



## UNITED IN CRISIS

### People's resilient response to devastating floods

STAR DIGITAL REPORT

The ongoing floods in Bangladesh have left many rural communities devastated. Children and women are among the most vulnerable in this crisis. Every time a natural calamity strikes, we triumph through our resilient life forces. People from all walks of life rise to the occasion and stand beside our fellow people who are in distress. All our small efforts from general individuals and charity organisations add up to building a substantial relief operation that complements efforts by the government.

Faiza Ahmed, Creative head of Manas and Shanchayita, is raising funds to provide essential items like food, powdered milk, vitamin C, supplements, clothing, mosquito nets, bedsheets, toys, and blankets for young victims. There are many such general people like her, who are trying to collect contributions, no matter how small, to make a significant difference in a child's life during this difficult time.

The Rizq Project, is another such effort, helping people in the worst-affected areas in Parshuram, Feni Sadar, Sonagazi, and Chagalnaiya, by working with local volunteers involved in rescue and food relief operations. Also, in Mirsharai, where volunteers



from neighbouring Sitakunda are helping out. Soup kitchens, catering to people who have sought shelter on higher grounds, are a very important part of the relief programme and The Rizq Project has mobilised funds to support ongoing relief efforts by the SAJIDA Foundation in Dhaka and Ghashful bd in Chattogram.

"Geology and earth sciences are my passions, so, naturally, I'm very inclined towards worldwide weather-related phenomena. The night before the waters from upstream started descending and engulfing the flat lands of Bangladesh, I was monitoring the

Centre (CRDC), in collaboration with multiple volunteering teams and individuals who have generously contributed to the relief efforts, have been able to support the 5,000 families in remote areas of Baghaichari Upazilla in Rangamati district. The Bangladesh Marmas Students Council BMSC, Rangamati branch is volunteering to deliver essential supplies like food, clothes, and sanitary napkins to this severely flood-affected area. However, it takes around four to five hours to reach the destination by boat.

There are many livestock animals stranded in the floodwaters. The Animal Welfare Team of Dhaka University is requesting the rescue operation team to look out for these unfortunate domestic animals. Their request on their official Facebook page to collect donations for animals, generated around Tk 78,304 and counting to buy fodder for cows, goats, poultry feed, as well as cat and dog food.

In a rare gesture, The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has been instructed to supply free diesel to keep network towers operational in flood-affected areas in Feni, according to a press release, reported in The Daily Star.

rain using Bing Maps, a free app that anyone can install. So, my question is, if a novice can forecast, where were our concerned personnel in charge of this?" says Shafin Ahmed of The Rizq Project, adding that using social media platforms was most effective in quickly organising funds.

SAJIDA Foundation is providing emergency relief to thousands of families affected, prioritising the safety of the elderly, pregnant women, and children, and transporting them to safe, dry locations.

The Azimur Rokia Rahman Trust and Community Resource Development

## Biden, Modi discuss situation in Bangladesh

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday spoke to US President Joe Biden over the phone to discuss the situation in Bangladesh.

During the phone call initiated by Biden, "The two leaders expressed their shared concern over the situation in Bangladesh and emphasised the restoration of law and order and ensuring the safety of minorities, particularly Hindus, in Bangladesh," said a readout issued by the Indian Prime Minister's Office.

India has expressed repeated concerns over a series of attacks on minority establishments in the days following the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led government on August 5.

This was the first time Modi and Biden spoke to each other on the issue of Bangladesh since the ouster of Hasina as prime minister.

## China ready to work with interim govt

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

China wishes Bangladesh political stability and economic development and is ready to work with the interim government to strengthen exchanges and cooperation in various fields, said Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong.

Welcoming the interim government, Weidong said China wants to pursue high-quality Belt and Road cooperation and greater development of China-Bangladesh relations.

