

Constitution

FROM PAGE 12
policy, namely Bangalee nationalism, democracy, socialism and secularism. While elaborating on the basic principles he says without socialism, by which he means a society free from exploitation, the 75 million people would not be able to maintain their existence in a land of only 54 thousand square miles.

Explaining why the constitution is being framed at a break-neck pace, Bangabandhu observes that a country without a constitution is like a boat without a rudder. The constitution, which guarantees the rights and obligations of the people, provides them a mooring of a civilised nation in a modern state. Referring to the experience of the subcontinent in the field of constitution making, he points out that India took four years to frame a constitution and Pakistan failed to give a workable constitution in 25 years.

HARDINGE BRIDGE REOPENS
The Hardinge Bridge is formally opened for railway today. It may be recalled that Hardinge Bridge was severely damaged by the retreating Pakistan army in mid-December during the last phase of the country's liberation struggle and since then the Hardinge Bridge remained closed, causing total disruption in Railway Communication between the northern and southern parts of Bangladesh.

Bangabandhu said yesterday that the reconstruction of the Hardinge Bridge over River Padma would serve as an inspiration for fulfilling the task of national reconstruction with confidence and determination. In a message on the eve of the reopening of the bridge Bangabandhu observes that the reconstruction of the bridge would be remembered as a symbol of joint efforts and tie of friendship between Bangladesh and India. **SOURCES:** October 13, 1972 issues of *Bangladesh Observer*, *Dainik Bangla* and *Dainik Ittefaq*.

Key meeting

FROM PAGE 12
are also ill," said Minister Md Tazul Islam of Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives.

Tazul said a fresh date for the meeting will be announced when they recover.

"In the meeting, we will discuss the canals and drainage system of Wasa [Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority], how we can hand over the work to the city corporations and what we will have to do for this regarding the process," he said.

The two mayors, managing director of Wasa, officials of LGRD ministry and other concerned organisations were supposed to attend the meeting scheduled to be held at the LGRD ministry. LGRD ministry would preside over the meeting.

The idea of handing over the drainage management to city corporations came to light in July when the two mayors -- Dhaka South's Shekih Fazle Noor Taposh and Dhaka North's Atiul Islam -- said they wished to take over the job.

They also criticised Wasa and Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) for their failure to solve the long-standing problem.

The two mayors blamed Dhaka Wasa for failing to properly clean the canals, drains and box culverts under its jurisdiction, causing waterlogging in the city in July due to heavy rain. They also slammed BWDB for failing to pump out storm water in time after rain.

Of the total drainage lines in the capital, 385km are under Dhaka Wasa. This key utility service provider is also responsible for the maintenance of 26 canals with a total length of 74km and box culverts of 10km.

However, experts said it would be unfair to blame Wasa alone.

They said it was a collective failure -- of two city corporations that manages some 2,500km of surface drains in the city, the deputy commissioner's office that owns canals and many water bodies, and the Rajdhani Unnayan Kartirpakkh (Rajuk) which owns city lakes including Hatirjheel and is the custodian of many flood flow zones and retention areas.

Besides, Bashundhara Residential Area authorities and Cantonment Board are two entities who enjoy autonomy in water management in their respective areas.

Dhaka Wasa Managing Director Taqsem A Khan, now about to take charge for three more years after failing to provide safe drinking water to over one crore city-dwellers and solve the waterlogging problem over 11 years in charge, told *The Daily Star* a few months ago that waterlogging during monsoon cannot be solved with only an artificial drainage system.

Teenager

FROM PAGE 12
what people thought of me," Currin told Guinness. "And once I just stopped caring, I wasn't affected by anything."

Currin now uses her social media to inspire others to embrace their height.

With 1.7 million followers on TikTok, and another 50,000 on Instagram, she regularly posts about confidence and body image. Her videos on TikTok reach millions of viewers per video.

"I hope that tall women can see that height is a gift," Currin told Guinness. "And that you shouldn't be ashamed that you're tall. You should really embrace it."



Medics and people carry a Palestinian injured during an Israeli raid in Ramallah in the Israeli-occupied West Bank yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Start delay concerns Beijing

FROM PAGE 12
movement, and citizenship. China was also actively working during the second attempt of repatriation last year.

