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A girl with the belongings of her family waiting to take shelter at a safe place after floodwater inundated their home. The photo was taken in Shalutikar Bazar area at Nandigaon union of Sylhet's Gowainghat upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Floods paralysing Sylhet

Around 13 lakh people affected in Sylhet city, 5 upazilas

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

The flood situation in Sylhet has further deteriorated yesterday as the Surma and the Kushiara rivers started flowing above the danger level.

The heavy torrential rainfall in the north-eastern region and India's Meghalaya and Assam has left parts of the district paralysed since May 12 while the cyclonic storm Asani worsened the situation.

Some 12 to 13 lakh people remained marooned in the region as all major rivers swelled and some exceeded danger level in the last couple of days, said the authorities.

The Surma river in Sylhet city area started overflowing early yesterday and was flowing 29cm above the danger level in the morning.

According to the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC), the Surma was flowing 143cm above the danger level in Kanaighat upazila headquarters point at 9:00am yesterday.

At the same time, the Kushiara was flowing 138cm above the danger mark at Amolshid point in Zakiganj upazila and above 45cm at Shewla point in Beanibazar upazila.

However, the water of the Sari Gowain river was reduced by 13cm and flowing 5cm below the danger level

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CUMILLA CITY POLLS BNP to go tough on rebels

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The BNP will take strong punitive measures against the party men running for Cumilla City Corporation mayor as the party is hell-bent on not contesting any polls under the incumbent government.

Top party leaders said if any of its leader runs in the June 15 Cumilla city polls, the contender will face tough punishment as high as expulsion from the party.

"The party's position is that it will not join any polls, be it a national or local government election. Stern action will be taken against the violators of this decision," Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, senior joint secretary general of the BNP, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Monirul Haque Sakku, two-time mayor of the CCC, has decided to participate in the mayoral polls as an independent candidate. Yesterday, he submitted nomination papers to the Election Commission.

Party insiders said after BNP leader Taimur Alam Khandaker contested the Narayanganj City Corporation polls as an independent candidate early this year, the party expelled him.

Sakku, incumbent joint general secretary of Cumilla South city BNP, was removed as member of the party's executive committee last year over allegations of not joining its programmes.

Contacted, Sakku said he served as Cumilla city mayor twice and tried to work with people from all political backgrounds. He said he is taking part in the election this time as well because people wants him to serve them as mayor for a third term.

"I have been involved with the BNP for the last 42 years. I never quit the party. As a mayor, I had to work with all. What can I do if anyone interprets this in a different way? I worked for the people and I will do so in the future, whatever my party's decision may be," he said.

Asked whether the BNP leaders and activists were with him in the polls campaign, he said people of all 27 wards of the city corporation were with him.

Sakku was the first elected mayor of the CCC. In the January 5, 2012, polls to the corporation, he contested as an independent candidate and defeated influential Awami League leader Afzal Khan with support from his party.

In the 2017 mayoral election, he defeated Afzal's daughter Anjum Sultana as the BNP candidate.

Other than Sakku, Swechasebak Dal leader Nizamuddin Kaisar has also submitted nomination for the mayoral post. He is the president of Cumilla city Swechasebak Dal.

BNP insiders said if Kaisar contests the polls, he is also likely to be expelled from the party.

The BNP earlier joined local government elections after the last parliamentary elections although the party had said that it would not participate in any election under the incumbent government.

But when the local government polls were marred by violence and allegations of vote rigging, the party boycotted the local government elections too.

Awami League has nominated Arfanul Haque Rifat as its mayoral candidate for the CCC polls.

The Election Commission on April 25 announced the CCC polls schedule and said that voting will be held using electronic voting machines (EVMs).

"I worked for the people and I will do so in future whatever my party's decision may be."

Monirul Haque Sakku

Lockdown in China hurting 3 mega projects

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

At least three mega infrastructure projects, including two fast-track ones, are facing supply chain strain due to the ongoing Covid-induced lockdown in China's Shanghai.

Contractor of Padma Bridge Rail Link Project (PBRLP) was forced to halt production of its sleeper factory for the lack of materials more than one month ago.

Some specific works of a station to be built in Cox's Bazar under the Chattogram-Cox's Bazar Rail Link project were also halted for want of materials.

Both are fast-track projects of the government.

