Month after floods, two lakh homeless
ANSHUMAN PHADIKAR

Tamluk, July 20: More than
a month after the floods in Ea-
st Midnapore, some two lakh
people are homeless and over
350 schools shut because they
are serving as relief camps.
"Hundreds of villages are
still under water," said district
relief officer Srikrishna Mai-
ty. Unless the water recedes,
the government won't be able
to assess the damage and fix
compensation.
If the water has receded in
some villages, the houses are
unfit to live in.
The authorities of many of
the 321 primary and 45 second-
ary schools had requested the
refugees to move out but it ev-
oked little response.
About 84 schools are closed
because they have been sever-
ely damaged by the floods, said
district inspector of schools
Dilip Ghatak.
The floods had affected 15
blocks in mid-June. Five of th-
em —in Bhagabanpur, Patash-
pur and Chandipur — are still
waterlogged.
Ghatak said there are 800
primary and 150 secondary
schools in the five blocks.
When the floods came, the
ground floor of the three-stor-

An East Midnapore school
still under water. Picture
by Jahangir Badsa

ey Bhagabanpur High School
went under water.
The floodwaters receded
a fortnight ago, but over 1,000
people have made the school
building their home.
"All the classrooms have
been occupied. We requested
the villagers to shift to some
other relief camp a week ago.
But only around a third of the
1,500 refugees heeded our re-
quest. Some of the classrooms
have been turned into cattle
sheds," said headmaster Ash-
ok Das Mahapatra.
"We don't know when we
will be able to start our classes.

About 1,800 students are suf-
fering at the onset of the aca-
demic year," he added.
Most of the flood victims,
however, have nowhere to go
to. Lutafar Rahman, 65, a haw-
ker of aluminium utensils fr-
om Durgapur village in Bhag-
abanpur block I, has been stay-
ing in a school with his wife
Rabeya, 55, their two sons, da-
ughters-in-law and grandchil-
dren since June 20.

"My two-storey mud-wall-
ed house has collapsed and the
village is still under knee-deep
water. Where will I go with my
family, if I am asked to move
out of the school building?"
asked Lutafar.
Sheikh Rabiul's house in
Uttar Beudia village is also
swamped. Rabiul, 41, who sells
wigs, said repairing the house
was impossible unless the wat-
er receded.
The students are worried.
"This year is very vital for me
as I will appear for Madhyam-
ik next year. We have our selec-
tion tests and a lot to catch up
on," said Abhijit Patram, a Cl-
ass X student of Palpara Boys'
High School.
Sheikh Sahidul's school
has resumed but he cannot att-
end classes because all his boo-
ks were destroyed.

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<description>More than a month after the floods in East Midnapore, some two lakh people are homeless and over 350 schools shut because they are serving as relief camps. "Hundreds of villages are still under water," said district relief officer Srikrishna Maity. Unless the water recedes, the government won't be able to assess the damage and fix compensation.</description>
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