The minister made the comment when he met the outgoing Bangladeshi Ambassador to China Md Jashim Uddin in Beijing on Sunday, according to a statement by the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

Stating that China and Bangladesh have been traditionally friendly neighbours and comprehensive strategic partners, Weidong said China remains committed to developing relations with Bangladesh based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, respecting Bangladesh's independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the development path independently chosen by the Bangladeshi people.

Jashim Uddin said Bangladesh will adhere to independence, actively explore a development path that suits its national conditions, and is ready to deepen friendly exchanges and mutually beneficial cooperation with China in various fields.

Bangladesh will also take the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries next year as an opportunity to push bilateral relations forward continuously, he added.

## S Alam barred from fund transfer

FROM PAGE 1

Founded in 1985 by Mohammad Saiful Alam, a relative of former Awami League politician Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury Babu and former Land Minister Saifuzzaman Chowdhury, S Alam Group has grown into one of the largest conglomerates in Bangladesh.

For instance, S Alam is one of the four edible oil importers and processors along with TK Group, City Group and Meghna Group. Together, they control 80 percent of the total edible oil market in Bangladesh, according to import data from the National Bureau of Revenue.

Its subsidiary S Alam Refined Sugar Industries was the third-largest importer of sugar in 2023, accounting for a fifth of the country's demand.

S Alam Group and its associate companies took out Tk 95,331 crore between 2017 and June this year from six banks, with 79 percent of the sum coming from Islami Bank, data showed.

Documents pieced together by The Daily Star show that most of the loans were taken by bypassing banking rules and regulations, in a testament to how the Chattogram-based conglomerate exerted its influence on the country's banking sector.

In a separate letter, the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) on Sunday sought detailed information on the overall banking activities of Alam, his 12 family members and their companies.

The 12 family members include his wife Farzana Parveen, his two older sons Ahsanul Alam and Ashraf Alam, and his brothers Osman Ghani, Abdus Samad, Rashedul Alam, Shahidul Alam, Mohammed Abdullah Hasan and Morshedul Alam, who passed away in May 2020 from Covid-19.

The account details of Ghani's wife Farzana Begum and Samad's wife Shahana Ferdous were sought too.

## Relief delivery is now the challenge

FROM PAGE 1

volunteer from Prothom Alo Bandhushava and Prothom Alo Trust working in Feni. He said people in those remote areas have yet to receive any assistance.

Admitting the problem, Feni Deputy Commissioner Shahina Akhter said they will coordinate with the UNOs from today to ensure all flood victims receive the necessary aid.

In Noakhali, people in remote areas are also suffering due to poor supply of relief materials.

Nurnabi Bachchu, of Senbagh, said their area has been waterlogged for several days.

"People living close to the roads have received relief multiple times, but those in remote areas have got nothing," he said.

Md Shahid Ullah, a resident of Arjuntala village in Senbagh upazila, said vehicles supplied relief materials in the upazila town and the municipality area.

"Some people had 8-10 packs, but those who could not reach those areas are struggling to survive with their families," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

In Cumilla, volunteers could not distribute relief in most of the areas of Chaudagram, Nangalkot and Burichang upazilas yesterday due to a lack of boats.

Salauddin Khandaker, a volunteer, said they somehow managed a boat, but most volunteers could not access remote areas.

Denying any lack of coordination among the government agencies, Pangkaj Barua, additional deputy commissioner of Cumilla, said they were working together to supply relief.

He urged the volunteers to contact

the district administration for any assistance in relief distribution.

### NEW AREAS FLOODED

New areas in Noakhali were flooded yesterday as 23 gates of Musapur regulator in Companiganj upazila collapsed due to the pressure of water, said Munshi Amir Faisal, executive engineer at Water Development Board.

This is likely to aggravate the flooding in Companiganj and Kabirhat upazilas, he said.

The flood situation in 82 unions across seven municipalities and eight upazilas of Noakhali worsened yesterday due to incessant rains since Saturday.

Noakhali Additional Deputy Commissioner Sharmin Ara said about two million people have been marooned in the district. Of them, 182,000 have taken shelter in 1,098 centres.

