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It may get even worse

Water levels forecast to rise; cry for help grows louder in flood-hit northern, north-eastern dists

DWOHA CHOWDHURY and MINTU DESHWARA

The floods wreaking havoc in the country's northern and north-eastern districts may worsen as water levels in already overflowing rivers could continue to rise over the next two days, according to the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre.

"The Brahmaputra-Jamuna, Ganges-Padma, Surma, Koshiyara, Teesta, Dharla, Dudhkumar and all other major rivers may continue rising for the next 48 hours," said an FFWC forecast released at 6:00pm yesterday.

In Sylhet, Sunamganj and Netrakona districts, the situation may get worse in the next 24 hours due to moderate to heavy rainfall in the northern and north-eastern regions of the country along with the adjoining Indian states of Assam, Meghalaya and West Bengal.

The rush of water from upstream in India as well as heavy rainfall in the region have left large swathes of Sylhet division and northern regions inundated, affecting lakhs of people.

The FFWC has also forecast that the situation in low-lying areas in Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, Rangpur, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Bogra, Jamalpur and Sirajganj districts could deteriorate further.

Flood water may even inundate low-lying areas of the country's central districts like Tangail, Munshiganj and Shariatpur, the forecast added.

Water of nine rivers across the country was flowing above the danger level yesterday morning, the bulletin said, adding that 11 districts have so far been affected by the ongoing flood.

Meanwhile, due to flash floods, thousands of people of the north-eastern region have been facing acute crises of food and drinking water.

The cry for relief is intensifying in flood-hit areas despite the government agencies working to provide relief.

"We have taken shelter on the road as our house has been submerged. But we have not gotten any food assistance from the government till now. A kind person gave us some food," said Akbar Hossain, who took shelter on the Sylhet-Companiganj Road in Shalutikar area of Sylhet's Gowainghat upazila.

"Hundreds of people have taken shelter in the government primary school in Chaila Afzalabad union of our upazila. But we have not been given any relief. We cannot even buy food as shops have been closed for days," said Swadhin Pintu, a resident of Chhatak upazila in Sunamganj.

However, government officials concerned in Sylhet and Sunamganj districts said around three lakh people and around one lakh cattle have taken shelter in 717 flood centres in the two worst-hit districts.

They said Tk 65 lakh in cash, 1,062 tonnes of rice and around 12,900 sacks of dry food have so far been distributed among flood victims in the two districts.

Besides, cooked foods have been distributed among 30,000 affected people, they said, adding that 260 medical teams have been working to provide medical services to victims.

"We have taken shelter on the road as our house has been submerged. But we have not gotten any food assistance from the government till now."



With floodwater swamping their homes, people from Dakkhin Surma upazila waded through knee-deep water on Bangabir road in Chandipul area to reach Sylhet city. Seeking food and shelter, many flood-hit people are trying to move to the city from different parts of the district. The photo was taken yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Floods coming to the heartland

STAR REPORT

Flood situation worsened in the northern districts yesterday as all major rivers were flowing above the danger mark.

Floodwater has already made way to some parts of Tangail, and the low-lying areas of Munshiganj and Shariatpur could be flooded within 24 hours, said a Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) report issued at 6:00pm yesterday.

Water levels of all major rivers are likely to rise in the next 24 hours as north and northeastern parts of the country, along with Indian states of Assam and Meghalaya, will see heavy to very heavy rains, said the report.

Talking to The Daily Star, FFWC Executive Engineer Arifuzzaman Bhuyan said the flood situation will start improving within a week.

In Kurigram, at least 20 villages in Nageshwari upazila were flooded as the 100-metre flood control dam of the Water Development Board (WDB) collapsed due to onrush of water, reports our Lalmonirhat correspondent.

Most parts of Nageshwari town have already been inundated with floodwater entering fresh areas of the upazila.

More than 1.5 lakh people in nine upazilas of Kurigram and around 50,000 people in five upazilas of Lalmonirhat were marooned as of yesterday.

Flood situation deteriorated in Sirajganj yesterday with the Jamuna flowing above danger mark at almost all points in the district.

"Water level [of the river] may continue to rise till June 22..." Md Nasir Uddin, sub-divisional engineer of the WDB in Sirajganj, told this newspaper.

Almost all char areas in Sirajganj Sadar, Kazipur, Belkuchi, Shahzadpur and Chowhali upazila were already flooded, he said.

Nasir further said that around one lakh people were still stranded in five upazilas of the district.



PM to visit flood-hit districts tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to visit the flood-affected areas in Sylhet, Sunamganj and Netrakona tomorrow.

Sylhet Divisional Commissioner Mosharraf Hossain, who was informed by the PMO over phone, confirmed this to our Sylhet correspondent yesterday evening.

The details in this regard are yet to be officially announced.

The PM will travel by helicopter, accompanied

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Nat'l highways should be off limits to bikes

Recommends the committee probing road crashes

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Motorcycles should be banned on national highways to reduce the number of accidents, recommended a committee that was formed by the government to probe road crashes.

The two-wheelers can be allowed only if the national highways have separate service lanes, added the committee.

Among some others, this proposal was placed as the committee found motorcycle accidents as a major reason behind the rise in fatalities during the last Eid vacation.

The recommendation was discussed at a meeting of the Road Transport and Highways Division yesterday.

The division was considering a ban on bikes for two to three days before Eid-ul-Azha, the meeting sources said.

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Rohingya refugees walk a "Go home campaign" rally demanding repatriation at Kutupalong Rohingya camp in Cox's Bazar yesterday. Tens of thousands of Rohingyas in the refugee camps demonstrated ahead of the World Refugee Day today. Story on page 5.

PHOTO: AFP

Malls, stores close at 8pm from today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shopping centres and stores will shut at 8:00pm every from today until further notice as the government looks to conserve power and energy amid the rising prices in the global market for the Russia-Ukraine war.

The Bangladesh Labour Act already stipulates the closure of shops at 8:00pm. At present, many shops stay open until 10:00pm.

Kitchen markets, transport services, emergency service providers and restaurants, however, can stay open beyond 8:00pm, as per the announcement made after yesterday's meeting of Monnujan Sufian, the state minister of labour and employment, and leaders of different business associations.

The trading hour restriction was instructed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on June 17 with the view to saving power and energy amid the elevated prices in the global market.

At the meeting, Mohd. Sher Ali, additional secretary of the ministry of power, energy and mineral resources, said the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation is incurring losses of Tk 110 crore per day for crude oil, The Daily Star

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Don't miss today's special issue
BANGLADESH REFRIGERATOR INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

ROHINGYA RETURN Talks get nowhere

Refugees left in limbo while humanitarian funds shrinking

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Nearly five years into the largest Rohingya influx, the process of repatriation remains confined only to talks with the international funding declining for the forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals.

The bilateral talks between Bangladesh and Myanmar to initiate the repatriation had been suspended for over two years amid the military rule in the neighbouring country and also the coronavirus pandemic.

The dialogue resumed this January but it has yet to yield any definitive outcome.

On Tuesday, in the fifth meeting of the Joint Working Group (JWG), formed in 2017 for the repatriation of Rohingyas, Bangladesh wanted Myanmar to expedite the verification of refugees to fast-track their repatriation.

Both Bangladesh and Myanmar agreed to work on addressing problems over verification and holding

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WORLD REFUGEE DAY