

COX'S BAZAR

Flood affects 6 lakh people

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Over six lakh people in Cox's Bazar have been affected by a recent flood which has damaged houses, roads and other establishments intensively.

People of four upazilas -- Pekua, Maheshkhali, Ramu and Chakaria -- have suffered immensely from the flood. 59 out of 71 unions in the district have experienced the calamity, according to the district administration office.

Around 1.5 lakh houses were damaged and some 59km of around 600km of the coastal embankments was destroyed. About Tk 57 crore would be needed to repair the dams.

Fisheries offices of Pekua and Chakaria said the sector incurred a loss of around Tk 138 crore as floodwater washed fishes of over 8,000 ponds and dighis (big ponds) away. Of the amount, shrimp farmers lost some Tk 90 crore alone.

Mohammad Ali Hossain, deputy commissioner of Cox's Bazar, told The Daily Star that the list of the damage had been prepared on the basis of field-visit information by offices of respective upazila administration.

The district administration opened flood shelters at 141 schools immediately after the calamity hit Cox's Bazar, he mentioned.



A factory in Keraniganj near the Buriganga second bridge fills these cans with unpurified water and sells them as pure drinking water in different parts of the Old Part of Dhaka. While the photo was being taken yesterday, the owner of the factory and the rickshaw-van puller ran away from the scene. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Blogger killers go unpunished

Avijit's father unhappy with govt role

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The killers of bloggers are yet to be tried due to the government's "nonchalant attitude" to the incidents, says Prof Ajay Roy, father of slain writer-blogger Avijit Roy.

"The government did not even protest the murder of bloggers. It seems that the Awami League is not interested in bringing the culprits to book," he told a programme in the capital's Brac Inn Centre yesterday.

At the programme, rights body Article 19 Bangladesh introduced a 12-point "charter" aimed at creating a vibrant and fearless online space in the country.

The "charter" calls for ensuring international standards while putting

any sort of restrictions on expressing opinion online. It also demanded that making use of existing laws to harass bloggers and forcing them to use their real names while writing blogs be stopped.

The government should also ensure security for the bloggers who are facing death threats, it said.

Ajay said the "charter" would be a safeguard against the violence against bloggers. "I hope the government will recognise the charter," he added.

Prof Mahbubur Rahman of Dhaka University's Law department called upon bloggers to be careful so that hate speeches are not spread online.

Three bloggers and writers, including Avijit, were brutally murdered in different places between February and May this year.

Two years after Morsi, Egypt stuck in turmoil

AFP, Cairo

Two years after the army deposed president Mohamed Morsi, Egypt is roiled by brazen Islamic State group attacks in the Sinai Peninsula and brutal government repression that has killed hundreds.

Militant attacks have persisted since the then army chief and now President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi ousted Morsi on July 3, 2013, after mass street protests against the Islamist's single year of divisive rule.

This week's assassination of state prosecutor Hisham Barakat in a Cairo car bombing, followed by spectacular IS attacks that killed dozens in the Sinai, underlined the lack of security and stability despite a wide-ranging crackdown.

Hundreds have been killed, tens of thousands detained and hundreds more sentenced to death after speedy trials in the crackdown targeting Morsi supporters.

Morsi and several leaders of his Muslim Brotherhood movement are among those to have been handed the death penalty.

Jihadists led by IS have killed scores of troops, mostly in the Sinai, challenging Sisi's efforts to restore security and economic stability in the biggest Sunni Arab country.

On Wednesday, the military deployed F-16 warplanes to bombard IS jihadists who battled troops in a North Sinai town after launching a surprise dawn attack on army checkpoints.

Dozens were killed in what was IS's boldest attack yet in the strife-torn Sinai, with militants taking over rooftops and firing rockets at troops.

The army said in a video depicting the attack that militants had pinned IS flags on some buildings to "show that the terrorists had taken over the town," but their attempt was thwarted.

Attacks by insurgents multiplied after the overthrow of Morsi, with Egyptian jihadist group Ansar Beit al-Maqdis pledging allegiance to IS last November.

"There is a complete political failure at all levels amid a return of repression, arbitrary arrests and killings," said activist Mohamed Nabil from the April 6 youth movement that spearheaded

the 2011 uprising against ex-president Hosni Mubarak.

WEARY EGYPTIANS BACK SISI

The crackdown overseen by Sisi initially targeted Morsi's supporters -- a police assault on two pro-Morsi camps in Cairo weeks after his overthrow killed hundreds.

