2 constituency. He was wanted in a number of criminal cases.

## Both BNP groups

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telephone or through messengers, sources said.

Several meetings were also held between the mediator of Badruddoza and Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, the sources added.

Discussions are also going on inside Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) about Badruddoza's return to BNP. Executive Committee of LDP-Badruddoza faction is to sit on Saturday and discuss the issue, LDP sources said.

AHM Mofazzal Karim, an adviser to the BNP chairperson but a pro-Mannan Bhuiyan faction leader, yesterday told reporters that Badruddoza sought time to make up his mind.

Asked about dialogue with the Election Commission, he said, "We want to have dialogues with the Election Commission unconditionally."

He accused new Secretary General of BNP Khandaker Delwar Hossain and BNP chairperson's adviser Brig Gen (ret'd) ASM Hannan Shah of creating confusion in the party by making misleading statements.

The Khandaker Delwar Hossain faction also sent a messenger to Badruddoza to talk about his returning to BNP. They also conveyed to Badruddoza detained BNP chief Khaleda Zia's wish and blessings in this regard, sources said.

A number of leaders of LDP want Badruddoza to return to BNP while some are against it, an LDP leader told The Daily Star Wednesday wishing to remain anonymous. "We will discuss the issue in our executive committee meeting on Sunday and will make a decision," said the LDP leader.

Badruddoza had to make an unceremonious exit from the presidency during the last BNP-led four-party alliance government's tenure. On October 27, 2006 Badruddoza along with Col (ret'd) Oli Ahmed floated a new political party protesting against "corruption" and "dynastic rule" in BNP.

On May 8, 2004 former president Badruddoza formed Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) and soon afterwards he then BNP lawmakers Major (ret'd) Abdul Mannan and Badruddoza's son Mahi B Chowdhury joined him.

Badruddoza on different occasions raised his voice against BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and her son Tarique Rahman saying their "family" is involved with corruption and meddled with the affairs of the state and the party.

## AL to probe

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guilty, we will certainly take organisational action against them for breaking party discipline," acting AL President Zillur Rahman told reporters at his Gulshan residence.

Echoing Zillur's views, acting General Secretary of the party Mukul Bose, who was among the leaders abused on that day, said when Zillur recovers from illness, they would take action against persons responsible for the incident.

Mukul, Organising Secretary Abdul Mannan, AKM Jahangir Hossain and Prof Abu Sayeed faced abuses with one of them assaulted while going to attend Wednesday's AL Central Working Committee (ALWCW) meeting and also when returning.

Chanting anti-reform slogans, the agitating AL workers also kicked cars of two of the four leaders known to be loyal to senior presidium member of the party Amir Hossain Amu. AL workers believe that Amu has taken a firm stand against Hasina.

Replying to a question, Zillur said, "I condemn the incident (on Wednesday)."

It was intended to divide the party, he asserted.

He however said a few unidentified people abused their party leaders.

Zillur urged party leaders and workers to maintain unity at any cost and in the face of any conspiracy against the party.

"There are no differences of opinion in the party over the leadership of Sheikh Hasina and getting her released," he said.

The acting AL president instructed party workers to remain calm and avoid recurrence of such incidents. The party would initiate a massive campaign to ensure this, he added.

Party leaders Shahara Khatun and Dr Dipu Moni were present at Zillur's press briefing.

At another press briefing at party leader Abu Sayeed's Dhanmondi residence, Mukul Bose said a conspiracy might have been hatched to split the AL in a planned way.

Mukul said those who do not want the AL to remain united and are opposed to Hasina's release were behind Wednesday's incident. It was orchestrated to divide the AL and to keep its office locked like that of BNP.

Abu Sayeed said conspirators rallied against senior AL leaders to destroy the image of the party.

## Arrest warrant

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also issued against 14 students of DU.

Meanwhile, the Dhaka University (DU) authorities yesterday requested the Army Chief of General Staff Maj Gen Sinha Ibn Jamali to show leniency to the arrested DU and Rajshahi University teachers and charge-sheeted DU students.

Police on September 9 charged four teachers with instigating violent student protests on the university campus and the students with violent demonstration on the campus and at Shahbagh in the capital last month.

