Vast areas of coastal region inundated

Incessant rains trigger flash-flood; situation may deteriorate further in Barishal, Khulna

STAR REPORT

Flashfloods caused by incessant rain inundated vast areas in the country's coastal regions in the last couple of

The situation may further deteriorate today in Barishal and Khulna, read a bulletin of Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC).

The report added that the heavy downpour may occur in the country's

south-western region. On the other side, the situation may improve in the Chattogram region, read the bulletin that was released at 9:00am yesterday.

Our correspondents from different districts reported on the flood situation.

In Cox's Bazar, some four lakh people in eight upazilas have been marooned due to the flood. Of them, two lakh are residents of Chakaria upazila, the worst flood-affected area.

The water levels of the Bakkhali and the Matamuhuri rivers in Cox's Bazar raised abnormally due to the rain and hilly water flow from upstream.

Households, farmlands, ponds, business institutions, toilets and tube-wells in Chakaria have been submerged.

road Even, communications collapsed. People were travelling from one village to another by boat.

Many portions of Cox's Bazar-Teknaf raod, Eidgaon-Eidgor road and Ramu-Moriccha road have gone under water.

Flood-hit people have taken shelter at safe places. People are suffering from an acute shortage of drinking water and food.

Few flood protection dams in some places in Chakaria were breached due to excessive water flow from upstream hills, said officials of the Water Development Board (WDB).

"Now, we are afraid that our municipal protection dam may collapse any time," said Chakaria municipality Mayor Alamgir Chowdhury.

People are afraid of a landslide as incessant rain has been continuing since last Monday, said locals.

At least 24 people have so far died in a landslide, heavy rains and hilly water flow since Monday in Cox's Bazar.

In Barishal, low-lying areas of Bhola, Patuakhali and Barguna districts have been inundated as the water levels of adjoining rivers have raised due to heavy rains, excessive flow of water from upstream, high tide and gusty

"People of our area are passing hard days as our residents and farmlands have been submerged and fish enclosures have been washed away," said Ershad Machhi, a resident of Dhania area of Kukri-Mukri union under Char Fashion upazila of Bhola.

"The weather is so rough that we cannot go for fishing," said Alauddin Majhi, a fisherman of Tulatuli village

In Satkhira, low-lying areas in three upazilas have been submerged due to flashflood. Crops and vegetables have been damaged while many fish

"There were around 68,000 fish enclosures in our upazila. Some 70 to 80 percent of them have been washed away," said Moshiur Rahman, the district fisheries officer.

"I cultivated Aman paddy in two bighas of land. But all of my paddies have been damaged by floodwater,' said Drubojoti Sarker, a farmer of Munshiganj village in Shyamnagar

People of some areas are facing electricity outages due to damaged wire

correspondents Our Cox's Bazar, Barishal and Satkhira

No question of their integration will send those to the World Bank,"

citizenship in Myanmar. "We asked the World Bank and the United Nations to create conditions in Rakhine so that Rohingyas can return at the earliest," the foreign minister

FROM PAGE 1

Asked about the proposed Refugee Policy Review Framework, Mercy Tembon, World Bank country director for Bangladesh and Bhutan, said it is supporting Bangladesh with \$590 million grant financing to address the needs of Rohingyas until their safe and voluntary return to Myanmar, and to minimize the impact on the host communities.

In an email reply, she said the Refugee Policy Review Framework aims at evaluating the effectiveness of the World Bank's support to refugee hosting countries across the world in their efforts to strengthen relevant policies and institutions to best manage the situation.

for Bangladesh "The review summarises the existing policies, and implementation," practices Tembon said.

A finance ministry official said the WB wrote a letter to the Economic Relations Division early June and copies of it were sent to several ministries, including foreign affairs and disaster management, for opinions.

"We are collating the opinions and

he said, adding that the last date for submitting opinions was July 31, but it was extended by a few days.

According to the WB, it reviews the

refugee policy framework every three ears before mobilising fund under International Development Assistance (IDA) window, which provides grants for the refugee hosting countries. Presently, 16 refugee hosting countries are provided grant under this window.

Different countries have different policies on refugee management, but the global lender only looks at how effectively the fund is being used.

For example, Pakistan provides mobile SIM cards to refugees to track them. Some countries allow freedom of movement and some others don't. That is the policy of particular countries, officials said.

