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Over 1,000km roads damaged by flood

RHD seeks Tk 150cr for immediate patch-up work, Tk 480cr for restoration; experts blame poor planning for huge damage



TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The Roads and Highways Department wants Tk 480.57 crore to properly repair about 1,000km of flood-damaged roads and highways.

On top of this, it wants another Tk 150 crore for patch-up work to make those "usable", RHD officials said.

"A proposal in this regard is being sent to the [road transport and bridges] ministry today [Monday]," said Abul Kalam Azad, superintendent engineer of RHD's

maintenance circle, yesterday.

The request for fund is in addition to the Tk 2,550 crore the government allocated to the RHD in fiscal 2019-20 for repairing and maintaining roads, Azad said.

"We want the additional amount as emergency funds since there is no special fund for such a disaster," he told this correspondent.

According to the Flood Control Room set up at the RHD headquarters in Dhaka, 1003.9km of roads and highways had been

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Salma, a househelp, fanning her seven-month-child with a plastic plate to give the baby some comfort inside their burnt shanty at the capital's Mirpur Chalanika slum yesterday. Salma, her garment worker husband and their two children were at their village home when a fire ravaged the slum on Friday night. The family returned yesterday and found that they lost almost everything to the flames.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Govt to feed students from January

Cabinet approves draft of National School Meal Policy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will start providing meals to primary school students from January.

The cabinet yesterday approved the National School Meal Policy-2019 draft to that end.

Primary and Mass Education Additional Secretary Gias Uddin Ahmed said meals will be provided to all 1.4 crore students of 66,000 government primary schools in phases by 2023.

The move is designed to increase attendance and reduce the rate of dropouts, as well as to ensure that children get at least 30 percent of their daily-required calorie intake at school.

The primary and mass education ministry, however, is still in a dilemma about whether to provide hot meals or fortified biscuits as school meals.

To prepare hot meals, each school will require a kitchen as well as manpower, including a cook, said ministry officials.

While the problem with fortified biscuits is that students cannot eat them at one go. They would rather need to eat them in intervals and drink a lot of water afterwards.

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AUG 22 REPATRIATION OF ROHINGYAS

Doubts linger over voluntary return

PORIMOL PALMA and MOHAMMAD ALI JINNAT

The much-awaited Rohingya repatriation is set to begin on Thursday, around 10 months after the first attempt failed as the refugees didn't choose to go back.

A list of 3,450 Rohingyas, who have been cleared by the Myanmar government for return, was shared with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in Bangladesh earlier this month so that the agency could assist in checking whether the refugees wished to return voluntarily.

The UNHCR, as part of its standard practice, asks the refugees to come forward and discuss matters relating to repatriation. Officials in a confidential setting meet those who express interest in going back.

"Those who express a wish to return will be invited for a second interview to ensure the voluntariness of their decision. They will be asked to complete a voluntary repatriation form," said UNHCR Spokesperson Joseph Tripura.

Through this, the UNHCR will aim to ensure that any return to Myanmar is voluntary, which is one of UNHCR's most fundamental protection responsibilities, he told The Daily Star.

Hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas poured into Bangladesh two years ago amid a military crackdown on them in Myanmar's Rakhine state.

"UNHCR and its partners are now reaching out to the Rohingya refugee community with information regarding the most recent developments," Tripura told The Daily Star recently.

Asked if any list of the Rohingyas, who volunteered to return, has been prepared, he said, "The work is going on."

Bangladesh's Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) Mohammad Abul Kalam said Bangladesh was prepared to start the repatriation anytime.

"We are waiting for the list [from the UNHCR] of those who volunteer to return to Myanmar," he told The Daily Star on Sunday.

The government is working to start the repatriation on August 22.

The RRCR said as per rules, the names of those who volunteered to return will have to be handed over to the Myanmar authorities. Besides, the returnees will go through medical check-ups and will be taken to transit camps near the Bangladesh-Myanmar border.

Bangladesh authorities have set up two transit camps -- one on the banks of the Naf river near Keruntali of Nayapara in Teknaf and the other near Ghumdhum Border area of Naikkhangchhari in Bandarban.

The Rohingyas who agree to return will

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ICC seeks views from victims

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The International Criminal Court has sought views of the Rohingya victims on the crimes committed against them in Myanmar.

