

LONGADU ATTACK

Many victim families yet to return home

ANVIL CHAKMA, Rangamati

The indigenous families in Rangamati's Longadu could not return home even a month after the attack on them on June 2. They are living in local schools, Buddhist monasteries and small huts they have built in deep jungles in the hills. They look to the administration for their quick rehabilitation.

Meanwhile, the schools in the affected areas opened on Sunday, but the students from the affected families were yet to join them. Their books and uniforms were also burnt in the attack.

A couple of days ago, this correspondent visited several indigenous families in Manikjor Chhara Government Primary School in Titila village and some other victims from Batuya Para village who took shelter in nearby jungles.

As the school has opened, most of those living there were making tents and other temporary homes with bamboo on the campus.



More than a month after losing their homes in arson attacks in Rangamati's Longadu upazila, the victims are yet to be rehabilitated. They are still living in temporary shelters as seen in this picture taken recently.

PHOTO: ANVIL CHAKMA

Drainage deplorable

FROM PAGE 1

While Bashundhara residential area's storm drainage is managed by the private developer itself, three organisations – Rajuk, Wasa and the city corporation – have developed the drainage facility in Ultra Model Town area.

The storm-water drainage management of the Dhaka-Narayanganj-Demra (DND) and the cantonment areas are being looked after by the Bangladesh Water Development Board and the Cantonment Board respectively.

Khilket has no formal drainage facility. It is mainly dependent on the local canals and other water bodies for rainwater runoff.

However, two canals – each at least 100 feet wide – have to be dug along the 300-foot road there as many of the water bodies had

already been filled up. Wasa MD Taqueen said.

Wasa covers some 400 square kilometres area of the capital. But some 350km² of the surface is paved, preventing the ground from soaking up rainwater, he said.

He also said rainwater would have gone under the ground naturally, instead of flooding the city streets, had 50 percent of the surface been open earth.

Again, the rainwater could easily flow into the canals and ponds if they had not been filled up.

The city's natural drainage system – comprised of a network of 65 canals and four rivers, numerous water retention areas (ponds, ditches), extensive low-lying areas and flood flow zones – is consistently being destroyed in the name of development.

The low-lying wetlands and flood flow zones earmarked in the DAP (detailed area plan) no longer exist as those were filled up, in many cases with official approval, according to officials concerned.

With its current capacity, Wasa's system can drain 45 cubic metres of water per second from the capital. But, it cannot do that as ways for rainwater receding are obstructed, says the Wasa MD.

According to officials concerned, rainfall above 40mm in Dhaka would take at least three hours to recede, as the available pumping facility is capable of draining only 20mm of rainfall.

Wasa says that most of the 26 canals that still exist are clogged with solid waste.

Ten kilometres of canals have been turned into concrete box culverts to

build roads over them, reducing their capacity to absorb rainwater.

Taqueen said the embankments cording off the Dhaka city – meant for flood management – have also become "counterproductive" for the urban storm water disposal and that it required artificial pumping at the cost of public money.

So, setting adequate storm drainage pipes and enhancing the pumping capacity could be a way out, he said.

Surrounded by four rivers, Dhaka was supposed to remain a delta with extensive wetlands all around, show planning documents like Flood Action Plan and the DAP.

According to the plans, the city should have conserved 5,523 acres of water retention area, 20,093 acres of canals and rivers and 74,598 acres of flood flow zones.

Only 20 percent of the total sewage is taken to the Pagla Treatment Plant through sewer lines and most of the rest is just released into the storm drains, posing serious threat to public health.

The Wasa MD also said five more plants would be built by 2025 so that all human wastes from the city were treated.

DESTRUCTION OF WETLANDS, PONDS

Urban planners time and again warn of grim consequences if the flood plains and the wetlands continue to be destroyed for "mindless commercial gains."

However, nobody seems to be paying any heed to the warning. The real estate developers are being allowed to indiscriminately fill up canals, ponds and other water bodies in and around the city, they said.

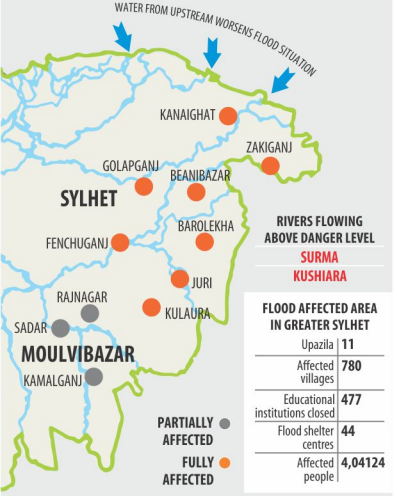
On the other hand, natural low-lying wetlands, flood flow zones, storm water retention ponds, ditches and canals have all been ravaged and filled up blocking the natural passage of rain.

