



People crouch under plastic sheets and umbrellas as they cross the Buriganga river on boats in the rain yesterday. Heavy rain over the last few days has made commuters' life more difficult.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Down in downpour

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 Khilgaon, Demra, Badda, Kamalapur, Jatrabari and elsewhere in the capital. It usually takes around half an hour for Abdus Sobhan Tarafdar to commute from Keraniganj to his workplace in Farmgate. But yesterday, it took him over two hours. "I had to change several routes to avoid traffic congestions ... though it was weekend," he said. Tired of being stuck in traffic for around two hours, Sobhan left his car at Karwan Bazar and walked to his office.

According to Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority officials, the existing storm drainage can deal with 20-millimetre rainfall at a time. If the rainfall exceeds this limit, it takes hours for water to recede. And between Friday morning and Saturday morning, the city experienced rainfall thrice its drainage system can sustain. During this time, 67mm rainfall was recorded in the capital and 263mm in Cox's Bazar, according to the met department. Light to moderate rain would con-

tinue across the country today due to an active monsoon and low over Bangladesh and adjoining areas, the met office forecast yesterday. However, the intensity of rainfall was likely to come down. Meanwhile in Cox's Bazar, unrelenting rain induced fresh mudslides in Teknaf upazila, claiming two lives yesterday. Bodies of 11 others, killed in flashed floods and other rain-triggered incidents, were recovered. Several lakh people living inside the Dhaka-Narayanganj-Demra (DND) embankment were marooned in one

to four feet deep water, reports our Narayanganj correspondent. The affected were facing an acute crisis of drinking water as fears of a spread of water-borne diseases rose. In Chandpur, flash floods triggered by continuous rain have inundated a large number of houses, roads and croplands in low-lying areas, reports our correspondent there. A few thousand people living in 30 chars [shoals] of the Padma and the Meghna rivers were marooned by floodwaters as the rivers swelled due to rain over the past four days.

Disaster tackling disastrous

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 The remaining ended up getting stuck on plants. The extent of damage to marine life and biodiversity of the Sundarbans in the long term is still unknown. Following the incident the government brought in a UN experts team for damage assessment. But it did not prompt the government to form an oil-spill rescue team that would have the expertise and tools to deal with such situations. It was for the first time such a disastrous incident took place inside the Sundarbans. Therefore the government had some defensive arguments for its failure to handle this situation. Then we had this accident in Boalkhal on June 19. Three rail wagons, each carrying 25,000 litres of furnace oil for Dohazari Peaking Power Plant,

plunged into the canal when a bridge collapsed at Khatibchar of Boalkhal. As the canal is connected to the Karnaphuli river, the spill spread around the area, killing fish and affecting the soil of the adjacent farms. Like the Sundarbans situation was mainly left to the Forest Department, the Boalkhal situation has been left to the rail authorities. The rail authorities are concerned about recovering their wagons, an attempt which spread the oil further as huge amount of oil began gushing out of the one of the containers when they were being pulled out. All the while, locals were seen collecting the oil using utensils. Protecting the water bodies was not certainly in the mind of the government then. It seems that the government is totally unconcerned about the long term environmental impact of an oil

spill in the water. It's as if the destruction of fisheries and their habitats or negative impacts on adjacent vegetable fields are "natural consequences" of the accident. The three rail wagons got more attention because the government can quantify their monetary loss while it cannot quantify the far greater environmental loss because it takes expertise to understand it. The government also does not bother to see what health risk the villagers are becoming exposed to when they are venturing out in those murky waters with utensils to collect the oil. If a man is exposed to oil like the ones photographed in newspapers, he risks delayed effects on his vital organs as he is inhaling the toxic fume while getting himself soaked in the oil for a long time. Who cares about a villager? Well, that man may be spending more money for his

healthcare in the long term. If that's not the government's concern, then what is the job of a government? There was no presence of the environment department and we see no initiative from the government to form a team that has the expertise to handle such a disaster. Usage of oil or other fuels will continue to rise due to the nation's economic development. Therefore, once in a while, there may be an accident that would not just affect the environment, but the livelihood of people and damage food sources. A government cannot be so insensitive as it is acting now. It is its duty to minimise the damage smartly and therefore it should immediately form a rescue team with proper expertise and tools. Utensils are in no way the tools for such rescue operation.

Away yet not away

FROM PAGE 1
 using a mobile device," Shah said while talking exclusively to The Daily Star yesterday. All they need is a smartphone or a tablet with internet. In case of poor bandwidth, the broadcast could be made either with only video or audio. Named after the platform, YakSee, the privately-held corporation owned by Shah and based in Los Gatos, California, is going to launch the fully interactive live broadcasting service in Bangladesh today. YakSee's ability to bring any number of participants to broadcasting makes it different from other tools like Google Hangouts, Skype, Viber or Whatsapp, said the developers. The platform has a huge potential in

citizen journalism. People should be able to broadcast live from spots and others could join in even before the crews of TV stations and news papers could reach there. **YAKANDSEE** During her first visit to Bangladesh four years ago, Leilah saw firsthand Sajida Foundation's programme to educate and support street children. She knew she too could add more value, and along with her sister immediately arranged an English language outreach club (LOC). A group of five to six students started to meet at Sajida's Office in Dhaka every two weeks and connected to as many students in Los Gatos High School using Skype. Seeing his daughter venting frustration whenever there was a strike or

