



A man taking his calf to safety in inundated Mohipur village in Rangpur's Gangachhara upazila yesterday. Vast areas in Rangpur, Nilphamari, Dinajpur and Kurigram have gone under water after the flood, triggered by downpour and onrush of water from the upstream, broke several flood protection embankments in the northern districts.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Flood hits 20 districts

FROM PAGE 1 affected... Sazzad added. The country witnessed four severe floods in the last four decades. Of them, the flood of 1998 was the worst when two-thirds of the county remained submerged for nearly three months.

- 18 rivers flowing above danger level
- Around 6 lakh people affected
- 9 more districts could be affected
- 20 people killed in three days

stations, water was flowing above danger level at 25 yesterday, while water level was increasing at 65 stations.

The FFWC also said water level of the Jamuna (Brahmaputra in India) was increasing 50cm a day and water level of the Padma 15cm a day.

Rail communications in Dinajpur, Lalmonirhat and Kurigram had remained suspended since Sunday as railway lines were damaged at several points, a top railway official said.

The rail routes are: Parbatipur-Dinajpur-Panchagarh, Lalmonirhat-Burimari and Teesta junction in Lalmonirhat to Ramna Bazar in Kurigram's Chilmari, he said.

As the floodwater is flowing down to the country's central part, nearly 100 metres of a dam in Manikganj was washed away on Monday.

According to reports from our corre-

spondents in the northern districts, a vast area has been inundated in the region as flood-protection embankments were breached in Saidpur of Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat, Dinajpur, Kurigram, Rajshahi and Badarganj of Rangpur.

Around 1,000 educational institutions in Lalmonirhat, Panchagarh, Nilphamari, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Bogra, Jamalpur, Tangail, Sunamganj and Sylhet have been closed as those have been either flooded or flood-hit people have taken shelter there.

Akkas Ali, 32, of Jagomaner Char village in Kurigram Sadar upazila, said water of the Dharla river partially submerged their village a week ago. His house and all his belongings were washed away.

Another flood victim, Shahima Begum, 40, of Char Madhobrum in the same upazila, said, "I along with my family have been living in the open beside Kurigram-Bhurungamari road for the last two days as my house has been inundated."

However, the flood situation started to improve in Nilphamari and Thakurgaon.

(Our correspondents from Kurigram, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat, Jamalpur, Tangail, Manikganj and Gaibandha contributed to this story)

Talks with CJ started

FROM PAGE 1 entered the Bangabhaban yesterday, Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha left it after exchanging greetings of Janmashtami, marking the birth of Lord Krishna, with the president.

"I did not know that the chief justice would be there," Quader told journalists after the meeting. "I conveyed our party's stance on the Supreme Court verdict to the president. I explained the party's true stance on the verdict," he said.

"I have already talked to the prime minister over the issue and conveyed the [meeting] outcome to the president who is the custodian of the state and appointing the chief justice."

Responding to a query whether the government would file a review petition over the verdict, Quader said, "Talks with the chief justice has already started and it will continue. I don't want to comment on the matter before the discussions end."

On Saturday night, Quader met the

CJ at his official residence on Hare Road. The AL leader met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who is also the president of the party, the next day.

According to AL insiders, the party would file a review petition with the Supreme Court, seeking to expunge some of the remarks, especially those on Bangabandhu and parliament, by the chief justice in the verdict.

The party would be able to file the review petition within 30 days of the release of the full verdict. The Supreme Court would go into its annual vacation on August 25 and the party would file the review after the vacation ends on October 1, said the insiders.

Law Minister Anisul Huq also said the government would file the review petition.

On the other hand, the AL-led 14-party alliance demanded cancellation of the observations and asked for a review of the verdict. Terming the verdict "irrelevant", "unacceptable"

and "ill-motivated", the 14-party vowed to face it legally and politically.

Referring to the verdict, Quader, at a programme at Palashi in the capital yesterday afternoon, said there might be some concerns over the verdict but there was no reason to get scared.

"I have held a meeting with the chief justice over the observation of the verdict. Taking permission from our party president, we have informed our party's stance to the chief justice. Today, again on the party president's advice, I informed the honourable president what I had told the chief justice on the observation of the verdict," Quader, also the road transport minister, said.

Meanwhile, Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan came down heavily on the chief justice yesterday.

Speaking at a programme in Madaripur, he said the CJ "humiliated 16 crore people of the country and undermined parliament through the verdict".

16 agencies

FROM PAGE 16 of the 16 hajj agencies at the camp yesterday.

"All but three agencies have pledged to complete all procedures within August 26. We have asked the three hajj agencies to appear before us tomorrow [today] and submit evidence of ticket booking," he added.