Canals, rivers and water retention areas collect, carry and retain rain water and are connected to each other as a drainage network. But in recent decades, the city canals have been grabbed.

Open space and water bodies help evaporate a third of the rainwater, percolate another third while leaving the rest to run down to retention areas.

Since DAP gazette notification in mid-2010, nearly all of the conservable wetlands have been filled up – some with silent approbation and some with formal government approval, said official sources.

FLOOD-HIT GREATER SYLHET



Relief for victims scanty

FROM PAGE 16

The flash flood damaged Aush crop on 1,200 hectares of land in the last two weeks, said Shahjahan Chowdhury, deputy director of the Department of Agricultural Extension.

Moinul Hassan, a farmer from Kurbanpur area in Kularua upazila, said although many flood-hit farmers were yet to receive any relief materials, a good number of local influential people received some.

Salma Begum, 65, a widow from Uttar Sadipur village in the same upazila, said she went to the union parishad building yesterday to talk to the chairman and members if they could give her some relief aid, but she found the entrance to the building padlocked.

"The flood has destroyed our paddy. We've no other source of income," said Abdul Rahman from Kathakoti village in Barlekha upazila. He also didn't get any relief material yet.

The victims demanded the government supply enough food, medicine, livestock feed and other relief materials to them.

DC Tofal said the district administration started distributing relief

materials in mid-April when the haor areas were inundated in flood water. The administration gave away 950 tonnes of rice and Tk 32,50,000 to victims from mid-April till this week.

He, however, couldn't give the figure about the relief distribution in the last two weeks.

Azizur Rahman, chairman of Moulvibazar district council, said the relief materials were quite scanty given the big number of victims. A large number of farmers in remote haor areas didn't get any aid, he added.

He demanded the government boost the relief materials.

Bijay Indra Sarker, executive engineer of the Water Development Board (WDB) in Moulvibazar, said the overall flood situation remained unchanged yesterday.

The Kusura was flowing 15cm above the danger level at Sherpur point.

BANDARBAN

The overall flood situation in different upazilas of Bandarban improved slightly yesterday. Local WDB officials said the Sangu and Mathamhuri rivers were flowing below the danger level.

Touhidul Islam, secretary of

Bandarban municipality, said they opened 11 shelter centres in different schools of the town. At least 600 families were staying there.

The district administration advised people not to leave the cyclone shelters during rain and asked those living on hill slopes to leave the areas vulnerable to landslides.

According to an estimate of the district administration, more than 1000 families live on the sides of hills.

SYLHET

The flood situation in the district's nine upazilas improved slightly as the floodwater started receding. However, the affected people were still struggling to have pure drinking water and food, reports UNB.

Waterborne diseases, including diarrhoea, were spreading in Zakiganj, Beanibazar, Fenchuganj, Golapganj, Balaganj and Osmaniganj upazilas due to shortage of pure drinking water. People were seen cleaning their utensils and clothes with floodwater.

Sylhet Civil Surgeon Dr Himanshu Lal Roy said several medical teams were deployed to prevent spread of waterborne diseases.

Woman killed in landslide

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

A woman was killed and her daughter was seriously injured in a rain-induced landslide in remote Ghundhum area of Bandarban yesterday night.

The dead was identified as Chenna Katun, 50, from Ghundhum in Naikhangchhari upazila.

Her daughter Amena Begum, 22, was seriously wounded after large chunks of earth fell on her house on a hill slope. Touhid Kabir, officer-in-charge of Naikhangchhari Police Station told The Daily Star.

At least five houses were badly damaged in landslides in Lama, Alikadam and Naikhangchhari upazilas of the district.

Earlier on June 13, nine people were killed in a landslide triggered by heavy rain in Bandarban.

Saudi funding

FROM PAGE 16

Funding from Saudi Arabia has primarily taken the form of endowments to mosques, the report said, which have in turn "played host to extremist preachers and the distribution of extremist literature".

The report also flagged that some of Britain's most serious Islamist hate preachers have "studied in Saudi Arabia as part of scholarship programmes".

In a statement to the BBC, the Saudi embassy in London said the claims were "categorically false".

"We do not and will not condone the actions or ideology of violent extremism and we will not rest until these deviants and their organisations are destroyed," it added.

The Henry Jackson Society called for the creation of new laws requiring mosques and other Islamic institutions to declare foreign funding.

