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Flood worsens in 5 districts

STAR REPORT

Flood situations in Bogra, Jamalpur, Gaibandha, Tangail and Pabna have been deteriorating as the Jamuna and Padma rivers were flowing above the danger level, flooding some new places yesterday.

Many people in different shoal areas of the Teesta and Jamuna basin under four upazila of Gaibandha have been marooned as the Jamuna was flowing 14 centimetres above the danger mark.

During visits to the affected areas, many of the houses were seen under knee-deep water. Sixteen unions of four upazilas have so far been affected by floodwater.

Jalaluddin, chairman of Kapasia Union Parishad in Sundarganj upazila, said eight wards of his union went under water where about 3,000 people had been marooned.

Almost all the village roads went under water, leaving communication suspended. Banana tree rafts were the only means of transport for the affected people, who were taking shelter on dry land and dyke with their cattle and poultry.

Cropland, houses and roads in Shaghata union went under water, leaving the marooned people with no work to feed their families.

The disaster management and relief ministry has allocated 125 maunds of rice and Tk 4 lakh for the affected people.

In Jamalpur, around 40,000 people have been marooned in seven unions in Islampur upazila, four in Dewanganj, three in Sharishabari and two in Melandah.

Kulkandi, Sapdhari, Belgachha, Noarpara and Chinaduli under Islampur and Chukaibari and Chikajani under Dewanganj were affected badly, said local government sources.

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People move belongings to safety as water creeps into their house following floods and heavy rains at Moyurer Char of Shariakandi upazila in Bogra. The photo was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO:
COLLECTED



SOHEL MAHFUZ

A valued hand for 'Neo JMB'

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN
and RAFIUL ISLAM

After the emergence of “Neo JMB” in 2014, its leaders chose Sohel Mahfuz for his expertise in bomb-making and knowledge about arms smuggling routes and smugglers in bordering areas.

Besides, he had a huge following in militant circle.

The leaders of the group requested him to come back from India where he had been hiding since 2006, investigators said yesterday.

Sohel responded to the call and returned in December 2014, leaving his position as the ameer of West Bengal unit of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB). A militant named Solaiman then became the acting chief of the militant organisation.

On his return to Bangladesh, Sohel joined the JMB offshoot -- “Neo JMB” as law enforcers call it - and became a member of its Majlis-e-Shura, according to officials of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of the DMP.

“Neo JMB” was behind the Holey Artisan Bakery siege in Gulshan on July 1 last year. Many operatives of the old JMB joined the new militant group as ordered by Sohel, police say.

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Govt to press on with Rampal

Also to conduct study as per Unesco condition, says PM's energy adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government would continue building the Rampal power plant and alongside do a Strategic Environment Assessment in the country's Southwest as per the condition of Unesco, said Prime Minister's Energy Affairs Adviser Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury yesterday.

“Though there is no such provision [for doing SEA] in our environment act, we will do it for our own sake. By doing so, we will be able to get a clear idea of the long-term environmental impact in the region ...,” he said.

He was speaking about the ongoing Unesco's 41st Session of the World Heritage Committee at a “meet the press” programme held at the Bidyut Bhaban in the capital.

Elahi returned home after leading a Bangladesh delegation in the session being held in Krakow of Poland.

Elahi said, “A total of 12 countries supported Bangladesh's move to construct the coal-fired plant near the Sundarbans after Turkey presented Bangladesh's matter in the meeting.”

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Count your blessings, not the misfortunes

Born without limbs, German youth now strives to inspire others

JAMIL MAHMUD

Born without arms and legs, Janis McDavid, a 25-year-old youth from Germany, spent a large part of his childhood convincing himself that he was like everyone else.

But at the age of eight, it suddenly dawned upon him that he was quite unlike his friends who could all walk on their feet and could do many tasks using their hands.

“It was shocking,” he said, adding it was right then that he decided to be himself. He started to find advantages instead of counting the cons.

Now a business economics student of University of Witten Herdecke, Janis is an inspiring personality who travels across the world to motivate and inspire thousands of people through motivational speeches.

