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## NATURAL DISASTERS 1.83cr affected in Bangladesh over last four months

Says UN agency

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 1.83 crore people in the country have been affected by natural disasters, including cyclones and floods, over the four months from May to August, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

The recent floods in the southeastern and northeastern regions had the most significant impact, affecting 59 lakh people, as reported by OCHA on Thursday.

These floods have been the most severe disaster of the year so far. Earlier this year, cyclone Rimal, which struck the coast on May 26, affected 46 lakh people.

The UN reported that recent flash floods in Bangladesh have devastated communities across 11 eastern districts. Over 5 lakh people are displaced in 3,403 evacuation shelters, the report mentioned.

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The authorities have dug up Nazimuddin Road in Old Dhaka to carry out drainage work, which has been going on for over six months. Slow progress of the work is causing difficulties for the road users. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE Fakhrul calls for UN-led investigation

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday urged the interim government to open an investigation under the United Nations into the enforced disappearances that occurred over the last 15 years.

Speaking at a solidarity meeting, he also called upon the government to take steps to provide allowances to the families of enforced disappearance.



"I have been in politics for a long time... I knew about arrests and killings, but I was not aware of enforced disappearances. Since the Awami League came to power [in 2009], the law enforcement agencies used state power to commit such heinous crimes against humanity," the BNP leader said.

Fakhrul lauded the interim government for signing the UN convention against enforced disappearances.

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## MITIGATING FLOOD RISK India appears positive about new mechanism

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Delhi

India yesterday appeared to respond positively to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus' suggestion of a new mechanism to share the data on water flow in cross-border rivers and help mitigate the threat of future floods.

Randhir Jaiswal, spokesperson for India's Ministry of External Affairs, told the weekly media briefing in New Delhi that established joint procedures and mechanisms between the two countries are already in place.

"We have been exchanging timely data with Bangladesh. We have conveyed to them that this year's flood [in Tripura] was caused by excessive rains and not by any dam," he said while responding to a question on Yunus' suggestion.

However, if there is a suggestion for a new mechanism to mitigate the flood problem, "I think we can consider how we can take it forward," said Jaiswal.

Asked about a CNN report on the flood in northeastern Bangladesh, the MEA spokesperson said, "We have seen the CNN report. Its narrative is misleading and suggests that India is responsible for the floods. It is actually not correct and ignores the facts mentioned in the press release issued by the government of India clarifying the situation."

"They also have ignored [in the report] that we regularly and timely exchange data and critical information through existing joint mechanisms for water resources management."

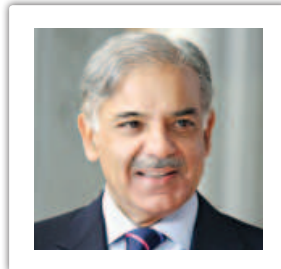
Jaiswal said the Indian high commissioner to Bangladesh, during his meeting with the chief adviser some days back, discussed several issues about the bilateral relationship including the flood.

According to Jaiswal, the Indian high commissioner told Prof Yunus that India would like to continue to work with Bangladesh to fulfill the shared aspirations of the peoples of both countries for prosperity, security and development.

"We are committed to taking forward the bilateral relationship in line with our national priorities," he added.

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## Pakistan PM calls Yunus, seeks to deepen ties



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pakistan Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif called Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus over the phone yesterday, congratulating him on his assumption of the leadership of the interim government of Bangladesh.

The Pakistan PM offered his best wishes and hoped the goodwill between the two South Asian countries would translate into substantial cooperation for the benefit of their peoples, according to the chief adviser's press wing.

Prof Yunus thanked PM Sharif for the phone call and his earlier message conveying sympathy for the flood victims of Bangladesh.

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## Israel raids West Bank for third day

Three killed; Kamala Harris says Washington's policy of supplying weapons to Israel to continue if she is elected

AFP, JENIN

Israel said it killed three Hamas militants in an air strike in the occupied West Bank yesterday, taking the death toll from a large-scale military operation now in its third day to at least 19.

A top UN aid official meanwhile questioned "what has become of our basic humanity", as the war raged on in Gaza where humanitarian operations struggled to respond.

In the United States, Vice President Kamala Harris pledged she will not change Washington's policy of supplying weapons to Israel if elected to the top job in November. But she stressed it was time to "end this war" in Gaza.