inclement weather or any other reason for the students not making make it to their classrooms, Shah thought of a platform which would allow teachers to fully participate live and interact directly with students. Founder and general manager of leading global IT company Cisco's Safety and Security Systems Business Unit, E-SchoolNet and Zayant Inc, which was subsequently acquired by Apple, Shah conceived the idea of developing a platform that would enable Yak, which means talking profusely, and see. He formed a team of 14 volunteers who worked with him earlier at US firms. YakSee lets anyone, anywhere, to create their own interactive live broadcast from a smartphone or tablet, and then pull members of the audience, from

anywhere in the world, to participate in the broadcast. Both the broadcaster and the invited interviewee could then be seen and heard by the whole audience right from the palm of their hands. **WHY BANGLADESH** YakSee's general release will take place in a few months. But prior to that it is being made available for a controlled limited access programme in Bangladesh specifically to support, and add live interactivity, the excellent distance learning projects that the country is famous for. "Since I am a Bangladeshi, I want to project it as a story of Bangladesh," said an excited Shah, an applied physics graduate from Dhaka University. Some NGOs working in the field of

FINANCING DHAKA-CTG RAIL CORRIDOR UPGRADE Govt today inks two loan deals with ADB

UNB, Dhaka
 Bangladesh and the Asian Development Bank today sign two loan agreements for financing a project to upgrade the 72km Akhaura-Laksam section of Dhaka-Chittagong railway corridor. The deals are \$400 million ordinary capital resources (OCR) and \$105 million Asian Development Fund (ADF), said an official yesterday. Economic Relations Division Senior Secretary Mohammad Mejbahuddin and ADB Country Director Kazuhiko Higuchi will ink the deals on behalf of their sides for the project titled "South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Railway Connectivity: Akhaura-Laksam Double Track". The project will support the

Bangladesh government in upgrading the 72km Akhaura-Laksam section of the Dhaka-Chittagong railway corridor to a double track railway line with modern signalling equipment, according to project documents. The section is a part of a major sub-regional corridor and the Trans-Asian Railway network. The project also aims at improving 11 railway stations and strengthening the capacity of the railway sector in project management and implementation. By increasing the capacity of the major international trade corridor, the project will boost the national economy and facilitate sub-regional cooperation and trade. On October 30, 2013, the project was endorsed by the SASEC Trade Facilitation and Transport Working Group at a meeting in Singapore.

Pakistan holds funeral of Kashmir 'militant'

AFP, Rawalakot
 An alleged Pakistani militant, killed en route to court in Indian-controlled Kashmir, was buried yesterday after his body was returned home by India, officials said. A charged crowd of around 5,000 people including leaders of militant organisation attended the funeral in Rawalakot in Pakistan-administered Kashmir and chanted slogans against India. Officials described the return of Waheed Noor Khan's body as the first time such an occasion had happened. "It has happened for the first time that India has handed over dead body of a militant to Pakistan," Hamid Mughul, a senior administration official in Pakistani-administrated Kashmir, told AFP. The disputed Kashmir region has been divided between India and Pakistan since the two countries gained independence in 1947. Both claim it in its entirety. The deceased Khan was arrested by Indian forces around six years ago while he was crossing the border. Khan was acquitted of three charges in Indian-administrated Kashmir but was killed in a bomb blast on June 20 in the town of Saurpur while being taken to court for the fourth and final case against him. "He was our fighter, he gave his life for liberation of Kashmir, his martyrdom gives a new zeal to all the liberation fighters of Kashmir, we will fight till India runs away," Syed Salahudeen, chief of the United Jihad Council, an alliance of various militant groups fighting against Indian troops said in his address. He said Khan had crossed the border to wedge jihad against India. Anti-India sentiment runs deep across Kashmir, a picturesque

Himalayan region that is the country's only Muslim-majority state. Although several rebel groups have been fighting Indian forces since 1989 for independence or merger with Pakistan, street protests have become the main mode of opposition to Indian rule. **'Al-Jazeera cameraman killed in Syria'** **AL-JAZEERA, Doha** A 19-year-old Al-Jazeera cameraman was killed while covering fighting in the Syrian province of Daraa, the Qatar-based news channel said in a statement. Mohammed al-Asfer "was martyred after being wounded as he was covering the battles in Manshiya" village between the opposition and regime forces, said the statement emailed to AFP yesterday. The cameraman was an activist in Daraa, where the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad's regime first erupted in 2011. Asfer's father was killed in the early days of the uprising and his brother was later killed in regime air strikes on Daraa, Al-Jazeera said. Asfer was himself wounded early in the uprising while covering clashes as a stringer for Al-Jazeera before officially joining the pan-Arab news channel. "This is a sad day in the history of Al-Jazeera. We have lost a young man full of life and hope," said Al-Jazeera General Manager Yasser Abu Hilala. Asfer represented "a complete generation of Syrians who dream of freedom and dignity, and were banned by the regime even from the right to stay alive," he said.

GOLD SEIZED IN LAST 5 YRS Govt deposits 1,794kg with central bank

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
 The government has deposited with Bangladesh Bank 1793.72 kilogrammes (nearly two tonnes) of gold seized in the last five years. Finance Minister AMA Muhith disclosed the information while replying to a lawmaker's query at the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday. Following auction, the money against the gold would be deposited in the state treasury. In the current fiscal year, 491kg gold has been seized, the minister said. Highlighting the possible reasons behind the gradual rise in gold smuggling, Muhith said Bangladesh might have been used as a transit route for smuggling gold to India after the neighbouring country imposed a heavy tax on importing the valuable metal. He said as monitoring against money laundering through hundi, an informal channel of money transfer, was intensified, black money was being used in the crime. Demand for gold inside the country and its low price in the international market could also be the key factors for smuggling gold in.

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