Dhaka has been persistently saying that regional powers have major investments in Bangladesh and Myanmar, but those may not yield good returns unless the Rohingya crisis is addressed at the earliest. Active political and other support was essential from regional and global powers.

Conflict between the Myanmar army and insurgent group Arakan Army in Rakhine state has recently escalated. Global attention, meanwhile, shifted because of Covid-19. Against this

backdrop, Myanmar has recently mobilised troops in Rakhine state along the bordering areas.

Momen has expressed concerns to the Chinese envoy over the issue.

During the call on, Foreign Minister Momen sought China's active assistance and mentioned that lingering of the repatriation process could create threats for regional security. Some Rohingyas are allegedly getting engaged in drug trafficking.

Recently, some eight Rohingyas were killed and scores were injured in clashes between two groups in Ukhiya camps.

The minister said such crimes were on the rise as there were no fencing around the refugee camps. Besides, locals were also expressing

dissatisfaction over their presence.

Momen assured Li Jiming that the criminals who killed a Chinese citizen in Pirojpur last week would be brought to book at the earliest. Two criminals involved in the incident have already been arrested.

Minister Momen requested the Chinese ambassador to renew the visas of students who got stranded in Bangladesh and were failing to travel to China because of the pandemic.

Jiming said China would take a decision at the earliest on the matter. He said China already started issuing visas for the businesspeople and for those seeking to reunite with their families in China.

He informed Momen that the

Chinese government would soon publish the book "Amar Dekha Noya Chin" [The New China that I have Seen] written by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. It is being translated to Chinese.

He thanked President Md Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for wishing China on the occasion of 45th diplomatic relations between Bangladesh and China.

Jiming also handed over a letter of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi to Momen. Yi thanked Momen in the letter for mentioning Hong Kong as the internal issue of China. Foreign Minister Momen reassured Jiming of Bangladesh's support to the One China Policy.

Padma bridge now as long as Bangabandhu bridge

FROM PAGE 12
he said, adding that they had to guard the crane and span, which were taken near the pillars, overnight.

With the span installment, the 4.8km of the structure is now visible, which is the same of the length of Bangabandhu bridge, the longest bridge in the country as of now.

The project authorities are now planning to put in two more spans within this month and total nine spans within this year.

But the authorities had planned to install all spans -- 41 -- within July this year, but it could not be possible due

to the pandemic and strong currents in the river, project officials said.

When work of most development projects was suspended due to the pandemic, the Padma Multipurpose Bridge project work continued.

But the work suffered due to lack of workers -- Chinese and local -- and poor supply of construction materials since January, said officials involved with the project.

The project authorities were able to bring back pace after Chinese nationals returned to work in May following the end of the two-month shutdown. But strong currents in the

Padma started causing problems, they said.

No span could be installed after June 10, when the 31st span was put in, due to strong currents, officials said.

Besides, at least 192 railway stingers and 220 roadway decks, supposed to be used for construction of the bridge, went into the Padma on July 31 due to erosion at a yard.

Although the erosion could not affect the bridge, which was nearly 2km off the bridge site, it might cause some delay as the stingers would have to be imported from Luxembourg,

they added.

The current deadline of the fast-track project is June 2021. However, top government officials already said they have to extend the deadline.

"If we can complete installation of all spans within this December, we are hopeful about completing the bridge within December 2021," a project official told this correspondent, wishing not to be named.

Once in service, the 6.15km-long bridge will connect the capital with 21 southwestern districts. It is expected to boost the country's gross domestic product by 1.2 percent.

They are all

FROM PAGE 1
in Habiganj, told this correspondent on Tuesday that the list sent to the River Commission was not complete.

He admitted that there are more than 2,000 illegal occupants.

The list has not been published as part of a strategy of the district administration to keep these occupants from going to the court and trying to get stay orders, he added.

In the drive between March and September last year, a mobile court of Habiganj district administration in association with the Water Development Board demolished around 500 illegal structures built on the river land.

But when this correspondent last month visited the area where the demolitions took place, it was found that some of the buildings have been rebuilt and there are even "to-let" signs on them.