Israel has described its raids on towns and refugee camps across the northern West Bank as "counter-terrorism" operations. They have killed at least 19 Palestinians since Wednesday, the military and the Palestinian health ministry said.

Palestinian militant groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad have said at least 13 of those killed were their fighters.

The military said it killed three Hamas militants in an air strike near the northern city of Jenin yesterday.

Witnesses told AFP the strike hit a car in the town of Zababdeh, southeast of the city.

Israeli troops pulled back from other West Bank towns late Thursday but fighting raged on around Jenin, long a hub of militant activity.

An AFP journalist reported loud explosions from the city's refugee camp and thick plumes of smoke rising from the area.

In Gaza, Israeli artillery pounded western areas of Gaza City early yesterday, an AFP journalist said, while a medical source at the southern Nasser Hospital said an Israeli strike killed three people near the southern city of Khan Yunis.

The World Health Organization said Israel had agreed to at least three days of "humanitarian pauses" in parts of Gaza, starting Sunday, to facilitate a vaccination drive after the territory recorded its first case of polio in a quarter of a century.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the measures were "not a ceasefire" in the nearly 11-month war.

The Israeli assault on the West Bank has caused significant destruction, especially in Tulkarem, whose governor Mustafa Taqatqa described the raids as "unprecedented" and a "dangerous signal".

- Israel army says ends month-long operation in south, central Gaza
- UK voices concerns at Israel's 'methods' in West Bank raid
- WHO said Israel agrees to three days of 'humanitarian pauses' in parts of Gaza

## Judiciary sees major reshuffle

81 lower court judges transferred

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has made a major reshuffle in the judiciary by transferring 81 lower court judges, including district and additional district judges, metropolitan and chief judicial magistrates.

**Among the judges, 80 have been asked to join their new workplaces on September 3.**

The law ministry issued four notifications to this effect on Thursday, mentioning that transfers of lower court judges were done in consultation with the Supreme Court.

Among the transferred judges, 80 have been asked to join their new workplaces on September 3 and another has been asked to join the new office on September 1 after vesting their responsibilities in their higher authorities.

The Daily Star tried to get comments from Law Adviser Prof Asif Nazrul, but he neither picked up our phone calls nor responded to text messages.

## SEIZING BLACK MONEY ACC to start special drive next week

DIPAN NANDY

The Anti-Corruption Commission is set to launch a special drive next week against corrupt individuals and black money.

The graft watchdog is also working on forming several teams, led by ACC directors, to conduct the drive. One such team has already been assembled.

"The six-member team would assist the law enforcement agencies with seizing evidence and legal support during the special drive," reads an office order issued last Sunday by ACC Director General Golam Shahriar Chowdhury.

The commission will deploy its personnel nationwide for these operations, several senior ACC officials told The Daily Star.

Following the fall of Sheikh Hasina's government on August 5, the ACC seems to have become active as it started investigating some former AL ministers and lawmakers.

The commission is also probing some former influential bureaucrats and senior police officials.

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This handout picture released by the Israeli army yesterday reportedly shows Israeli soldiers operating in Jenin in the occupied West Bank.

PHOTO: AFP

## Death toll from floods rises to 54 in nine districts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 54 people, including six women and seven children, died in the ongoing floods in nine districts until yesterday, the disaster management and relief ministry said in its latest release.

Nineteen people died in Feni, 14 in Cumilla, eight in Noakhali, six in Chattogram, three in Cox's Bazar, and one each in Moulvibazar, Lakshimpur, Brahmanbaria and Khagrachhari.

Besides, one person in Moulvibazar remained missing. The release said the overall flood situation in Sylhet, Habiganj and Chattogram districts improved yesterday.

As part of its relief efforts, the ministry as of yesterday disbursed Tk 4.52 crore in cash, 20,650 tonnes of rice, 15,000 packs or sacks of dry and other foods, Tk 35 lakh for children food, and another Tk 35 lakh for cattle feed.

Also, 1,15,105 packs of relief materials, including dry food, clothes and drinking water collected by the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement were sent to the flood-hit areas through the Department of Disaster Management.

The recent floods affected more than 54 lakh people in 11 districts in Chattogram and Sylhet divisions and 10.09 lakh families became stranded.

Areas in 64 upazilas were inundated during the floods, with 486 unions and municipalities affected.

The authorities have opened 3,269 shelter centres for the flood victims. Besides, 567 medical teams are providing treatment to them.