The court cleared detained Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) president Azizul Baree Helal of the two cases following the investigators' prayer.

The students against whom the arrest warrants were issued are -- DU unit JCD President Hasan Mamun and General Secretary Saiful Islam Firoz, Sir AF Rahman Hall JCD leader Kamrul Hasan Kochi, Shamsunnahar Hall unit JCD Acting President Tanjeen Chowdhury Lili, Rokeya Hall unit JCD President Shahinor Nargis, central BCL Vice President Aparna Rani Pal, Rifat Hossain Jiku, Nazrul Islam Russell, Shamsul Kabir Rahat, Mitul, Aziz Hasan, Rokonzaman, Kamruzzaman and Anwar Hossain.

Two other teachers, Duta General Secretary Prof Anwar Hossain and Science Faculty Dean Prof Harun-or-Rashid, and one of the charge-sheeted students Moniruzzaman are now in jail custody.

DU delegation meets army chief of general staff. A DU delegation of about 20 members led by Vice Chancellor (VC) Prof SMA Faiz held a meeting with Maj Gen Jamali at a city restaurant yesterday. DGFI director general and seven army high officials were also present.

Two teachers, who were present at the meeting quoting Maj Gen Jamali said that he told the DU delegation that none is above the law. Next course of actions will be taken against the detained teachers and charge-sheeted students according to law after investigation, he told the teachers.

Pro-VC Prof AFM Yusuf Haider, Treasurer Prof Syed Abul Kalam Azad, former Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) president Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, former Duta general secretary Prof Dr Mohammad Akhtaruzzaman, DU Syndicate members Prof Sadeka Halim, Dr Rahmatullah, Deans of different faculties, representatives of the Syndicate and the Duta comprised the DU delegation.

Prof Akhtaruzzaman said that an

open discussion over the whole university situation was held in a warm environment.

Maj Gen Jamali also assured the teachers that the law-enforcement agencies would extend full cooperation to the university authorities after it reopens to maintain congenial academic atmosphere, Prof Sadeka Halim said.

As the teachers complained about some posts on a military website that is embarrassing for the university, Maj Gen Jamali assured them of looking into it.

The university authorities are scheduled to sit with the chief adviser on October 16 to discuss the university issues.

## ACC ready

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August 19 but he could not come out of jail as his detention remained valid. Since July 25 Moudud was given detention in phases under Special Power Acts.

The joint forces detained him on April 13 and seized 220 pieces of sarl, 32 cans of beer and 16 bottles of other alcoholic beverages from his possession.

Gulshan police later filed a case against him under the Narcotics Control Act for allegedly smuggling in and possessing contraband foreign liquor.

Meanwhile, Deputy Conservator of Forest Hanif Patwari submitted his wealth statement to the ACC through his wife Dilruba Parvin on Wednesday.

His statement showed that the forest official owns a plot in Lalbagh, three acres of land in Chandpur, electronic gadgets worth Tk 2 lakh, Tk 10,000 in bank balance, Tk 8 lakh in security savings certificate.

The statement also included his wife's wealth information. She owns a three-katha plot in Mirpur, an apartment in Naya Paltan measuring 234.70 square metre and 25 tolas of gold ornament.

The forester's wife Dilruba also owns electronic equipment worth Tk 3 lakh, furniture estimated at Tk 63 thousand, Tk 5 lakh in fixed deposits, Tk 2 lakh in security savings certificate. The couple have a computer in their daughter's name, read the statement.

The ACC has served notices on 218 corruption suspects to turn in their wealth information. Among them about 200 have so far submitted their statements.

The watchdog filed cases against six persons for non-compliance with its notices. Among them, four have been sentenced.

ACC officials resign. Meantime, two ACC officials stepped down from the commission on personal reasons, bringing the number to five.

The officials are Hamidur Rahman and Amirul Islam. They were posted in Chittagong and Sirajganj respectively.

## Tigers whack WI out

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alert. Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed termed the victory 'outstanding' in a short message immediately after the Tigers' latest triumph.

Back to the match and with his side reeling at 28 for two, Ashraful got settled. Twenty20 style when he cracked three consecutive boundaries off fast bowler Daren Powell and then added some more in the ensuing 40 minutes of play.

