

DOWN TO EARTH

Road Digging In City During Monsoon

By A S M Nurunnabi

Traditions die hard. It appears that the tradition of road digging during monsoon follows the same pattern over the years. The arrival of monsoon is still on month away. From now preparation seems to be underway for going in for road digging on a large-scale. It is understood that the Dhaka WASA has lately approach the Dhaka City Corporation for permission for digging 44 roads including such important roads as the Airport Road, Mohakhali and Gullistan roads.

The T&T Board also contemplates digging of 30 roads during this season in such busy areas Mitford, Sonargaon Road, Nazimuddin Road, Tongi Diversion Road and Malibagh. There are also other organisations like PDB, Titag Gas, PWD have expressed the same intention.

It is a sad commentary on our administrative system that during the end of each financial year different organisations bestir themselves with their programmes for road digging operations in the city. The obvious reason for the unseemly haste is that all budget allocations under different organisations expire with the end of the month of June which coincides rainy season. But this is not a new problem and on this a lot of discussion has taken place. Yet the same issue comes up again and again.

The proposed diggings of roads by several organisations this year have some serious implications. The Dhaka City Corporation lately completed a large-scale programme of repairs and maintenance of some important roads of the city at a cost of Tk 100 crore. Now the Corporation is reportedly about to take up repair work in some lanes and by-lanes. In this situation, the City Corporation has received requests from the aforesaid organisations. Apparently such permission, if allowed will undo the 100 crore taka repair work already completed by the City Corporation.

Understandably, the City Corporation is faced with an embarrassing exigency. In spite of its convenience, it seems to have no alternative but to grant the permissions sought for. But there may be a way of lessening such inconvenience if the permissions are given not for all the roads at the same time but in phases.

But what is the way out of the recurring problem of road digging during the monsoon? Some observers suggest that a coordination committee be constituted under the auspices of the Dhaka City Corporation to oversee that all digging operations public utility services

be duly completed well ahead of the rainy season subject to the condition that if any organization fails to complete its work before the rainy season, it will be accountable for the failure. In case of unsatisfactory explanation, that organization may be liable for action. In this way, it has been suggested, the road digging operations of other organizations may be carried on in a planned manner and at the same time public woes may be minimised. It is also felt that if the government takes steps to place funds at the disposal of the different agencies for development, repair or maintenance works at the beginning of the financial year it may be possible for them to complete their digging operations during the dry season. In that case, sufferings of the public on the roads may be greatly-redeemed.

There is no denying that road digging by public utility services becomes a necessity in many cases. But the regret-

table fact is that such digging is seldom done in a planned and coordinated manner. It has also been seen that after one organization completes its work, another organization comes up within a few months with its programme for work in the same area. Even after completion of their works, the organizations concerned do not take timely care or interest in repairing and restoring the affected areas. This leads to prolonged public suffering. Observers express apprehension that if the City Corporation grants permission to dig up all the roads, big and small, by different organizations, as sought for, at the same time, it may lead, in many areas of the city, to inordinate public suffering on account of traffic dislocations. It, therefore, behoves the City Corporation, in public interest, to ensure that the city dwellers' ous in this respect are minimised as far as possible.



A FAMILIAR SCENE: Another dug-up city road.

'Ekattorer Jishu' still in cans

By Staff Correspondent

A feature film on the country's glorious war of independence is now awaiting the Information Ministry's final certification.

Sources said that the film — "Ekattorer Jishu" — has been waiting for the last 20 days for the government's green signal despite the approval of an appeal Censor Board recommending immediate clearance for its release.

The appeal board on April 25 okayed Ekattorer Jishu as "an honest and quality feature film" and suggested the ministry give the clearance for its release, they said.

The ministry, in turn, asked the board to re-consider its verdict or, at least, suggest a change of the film's title, the sources said.

Accordingly, the appeal board reviewed the film but stood by its earlier decision, the sources said. It also voted against changing the title and advised the ministry to consult the Archbishop of Dhaka for his opinion, they said.

The director of Ekattorer Jishu, Nasiruddin Yusuf, appeared to the board when the Censor Board denied to release his film on grounds that it had distorted the history of the Liberation War.

The makers of Ekattorer Jishu also held a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club on April 13 to protest the Censor Board's decision.

Programme to save tigers soon

By Staff Correspondent

Several conservationists of the country, in a meeting Thursday, have decided to launch a tiger conservation programme.

The meeting, convened by the Nature Conservation Movement (MACOM) and presided over by GMME Karim, honorary consultant of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), was attended by several Bangladeshi experts on the tiger.

