

**PRESS INFORMATION DEPARTMENT  
GOVERNMENT OF BANGLADESH  
DHAKA**

**MOST URGENT**  
FOR: BANGLADOOT, ALL MISSIONS  
MSG: 31/2017  
**Date: Sunday, 13 August 2017**

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**News Brief**

Flash floods, triggered by continuous downpour over the last couple of days and onrush of water from the hills, inundated Hili and Akhaura land ports yesterday, halting export-import activities there. Thousands of hectares of land with Aman crops were also damaged, several hundred schools were closed and many people were forced to take shelter on high ground as vast areas of Dinajpur, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Brahmanbaria, Sunamganj, Panchagarh, Thakurgaon and Habiganj went under water. At least 15 rivers, including the Jamuna, Teesta, and Surma, were flowing above the danger mark. They may continue to do so in the next 72 hours, further deteriorating the situation, Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre officials warned.

Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith has urged the financial institutions to allocate more on education from corporate social responsibility fund. Addressing a scholarship distribution programme in the capital, the Finance Minister said the meritorious students would turn assets for the country if get proper supports in academic lives.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid has said as many as 19,500 buildings will be set up at secondary schools, madrasahs, colleges and public universities by the next year. "Under the current development projects, 184 academic and residential buildings, student dormitories and buildings for research are being constructed at public universities," he told a view-exchange meeting with grassroots engineers of Education Engineering Department in Dhaka yesterday.

Prime Minister's Adviser for International Affairs Gowher Rizvi has said the government is considering easing the transfer process of remittance Bangladeshi expatriates send from abroad. 'The government will not take any step that may put the expatriates in trouble,' he told a discussion titled 'NRB & Peacekeeping: Remittance Opportunities and Challenges' in Dhaka yesterday. Adviser Rizvi said Bangladeshi expatriates have remarkable contributions to every achievement of the country since its independence in 1971.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina thanked the doctors for the successful surgery of Muktamoni. The surgery, without amputating her right hand which is affected by an unknown disease since her early age, was carried out yesterday at Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Muktamoni's family members expressed their gratitude to Prime Minister for her support for Muktamoni's treatment.

Dhaka is closely monitoring the development in Myanmar's Rakhine, a Rohingya-majority state bordering Bangladesh, where military personnel were deployed to beef up security following the killing of seven Buddhists near the town of Maungdaw earlier this month. Although the military deployment is being attributed to the enhancement of security, it is feared that an offensive is on the cards against the militants responsible for the killing. Meanwhile, The UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar Yanghee Lee has expressed deep concern over reports that an army battalion has been flown into the country's Rakhine state to help local authorities boost security in the region. This development, which reportedly took place on Thursday, is a cause for major concern, reads a UN press release issued in Geneva yesterday. More than 70,000 Rohingya villagers fled across the border to Bangladesh, carrying with them stories of systematic rape, murder and arson at the hands of soldiers.

The government has taken initiatives to improve the quality of leather and leather goods, shoes, light engineering and plastic products and develop the market brand of these products as part of its move to expand export market. The Commerce Ministry has taken a project "Export Competitiveness for Jobs" to diversify the export products at a cost of Tk 941 crore. Under the project the officials concerned will also be given training to improve the capacity for expanding the export market.

Hundreds of Muslim devotees who joined Jumma prayer at the Islamic Center in Washington D.C. on Friday sought divine blessings for the departed soul of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. This is the part of the Embassy's National Mourning Day program to mark the 42nd anniversary of death of Bangabandhu that will be observed on August 15.

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