With an able ally in Aftab Ahmed, Ashraful resurrected the Bangladesh innings and was only dismissed with his side requiring 27 to win. He struck seven boundaries in all, some of them as sublime as sublime can be. Off the sixth ball, he carved an inswinging from Powell over extra-cover for four. Then as if taunting the fast bowler, he drag-dug a Rampaul bouncer to the fine-leg fence for six. And as luck would have it, Fidel Edwards dropped him in exactly the same place two balls later. He was then on 29.

With opener Nazimuddin dismissed and Tamim Iqbal struggling to connect the ball at the other end, it was Aftab who kick-started the innings with an imperious pulled six off Rampaul to get off the mark and kept up to the required run-rate.

But this match was Ashraful's. His next two sixes, came in a three-ball onslaught.

Having wrecked Dwayne Bravo's mood with two fours in a row, Ashraful pulled a six deep into the stands. Then came his special scoop. The young captain took a quick, full ball from Edwards and twirled its direction towards fine leg in the only way he can.

Aftab made sure that the innings never lagged behind the run-rate and with Ashraful, the two added 109 for the third wicket. The boy from Chittagong remained unbeaten on 62 off 49 balls that contained eight fours and a six.

Ashraful finally fell to his opposite number Ramnaresh Sarwan as he tried to chip over cover fielder Chris Gayle's head but was caught. This was Gayle's only contribution as his first over dismissal inspired Bangladesh.

Left-arm seamer Syed Raseel's short ball went as far as backward point where Kapali took a smart catch to dismiss Tuesday's centurion for a duck. Raseel bowled a perfect spell as he conceded only 10 runs in his 4 overs.

The other opener Devon Smith, along with Shiv Chandepaul, helped revive the West Indies innings with a 95-run second wicket stand but when the experienced Chandepaul fell to Abdur Razzak at the long-on fence in the 14th over, Bangladesh swooped in.

The Tigers left-arm spinners -- Shakib and Abdur Razzak -- took full

advantage of some turn in the wicket as they snared six of the eight wickets that fell.

Marlon Samuels and Dwayne Smith, who scored 27 and 29 respectively, momentarily took the game away from the Tigers but it was Shakib's superb final over, taking three to finish with figures of 4-34.

Razzak, who bowled with the new ball with Raseel, took two for 25.

The match started an hour late due to a wet pitch which gave Ashraful more incentive to win the toss and bowl first.

Bangladesh take on South Africa in a battle to decide the Group A champions at Newlands in Cape Town tomorrow.

## Delwar eyes

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Khandaker Delwar Hossain and Hannan Shah are causing confusion within the ranks by making misleading statements.

Echoing Ashraf, the also expelled joint secretary general of the BNP, he said the BNP council would be convened shortly in consultation with the senior leaders.

However, Khandakar Delwar says Bhuiyan has no right to call a council of the BNP, as he does not belong to the party anyway. "If he [Bhuiyan] still accepts Khaleda Zia as the chairperson, then why can't he accept the expulsion orders?" he questioned referring to a previous statement of the pro-reform leader.

Talking to reporters at his NAM apartment yesterday, Delwar said, "According to the party constitution, the chairperson's approval is needed to convene any meeting."

He said the detained chairperson has to be freed first and only then they could seek her consent for a council. "I don't understand how come some outsiders plan a council for the BNP," he said in an oblique reference to Bhuiyan and allies.

Over the EC dialogue, he said the party chief should be released to sit with the commission over electoral reforms.

Demanding immediate withdrawal of police from the BNP headquarters at Naya Paltan, Hannan Shah yesterday said, "Only the leaders and workers have the right to decide who owns the central office."

Talking to reporters at his residence, he said there is no reason for fear of clash between the factions. He said he believes Bhuiyan is out to create intra-party feuds at the behest of some quarters.

Hannan said the government should work in line with its announcement and should not encourage the elements seeking to create disturbance in the party.

## Businessman shot dead by extortionists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criminals shot dead a businessman yesterday in the city's Jurain area as he refused to oblige their demand for extortion money.

The dead was identified as Abu Naser alias Nayan, 32, owner of Nayan Engineering Workshop at Jurain Baganbari in Shyampur.