According to Khowai River Waterkeeper Tofazzal Sohel, a local activist, prominent structures that remain on the river land include the Habiganj District Council office, the multi-storey Diabetics and General Hospital, the District and Town Freedom Fighters' Sangshad, a government library, and buildings of other government and non-government institutions.

THE ILLEGAL OCCUPANTS
Red crosses have been drawn on buildings to mark structures built illegally on river-occupied land. One such sign marks the house of Sirajul Haque Chowdhury.

He is the public prosecutor of the District and Sessions Judge's Court of Habiganj and former vice president of

the district Awami League.

Contacted, Sirajul said he and around 100 freedom fighters formed the Motsyajibi Samity, which was given permission to build a freedom fighters' housing project there.

Tofazzal Sohel said some of this river land was given to these freedom fighters and other such institutions but they took advantage of it and further encroached upon the river over the years.

Another illegal occupant as per the district administration's list is former Habiganj municipal mayor and joint convener of Habiganj district BNP GK Gaus, sources say.

Contacted, GK Gaus denied illegally occupying any river land.

On visiting Habiganj district town last month, this correspondent found several workers rebuilding an office of Krishak League, a pro-AL organisation, occupying land of the Old Khowai in Anantapur.

This is the same area where the district administration's drive took place last year.

SA Mahfuz, joint secretary of the district Krishak League, is alleged to be involved in the construction of the office.

Contacted, he claimed this will be a temporary office, and if the administration demolishes it in the future, then they will move to some other place.

He admitted that the office was knocked down at the site last year.

The six-storey Diabetics and General Hospital, right at the mouth of the now-diminished Old Khowai river, looms over the surrounding river land.

Shahid Uddin Chowdhury,

president of the board of directors of the hospital, said, the site of the non-profit organisation was registered following proper government procedure.

SAVING THE OLD RIVER

The river was one of the town's reservoirs, Tofazzal said, but it has become almost non-existent because of continued encroachment.

This land grabbing dates back to when the river was diverted.

Around 40 years ago, the Khowai would frequently overflow, flooding the town of Habiganj.

To protect against flooding, the river's natural course was diverted from Mashulia to Rampur and from Khowai Mukh to Garur Bazar through loop cutting at two points.

It was around 250-300 feet wide and 25-40 feet deep before the diversion, said Tofazzal.

After the diversion, the new channel has become the main river which flows around the city. The original river, now landlocked, has become known as Old Khowai.

At least four kilometres of the Old Khowai has been gradually occupied and thus it largely disappeared, he said. The remaining one kilometre has some stagnant water in places, but even in these submerged parts, signboards stand claiming "ownership".

Habiganj WDB's Executive Engineer Shahnewaz Talukder said a project worth Tk 89 crore was sent to the ministry concerned for beautification of the Old Khowai after the drive last year. If the project is approved by Ecnc, necessary steps will be taken.

Sharif Jamil, general secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon's

outpost around 10:00am when policemen at the outpost told him to go to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital, as Rayhan was admitted there since his condition had deteriorated," he also said.

"Reaching the hospital, he came to know that Rayhan died and the police members on duty there told him that Rayhan was beaten by a mob."

Rayhan's stepfather Habib Ullah echoed the same and said, "We believe that Rayhan was tortured to death at the police outpost."

This correspondent called the number from which Rayhan had called his mother, but no one received the call.

According to the medical registrar

(Bapa) central committee, said recovering the Old Khowai is crucial to saving Habiganj town from waterlogging and important for the groundwater table of the municipality area.

Unfortunately, locals and civil society of Habiganj who want the channel to be rejuvenated were not engaged with the proposed beautification process. "This is unacceptable," he said.

Plans for the river cannot be drawn up solely by government officials. "It is the people's property and the government is the custodian."

The authorities concerned must share their plans with the people and do the needful to demarcate the river area, evict the land grabbers, and restore the Old Khowai through a comprehensive and inclusive action plan immediately, Sharif added.

Muzibur Rahman Howlader, chairman of the National River Conservation Commission, told this correspondent on Tuesday that the issue has been discussed several times.