Quoting top officials of the Bangladesh Hajj Mission in Saudi Arabia, the religious affairs secretary said 1,26,067 out of the total 1,27,198 pilgrims have already applied for visa. Of them, 1.20 lakh have received visas so far.

"I strongly believe there will be no problem in sending all the pilgrims to Saudi Arabia," he added.

Earlier, the religious affairs ministry had issued an ultimatum to 367 hajj agencies to complete all the procedures by August 10 to send pilgrims to Saudi Arabia.

Meanwhile, Civil Aviation Minister Rashed Khan Menon expressed concern over sending all the pilgrims to Saudi Arabia within the August 26 deadline.

According to him, around 15,000 were yet to get visas due to irresponsibility of a section of hajj agencies.

He was talking to reporters at the Hajj Camp after holding a meeting with top Biman officials at its headquarters in the city's Kurmitola.

Menon said stern actions would be taken against the hajj agencies if they

failed to secure visas and send pilgrims to Saudi Arabia within August 26.

"We will not spare those hajj agencies who showed negligence, non-cooperation and created obstacles to sending pilgrims to Saudi Arabia.... We will take legal actions against the hajj agencies concerned."

About negligence of a section of hajj agencies, the minister said they heard that many tour operators rented houses and hotels in Saudi Arabia from August 20. That's why they were not sending pilgrims despite having visas.

"If it is true, then Biman will be under tremendous pressure to operate additional hajj flights to tackle the heavy rush of pilgrims from August 20 due to shortage of aircraft," he said.

"That's why we have asked the hajj agencies to send those pilgrims who have got visas."

Menon informed reporters that Biman Bangladesh Airlines would apply to the Saudi Arabian authorities to extend the pre-hajj flight operation deadline from August 26 to August 28.

The national carrier would also request them to grant it permission to operate seven additional hajj flights, he added.

The Saudi Civil Aviation Authority already gave permission to Biman to operate 14 additional hajj flights as the airline cancelled 22 flights which could have carried over 8,800 pilgrims.

Menon said, if necessary, Biman

would cut the number of flights or cancel flights on different routes, including Dubai, Kathmandu, Kuala Lumpur, Muscat and Riyadh, to complete operations of hajj flights.

As of 8:00am yesterday, 62,508 pilgrims were sent to Saudi Arabia for hajj.

Kenya's Odinga mulls next move on disputed election

AFP, Nairobi

Kenya's opposition leader Raila Odinga was weighing his next move yesterday to contest an election he claims was rigged after defying pressure at home and from abroad to take his complaints to the courts.

The 72-year-old insists he was the rightful winner of a "stolen" election last week and has urged his supporters to stay away from work yesterday to mourn the deaths of those killed in angry protests against the re-election of President Uhuru Kenyatta.

However, after nearly a week in limbo in which businesses remained shut and workers stayed home, Nairobi largely came back to life yesterday with many unable to afford any more time away from their livelihoods.

Australia drops asylum-seeker secrecy laws

AFP, Sydney

Australia is scrapping secrecy laws designed to stop whistleblowers from speaking out about alleged abuse at offshore asylum-seeker detention camps, in a move which campaigners yesterday hailed as a victory for free speech.

Asylum-seekers who try to reach Australia by boat are either turned back or sent to remote camps in Nauru and on Papua New Guinea's Manus Island.

Refugee advocates and medical professionals have long criticised conditions in the camps, where some detainees have been held for years.

The secrecy provisions were introduced in 2015, making it a jailable offence for immigration department workers to speak out about conditions in the centres.

But Immigration Minister Peter Dutton last week moved an amendment to the law to restrict the definition of unauthorised disclosures to information relating to the national or public interest.

He told parliament last week the 2015 changes had "not kept pace with the developments in the modern border environment".

"The definition of the information to be protected has been refined to include only certain kinds of information" such as national security and defence, Dutton added.

The previous provisions were set to be challenged in the High Court by rights group Doctors for Refugees, which welcomed the government's U-turn.

"This is a stunning victory for anyone in Australia who believes people who are concerned about abuse or neglect should be allowed to speak out," Barri Phatarfod from Doctors for Refugees said in a statement yesterday.

312 dead

FROM PAGE 16 4:30 am by rain beating down on the mud house they occupy, which was by then submerged by water.

She managed to escape by climbing onto the roof.

"We have lost everything and we do not have a place to sleep," she told AFP.

PILES OF CORPSES

Local media reports said a section of a hill in the Regent area of the city had partially collapsed, exacerbating the disaster.

Other images showed battered corpses piled on top of each other, as residents struggled to cope with the destruction.