Eyewitnesses said six youths carrying firearms stopped Nayan in front of his house at about 9:00am and fired 11 shots at him. He died on the spot.

"Hearing gunshots, I came out of the house and saw six youths leaving the place. I found Nayan lying in a pool of blood," said Nayan's cousin Abdur Razzak.

He said the criminals repeatedly made calls on Nayan's mobile phone last month asking him to pay them toll. Being irritated at the phone calls, Nayan sold his mobile phone 15 days back and did not carry any cell phone since then.

His family members could not say whether he had any enmity with anybody.

Police suspected that he might have been killed due to a previous dispute.

A case was filed with Shyampur Police Station. Police are yet to make any arrest.

## 60 killed

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Afghan and Nato convoy late Wednesday, sparking a battle in which 11 militants were killed, the provincial government said.

"Eleven militants and one Afghan soldier were killed and two soldiers were wounded in the battle," provincial spokesman Gulab Shah Alkhalil told AFP.

In the northeastern province of Badakshan meanwhile a Bangladeshi working with a microfinance project was shot dead by unknown gunmen while travelling through a remote area on a motorbike Wednesday, police and his organisation said.

Two men who claimed to be robbers were arrested for the shooting, provincial police commander Aqa Noor Kendoz said, without ruling out the possibility they were linked to the Taliban or other militant groups.

Elsewhere, three mine clearers who were abducted a week ago with 10 colleagues were freed late Wednesday in the southeastern province of Paktia, police said. The 10 were freed Monday.

Officials have not accused any group of the abductions and the Taliban have not claimed responsibility.

However the organisation has carried out similar kidnappings, including that of 23 South Koreans, two of whom were killed before the remainder were released, most after six weeks in captivity.

The latest violence was on the eve of Ramadan, the Muslim holy month, which started in Afghanistan on Thursday.

The Taliban has said it would use the month to launch a new "operation" involving suicide bombings and other attacks.

## Coastal people

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buildings started returning home shortly after the tsunami alert was withdrawn at around 1:30am. Many returned home in the morning, witnesses said.

The tidal water rose a few feet higher than usual and entered some coastal areas and offshore island of Sandwip but no damage of property or causality was known, our Chittagong office reports.

The Met office also lifted from the maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla the local cautionary signal number three that was hoisted due to a low pressure.

However the Met office asked all fishing boats and trawlers over the north Bay to remain close to the coast and proceed with caution until 6:00am tomorrow.

AFP reports from Jakarta: Indonesia called off a tsunami alert issued after a 6.4-magnitude quake struck off the northern tip of Sulawesi island, the meteorology office said.

"The tsunami alert has been lifted," it said in a telephone text message.

## Rupali sale

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activities except some routine tasks have virtually stopped in the last one year.

The bank's classified loan was Tk 1,612 crore as of June this year, which is 36 percent of the total outstanding loan. Provision shortfall of the bank stood at Tk 675 crore during the same period.

"We have been forced to suspend disbursement of all kinds of loans over the last one year," said a senior official of the bank. "Only recently the central bank permitted us to release loans on a limited scale."

Another official said many of the bank's staff have applied for voluntary retirement while many more are looking for jobs elsewhere.

"Of Rupali Bank's 4,500 staff 650 have applied for voluntary retirement since April 30 under the golden handshake scheme," he said.

As per official data, Rupali Bank's capital deficit was Tk 569 crore in December last year and its accumulated loss was Tk 261 crore.

## Flood situation may start improving in 3 days

STAR REPORT

The overall flood situation is likely to start improving within the next 72 hours, Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) said in a bulletin yesterday.

The FFWC expects the improvement as an India Meteorological Department forecast anticipates a weaker monsoon and isolated rainfall during the next 24 hours over India's northeastern states (Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram and Tripura).

Meanwhile, most rivers in the country are still flowing over the danger level. Out of 88 water level measuring points in rivers all over the country, 22 recorded danger level while 32 measuring points recorded rising trend of water.

The flood-affected people in these areas are in dire need of drinking water, food and treatment -- especially, for various waterborne diseases such as skin diseases and diarrhoea, said our correspondents from different parts of the country.

In Sylhet and Sunamganj, the flood situation in most areas remained almost unchanged except for a few areas where water receded slightly, said our Syl