"I have issued instructions in a meeting a few days ago. I have requested the DC. They have to do it. The River Commission does not have the power to conduct drives against illegal structures. We can only recommend."

"But," he added, "this is an ongoing process and it is not possible to do it in a short time."

He observed that the government has occupied land of several other rivers in different areas of Bangladesh, not only the Khowai. "They do not have in mind that the rivers must be protected."

Nadal wins

FROM PAGE 12
the roof of court Philippe Chatrier.

Djokovic, who was looking to win his 18th Grand Slam title, rebelled in the third set, breaking back for 3-3, only to drop serve on a double fault in the 11th game before Nadal went on to bag his 100th victory at Roland Garros with an ace.

"First of all of course congrats to Novak for another great tournament, sorry for today," Nadal, who has now beaten Djokovic in all of their three French Open finals, said on court.

"In Australia (in the final in 2019) he killed me. We've played so many times, one day one wins, another day the other wins."

Djokovic had won five Grand Slam finals in a row since being beaten by Stan Wawrinka at the 2016 Australian Open, but Nadal was not upset on his turf despite a new stadium design, the roof and the lack of spectators amid the COVID-19 crisis.

The 34-year-old Nadal would not think of matching Federer's mark.

"To win here means everything. I don't think today about the 20th and equal Roger on this great number, today is just a Roland Garros victory and that means everything to me," the world number two said.

"This love story I have with this city and this court is unforgettable."

India's Covid

FROM PAGE 12
But India's festival season, which climaxes in October and November with the popular Hindu celebrations of Dussehra and Diwali, poses additional challenges, as officials try to dampen the usual large public celebrations and cross-country travel.

Typically the festival season brings a big increase in consumer spending, and the more sombre atmosphere this year will further dampen an economy that contracted by almost a quarter in the three months to June - the worst figure on record.

A few states such as Maharashtra and Gujarat in the west have put restrictions on gathering during the nine-day Navratri festival due to begin on October 17.

"Festival season is approaching. A little carelessness of people during festivals can worsen the situation," India's health minister Harsh Vardhan told his social media followers in a broadcast yesterday.

"There is no need to congregate in large numbers to prove your faith or your religion. If we do this we may be heading for a big trouble," Vardhan said.

Vardhan also said the market rollout of the much-anticipated 'Feluda' (named after director Satyajit Ray's iconic fictional sleuth Prodosh Mitter) Covid19 test kit was expected in the next few weeks. He said he cannot put an exact date for its availability.

Since the virus emerged in China late last year, it has killed more than one million worldwide, infected over 37 million and forced millions more out of work as the pandemic batters the global economy.

CHINA REPORTS NEW CASES
China reported 21 new confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus on Saturday, up from 15 the previous day, the national health authority said yesterday.

All the new cases were imported infections involving travellers from overseas, the National Health Commission said in a statement.

The number of new asymptomatic cases, which China does not classify as confirmed, fell to 23 from 39 a day before. All of them were imported.

Trump back

FROM PAGE 12
Dr Albert Ko, an infectious disease specialist and department chairman at the Yale School of Public Health, said Saturday night that the White House appeared to be following CDC guidelines for when it is appropriate to end isolation after mild to moderate cases of Covid-19.

But Ko cautioned that those who have had severe cases of the diseases should isolate for 20 days.

He noted that Trump was treated with the steroid dexamethasone, which is normally reserved for patients with severe Covid-19.

"It looks like I'm immune for, I don't know, maybe a long time and maybe a short time, it could be a lifetime, nobody really knows, but I'm immune," Trump said in a Fox News interview yesterday.

The US president first revealed that he had tested positive on October 2, and spent three days in hospital. The White House has not disclosed when Trump last tested negative.

Trump is eager to get back on the campaign trail after an absence of more than a week. Saturday's event set the stage for a full-fledged campaign rally today in Florida -- followed immediately by two more in battleground Pennsylvania Tuesday and Iowa Wednesday.

The president's illness has cast a spotlight on the pandemic, which has infected nearly 7.7 million people in the United States and killed over 213,000.

His administration has faced criticism for its handling of the crisis, and for its lax approach to mask-wearing and social distancing in the White House. At least 11 close Trump aides have tested positive for coronavirus.