Meanwhile disaster management official Candy Rogers said that "over 2,000 people are homeless," hinting at the huge humanitarian effort that will be required to deal with the fallout of the flooding in one of Africa's poorest nations.

Freetown, an overcrowded coastal city of 1.2 million, is hit each year by flooding during several months of rain that destroys makeshift settlements and raises the risk of waterborne diseases such as cholera.

Flooding in the capital in 2015 killed 10 people and left thousands homeless.

Sierra Leone was one of the West African nations hit by an outbreak of the Ebola virus in 2014 that left more than 4,000 people dead in the country, and it has struggled to revive its economy since the crisis.

About 60 percent of people in Sierra Leone live below the national poverty line, according to the United Nations Development Programme.

2 fraudsters

FROM PAGE 16 conference at the Rab Media Centre in the city's Karwanbazar, Tuhin said the detainees, both mobile phone technicians, used to target their clients, mainly young girls, expatriates and their relatives.

According to the Rab, the two transferred all the mobile phone data of their targeted clients to their phones. If there was any IMO account on the phone, the technician would install a mirror account into his phone using a verification code. Thus, the same IMO account would remain open in both the phones.

The detainees used to follow chat sessions and download private data like photos and videos. Later, they would set traps to blackmail the victims, Tuhin told journalists.

If any of the victims was offline, the technician would impersonate the original IMO user to chat with his/her relatives or friends abroad and would trick them into sending money on an urgent basis through mobile banking platforms, he added.

They would also hack the accounts of the original users' friends or relatives by using the same trick.

The Rab official said the fraudsters became successful in around 70 percent cases as most of the phone users lacked enough knowledge on IT.

"Although there are very few complaints about such incidents, we find the number of victims is very high following the arrest of any fraudster," he added.

The Rab also claimed to have seized two computers, nine mobile phones and numerous porn videos from the arrestees.

18 killed

FROM PAGE 16 A government statement described the latest deadly shooting as a "terrorist attack", while President Roch Marc Christian Kabore condemned it as "a despicable attack that has Ouagadougou in mourning."

"The fight against terrorism is a long-term struggle," he said in a Twitter message.

A police officer who spoke to AFP on condition of anonymity cited witnesses as saying at least two assailants arrived on a motorcycle around 9:00 pm (2100 GMT) on Sunday armed with Kalashnikovs, and opened fire on the Istanbul restaurant.

A waiter also said he saw "three men arrive on a 4X4 vehicle around 9:30 pm, get off the vehicle and open fire on customers seated on the terrace".

Dandjinou had earlier said that "some people were held" by the assailants and that "some were released", but gave no further details.

He said the 18 victims were of different nationalities, both Burkinabes and foreigners.

Turkey said one of its citizens was among the dead, while Paris prosecutors said at least one French national died in the shooting, which French President Emmanuel Macron condemned as a "terrorist attack."

Security forces launched a counter-assault at around 10:15 pm against the assailants who were hiding in the building, the police officers said.

The shooting was intense at first and then sporadic, an AFP journalist at the scene reported.

Video footage posted on Twitter showed people fleeing, as shouting and gunshots are heard. Armed officers in uniform are then seen walking towards the attack site.

The gunfire ended around 5:00 am yesterday, according to an AFP journalist who was near the restaurant.

OVERWHELMED

The wounded were taken to Yalgado Ouedraogo hospital.

"We are overwhelmed," one surgeon told AFP on condition of anonymity.

"We have received about a dozen wounded, including three who have

died. The condition of the other wounded is critical. Three of them are currently being operated on."

Burkina Faso, a poor landlocked nation bordering Mali and Niger, has seen a string of attacks claimed by jihadist groups in recent years.

In December 2016, a dozen soldiers were killed in an assault on their base in the north of the country. And in October that year there was an attack that killed four troops and two civilians.

In the January 2016 assault, AQIM gunmen attacked the Splendid hotel and the Cappuccino restaurant opposite, both popular with Westerners.

AQIM named the three gunmen responsible and published photos of them, dressed in military fatigues and wielding weapons.

The hotel and cafe attack came weeks after jihadists claimed an assault on a top hotel in Bamako, capital of neighbouring Mali, that killed 20 people.

There have also been kidnappings -- of Burkinabes as well as foreigners. An Australian and a Romanian, abducted in 2015, are still being held hostage by Islamist groups affiliated with al-Qaeda.

Turkey policeman stabbed to death by IS suspect

AFP, Ankara

A policeman was stabbed to death in Istanbul on Sunday by a suspected member of the Islamic State group who had been arrested for planning a suicide attack, Turkish media said.

The assailant stabbed the officer at around 11 pm (2000 GMT) as he was being taken out of a patrol car near a police station following his arrest, according to the privately run Dogan news service.

