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CHATTOGRAM DIVISION

Flood, rain keep wreaking havoc

Thousands left without access to safe drinking water, power, mobile networks

STAR REPORT

Floods have brought much of Chattogram division to a standstill, leaving thousands of residents without access to safe water, electricity, and mobile phone networks.

Incessant rain and overflowing rivers submerged vast areas and closed all roads to Cox's Bazar and Bandarban districts.

The waters will hopefully begin to recede from today because there will be less rain, said Meteorologist Bazlur Rashid of the Met office in Dhaka.

Officials in Cox's Bazar say almost 3 lakh residents of 60 unions in Cox's Bazar are affected by the floods. Of those evacuated, 34,000 are sheltering in government allocated centres such as educational institutions and government facilities, according to the administration.

The authorities yesterday used megaphones in neighbourhoods to urge people to evacuate immediately due to

risks of landslides.

In the Rohingya refugee camps, 207 families were relocated because of risks of landslides, said the refugee, relief and repatriation commissioner.

Submerged roads to the beach town were closed to traffic yesterday morning.

Floods closed the roads to Bandarban on Sunday and stranded at least 8,000 families while mudslides damaged over 450 houses.

Six upazilas of the district have been without power since Monday night and over 9,500 residents were taken to flood shelters.

People reported that mobile phones were not working in the district.

"Even the first floor of my building has been inundated. All of our belongings got damaged," said Osman Ali of Keching Ghata area in Bandarban town, who has been at a shelter for the last few days.

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This bus almost fell into a ditch as it tried to find its way on a stretch of Chattogram-Cox's Bazar highway in Chandonais in Chattogram that went under knee-deep water. Torrential rain in the southeast inundated parts of Chattogram city, towns in Bandarban, Cox's Bazar, and Rangamati districts. Road communication between Cox's Bazar and rest of the country snapped yesterday morning.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

RISE IN DENGUE PATIENTS

DMCH faces acute shortage of beds

Many being treated on floor; 13 more including doctor die from the virus; another 2,742 hospitalised

HELEMUL ALAM and MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

Twenty-year-old Mohammad Sakib was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital on Sunday as he was experiencing severe weakness -- a dengue symptom that is considered a "warning sign".

However, as there was not a single bed available, his father had to buy a mat for him to be placed on the floor of the medicine unit, where he is still undergoing treatment.

"I was diagnosed with typhoid and dengue, both. I am doing a bit better now. But I plan to leave my job and go to my village home once my condition improves, as where I live and work right now in the city -- Matuail -- lacks anti-mosquito activities," said Sakib.

Like Sakib, many patients at DMCH are being treated on the floor due to a scarcity of beds.

Riaz Uddin, a doctor at the medicine ward, said, "We don't send back patients who are in a critical stage with such warning signs, comorbidity patients, or those in high risk."

"As we have a scarcity of beds, we are trying to make space on the floor in order to ensure their treatment," he said.

HM Nazmul Ahsan, associate professor at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital,

said immediate hospitalisation is required if a patient experiences severe stomach aches, breathing difficulty, severe weakness, vomiting, and/or bleeding from gums and nose.

"If a patient is not hospitalised within 24 hours [of these symptoms surfacing], they may go into dengue shock syndrome."

Zaheda Begum, an aunt of Abir, 15, who has been in DMCH since Saturday, said they also had to get a mat to use as a bed on the floor for him.

"However, with continuous treatment, Abir is doing well now."

Morshed Alam, 30, a resident of Cumilla's Daudkandi, was admitted to DMCH with dengue on Sunday and was about to get his treatment started after his test reports were available.

"But as I was placed on the floor, my test reports, along with my mobile phone, were all stolen."

Meanwhile, a doctor died of dengue fever at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) in the early hours of yesterday.

Almina Dewan Mishu, 32, was a 39th BCS cadre officer. She had been under treatment at the hospital's ICU since August 1.

Earlier, she was at a private hospital after being diagnosed with dengue on July 26, and

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

BNP plans to hold protest rally in city August 11

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

After a 12-day break, BNP and like-minded parties are set to restart their one-point movement for the government's resignation with a protest rally in Dhaka on August 11, according to party sources.

It, however, currently has no plan to launch protests outside Dhaka due to excessive flooding in many districts at the moment, party leaders said.

The BNP standing committee took the decision on Monday.

At a press conference held at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office yesterday, Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, the party's secretary general, said BNP is gearing up for a simultaneous movement.

"The government is making all arrangements to prevent the opposition party from participating in the election. There is no level-playing field."

"Our senior leaders have been detained and are prevented from conducting political programmes."

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NAT'L ENERGY SECURITY DAY

High time to start gas exploration

Experts say excessive dependence on LNG imports pose threat

ASIFUR RAHMAN

With local gas production on the wane, import dependency in the power and energy sector is on the rise, in what can be viewed as a threat to national energy security, according to experts.

The liquefied natural gas (LNG) import ratio has reached the amount of gas produced by local gas companies. As a result, the power plants and industries are not getting enough gas to operate properly.

Bapex, Bangladesh Gas Fields Company and Sylhet Gas Fields Company produce around 24-25 billion cubic feet (BCF) of gas in a month whereas the LNG import stood at around 22-23 BCF, according to the latest report of the hydrocarbon unit of the ministry of power, energy and mineral resources.

Besides, the two foreign companies -- Chevron and Tullow -- operating in local fields are producing around 42 BCF of gas monthly, which is more than 50 percent of the country's total gas production.

The reserves of both of the gas fields operated by foreign companies are fast depleting, which is another threat to energy security, according to the experts.

If the government does not enhance gas exploration and finds an alternate option, the remaining gas reserves would be exhausted in nine to 10 years.

Currently, Bangladesh is consuming about 1 trillion cubic feet (TCF) of gas every year and the remaining reserve of 29 gas fields is only 9.76 TCF, shows data from Petrobangla.

In such a situation, the government is set to observe National

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HIKE IN ENERGY PRICES FAILS TO IMPROVE SUPPLY -- BI

UNIVERSAL PENSION PM likely to roll it out August 17

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina may unveil the Universal Pension Scheme for ordinary citizens on August 17.

People at home and abroad would then be able to register with the scheme. But the registration would be on a limited scale.

The finance ministry could not roll out the pension scheme on a full-fledged basis as it is yet to complete all preparatory work.

It has already finalised two rules to execute the scheme. The rules have been sent to the law ministry for vetting.

Details of the rules may be disclosed before the pension scheme's rollout, sources said.

Four separate schemes for both local and non-resident Bangladeshis have been formulated. The schemes -- Probas, Progoti, Surokkha and Samata -- can be availed by everyone except government employees.

There will be different

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Eleven-year-old Saima was excited about getting a sibling in just two months. Yet here, she is being consoled by a relative as she weils, having learned that her eight-month-pregnant mother Farzana just died from dengue in Mugda Medical College Hospital's ICU yesterday morning.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

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