They said the World Bank also in its review policy framework wrote that the fund is used not only for the refugees but also for the local host communities.

Foreign Minister Momen said the international community had recommended giving Rohingyas freedom of movement, scope for jobs and other privileges.

"We cannot do it. We call upon the world leaders, and the UN to ensure quick repatriation of the Rohingyas. We already have enough burden to bear,'



Lawmakers, government authorities and peoples' representatives of different local government bodies were distributing relief materials among the flood-hit people.

in Bhola Sadar upazila.

enclosures were washed away.

by the gusty wind.

contributed to this report.

All the major government hospitals treating Covid patients, including Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, Mugda Medical College Hospital, Kurmitola General Hospital, DMCH, Kuwait-Bangladesh Friendship Hospital, and DNCC Dedicated Hospital have been overwhelmed over the past few days.

help people cross the road safely.

Shipra are being refused admission to

public hospitals in the capital as those

are already overburdened with Covid

infections keep surging, the hospitals

find themselves in a major crisis: most

of those don't have any empty beds

while many others are treating patients

And hundreds of patients arriving in

the capital from different districts are

suffering as they are denied admission

to hospitals already stretched to their

limits. They are left with no choice but

and non-government hospitals in the

capital for Covid patients, according to

the dashboard of Directorate General

Of those, only seven hospitals,

including public and private ones, had

around 50 percent beds available till

of Health Services (DGHS).

At present, there are 64 government

beyond their capacity.

to return home.

As the number of Covid deaths and

Most of these hospitals are taking new patients only when beds become vacant after admitted patients die or are discharged, said officials concerned.

There are 40 private hospitals in the city which are treating Covid patients. However, the bed occupancy rate in all of them was nearly 100 percent as of Thursday, according to the DGHS data.

Visiting different hospitals across the capital in the last couple of days, these correspondents saw long queues of patients and lines of ambulances outside the healthcare facilities. The patients, many of them in ambulances, were seeking admission, but there was hardly any space inside.

Tanjila Begum, a 22-year-old Covid patient from Shariatpur, is one of those who had to return home failing to get admission at the DMCH.

Her chest CT scan report showed that her lungs were infected. When she started having difficulties in breathing, her father Anwar Gain panicked.

"There is no hospital in Shariatpur where my daughter can get the oxygen support she needs. The nearby Faridpur Medical College Hospital is

Hospitals in city overwhelmed overcrowded and does not have any because a number of hospitals have ICU facility. So, we rushed to Dhaka," Anwar said.

A newly constructed boat shaped footbridge is ready to be opened to pedestrians in the capital's Dholaipar

area. The structure has been built on the Dhaka-Mawa highway under the supervision of Bangladesh Army to

He further said he first took his daughter to Mugda Medical College Hospital, only to find that all the beds there were already occupied.

"Then I brought her to Dhaka Medical College Hospital and have been waiting here for around 24 hours," said an utterly frustrated Anwar with her daughter gasping for breath inside an ambulance. Later, they headed back to Shariatpur.

An official at the DMCH's admission department said they were struggling to handle the rush of coronavirus patients.

"We are currently taking new patients only when a seat becomes vacant...

DMCH Director Brig Gen Nazmul Haque said, "We have a total of 705 dedicated beds for Covid patients, whereas we are accommodating more than 730 patients now. We exceeded our capacity much earlier.

"Now, we are treating patients at the outdoor department, and referring them to other hospitals. A new patient can get admitted only when an admitted patient dies or is discharged."

A notice hung at the entrance to the Mugda hospital yesterday said the hospital did not have any seats available for Covid patients, not even Long queues of ambulances carrying

critical patients were seen outside.

The patients and their families were

desperately hoping that a few seats would fall vacant. One such patient was Pushpa Begum, a 50-year-old woman from Narayanganj, who tested positive for

Covid four days ago. She was taken to the 300-bed Narayanganj hospital. As her condition worsened, her family was advised to take her either to the DMCH or the

Mugda hospital. Pushpa was turned away by both the public hospitals. She was advised to take oxygen support at home.

Talking to The Daily Star on Thursday, Dr Asim Kumar Nath, director of the Mugda hospital, said, "All our beds have been occupied over the last two days. A new patient can be admitted only if a bed becomes vacant. We give priority to the extremely critical patients for admission."

