

Downpour halts life

Record rain in Dhaka inundates streets, hampers commuting, education, trade; 9 die in electrocution; bus, ferry services disrupted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Incessant rain overnight had much of the city knee-deep in water throughout the day yesterday, wreaking havoc on life and trade.

At least nine people were killed and many injured as they stepped on power cables that had shorted in the driving rain.

The met office said 290 millimetres of rain fell in six hours to 7:00am. It is a record six-hour rainfall for the capital in 60 years.

The country's highest rainfall in 24 hours to 7:00am was 333mm in Dhaka. The second highest was recorded in Mongla at 169mm.

Meteorologists said a low formed in the Bay joined forces with monsoon

clouds and created a unique condition that caused such extraordinary rainfall.

They forecast the intensity will come down today, but the rain spell might continue till tomorrow.

The torrential pouring started at around 10 on Monday night. It soon submerged the city streets and alleyways, leaving hundreds of commuters stranded on their way back home.

With high winds and thunder, it snapped power and phone lines and making roads and sidewalks even more dangerous for late-night commuters.

People in the shantytowns were the worst sufferers. They found their huts under knee-deep water by 3:00am and had to take shelter in nearby buildings.

Most of those living on ground floors had to spend a sleepless night as they saw

water reach for their beds.

Attendance at the government and private offices was very thin. Shopping malls and other businesses had few shoppers as people remained indoors.

Children in most areas could not go to schools.

Though it meant sufferings for the downscale urbanites, the rain ended long dry spells bordering on drought, much to the relief of the farmers.

Of those who contacted live power lines, seven including a woman and a baby girl were in the capital and the rest two in Nalitabari upazila of Sherpur.

Shafiqul Islam, 35, and six-year-old Bristi died in the city's Kafrul area, Abdul Kader, 28, in Fakirapul, Jannatul Mawa, 35, in Demra, Shahin in Mohammadpur

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People yesterday heading to work through almost waist-deep rainwater on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in front of Prime Minister's Office. More photos on pages 3 and 12.

Double blow for people

Power, water crises add to their woes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

City dwellers had to deal with intermittent power supply and water crisis indoors yesterday as if the waterlogged streets were not enough to go through in a day.

Residents of Farmgate, Dhanmondi, Kalabagan, Moghbazar, Malibagh, Shahbagh, Mohammadpur, Rampura, Goran, Khilgaon, Shahjahanpur, Uttara and other places in the capital experienced frequent power cuts each lasting more than an hour.

Residents of different

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Misery rains down on city slums

PINAKI ROY

It was 2:30 am Tuesday. An unbroken spell of rain was creating a rhythm on the corrugated tin roof of their room. The night would have been otherwise good for deep sleep. But the poor couple—Md Farhad and Jamila along with their three children—were sitting on their small cot with water rolling into the room.

Rain started at about 10:00pm. Jamila brought their four hens inside the room as

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Notice

Today's issue contains a special supplement on "Second International Conference on Genocide, Truth & Justice" being organised by the Liberation War Museum, on page 13.

Save Dhaka city from waterlogging

PM directs DCC, Wasa

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina directed Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), Wasa and all other authorities concerned to immediately take effective steps to salvage the capital from waterlogging during rainy season.

She gave the directive in an emergency meeting with LGRD State Minister Jahangir Kabir Nanak, DCC Mayor Sadek Hossain Khoka, the public works secretary, Wasa,

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WATERLOGGING IN CAPITAL

Clogged drains, filled up canals blamed

HELEMUL ALAM

Clogged and inadequate drainage system and filling up of most of the city canals are mainly responsible for waterlogging in the city.

The city drainage system has not improved with the pace of rapid growth of urbanisation while most of the canals out of around 50 in the city have either been filled up entirely or partially over the last two decades, said experts.

Low-lying areas including eastern fringe of the city are still being filled up in the name of development contributing to waterlogging, they said.

Around 10 canals of the city have either been

filled up totally or turned into box culverts to construct roads which has aggravated waterlogging, said experts and officials of Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa).

Roads were constructed in Rayerbazar, Rajabazar, Gopibagh and Shyampur Kadamtala by filling up canals and constructing storm water and sewerage lines.

Width of Segunbagicha canal, Dholai Khal-1, Dholai Khal-2, Debdholai Khal and Paribagh canal have been narrowed down for building box culverts. The water under the culverts remains clogged due to lack of maintenance, they said.

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Shades of rain

Underground parking turns underwater parking; upper floor apartments get wet treatment; fishes glide through streets

SHARIER KHAN

Following the overnight torrential rain, some city dwellers realised that reality sometimes may really beat their wildest imagination. For instance, when the residents of an apartment building on Green Road woke up in the morning yesterday they could not believe their eyes that their underground parking had become an underwater parking.

All of their 17 motor vehicles remained gently parked under 10-12 feet water.

After overcoming the initial shock, they began the rescue operation from noon by using a water pump. But it is unlikely that they would be able to get their cars moving earliest in a week.

A similar shock numbed the tenants of the City Heart Market and Capital Apartments in Naya Paltan on a larger scale. The City Heart Market houses a large basement parking for 62 cars and the Capital Apartments 19 cars.

