



A woman with two children wade through water as they look for shelter amidst heavy rains that caused widespread flooding in Sylhet yesterday. Water, top left, gushing into Bangladesh at Akhaura from India. Sylhet's MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital, bottom left, inundated. Satellite images, right, taken in March and June show the water extent of Sylhet division.

IMAGES: MASHUK HRIDAY/SHEIKH NASIR/REUTERS/COURTESY OF PALASH BASAK

Declare flood-hit areas as disaster zones

BNP demands, says govt busy with Padma Bridge inauguration instead

UNB, Dhaka

BNP yesterday demanded the government immediately declares the flood-hit areas of the northeastern region as 'disaster zones' and provide all the affected people with adequate relief materials.

Speaking at a council of BNP's three wards at Bhatra under the Dhaka North City unit, Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, the party secretary general, also bemoaned that the government is occupied with the inauguration of the Padma bridge when thousands of flood victims are suffering.

"Floods are raging the country. The vast areas starting from Sylhet-Sunamganj to northern Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram were submerged by floodwaters," he said.

Referring to media reports, Fakhrul said the water levels of major rivers, including the Padma, Meghna and Jamuna, are increasing flooding in many areas as the Indian authorities opened all the gates of the Farakka Barrage.

The BNP leader went on to lament that the government could not sign an agreement with India on the sharing of water of the common rivers for over a decade.

The government has long been talking about

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Air, rail gone, road to may go soon

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inundated large swathes of Sylhet division in the last few days, leaving lakhs of people stranded.

The authorities on Friday suspended flight operations at Sylhet Osmani International Airport for three days after floodwater reached the runway.

COMMUNICATIONS ALMOST COLLAPSED

Flash floods have hit hard the Sylhet division, badly affecting road communications in Sylhet and Sunamganj. People are forced to use boats and trawlers to travel from one place to another.

"Most of the roads have already gone under water with parts of many roads swept away by floodwaters,"

RHD official Fazle Rabbe told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said 10 major roads in Sylhet and six in Sunamganj have been submerged.

In some areas, water was flowing four to five feet above the road surface.

"We are continuously monitoring the flood situation and taking measures to prevent sweeping away of roads."

RHD headquarters sources in Dhaka said they received information that around 143km roads in Sylhet, Sunamganj and Sherpur went under water, they added.

"This is not the complete information. We hope to get more information tomorrow [today]," an official said wishing not to

be named.

The sources said part of a national highway from Sylhet to Bholaganj was submerged, disrupting road communications.

Regional highways and district roads, including Sylhet-Sunamganj, Jamalganj-Sunamganj, Gobindaganj-Chatak-Goinghat, Sari Goinghat, and Companyganj-Chatak road, are now under water, they added.

Ashraful Islam Pramanik, executive engineer of RHD's Sunamganj division, said parts of Jamalganj-Sunamganj road and a part of the road connecting a bridge on the Surma river in Chhatak upazila were swept away.

"We have some 350km roads and around 80-90 percent of those have already been inundated," Ashraful told this newspaper.

He said it is not possible for them to assess the damages right now.

RAIL COMMUNICATION

Operations of trains to and from Sylhet Railway Station were suspended around noon yesterday as the main platform went under water, said a BR engineer.

He said two other platforms at the station were inundated earlier.

A total of 13 trains, including six intercity trains, travel to Sylhet daily from different destinations, including Dhaka and Chattogram.

In Netrakona, the soil

under the railway bridge 23 between Mohanganj and Atitpur railway stations was swept away sometime Friday night due to strong currents of floodwater.

This caused rail communications between Mohanganj station in Netrakona and the rest of the country being cut off, Mymensingh Railway Station Manager Jahangir Alam said.

Intercity train Haor Express was stranded at Mohanganj station yesterday morning as it could not depart for Dhaka. Another local train was also stuck there, he added.

Our correspondents in Moulvibazar and Mymensingh contributed to this report.

Suspected jihadis kill 10 people in northeast Nigeria

AFP, Kano

Gummen suspected to be linked to the Islamic State yesterday killed 10 people in the latest spate of violence in northeast Nigeria's Borno state, militia sources told AFP.

The 10 victims, nine men and a woman, were scavenging for metal scrap from vehicles burnt in military operations in Goni Kurmi village, near the town of Bama, when they were attacked, two militia sources told AFP.

"The 10 people were all shot," militia leader Babakura Kolo said. "The victims were in the village to scavenge for metal scraps when they ran into the terrorists who shot them dead," said Kolo.

The bodies of the victims were recovered by the civilian force and brought to Bama, according to Ibrahim Liman, another militiaman who gave the same toll.

The Nigerian army, deployed in the region, has not yet commented on the attack.

Jihadists have recently been attacking civilians collecting metal scrap, accusing them of spying on them for the military.

ISWAP, which split from mainstream Boko Haram jihadist group in 2016, has become the dominant threat in northeast Nigeria.