Project officials said if the situation prolongs, it would have an adverse impact on deadlines.

Another project that is facing problems is the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Tunnel under the Karnaphuli river in Chattogram.

Chinese contractors are involved in all three projects and most of the materials are collected from China, they said.

Almost all of the country's development projects faced huge setbacks when the government



imposed lockdowns in early 2020 and 2021 to halt the spread of Covid-19.

Although the situation has improved and the project works have gathered momentum, these projects faced a roadblock when the Chinese authorities last month imposed a lockdown in Shanghai – China's most important economic hub, boasting the world's busiest port.

CNN in a report on May 6 said Chinese cities including Shanghai have started easing Covid restrictions in recent days, but experts say the damage has already been done and global shipping will suffer well into the summer.

That could exert even more pressure on global supply chains already reeling from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and keep inflation running hot, said the American news outlet.

The Padma Bridge Rail Link Project is being implemented to build a 169-kilometre rail line from the capital to Jashore via Padma Bridge.

The original cost of the project was Tk 34,989 crore when it was approved in 2016 and the deadline was June 2022.

But the project had to be revised even before the physical

work started, mainly due to the delay in signing the loan contract with Chinese Exim Bank.

The revised cost of the project is Tk 39,246 crore and the deadline extended to June 2024.

Overall progress of the project was 57.5 percent till April this year.

Project Director Afzal Hossain said the steel girder prepared for bridges has been stuck at Shanghai port for over a month.

They had to halt operation of the sleeper factory at Faridpur's Bhanga since before Eid for the lack of materials, he said.

"Still, we are hopeful of making up the delay caused by the disruption in supply, but if the situation prolongs, it would create a serious problem," Afzal told The Daily Star yesterday.

Citing officials of the contracting firm, he said the lockdown in Shanghai may be extended by two more weeks.

The Chattogram-Cox's Bazar Rail Link project was taken up in 2010 at the cost of Tk 1,852 crore.

But revised cost of the project is Tk 18,034 crore and the deadline is June 2022. However, project authorities sought more time and hoped to complete the work by June 2023.

Project Director Mofizur Rahman said lockdown in Shanghai has had a "huge impact" on their project in the

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3 lakh children under 5 severely malnourished Says Unicef report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

More than three lakh children, aged less than five years, suffered from severe malnutrition across the globe, reads a report by Unicef.

Bangladesh is the fifth-worst among countries where children suffer from severe malnutrition, according to the report.

South Asia is the epicentre of severe malnutrition among children with India being the worst and Pakistan the third worst.

The report titled "Severe wasting: An overlooked child survival emergency" showed that Bangladesh ranks fifth with 327,859 children affected by severe wasting while India ranked first with 5,772,472 affected children and Pakistan third with 678,925 affected children.

The report said, "In South Asia, the longstanding 'epicentre' of severe wasting, roughly 1 in 22 children is severely wasted. The absolute numbers and prevalence are massive, with at least 7.7 million children affected, three times as many as sub-Saharan Africa."

It also said the situation in South Asia highlights most clearly how severe wasting is passed on from one generation to the next.

Almost 1 in 2 girls in the region are married before the age of 18, and 1 in 5 give birth before 18.

"The region is also home to high rates of underweight and anaemia among adolescent girls and pregnant or breastfeeding women."

The other top 10 countries are Indonesia, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Niger and South Africa.

It said the number of children with severe wasting was rising even before the war in Ukraine threatened to plunge the world deeper into a global food crisis and it was getting worse.



Two buses sideswipe intentionally as they try to block each other from getting ahead and picking up passengers at Banglamotor intersection yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



CONDOLENCE

We are deeply saddened by the demise of country's eminent academican **Prof. Dr. Rahim B Talukdar** who breathed his last early yesterday morning at United Hospital. He was 82. Former Director of IBA-DU, Prof. Talukdar had been at the institute since its inception in 1966 and also served as the vice chancellor of Eastern University and University of Business and Technology. As an expert in his field, he largely contributed to numerous projects of top development agencies namely World Bank, ADB, UNDP, UNFPA, USAID, CIDA, DFID etc.

We pray for eternal peace of the departed soul and convey our deepest sympathy to the bereaved family members.

Nazmul Hassan Papon, MP
President

On behalf of the fraternity