"We tried hard to stop the water from rushing in," said Asad, a car driver who was waiting in a car in the garage of Capital Apartments. "But at 3:00am we conceded defeat and came out abandoning the cars as water flooded the basement."

The drivers of this apartment complex managed to bring out

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PM for joint efforts to combat crime

Asks DCs to work in coordination with SPs, UNOs

M ABUL KALAM AZAD

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday directed deputy commissioners to work in coordination with the superintendents of police and upazila nirbahi officers concerned for improving law and order in the country.

Addressing the opening session of a three-day conference for DCs at the Prime Minister's Office, Hasina instructed them to work to stamp out militancy, extremism and other crimes from the society.

The prime minister also asked them to execute development initiatives and government projects properly remaining above all influences.

"People of the country voted the Awami League to power. So, welfare of the people will have to be the topmost priority. Any negligence

or fault in serving the people will not be tolerated," said Hasina, also president of the ruling AL.

She asked all concerned, including DCs, SPs and UNOs, to regularly attend meetings on law and order at the district and upazila levels and work in a coordinated way.

Hasina termed the law and order reports placed by DCs at the conference "traditional" and asked them to prepare detailed reports and suggestions to successfully handle law and order.

She urged government officials to work for the development of the country. "You do your jobs...the government will see if there are any difficulties," Hasina told the DCs who informed her of the complications in discharging their duties following separation of the judiciary.

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BNP terms Tipai visit a 'picnic'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terming the parliamentary delegation due to visit Tipaimukh dam site in India a 'picnic party', BNP yesterday said the one-party team weakens Bangladesh's stance on the issue and it cannot protect national interest.

"BNP thinks the government should include renowned experts in the delegation as proposed by it (BNP) earlier. Otherwise, the visit will not be meaningful," said Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, member of the party's standing committee.

Reading out a statement at a press briefing at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office, he said, "One-party team's visit without experts will not

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Dhaka to seek jt study on impact of Tipai dam

JS team leaves for Delhi today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh will seek Indian assurance that water from trans-boundary rivers will not be diverted, and will propose a joint study for assessing the impacts of controversial Tipaimukh dam, as Dhaka sends a parliamentary delegation to examine the dam site today.

The delegation also expects to get from the Indian authorities a firsthand appraisal of the geo-environmental impacts of the largest hydroelectric project in the eastern part of that country.

On the eve of departure for India, delegation head Abdur Razzaq also chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on water resources, met the prime minister at the latter's official residence Jamuna, and apprised her of their readiness for the visit.

Emerging from the meeting, Razzaq told The Daily Star that the premier directed him to get a clear picture of the Indian dam plan, for removing all confusions about it.

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Obama praises Bangladesh for women empowerment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US President Barack Obama has praised Bangladesh's role in women empowerment, democracy, and poverty alleviation through micro-credit.

"Many countries in the world can follow Bangladesh's role toward the issues," he said adding, "Bangladesh as a tolerant moderate Muslim country can also play a model role in flourishing democratic rules in the Islamic world."

Talking with Bangladesh Ambassador in the US Humayun Kabir at a White House reception hosted for ambassadors on Monday, Obama said Bangladesh has been playing a pioneer role in different fields, particularly in empowering women.

He especially highlighted various endeavours taken up by Bangladesh like micro-credit to alleviate poverty.

The US president congratulated the people of

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Two children, unattended and oblivious of the potholes and open manholes on this Arambagh street, head to their coaching centre.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Fish output falls short of demand

Country heavily dependent on 'culture' fisheries as 'capture' fish resources diminishing

REAZ AHMAD

National fisheries week begins today with the country's fish resources still falling short of the domestic requirements, and its production heavily dependent on 'culture' fisheries.

Once rich with aquatic biodiversity and sweet water fish species, Bangladesh witnessed a gradual shift in sourcing its fish proteins to culture fisheries from 'capture' fisheries over the last 20 years, fishery officials told The Daily Star yesterday.

Against an annual demand for three million tonnes of fish, the country could produce 2.5 million tonnes in fiscal year (FY) 2007-08. Fisheries and livestock ministry thinks production rose to 2.7 million tonnes in FY 2008-09 (estimate being made).

But more importantly, the country is now getting over 60 per cent of its fish output from culture fisheries whereas only 20 years ago the situation was just the opposite with capture sweet water fish constituting 60 to 70 percent of the total fish production.

Officials noted that capture fish species are the home-grown ones rich in protein and taste, while many of the culture ones are aliens introduced in domestic water bodies, and inferior in both taste and quality. There are about 795 species of fish and shrimp available in the fresh and marine waters of Bangladesh.

As this year's national fisheries week kicks off with a rally in

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Rainwater enters rice godowns

Staple sells at Tk 2-5 a kg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A huge quantity of stocked rice was damaged in the city's Mohammadpur Krishi Market as water entered many godowns during the overnight torrential rains.

Sources said wholesalers were forced to sell their rice at prices ranging from Tk 2 to Tk 5 a kg.

Besides, vegetable brought in from different parts of the country to the wholesale markets in the capital were destroyed by rainwater.

From what was not destroyed in the rains, a huge quantity remained unsold in the markets as the waterlogging in the city as well as the wet day kept most buyers indoors.

As a result prices of the vegetables varied widely across the retail markets in the city, including the three largest

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