

Flood risk looms in July, August

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Online Desk : Bangladesh may experience flooding in the Brahmaputra and Meghna river basins during July and August due to heavy rainfall in upstream areas, Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) warned on Friday. Sardar Uday Raihan, Executive Engineer of Bangladesh Water Development Board's FFWC, said flooding remains a seasonal risk during July and August as heavy rainfall in upstream catchments and major river basins often triggers high river flows in Bangladesh.

He said there is a possibility of flooding in the Brahmaputra and Meghna basins this year, although the severity will depend on rainfall patterns in the coming weeks. According to Raihan, FFWC can now forecast floods for inland river basins 10 to 15 days in advance, while forecasts for coastal rivers are available up to three days ahead. He said low-lying areas along the Brahmaputra basin are currently experiencing minor inundation, but the situation is expected to stabilise within the next five to six days. The Meghna basin is also likely to remain stable over the coming days due to the absence of heavy rainfall upstream.

Raihan also warned that a low-pressure system may form over the Bay of Bengal later this month, raising the risk of flash flooding in low-lying coastal areas.

In its flood forecast published on Thursday, the FFWC said water levels in the Brahmaputra-Jamuna river system declined over the past 24 hours but may rise again over the next four days before stabilising on the fifth day.

In the devastating floods of 1988, excessive rainfall during August and September inundated approximately 82,000 square kilometers of Bangladesh-about 60% of the country's total land area. Similarly, the historic flood of 1998 lasted for more than two months, throughout July and August. The disaster claimed the lives of more than 1,000 people, while nearly 30 million people were temporarily displaced or stranded by floodwaters.

Experts believe that the greatest flood risk arises when the Brahmaputra and Meghna river basins- two of the country's largest -experience peak flows simultaneously. In late July 2004, the peak flows of the Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers coincided, triggering severe flooding. In the northeastern region alone, nearly 30,000 square kilometers of land were submerged. In addition, the 2022 Meghna basin flood and the devastating floods of 2024 together affected more than 13 million people, highlighting the growing threat posed by increasingly intense upstream rainfall.