"As per the ICC's legal framework, the victims of the alleged crimes committed against the Rohingya population in Myanmar have the right to submit 'representations', i.e. to provide their views, concerns and expectations, to the ICC judges who are considering the prosecutor's request," the ICC said in a statement.

On July 4, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Fatou Bensouda, requested authorisation from Pre-Trial Chamber III of the court to initiate an investigation into alleged crimes against the civilian Rohingya population in Myanmar since at least October 9, 2016, it said.

This is not an application process for participation in court proceedings or for

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Right tests at right time a challenge

Say doctors as many patients come late for diagnosis

DENGUE OUTBREAK				
NEW CASES IN LAST 24 HRS	TOTAL DENGUE CASES	OUTSIDE DHAKA	DEATH	UNDERGOING TREATMENT
1,615	54,797	21,273	40 Unofficially 104	6,733
SOURCE: DGHS				

HELEMUL ALAM and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Jobayer Islam, who had been running a high fever for two days, was taken to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital on August 14. Doctors there advised that he take an NS1 test, which is done to detect dengue.

The test, however, showed he did not have dengue. His parents, residents of the capital's Shekherterk, took him home, but a day later his condition started deteriorating. His temperature rose, while he also began vomiting and having severe abdominal pain.

After two days, he was admitted to the same public hospital in critical condition. Doctors there then conducted IgM/ IgG tests -- two antibody tests -- which confirmed the boy had dengue.

HM Nazmul Ahsan, associate professor at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, said rapid diagnostic tests, such as NS1 kits, may have lower sensitivity in terms of detection if 72 hours have passed since a fever began.

He said there were many cases of patients testing negative for dengue initially, but other tests, like complete blood count (CBC) or IgM, later showed the presence of the infection.

Kankar Ghosh, epidemiologist of Dhaka Shishu Hospital, said around 50 percent of the patients come to hospital after running a fever for three days, which makes the NS1 kits ineffective.

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RAWHIDE TRADE

Merchants start sale after one week's hiatus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Merchants started selling rawhide to tanners yesterday, a day after the FBCCI assured them of resolving their arrears of Tk 400 crore.

"We started selling rawhide to the tanners from today [yesterday]. Tanners have been buying rawhide at government-fixed rates," said Delwar Hossain, president of Bangladesh Hide and Skin Merchants' Association.

He said they were hoping to sell nearly 1 crore pieces of rawhide of animals which were sacrificed across the country during the Eid-ul-Azha last week.

The sales of rawhide, which would continue for the next three months, would be worth Tk 2,000 crore, Delwar told The Daily Star.

Earlier, tanners had assured that they would pay a significant portion of Tk 400 crore arrears to the merchants. Both the merchants and tanners agreed to accept the FBCCI-brokered decision in this regard.

The merchants were supposed to start selling rawhide on Saturday, five days after the Eid, but it was delayed over the arrears issue.

However, tanners and merchants estimated that some 35 lakh pieces of rawhide out of more than 1 crore pieces

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Sumi Begum attends to her son Rabbi at Mugda General Hospital in the capital yesterday. Rabbi was admitted to the hospital with dengue on Thursday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Girl gang-raped as family refused to withdraw case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushiya

A gang of three kidnapped a sixth grader from her house and gang-raped her in Chuadanga's Alamdanga upazila on Saturday night, police said.

Police arrested one of the accused Laltu Hossain, 35, on Sunday while the two others -- Shariful Islam, 40, and Raju, 30 -- are on the run, said Asaduzzaman, officer-in-charge of Alamdanga Police Station.

The victim's family filed a case against the three in July this year over assaulting their daughter on her way to madrasa, the OC said.

Since then, the culprits had been forcing the family to withdraw the case, the OC said, adding that they also threatened the family with dire consequences if they acted otherwise.

On the night of the rape incident, the trio broke into the victim's house around 11:00pm and tied up her mother before abducting the girl, the OC said, adding that the victim's father was not in the house at that time.

They took the girl to the bank of Mathabhanga river and raped her, OC Asad added.

Police rescued the girl from the spot the next morning and sent her to Chuadanga Sadar Hospital for medical tests.