For Covid patients and their families, such a situation can be frustrating

manpower and equipment to provide proper treatment to Covid patients. According to the DGHS dashboard, 146 beds for Covid patients are

empty beds, but they lack the necessary

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

vacant at the National Institute of Orthopaedic Traumatology and Rehabilitation (Nitor). But it doesn't have high-flow nasal

cannula, ICU beds and sufficient number of trained manpower to treat infected patients. As a result, the hospital has not been able to operate its Covid-19 unit at full capacity.

Asked, Nitor Director Prof Md Abdul Gani Mollah, "We have dedicated three floors of our hospital for treating Covid patients. But we are providing treatment to only those already admitted here.

"We are trying to enhance our capacity by procuring high-flow nasal cannulas and recruiting doctors."

The DGHS data showed that the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases in the capital had 146 empty beds for Covid patients. But these correspondents found that most of those beds were occupied by cardiac patients, who were infected with Covid.

The hospital authorities said they were giving cardiac patients with Covid priority because such patients may not get proper treatment at general hospitals.

Contacted, DGHS Director hospitals and clinics) Dr Farid Hossain Miah said, "It's not true that there is an acute crisis of beds at the hospitals. Actually, most of the patients are going to some major hospitals, which are already overcrowded.

"There are many hospitals even at upazila and district levels. Those can treat such patients. There are many vacant beds there," he said.

Health Minister Zahid Maleque told The Daily Star that they had instructed the authorities to increase the number of beds at hospitals at the upazila level to accommodate more patients.

Currently, there are 10 hospital beds dedicated for Covid patients in every upazila and the authorities were asked to increase the number to 20. "We have also instructed them to

boost oxygen supply to those hospitals so that people don't have to flock to district and divisional hospitals.

"These [district and divisional] hospitals are already overburdened with patients. There is little scope to increase beds in these hospitals," said

2 killed in attack on Israel-linked oil tanker

AFP, London

Two crew members of an oil tanker managed by a company owned by a prominent Israeli businessman were killed in an attack off Oman, the vessel's London-based operator said vesterday.

Analysts said the attack bore all the hallmarks of tit-for-tat exchanges in the 'shadow war" between Israel and Iran, in which vessels linked to each nation have been targeted in waters around the Gulf.

Zodiac Maritime, owned by Israeli billionaire Eyal Ofer, said the incident on board the MT Mercer Street on Thursday left one Romanian and a UK national dead.

"We are not aware of harm to any other personnel," it said in a statement, adding that the Japaneseowned tanker was back under the control of its crew, and was steaming to an undisclosed "safe location" under US naval escort.

Infection rate rises

FROM PAGE 1

The positivity rate was 39 percent in Narayangani, 44 percent in both Munshigani and Gazipur and 45 percent in Manikganj last week. These four districts of Dhaka division are well known for industrial hubs.

This week, the infection rate has dropped by 3 to 20 percent in the four bordering districts -- Nilphamari, Thakurgaon, Dinajpur and Panchagarh.

According to DGHS data, the infection ates in Khagrachari, Bandarban and Rangamati rose by 12 to 46 percentage points in one week

13,862 MORE INFECTED

Meanwhile, 13,862 new Covid-19 infections were reported in 24 hours preceding 8:00am yesterday, taking the overall number of infections to 12,40,115 in the country, said a DGHS press release.

The current positivity rate is 30.77 percent and the total positivity rate is 6.08 percent.

A total of 45,044 samples were tested across the country during the 24-hour

The health authorities reported 212 deaths from the virus in the same period. With this, the total number of Covid deaths in the country now stands at 20,467. The overall death rate is 1.65 percent.

Among the 212 deceased, 119 were men and 93 women.

Of them, one was aged between 11 and 20 years, five between 21 and 30, 15 between 31 and 40, 25 between 41 and 50, 48 between 51 and 60, 69 between 61 and 70, 32 within 71-80, 11 between 81 and 90 and six between 91 and 100 years, said the release.

At least 13,975 Covid patients have ecovered during the 24 hours. The total number of recoveries now stands at 10,64,195 and the recovery rate is 85.81 percent.

Former deputy

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Later, he was elected MP from Cumilla-7 (Chandina) in 1996 and subsequently re-elected in 2008, 2014 and 2018.