Fatehpur, Subil, and Boroshalghal unions in Debidwar upazila of Cumilla were inundated in 24 hours.

The overall flood situation in the 10 other districts improved significantly yesterday as the floodwaters started receding.

The Disaster Management Ministry in a release yesterday said floods have directly affected over 5.71 million people in 11 districts.

At least 74 upazilas have been severely impacted. The authorities have opened 3,834 shelters, providing refuge to over 4.69 lakh people.

The Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) yesterday said the water levels of the rivers in the flood-hit districts were falling.

"Rivers were previously flowing above the danger levels in at least 13 points. But only the Gumti river is now flowing

above the danger level at one point. I think the situation will improve further tomorrow [today]," said Sarder Uday Raihan, executive engineer of FFWC.

Asked about the situation in the Ganges basin, he said there is no chance of flooding in the Ganges basin over the next one week as the water level there was still below the danger level.

HOME ADVISER DISTRIBUTES RELIEF Home Adviser Lt Gen (ret'd) Md Jahangir Alam Chowdhury yesterday said the country is facing severe floods. But if the people remain united, all problems can be resolved.

He was speaking to journalists after distributing relief and medical supplies among the flood victims at the Noakhali Police Training Centre.

The adviser said there would be no shortage of relief materials and medicines. He said the authorities were facing difficulties in accessing some areas, but those problems would be over soon.

He urged all to cooperate with the authorities to ensure that relief reaches all flood-hit areas.

In a press statement, the Inter Services Public Relation Directorate (ISPR) yesterday detailed the Bangladesh Army's rescue operations and relief distribution.

The Army Aviation Group conducted rescue and relief missions using 15 helicopters. Eleven critically ill patients were rescued and transferred to hospitals, while 24 individuals were relocated to safety.

Despite adverse weather conditions, the Army distributed 4,839 relief packages, 50,400 liters of fresh water, 500 mobile phones, and one lakh water purification tablets via helicopters in Sylhet, Chattogram, and Feni, said the ISPR statement.

## Hasanul Haq Inu arrested in Uttara

FROM PAGE 1

government to ensure Inu's legal rights and security in police custody, adding that his named has been added to some murder cases without conducting primary investigation.

Besides this case, Inu has been accused in several other cases after Hasina resigned and fled on August 5 in the face of a mass uprising.

He is also facing charges of crimes against humanity along with Hasina at the International Crimes Tribunal.

Inu was a key partner of the Awami League-led 14-party coalition that was in power from January 6, 2009, to August 5, 2024.

He was information minister from September 2012 till the first week of January 2019. Before he was appointed the information minister, he served as the chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee for the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications from 2008 to September 2012.

He also served on the parliamentary

standing committee for the information ministry from February 2019 to January 2024.

Inu is a three-time MP from the Kushtia-2 constituency. However, he lost in the last parliamentary election to an independent candidate.

Inu was vocal about announcing a nationwide curfew when the leaders of the 14-party alliance met with Hasina on July 19, amid the student protest. The meeting eventually agreed on imposing a curfew the next day.

## Blaze under control after 22 hours

FROM PAGE 1

Lt Col Rezaul Karim, director of Fire Service and Civil Defence (Dhaka), told The Daily Star in the afternoon that relatives were claiming that their family members, who were in the factory during the fire, were missing.

"We are noting down the names and addresses provided by the relatives. So far, we have 174 names."

However, the fire service in a text message sent to the media around 5:50pm said they were not officially maintaining any list of the missing. Some locals gave their phone numbers and requested them to inform them if any victim was found.

While briefing reporters in the evening, Rezaul said the responsibility of preparing a list of victims lies with the local administration and the police.

The fire spread quickly as flammable materials like tyres, rubber, and plastic were inside the factory, he said, adding that they rescued 14 people trapped inside.

He said the rescued were not factory workers.

Rezaul said when the fire is fully out, they will conduct a search.