It also demanded the launch of a public inquiry into foreign funding of extremism, putting pressure on the government which has so far refused to publish its own report into foreign funding of terrorism.

Under the strict version of the Islamic faith in Saudi Arabia, women are forbidden from driving, there is no intermingling of the sexes, and cinema and alcohol are banned, while the militant preaching associated with Wahhabism though is accused of inspiring extremists from Osama bin Laden to the Islamic State group.

The oil-rich kingdom is Britain's largest trading partner in the Middle East, with exports of more than £6.5 billion (\$8.4 billion, 7.4 billion euros) in British goods and services to the country in 2015.

HC orders removal

FROM PAGE 1

An HC bench of Justice Salma Masud Chowdhury and AKM Zahurul Haque came up with the order as it disposed of 237 writ petitions that owners of such establishments filed seeking a directive that the government and Rajuk should not evict them without issuing notices and without giving them sufficient time.

Earlier, notices were served to as many as 13,000 business establishments in residential areas under the city corporations across the country.

Owners of several structures filed

writ petitions with the HC, challenging the legality of the Rajuk notice.

The HC then permitted them to continue their business operations until December 31 last year and issued separate rules questioning the legality of the Rajuk notice.

Replying to a question, the attorney general said Rajuk while giving its approval should consider whether the environment of the residential area in question would be damaged.

Owners of some of the business outlets in Gulshan and Banani have already received Rajuk's approval.

Under the master plan of Rajuk, some commercial activities are allowed in the residential areas of Gulshan and Banani for their relevant services, said Ashanul Karim who represented a few petitioners in court.

According to Rajuk, a total of 342 restaurants, 62 residential hotels and guest houses, 16 bars, 56 schools, 3 colleges, 23 universities and 50 hospitals and medical centres have been operating illegally at Gulshan, Banani and Baridhara.

Three of the dead made accused

FROM PAGE 1

Thirteen workers were killed and more than 50 others injured in the explosion at the apparel factory in Kashimpur area on Monday evening.

"Boiler operators Abdus Salam, Ershad Hossain and Mansurul Huq with the help of eight to 10 fellow staffers switched on the boiler despite knowing it was risky and that the period of validity of the boiler had expired," says the FIR.

Police said the accused didn't take permission from the factory authorities for operating the boiler which is tantamount to negligence in discharging duty.

In the FIR, it was mentioned that the factory authorities applied several days ago to the Office of the Chief Inspector of Boilers for inspection of the boiler.

Without informing the authorities, they [the staffers] switched on the boiler to check it before examination by engineers at the Office of Chief Inspector of Boilers."

It also said the factory was scheduled to resume operation on July 4 after a nine-day Eid vacation.

Talking to this correspondent last night, Mahiuddin Faruqi, chairman and managing director of Multifab Ltd, said the factory authorities had sent some workers to resume operation of the boiler.

"We had asked them to work during the daytime only, not at night," he claimed.

The filing of case against the dead boiler operators triggered outrage among their relatives and co-workers.

Venting their anger, several workers at the factory yesterday told this newspaper that the operators switched on the boiler upon instructions from the factory authorities.

They said the factory has strict rules that no one can operate any equipment without permission from the authorities.

"There were more than 200 workers at the factory when the boiler exploded. If the authorities had not given them permission, they couldn't even enter the building and start work in different sections, including dyeing, knitting, maintenance and boiler," said one of the workers, seeking anonymity.

Another worker said, "It requires more than 10 people to operate a boiler. How could police say [in the case] that the three operators decided on their own to check it."

Abdur Hossain, cousin of accused Abdus Salam, said he was surprised to know that Salam's name was in the FIR.

Quoting a name of Salam's family, Anwar said an engineer of

Multifab Ltd had asked Salam to go to the factory on Monday to operate the boiler.

"Doesn't it mean that he operated the boiler on instructions from the factory authorities?"

"I have no way to express my anger. My cousin and 12 other workers were killed because of negligence of the factory authorities as they didn't replace the outdated boiler in time. Instead of ensuring justice for the victims, the dead have been made accused," he added.

Wishing anonymity, a relative of Ershad, another main accused, said the factory authorities and the police showed utter disrespect to the dead by filing a case against them.

"We want justice and punishment to those responsible. But the filing of the case against the dead workers indicates that justice is still far away."

Meanwhile, Ain O Salish Kendra said it learnt from workers of the factory that they had informed the factory authorities about faults in the boiler. But instead of taking any measure, the authorities asked them to continue work.

In a statement yesterday, the rights organisation demanded that the government take strict action against the persons responsible to stop recurrence of such industrial accident.