



## Relentless rain triggers flash floods in Feni

Hilly regions at risk of landslide

### STAR REPORT

Incessant rains for the past few days have triggered flash flooding in Feni's Fulgazi and Parshuram upazilas.

Thousands of residents were marooned yesterday after breaches in the embankments of the Muhuri, Selonia, and Kohua rivers submerged at least 30 villages in those two upazilas.

Those stranded are struggling to cook meals and access safe drinking water.

The Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) attributes the ongoing deluge to an active monsoon system and a persistent low-pressure area affecting not just Feni but also other coastal and hilly districts.

Torrential downpours have battered Patuakhali, Cox's Bazar, Chattogram, Barishal, Khulna, Noakhali, Bandarban, Khagrachhari, and Rangamati, inundating low-lying areas and leaving thousands of people in distress.

As of now, flooding has affected Patuakhali, Khulna, Feni, and Noakhali the most, damaging standing crops and fish enclosures in the regions.

The BMD said yesterday that the rain is expected to continue for a few more days. Out of 75 monitoring stations across the country, 22 stations recorded "heavy rainfall" (above 48 mm in 24 hours).

The BMD also issued landslide warnings for the hilly

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A tin-roofed house stands partially destroyed after a breach in the Muhuri River embankment in Uttar Sripur Purba Para in Feni's Fulgazi upazila on Tuesday evening. The river, swollen from incessant rain, burst through the embankment, causing flash floods that swept away several homes in the area. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ABU TAHER

## BANGLADESH POLICE Helicopter deal with Russia stalls for US sanctions



### MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Five years ago, Bangladesh initiated a Tk 400 crore deal with a Russian company to procure two helicopters for its police force, but the delivery was recently suspended due to US sanctions.

On November 19, 2021, Bangladesh signed a government-to-government (G2G) agreement with the Russian company "JSC Russian Helicopters", to purchase two Mi-171A2 helicopters for the police force at a cost of Tk 428.12 crore.

Over the years, significant progress has been made, including the training of police pilots and technical staff, and the payment of nearly Tk 300 crore.

Even an eight-member team from the home ministry and police headquarters had visited Russia on December 12 last year, at the expense of the Russian company, to inspect the completed helicopters as part of a pre-shipment inspection.

After the inspection, the helicopters were supposed to be delivered to Bangladesh by January this year.

However, soon after the pre-shipment inspection, all processes stopped following a directive from the Ministry of Home Affairs citing sanctions imposed on the Russian

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## JULY ATROCITIES AL should be punished as a party: Fakhrul

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League must be brought to justice as its chief, deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, is solely responsible for the killings of thousands of people, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said yesterday.

"We always believe that political parties that support fascism -- especially the Awami League, which has done so -- every one of its members must be punished," he told reporters after visiting two BNP chairperson's advisers undergoing treatment at the National Institute of Neurosciences and Hospital in Agargaon.

They should be brought under the law and held accountable.

"Sheikh Hasina, the head of the Awami League, is, in my opinion, personally responsible for the killings of thousands of people. Legal proceedings against her have already begun. We are hopeful that she, along with others involved in the mass killings, will be brought to justice."

The country must be saved through the united efforts of all and it is the responsibility of every

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## New austerity measures amid low revenue receipts

### REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The interim government yesterday imposed several restrictions on allocated budget expenditures, including foreign tours and vehicle purchase, in a turn towards austerity amid low revenue collection.

The move to rein in the expenses of ministries, state agencies and public corporations comes in line with the contractionary monetary and fiscal policies of the Bangladesh Bank and the finance division respectively to tackle the high inflation. The Daily Star has learnt from finance division officials informed with the proceedings.

After 27 months, inflation dropped below 9 percent in June, according to data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

The low revenue collection was another deciding factor behind the austerity measures, which were announced in a circular by the finance ministry yesterday.

The government has yet to calculate the amount of money saved from last fiscal year's austerity, but in fiscal 2023-24, about Tk 2,500 crore could be conserved.

The latest round of austerity measures, which took effect from July 1, excludes expenditure restrictions on electricity, petrol, oil and lubricant, gas and fuel.

Due to the austerity measures over the past few years, different ministries and divisions could reduce unnecessary waste of these resources, said a finance ministry official.

As a result, the government did not deem it necessary to impose further restrictions on these overheads this fiscal year, he said.

The ministries and divisions could spend a maximum of 80 percent of total allocations for electricity, petroleum and gas last fiscal year.

Besides, except for education, health and agriculture purposes, no ministry is allowed to

construct residential, non-residential or other buildings under the operating budget.

However, if 50 percent of the construction work on any building has been completed, the agencies may continue with the project with approval from the finance division.

### AT A GLANCE

- Govt restricts foreign tours, vehicle purchases
- Austerity move aims to cut budget deficit
- No new cuts on electricity, fuel spending
- Ongoing building projects (50% done) may continue with approval
- Land acquisition restricted without approval

## Ctg open drain takes 3yr-old's life

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A three-year-old girl became the latest victim of drowning in Chattogram after falling into an open roadside drain in the city's Halishahar area yesterday.

Locals said the child fell into the drain around 2:45pm near her home in the Tasnia Gate area while playing with a ball.

Md Sujan, a witness, said the incident occurred when the girl tried to retrieve the ball after it fell into the drain.

"She tried to fetch the ball but was swept away by the strong current. Some neighbours attempted to rescue her but couldn't find her immediately. About 45 minutes later, her body was found stuck against a plastic pipe," he said.

Kamrul Islam, an official of the Agrabad Fire Service and Civil Defence office, said they sent a rescue team to the scene upon receiving the information.

The child's body was recovered by locals, he added.

At least 14 people have lost their lives after falling into open drains or canals in Chattogram city over the

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## Freeze 53 bank accounts of S Alam Group chair, family Court asks ACC

### COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered the Anti-Corruption Commission to freeze 53 bank accounts of S Alam Group Chairman Mohammad Saiful Alam, his family members, and his beneficiaries over corruption allegations.

S Alam and others deposited Tk 113,098,2868.09 in accounts of First Security Islami Bank PLC, Mutual Trust Bank PLC, and Islami Bank Bangladesh PLC.

Judge Md Zakir Hossain of Dhaka Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court passed the order after ACC Deputy Director Tahasin Monabil Haq, who leads the inquiry team, submitted an application in this regard.

"The ACC official came to know from credible sources that S Alam and others were trying to transfer their properties elsewhere. So, an order is needed to prevent them from doing so," said the anti-graft body in its application.



A woman and a child carefully make their way across a dug-up street in the capital's Gopibagh area, where the Dhaka South City Corporation is carrying out sewerage pipeline installation work. Residents say the slow progress is making daily life extremely difficult. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Over 1,900 forced into Bangladesh since May 7

### Push-ins continue as Delhi ignores Dhaka's concerns

#### PORIMOL PALMA and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Despite repeated concerns raised by human rights groups, Indian authorities have continued the practice of "push-ins" -- forcibly sending individuals across the border into Bangladesh -- with over 1,900 people pushed in since May 7.

Among them are over 200 Rohingya refugees, according to official data.

This ongoing wave of push-ins comes at a time of strained bilateral relations between the two countries following Bangladesh's political changeover last August and is believed to be the largest of its kind in recent years.

Rights organisations have condemned the practice, saying it violates both bilateral protocols and international law, which require repatriation through legal and formal procedures.

Many of those pushed in have alleged abuse and mistreatment while in India. Several returnees were found with visible signs of torture, according to Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) sources.

Government data shows the highest number of push-ins -- 502 -- took place along the Moulvibazar border. Other major entry points include Sylhet (250),

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