The experts observed that all figures on the tiger population in the Sundarbans are based on assumptions and a lack of government initiatives hinder scientific research on the tiger.

The experts decided to launch an expedition very soon to the Sundarbans to ascertain the tiger population there.

Star Wars

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A top priority for the US administration will be development of a replacement for the patriot missile, which gained notoriety in intercepting Iraqi scud missiles.

Aspin said the defence against intercontinental missiles would not be completely abandoned because "in the future, we may face hostile or irrational states that have both nuclear warheads and ballistic missile technology that could reach the United States."

Voluntary labour

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could also create social resistance against different vices including drug addiction, terrorism and other problems which had been hindering development of the country.

Begum Zia said the members could make the people health conscious at the grassroots level. They could explain to the ignorant people the causes of such deadly epidemics like diarrhoea and advise them about the remedies.

She said the members of the Dal could also play a strong role in the implementation of mass education programme on which the success of other programmes largely depended.

The Prime Minister said involvement of the Shechha Sebak Dal with the programmes of the LGRD Minister could be considered to enable the Dal members to play a more effective role in development and progress.

The function was also addressed by chief patron of the Dal Agriculture Minister M Majedul Huq, Information Minister Nazmul Huda, Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Miah, State Minister for Social Welfare Begum Sarwari Rahman, Convenor of the Dal Kazi Asaduzzaman and other leaders, including Akbar Ali and Abu Taber Patwari.

Storm deaths

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poles and thousands of trees. The worst affected villages are: Pathbaria, Aigaon, Borpir, Amshapara, Palpara, Nabagram and Bangla Bazar.

Nine of the dead were identified as: Menufa Begum, 22, Nur Mohammad, 6, Sumon, 12 of Aigaon village, Mizanur Rahman, 5, Monowara Begum, 45, Razia Sultana, 4, Ali (6 months), Mohan, 2, Nizam, 5 of Pathbaria village in Nodona union.



Shilpangan, a city art gallery, yesterday observed its first founding anniversary at its Dhanmondi premises.

45 killed in S African coal mine blast

JOHANNESBURG, May 14: At least 45 miners were killed and eight more were missing and feared dead Friday after a methane gas blast ripped through a coal mine, officials said, reports AP.

In a separate accident, five miners were killed in a rock fall at a gold mine. Several hundred workers are killed annually in South Africa's gold and coal mines, the world's deepest. But the accident at the Middelbult coal mine at Secunda, 100 kilometers southeast of Johannesburg, was the worst single disaster since 1987, when 62 men died in a gold mine explosion.

Rescue teams drilled ventilation shafts and searched for survivors Friday, a day after the blast, but the huge explosion caused extensive damage and there was little hope anyone was still alive.

"We are hanging on the edge of our seats here," said Richard Hughes, a spokesman for Sasol, which owns Secunda Collieries. The mine received an award Monday night as one of the safest in South Africa, based on its accident rate during 1992.

Gerrit Ferreira, operations manager for the National Occupational Safety Association, the group that presented the award at a banquet, said 53 companies nationwide were recognized and only a handful were mines. Miners' relatives gathered at the mine office, anxiously waiting for news. At a morgue near the mine, a woman and her four young children all wailed with grief after she saw the body of her husband, an engineer.

The blast was in two working areas about 130 meters (130 yards) underground, officials said. It was not clear if the blast started a fire as initially reported, they said.

A team specially trained to deal with underground accidents was providing ventilation to the affected areas of the mine and searching for the missing miners, Hughes said. The team had recovered 45 bodies by Friday afternoon.

Methane is a highly volatile gas that can build up in mines, easily igniting and causing devastating explosions. Mine officials were trying to determine how safety devices failed to detect the apparent gas build up.

Kabul airport closed

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The attack was mounted as government troops appeared to be preparing an offensive to halt several days of smaller clashes.

Other groups, including the militia of powerful ex-communist warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostum, who is based in the north, joined in on Thursday, attacking government posts.

They were fighting in the central old city district with rocket-propelled grenades and Kalashnikov assault rifles, witnesses said. A government officer said 50 civilians and fighters have been killed or injured.

Fire engines doused flames in a carpet warehouse in the old city, where families picked through the rubble of homes and shops.

"We have orders to shoot to kill looters," said a Dostum commander. Moments later he opened fire on a group of youths who ran out of a rocket-damaged shop. No one was hurt.

Residents said more than 100 shops and homes in the old city had been destroyed by artillery fire since Thursday.