Janis arrived in Bangladesh on Friday on a four-day visit at Unicef's invitation to deliver lectures to underprivileged children.

On Saturday, Janis visited a group of underprivileged children at Mirpur. They sang for him and showed some performances which he really enjoyed.

The Daily Star caught up with him afterwards at the Unicef office in the capital.

The blond German sat sipping coffee, leaning forwards till his lips touched the cup, refusing the use of a straw. For a certain period, Janis had made use of artificial limbs. But in his mind, he could never see them as



Janis McDavid

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HC stays govt suspension of Gazipur mayor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two days after his suspension, the High Court yesterday cleared the way for BNP-backed Gazipur City Corporation (GCC) Mayor MA Mannan to resume his duties.

This is nothing new for most of the BNP-backed City Corporation mayors as Local Government Division has been suspending them followed by the court scrapping the suspension orders and reinstating them.

On Thursday, Local Government Division suspended Mannan for the third time due to a Gazipur court accepting the charge sheet in a corruption case filed against him by the Anti-Corruption Commission.

But yesterday, the High Court stayed the government's suspension order for three months.

The HC also stayed the

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Queen hires first ever black equerry



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A new personal assistant selected by the Queen is to become the first black equerry in British history.

Major Nana Kofi Twumasi-Ankrah, a Ghanaian-born officer who fought in the Afghanistan war, will fill one of the most important roles in the royal household, The Times reports.

As an equerry, Major Twumasi-Ankrah - known as “TA” to his friends - will act as one of the Queen's most-trusted attendants, assisting her with official engagements and welcoming high profile guests to royal residences.

Historically, the role was created for someone to look after the cavalry's horses, but in modern times an equerry is expected to be publicly visible as an aide at the Queen's side.

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ARAB BLOCKADE

Qatar to seek compensation for damages

AFP, Doha

Qatar yesterday announced it was establishing a committee to pursue compensation claims potentially worth billions of dollars over the country's “blockade” by Gulf states.

Attorney General Ali bin Fetais al-Marri said the Compensation Claims Committee would deal with cases including major companies, such as Qatar Airways, and individual Qatari students who have been expelled from the countries where they were studying.

“This committee will receive all claims, whether from the public sector, private sector or individuals,” Marri told journalists at a press conference in Doha.

Potential plaintiffs such as Qatar Airways, banks or individuals will be able to file claims over what Doha has labelled a “siege” in courts at home and abroad,

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The destruction in Mosul's Old City seen yesterday before Iraq announced a final victory in the nearly nine-month offensive to retake Mosul from jihadists.

PHOTO:
AFP

Mosul 'liberated'

Iraq PM declares victory over IS as skirmishes continue in the city

AFP, Mosul

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declared victory in the “liberated” city of Mosul yesterday, his office said, in the biggest defeat yet for the Islamic State group.

Abadi “arrives in the liberated city of Mosul and congratulates the heroic fighters and the Iraqi people on the achievement of the major victory,” his office said in a statement.

The announcement comes after a gruelling nearly nine-month battle to retake the northern city from the jihadists after three years under their rule.

A photo on Abadi's official Twitter account showed him dressed in a black military uniform and cap as he arrived in Mosul to announce the recapture of the city.

The fighting did not seem to be completely over yet, with gunfire still audible in Mosul and air strikes hitting the city around the time the premier's office released the statement.

The declared victory in Mosul marks an epic milestone for the Iraqi security forces, who had crumbled in the face of an IS onslaught across Iraq in 2014.

IS swept across much of Iraq's Sunni Arab heartland in a lightning offensive that year, proclaiming a self-styled “caliphate” straddling Iraq and neighbouring Syria.

But the jihadist group, which is facing twin offensives backed by a US-led coalition in both countries, has since lost large parts of the territory it once controlled.

The Iraqi forces launched their campaign to recapture Mosul in October, seizing its eastern side in January and launching the battle for its western part the next month.

But the fight grew tougher when Iraqi forces entered the densely populated Old City on the western bank of the Tigris River that divides the city.

In recent days, security forces have killed jihadists trying to escape their dwindling foothold in Mosul, as Iraqi units

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