In 2001, he was elected deputy speaker of the seventh parliament. According to the Jatiya Sangsad website, Prof Ashraf was involved in

consultancy, insurance and agro-based business, apart from politics. He was admitted to Square Hospitals on July 9 with gallbladder stone-related infections and shifted to the Intensive Care Unit on July 11 when his condition

deteriorated. The senior lawmaker had been kept on life support since July 23 following further deterioration in his health.

Prof Ashraf was born in Gollai village under Chandina upazila on November

He was the chairman of the Committee on Government Assurances, Jatiya Sangsad. Besides, he was also a member of the Standing Committee on Rules of Procedure, Committee on Petitions, Standing Committee on Public Accounts Committee and Standing Committee on Ministry of Finance.

He attained his bachelor's and master's degrees in economics from Dhaka University in 1967 and 1968 respectively, according to the biography of MPs of the ninth parliament published by the then Jatiya Sangsad.

Prof Ashraf was involved in teaching at different colleges.

After serving as the director in the foreign ministry of Mujibnagar Government in 1971, he was the central finance and planning secretary of AL and Cumilla North District AL president for a long time since 2002.

He was the author of several books in both English and Bengali, including "the ethical standard of parliamentarians" and "disbarments and human security."

President Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Deputy Speaker Fazle Rabbi Miah, different ministers, state ministers, distinguished personalities, leaders of different political parties and organisations have expressed deep shock at the demise of the veteran

In separate condolence messages, President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said he had played an important and positive role in practising parliamentary democracy in the country. "We have lost a patriotic people's

leader and a soldier of the ideology of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the demise of Prof Ali Ashraf," the PM said in her condolence message.

Target 60 lakh jabs in 6 days

Inoculating the elderly people in the rural areas will be a challenge because there is no database on the target population, experts said.

"We can vaccinate one crore or more people in

vaccinate as many people as possible within a short time," Health Minister Zahid Maleque told The Daily Star yesterday. He said the NID is required to register for inoculation. "But those who don't have the NID will

a month if the doses are available. We will try to

also get the jab. There will be a special arrangement According to Election Commission officials, there

are around 11 crore NID holders in the country. Bangladesh has recorded 12,40,115 cases of Covid-19 and 20,467 deaths from the disease as of yesterday. Over 79 percent of those who died were

The country has so far inoculated 1.18 crore people, which is just over four percent of the population. And only 43 lakh of them got both the first and second shots. According to the World Health Organization, at least 80 percent of the population has to be inoculated to contain the spread of coronavirus.

The government will vaccinate people with 1 crore 34 lakh and 42 thousand doses from August 7. Of the doses, 1 crore 10 lakh 40 thousand will be administered in rural areas.

"The 60 lakh doses to be administered in six days are meant for those who have yet to get the first shot. The second dose will be administered in the same fashion," said a health official familiar with the China's Sinopharm vaccine will be administered

in the rural areas and district towns while the Moderna vaccine will be administered in the city corporation areas, he said. The government has 55 lakh doses of the Moderna

and 51 lakh doses of Sinopharm in stock.

A total of 1.10 crore doses will be administered in 13,800 rural wards, 15.58 lakh doses in 433 wards in the cities, and over 43,000thousand doses in 1,054

wards in the municipalities. In every ward of the city corporation, there will be one permanent and two temporary centres, while in the municipality areas, there will be a vaccination team in each ward. The team will inoculate people four days a week.

Ward councillors will decide where to inoculate the residents of their respective area.

Officials will keep an account of the individuals who get the shots, and the information will be used to update the national database. CHALLENGES APLENTY At an inter-ministerial meeting, chaired by Home

government representatives will be engaged in implementing the plan. The ministries will issue circulars and the Press Information Department (PID) has been asked to launch a mass campaign," the health minister

Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, at the Cabinet

Division held on Tuesday, it was decided that local

Renowned virologist and former VC of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital Prof Dr Nazrul Islam said community engagement is the key to make the drive a success. The local public representatives should create

awareness in every village, so that people voluntarily come to the centres," he said. Public health expert Be-Nazir Ahmed said the main challenge would be to inoculate the elderly

"Who is there to see if they don't come for the vaccine?" he asked. Before embarking on this special drive, the government should have prepared a database of

those who are being prioritised.

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