### THE LOOTING

As the six-story building continued to burn yesterday, looting was going on at other parts of the factory.

This is the second attack on the factory since Sheikh Hasina resigned and fled to India on August 5. The factory had then suspended operations

and only some security personnel were present, according to factory officials.

Md Asaduzzaman, additional DIG of Industrial Police, said the factory lacked proper security, including guards and boundary walls, making it vulnerable.

"A significant number of people looted goods and machines. They even took the commodities from toilets," he said.

Locals told this newspaper that the factory was on disputed land and after the news of Gazi's arrest spread, locals formed a human chain demanding the land be given back to them.

Gazi's arrest was announced over a mosque's horn speaker around 11:30am on Sunday.

Lutfar Rahman, the imam of the mosque, told The Daily Star, "A few individuals came before Zuhr prayers and announced over the mosque's horn speaker about Gazi's arrest. They urged landowners to gather at Rupshi. Although they requested not to resort to looting, pillaging began immediately after the announcement."

Locals claimed that an armed group arrived at the scene around 4:00pm and clashed with the locals, but the armed group eventually retreated.

They said by 9:00pm on Sunday, hundreds of people were looting the factory.

The situation at the scene was chaotic throughout yesterday despite the presence of many law enforcement

personnel inside and outside the factory.

Locals said that they saw looting in the unguarded areas of the factory compound.

This correspondent also saw people removing machine parts, steel, plastic, and copper. A few were breaking windows to steal from the outside.

When confronted, many refused to speak and some became aggressive.

One unidentified youth said, "Gazi took a lot from us. This is ours now."

Senior Assistant Superintendent of Police Habibur Rahman assured that the police were making every effort to secure the factory.

Rupganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer Ahsan Mahmud Russell urged people to have a stronger stance against looting.

**THE MISSING** This correspondent spoke to the families of 14 "missing" individuals. They said their loved ones were not factory workers and that they had gone to the factory during the vandalism and looting on Sunday.

They said they could not contact them over phone since then. Moni Akter, a resident of Kalabagan, said her husband, Md Rashed, a mason, had gone to the factory around 8:30pm on Sunday. When he did not return, she tried calling him, but his phone was off.

"I've been searching for my husband all night, but I can't find him."

Md Mizan said his brother, Bellal Hossain, 36, also went to the factory on Sunday night and has been missing since.

## 437 Ansars sued over clashes

FROM PAGE 1

uniforms for those without these dresses. "I know my force members, but those faces were unknown," said the Ansar DG.

He alleged irrational recruitment over the last 10 years allowed Ansar to swell to a 90,000-strong force despite having around 50,000 posts. "This was done in a very organised manner," he said.

Law Adviser Prof Asif Nazrul also said those who came "in the guise of Ansar members had a different agenda behind their demands and a plan to create a terrible situation".

"Creating chaos was their main objective. They had a stock of sticks, and we saw how they attacked the students," he told reporters while visiting the injured at Dhaka Medical College Hospital. "They besieged the Secretariat to cause disruption for an unrealistic and impossible demand."

Asif Nazrul further mentioned that the students are vigilant, and the government will take legal action against anyone attempting to sabotage the interim government's work in the

name of protests. Power, Energy, and Mineral Resources Adviser Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan and Education and Planning Adviser Wahiduddin Mahmud also visited the injured students.

DMCH Director Maj Gen Asaduzzaman said the condition of Hasnat Abdullah, a coordinator of the student movement who was injured in the clashes, was now stable and under 48-hour observation for head injuries, he said.

The clashes also left six army officials injured, one of them critically, the Inter-Services Public Relation Directorate (ISPR) said in a press release yesterday. It said the demonstrators refused to leave the area and confined seven advisers of the interim government, the Ansar DG, and other senior officials to the Secretariat even after the authorities accepted their demands.

The army soldiers fired 27 rounds of warning shots after their bid to make the protesters desist failed. Later, additional troops were deployed in the area and they brought the situation under control, the release added.