Millions marooned

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Dudukumar and all other major rivers may continue rising in the next 48 hours."

Rivers were flowing above the danger level at 17 of its measuring points across the country until yesterday morning, the bulletin added.

Meanwhile, electricity supply to Sylhet district was cut off yesterday after sub-stations became submerged in flood water.

Sylhet's worst affected areas are Gowainghat, Companiganj, Kanaighat, Jaintiapur, Sylhet Sadar, Zakkiganj, Bishwanath, Golapganj, Beanibazar and parts of Sylhet city area.

Chhatak, Dowarabazar, Sunamganj Sadar, Derai, Madhyanagar, Bishwanath, Dharmpasha, Tahirpur, Jamalganj and all of Sunamganj town are the worst affected in Sunamganj district.

Amid the situation, the fare for boats, the only option for rescue so far, has shot through the roof. What used to be Tk 100 is now Tk 10,000, said locals.

Maroof Ahmed was willing to pay up to Tk 40,000 to a boatman to take his pregnant wife from their inundated village to Sylhet city. But the boatman declined.

And all the train movement in and out of Sylhet Railway Station was suspended yesterday due to flood. Around noon water entered the station's main platform.

In Moulvibazar, at least 40 villages of Kulaura

and Barlekha upazila are inundated. Besides, many portions of the district headquarters have gone underwater.

Bangladesh Army, Navy, firefighters, civil administration, law enforcers and local council representatives are running rescue operations.

Nine million flood hit people have so far been evacuated in Sunamganj and Sylhet, the state minister said while briefing reporters at the ministry's conference room yesterday.

The ministry has allocated 400 tonnes of rice, 41,000 packets of dry food and Tk 2.25 crore in cash as relief for the flood hit people, said a press statement.

"Relief materials are being sent to flood centres. We will serve cooked food and where not possible, dry foods will be provided," Hossain said.

Bangladesh Army yesterday launched toll-free numbers to help the flood-affected people in Sunamganj and Sylhet. People can call those numbers without any cost, said the release.

The flood has also affected the adjoining districts of Sherpur and Brahmanbaria, report our correspondent quoting local administration.

Meanwhile, the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education has asked the authorities of all schools and colleges in the flood-affected areas to get their establishments ready for affected people.

Floods hit 5 dists in North, 15 more at risk

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Chandpur, flood officials said.

The five districts already flooded are Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, Kurigram, Rangpur and Sirajganj.

Officials said the Brahmaputra and Jamuna have already been flowing above the danger level and water level of the Padma River system may rise within the next couple of days.

"This will cause fresh floods in many districts across these rivers, whose water levels will continue to rise for the next three-four days and the situation may continue to worsen till the end of the next week ... It will gradually improve after that," Md Arifuzzaman Bhuiyan, executive engineer at the Flood Forecasting and Warning

Centre (FFWC), told The Daily Star yesterday.

"The flood situation is unusual in a few areas [including Sylhet division]. But it is the regular monsoon floods in other parts of the country. It is unlikely it will take a turn for the worse in those places."

Due to heavy rains in Bangladesh and upstream in India's northeast, the water levels of all major rivers have increased.

Yesterday, the FFWC recorded a rise in water levels of 95 out of the 109 rivers under its observation, reports BBC Bangla.

Bangladesh Meteorological Department forecast that light to moderate rain/thunder showers is likely to occur at most places in all eight divisions of the country, with moderately

heavy to very heavy rainfall in certain areas for 24 hours since 8:00am yesterday.

LALMONIRHAT, KURIGRAM AND SIRAJGANJ
More than one lakh people have been left without drinking water and cooked food in 14 upazilas across Lalmonirhat and Kurigram due to floods.

Many flood victims, along with their cattle, poultry and furniture, have taken shelter on roads, dams and educational institutions, reports our correspondent from Lalmonirhat.

"With 2.3 feet high flood water, we have been living on a bamboo structure

inside the house. We have not been able to cook any food for the past four days," said 28-year-old Champa Begum at Dharla Shoal Falimari village of Lalmonirhat Sadar Upazila.

According to Water Development Board officials, the Teesta was below the danger level at 6:00am yesterday.

But the Brahmaputra and the Dharla River were flowing 22cm above the danger level at Chilmari and the bridge point in Kurigram respectively.

"The water levels of both rivers will continue rising for another two to three days," Abdullah Al Mamun, executive engineer of the Water Development Board in Kurigram, told the Daily Star yesterday.

(Our correspondents from Lalmonirhat and Pabna contributed to this report.)

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Due to the Jamuna swelling, water levels of other rivers, including Boral, Karotao, Ichamati, and Fuljore, have also risen.

"Low-lying and char areas of Sirajganj Sadar Kazipur, Belkuchi, Shahzadpur and Chowdhali upazilas, located outside the embankment, have been flooded while the vast areas of the district are well protected by flood-protection embankments," Md Nasir said.

Sirajganj's district administration has kept 127 flood shelters ready for victims.

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