The crackdown was rapidly expanded to include the jailing of secular activists who had not only revolted against Mubarak but backed Sisi in ousting Morsi.

Rights groups accuse the authorities of using the judiciary to suppress dissent.

"The Egyptian authorities have shown that they will stop at nothing in their attempts to crush all challenges to their authority," said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui of Amnesty International.

Barakat's murder and Wednesday's IS attacks infuriated Sisi, who called for fast-track executions of those on death row.

On Wednesday the cabinet passed an anti-terror law to "achieve swift justice and revenge for our martyrs".

Analysts said the government sees most opponents as supporters of the now blacklisted Brotherhood.

"And because many Egyptians are weary of political tumult and frightened by an upsurge of terrorist attacks within Egypt's major cities, they are largely supportive of this crackdown," said Eric Trager of think-tank The Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

The other major challenge Sisi faces is how to revive the economy.

His government's aim is to achieve annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth of seven percent for an economy traditionally driven by tourist revenues.

The vital sector has plummeted, however, with last year's 10 million visitors sharply down on 2010 when 15 million tourists thronged the country, lured by its archaeological sites and Red Sea resorts.

Signs of a recovery are visible, but economists said a fundamental change is needed in the government's thinking.

Sisi hosted an international conference in March, which attracted investment deals worth more than \$36 billion. He is also banking on the new \$9 billion Suez canal expansion project scheduled to be inaugurated on August 6.

Bus tickets 'sold out' within hours

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Joypurhat, Chapainawabganj, Panchagarh, Thakurgaon, Bogra and Naogaon for July 14, 15 and 16.

But the staff at the counters of Shyamoli Paribahan, SR Paribahan and Hanif Paribahan said they had no ticket for July 15 and 16. A ticket seller, however, said he could manage one for a late night trip on July 14 and the seat would be at the back of a bus.

Some ticket-seekers came and bought tickets quite easily as they had references from influential people or bus operators.

Around 3:00pm, a man came to the counter of Shyamoli Paribahan in

Technical area with a slip of paper and asked for tickets to Rajshahi between 8:00am to 10:00pm on July 16.

As he produced the slip of paper before the counter staff, he was asked to choose a starting time between 8:00am to 10:00am. Soon he got the tickets.

Asked about the slip of paper, he said it was from an influential person close to the management of the bus operator.

HIGHER FARES CHARGED

Many people complained bus operators were charging them higher fares than usual.

"I travel from Dhaka to Jhenidah for Tk 450. But now the same bus operator is asking for Tk 550," said Morshedul

Islam, a government employee.

Mesbah Uddin said he bought a ticket to Natore for July 17. He paid Shyamoli Paribahan Tk 560 for the ticket, up by Tk 180 from its regular price.

Yasin Ali paid SR Travels Tk 500 for a ticket to Bogra for July 13. A month ago, the bus operator had charged him Tk 350.

Bus operators, however, claimed that they were charging passengers as per the rate chart fixed by the government.

"Throughout the year, we charge passengers lower fares than the rates set by the government due to a tough business competition. But during the Eid season, we sell tickets as per the government-decreed fares," said Mosharraf Hossain, general manager of Hanif Paribahan.

Ramesh Chandra Ghosh, managing director of Shyamoli Paribahan, blamed the crisis of tickets on its high demand.

Also the vice-chairman of Bangladesh Bus-Truck Owners Association, Ramesh warned that stern action will be taken if anyone is found selling tickets on the black market.

Meanwhile, the state-run Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) will start selling tickets on July 10 and Bangladesh Railway on July 9 for the Eid holidaymakers.

Letter from prison

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reliable sources that intelligence agencies tap my mobile conversations."

Under the law, prison inmates cannot use mobile phones.

If the letter is authentic and Abu Jandal's claim of using a mobile phone in prison is true, then it also exposes a serious security lax in Kashimpur prison.

This correspondent tried to contact the Kashimpur jail authorities over the phone last night, but no one picked up the phone.

Contacted, Brig Gen Syed Iftekhar Uddin, inspector general of prisons, said he did not know if any inmate was using

phones there. "I will look into it."

At a press briefing on Thursday at the Rab headquarters, Rab officials said the banned militant outfit was planning to free its leaders, including Moin, by attacking and cutting the grills of jail. Having realised that it would be risky, it then made plans to ambush prison vans.