The city has been divided into a patchwork of small fiefdoms controlled by rival guerrilla parties, often separated by only a few metres (yards), since the fall of communist government in April 1992.

Hezbollah and Hezb-i-Wahdat said they had captured the Darulaman Palace, which houses the defence ministry and is occupied by Dostum's militia, and had taken many prisoners.

Government jets bombed Hezb-i-Islami positions 80 km (50 miles) east of Kabul on Thursday. No casualties were reported.

A military commander said bodies littered streets near the heart of the battles in the west.

President Burhanuddin Rabbani and his arch-rival Hezb-i-Islami were in the eastern city of Jalalabad for a 14th day of talks to try to break a deadlock over formation of a cabinet under the terms of the March peace accord.

The Midnight File

CIS to form 'economic union'

MOSCOW, May 14: Commonwealth leaders signed a declaration Friday stating support for an "economic union" among the former Soviet republics, taking a step toward closer cooperation after a year of squabbling. Nine of the 10 leaders of the Commonwealth of Independent States signed the declaration at the end of a one-day summit meeting in Moscow. The only member abstaining was Turkmenistan, which has balked at the idea, reports AP.

Families of UN agencies ordered to leave Cambodia

PHNOM PENH, May 14: The families of UN agencies were ordered on Friday to leave the country within 24 hours, UN sources said. The order, which came from the UN headquarters in New York, said family members of officials working for UN agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme and World Food Programme should leave Cambodia by Saturday, said the sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, reports AP.

Two killed, 5 injured in accidents

By Staff Correspondent

At least two people including a four-year old boy were killed and five others hurt in accidents in and outside the city Thursday and Friday.

A garments employee died on the spot in a road accident in the capital Thursday evening.

Abdul Hannan, returning from his place of work, was crushed under the wheels of a speeding bus near the Shamoli cinema hall at about 7 pm.

The body of Hannan was taken to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

In another incident a minor boy was critically injured in a bomb blast Friday morning at Kamrangirchar in the city suburbs.

The accident took place when Shaheen, a four-year-old, hit a can with a stick while playing at around ten near Masterbart on the bank of the Buriganga.

Shaheen's limbs were badly hurt in the explosion. He was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

UNB adds: An unidentified woman was killed and four people were injured in a road-mishap near Tongi bazar in Gazipur Friday, fire service sources said.

The unidentified woman, in her 30s, succumbed to her injuries at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

According to Fire Service source, a speeding truck lost control and knocked down five pedestrians.

Among the four wounded pedestrians, Halima Khatun, 30, was admitted to the DMCH, while tree males were taken to the Tongi Health Complex and released after first aid.

Our Correspondent says, a fire broke out in a garments factory at Mahakhali in the city Friday morning causing a reported damage of Tk 10 lakh.

Esleep Clothing Export (Bangladesh) Ltd, was locked for the weekend holiday when it caught fire.

Fire fighters, on being informed by local residents, rushed to the spot and brought the flames under control within 15 minutes.

Firemen, however, could not detect the cause of the fire.

A case has been lodged with the Gulshan Police Station in this regard.

Mostafiz

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Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Ahmed Al Sabah who is in charge of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, covering the entire gamut of bilateral relations, regional and international issues of common concern.

Concluding his three-day trip to Kuwait, Mostafiz will fly to Abu Dhabi to deliver a message from Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to Sultan Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan.

The Foreign Minister will meet with several ministers there and discuss with them bilateral relations as well as regional and international issues of common concern.

He is expected to return home on May 19.

Hasina

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setting a primary school in each village, increasing the salary of primary school teachers to Tk. 1000 from Tk 500, regularising the Ansars Battalion and banning liquor and gambling in the country.

The opposition leader rebuked the ruling party for breaking its pre-election promises and said the BNP came to power by giving bluffs to the people.

After signing an agreement with the SKOP, the government had failed to implement it, forcing the industrial workers to go on strike, Hasina said. She also said that despite the firm commitment by the Prime Minister, cooperative loans upto Tk 5000 have not yet been written off.

Hasina ridiculed the 'dal-bhat' slogan of the Prime Minister. The audience at the meeting shouted 'no, no' when Hasina asked the people whether they have the buying capacity for rice and pulses.

Referring to local problems, Hasina demanded reopening of the W Rahman Jute Mills immediately and construction of the Chandpur-Raipur road.

Awami League leaders Zillur Rahman, Abdul Jalil, Zakaria Chowdhury were, among others, who addressed the meeting.