The attacker, who was detained on suspicion of planning to carry out a suicide bombing, was then shot dead by police, the pro-government Anadolu agency reported.

Student trafficking

FROM PAGE 16 The team met up with agents while posing as factory managers looking for cheap labour, infiltrated the colleges, and followed the trail all the way to Dhaka.

One agent told our journalist he works for a "Datuk" who owns a college in Kuala Lumpur, and that he has trafficked over 8,000 Bangladeshi students to Malaysia.

"Bangladeshi students are easy and quick money," said the agent, who is Nepali.

"Bring in 200 or 300 of them, then distribute them (among the colleges), then you'll make your money."

Many of these victims live and work not far from the glittering lights of the Klang Valley's major towns, hidden and suffering.

"Our living conditions here are worse than the garbage dumps in the slums of Dhaka," said one victim, now a construction worker living in a makeshift ghetto in Cyberjaya.

His family had to take a loan to pay for his "studies" in Malaysia, for which they pay Tk 21,000 (RM 1,100) a month in instalments.

He now earns around RM 1,500 a month.

"In my college, there were around 200-250 Bangladeshi students, but only 30-35 have renewed their visas (to continue studying)."

"Where the rest are, we don't know," he added.

During the course of its investigation, RAGE met over 30 student traf-

ficking victims, and found almost 30 colleges that showed signs of having worked with student traffickers.

When a RAGE journalist posing as a prospective student went to one of these colleges, an employee quietly warned him against signing up.

"If our own people [Malaysians] come, I'll tell them not to study here," she said.

"Look around, the whole place is empty! I wouldn't want any Malaysian students stuck here."

An earlier report by The Star (Malaysia) revealed a large number of foreign students arriving through dubious colleges in 2013.

The Ministry of Higher Education revoked the international student licenses of four such institutions in 2015.

Since then, a further 26 institutions have had their licenses revoked or not renewed.

Though many of these colleges can no longer enrol international students, they continue to operate by channelling students to other affiliated colleges.

"We do have something like collaboration, a group of companies," said the Nepali agent.

"We have a language centre and four colleges, all are like 'joint-venture' companies."

He also claimed that he enrolled 3,000 Bangladeshi students at one of these colleges, but RAGE found its campus to be nearly deserted.

"I came here to study. Only to study. But now, my dream is dashed," said one victim.

No progress

FROM PAGE 2 Canada to return convict Noor Chowdhury.

Noor was the man who had shot Bangabandhu dead.

"The prime minister sought his [Noor's] extradition," PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim told a media briefing at the PMO and the envoy in reply said he would convey Bangladesh's message to the Canadian authorities.

Asked about the other fugitives, Law Minister Anisul Huq said there was no such specific information about the remaining four, who are the self-confessed killers of Bangabandhu.

"But efforts are on to locate them," he observed.

A taskforce comprised of ministers and high officials of the foreign, law and home ministries was formed in 2010 to locate and bring back the six killers.

"I am sure that we will get them back. As long as we don't get them back, our efforts will continue. We know the whereabouts of the two killers and we are in discussion to remove the bottlenecks regarding their deportation," the law minister told The Daily Star on August 11.

Replying to a question, he said, "We have appointed two law firms in the USA and Canada for lobbying to bring the killers back to the country."

The Bangladesh government has already written letters to "every" country, seeking assistance in this regard. It has also made a global appeal in bilateral, regional and international forums to track down the culprits, said foreign ministry officials.

Highly placed sources at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and foreign ministry said there was constant contact with the US Department of State and also with the Justice Department for the deportation of Rashed Chowdhury.

"Since President Trump has declared that no criminal will be allowed to stay in the USA, we hope that killer Rashed Chowdhury will not be allowed to stay here too," said a Bangladeshi diplomat in Washington claiming that Rashed was staying in the USA concealing his identity.

The diplomat also claimed that a former ambassador in Washington during the previous BNP regime gave a nod to the US administration to give Rashed political asylum.

Asked when he got the asylum status, the diplomat said, "You see, it takes time to get the process completed. It's not clear when Rashed got political asylum and the US side never discloses any information about the killer."

Dhaka came to know about Rashed's status only when US Ambassador to Bangladesh Marcia Bernicat in August 2015 officially informed Dhaka that Rashed was in the US after securing political asylum.

Until that time, the US, which had long been assuring Bangladesh to consider the extradition of Rashed, apparently suppressed the information.

On the possibility of early extradition of Rashed from the US, the Bangladeshi diplomat said, "There is assurance from the Trump administration to look into the matter, but no legal step has yet been initiated to send him back to Dhaka."