In the letter, Moin asked Mainul to change names of some key figures. He even suggested a few changes -- Salman for Mufti Zafar, Toha for Habib, Al Mamun for Altaf and Fedau Islam for Lelin.

Mufti Zafar, Altaf and Habib are

among the 12 arrestees. (They were all placed on three day's police remand yesterday.)

The letter was not addressed to anyone in particular and there was no date on it. At the bottom, there was only a signature, no name.

Rab believes Moin put the letter in a bag and had it delivered to his fellow men through his counsels when he was produced before a court.

Communications from jail is nothing new. There are numerous allegations that inmates with the help of police and jail authorities communicate through phones or letters with their cohorts

Disappointing

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Felani's father Nurul Islam and relatives had testified in the proceedings.

On September 6 that year, the court cleared Amiya of the murder charge, drawing further anger from the victim's family and rights activists of both countries.

Not even the BSF chief "agreed" with the findings of the court. A retrial was ordered after Bangladesh expressed displeasure and took the matter to Indian border force top-brass in New Delhi.

The retrial began only to end with the accused being acquitted again.

"Though very disappointing, it is not surprising at all," noted rights activist Sultana Kamal told The Daily Star last night.

"We didn't have any expectation as it was the same special court that delivered the previous verdict over the Felani killing and got the charge to conduct the review," she said.

"Besides, they [Indian authorities] were delaying the process; they unnecessarily took seven months for the review," said Sultana Kamal, executive director of rights body Ain o Salish Kendra.

"The whole process has given us a message that they are not willing to do anything regarding the case. Even if they do something, it will be just whatever they wish," she said.

Replying to a query, Sultana Kamal said Bangladesh government has legally nothing to do about the verdict as the trial was conducted by an Indian court. If Dhaka wants to do something, it can proceed through diplomatic channel.

She also urged all human rights organisations of both the countries to raise their voice for justice for Felani.

Kurigram Public Prosecutor Abraham Lincoln, lawyer in Felani's case from Bangladesh, said the verdict went against the principles of "human rights and justice."

"Indian judicial system might come



A file photo shows Felani's parents standing in front of her grave in Kurigram.

From January to June this year, 15 were killed in BSF firing while eight were tortured to death and 38 others injured.

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Kurigram Public Prosecutor Abraham Lincoln, lawyer in Felani's case from Bangladesh, said the verdict went against the principles of "human rights and justice."

"Indian judicial system might come

under question because of this judgment. Besides, further crisis in the border management might emerge," he told The Daily Star.

Lincoln said the Indian government could appeal against the verdict. Besides, Felani's father can also appeal to Indian upper court.

Contacted, BGB Director General Maj Gen Aziz Ahmed said he was disheartened. "Like you, I heard of the verdict from different sources and I was also disheartened like you," he said.

The BGB chief said there is no scope for the Border Guard Bangladesh to take any legal step in this regard. "But, like on previous occasions, we will certainly assist Felani's family if they take any further legal step."

Rejecting the verdict, Salma Ali,

executive director of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association, said, "We knew that we would not get justice from this court. That's why, after the first verdict, we filed a petition with the Indian Supreme Court seeking a fair trial and compensation."

Referring to a rape case of a Bangladeshi woman by Indian railway officers, she said the Indian Supreme Court in its judgment on January 28, 2000, handed down 12 years' imprisonment to all the accused and ordered to give the victim Rs 10 lakh in compensation.

"We have brought the reference of the rape case in our petition and hope we will get justice," she said, adding the Supreme Court fixed July 14 for hearing the petition.

Strong quake rocks southern Philippines

AFP, Manila

A strong 6.1-magnitude quake struck off the southern Philippines on Friday, the US Geological Survey said.

There were no immediate reports of damage or casualties after the undersea quake struck at 2:43pm (0643 GMT) some 62 kilometres (38.5 miles) northeast of Surigao city on Mindanao island.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said the quake occurred at a depth of 26 kilometres and was felt on Mindanao's northeast tip as well as on nearby Leyte island.

The Philippines is regularly hit by quakes due to its location along the so-called chain of fire of islands of the Pacific Ocean that were created by volcanic activity.

Father, 3 sons

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Billal and his family embroiled in an angry quarrel with Lal Mia and his family in the morning, which triggered the brutal attack.