Earlier, Hasina addressed another public meeting at Kachua High School. Mesbahuddin Khan, MP presided. She also addressed wayside rallies at the W Rahman Jute Mills premises, Dhanoa Bazar, Baghdi Bazar, Hajiganj Bazar and Ilichat Arch. Nearly 50 welcoming garh were erected along her route from Kachua to Faridganj.

Hasina will address a public meeting at Haimchar Saturday.

Ogata

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One Anwara, 22, living in a transit camp at Gundum, burst into tears when narration and incident of violation of human rights at Tombazar in Arakan district.

"I was raped and my husband was killed by the Myanmar troops", Anwara told the chief of the UN relief agency which looks after victims of violation of human rights across the world. Ogata assured her, "Don't worry, you have friends here."

Dr Ogata, accompanied by other UNHCR officials, talked to the local leaders, including union parishad chairman at the Jumapara transit camp.

They appraised Ogata of the extensive damage caused to the socio-economic condition of the region due to influx of thousands of refugees from neighbouring Myanmar.

The local leaders demanded quick repatriation of the refugees.

Ms Ogata drew the attention of the leaders to the programmes being undertaken by the UNHCR to help the people to overcome the loss.

Earlier, Chittagong Divisional Commissioner Omar Farooq received the UN relief agency chief at the Ukhiya High School ground when she flew in here.

The Divisional Commissioner briefed Ogata about the relief operations and various aspects of the problems, including the repatriation.

Ogata was taken to Jumapara transit camp where she was told that some 997 refugees were awaiting repatriation at four such camps. Of the total 2.65 lakh Rohingya Muslims who crossed into Bangladesh from Myanmar in 1991, 24,105 refugees have returned home so far.

Ogata went round different sheds of the camps and visited a medical centre.

She also visited the Jalapalong Primary School for which UNHCR earlier sanctioned Tk 6 lakh.

Before returning to Dhaka in the afternoon, Ogata held a meeting with the UNHCR officials at its sub-office in Cox's Bazar.

During the trip, Ogata was accompanied by UNHCR chief in Dhaka Darius Bayander, Rohingya Refugees Repatriation Commissioner Golam Murtaza and Director (South Asian Desk) at the Foreign Ministry Jahangir Sadat.

SKOP: Fresh action

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nents share the general workers' sentiments that the movement must be made more "dynamic" and "effective" while others are of the view that such a move would weaken the labour agitation, the leader added. The latter argue that workers, irrespective of party affiliation, must be kept in the process to get the government-accepted demands fulfilled.

The SKOP leaders have decided to meet tomorrow, May 16, to evaluate effectiveness of the 72-hour shutdown and also to discuss their new programme, sources said, adding that the meeting would also discuss strategies to combat the government's reluctance about resolving the labour issues, the growing resistance by the employers in the way of implementation of the agreements already signed and to force the AL to spell out clearly its position on the labour agitation.

The SKOP coordinator Dr Wajedul Islam Khan commented that the next action would be "more effective" but declined to elaborate.

However, another SKOP leader Golam Mahmud hinted that the coming action may include gheraoing the offices of the Deputy Commissioners (DCs) and the Secretariat in the capital.

But it would take time to finalise the programmes for the coming days, Golam Mahmud said and added, efforts to maintain the existing unity of the labour bodies and to seek increased support of the political forces would continue simultaneously.

Leaders of the jute-textile-cotton-sugar-BSEC workers federations will meet after the

One found murdered in city

By Staff Correspondent

Police recovered the body of a missing janitor Friday afternoon from an apartment block at Bailey Road in the city.

Mantu Sarker, who looked after the multi-storied building, was found dead in his fourth floor room which was locked from outside.

Witnesses said that there were bruises all over the body and a rope was tied to the neck of the badly decomposed corpse.

Hasanul Rashid Chowdhury, a tenant of the apartment, had earlier reported to the Ramna Police station about Mantu's disappearance.

Acting on the report, Ramna police opened Mantu's room and found his body on the floor.

Police sent the body to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Sources said Mantu may have been murdered following a dispute over financial matters.

A murder case has been filed with Ramna Police.

Imported salt

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will be imported and this would retard the on-going Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders (CIDD) programme.

The Unicef has already equipped 92 salt refineries with salt iodisation plants which can iodise about 40 per cent of the salt demand of the country. Another 173 units will also be equipped with the plants very soon.

According to Unicef estimation, about 12 million people in the country have visible goitre and about 40 million are at risk of various iodine deficiency disorders.

Unicef has already invested three million US dollar for the iodine programme and another 3.5 million dollar will be mobilised through different donors for the same.

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