

DOWN TO EARTH

Neglected City's Infrastructure

By A S M Nurunnabi

To every observing citizen, Dhaka's roads, drains and sewerage system continue to remain in the same state of neglect and decay. There have been only sporadic and isolated efforts at improvement which in effect fail to bridge a major gap in the city's health, sanitation and environmental infrastructure.

There has been no dearth of media publicity of the public suffering and complaints for specific city areas in this regard. Yet the reaction of the concerned authorities has been, by and large, negative or indifferent. Observers are of the opinion that 90 per cent of the entire city road network outside the 10 per cent of VIP roads lie in a state of decay.

Following every rainy season the city roads become literally unusable. The incessant rain coupled with the heavy pressure of vehicular traffic damage the road surface, most of which develop large pot-holes and large-scale broken surface. Repairs are never promptly taken up, thereby creating conditions under which a ride over them in a transport is a painful experience.

The continuing default of the concerned agencies in the matter of repairs and reconstruction leads to a process of unabated decay which presents a

sorry picture of the major part of the city's road network.

The Mayor of the Dhaka City Corporation recently warned the engineers and area officials that they would be held responsible if the roads, after repairs, do not last at least for a period of five years. Literally crores of taka are wasted every year on poor road repair work. In the opinion of observers, mere warning alone will not improve matters. It is felt that if roads are to be repaired with quality material and in a way that will ensure durability, then the whole process — from selecting contractors, purchasing materials and supervising the work done — will have to be thoroughly reviewed.

Next to the roads are the drains equally dilapidated. There has been also no lack of media publicity about the poor functioning of the city's drainage system which has been a major cause of general suffering of the citizens. Replacement of the surface drains by storm sewers has apparently miscarried. Besides, expansion of the city drainage to cover areas with none yet has been the city's urgent problem.

The overall situation has turned so wretched that it is the biggest single cause of pollution of environment and a direct

threat to health and sanitation of the city's population.

The sanitation situation is further made pitiable by the city's timeworn sewerage system. Some of the underground sewers date back to the twenties of the century. They need replacement urgently. An efficient sewerage system is regarded to be far more important than the sanitation point of view than even roads with good surfaces.

As it is, the state of city's sewerage is as horrifying as the drainage and road system is at its worst. The general public, the taxpayers in particular, have come to react with a growing sense of frustration over the inaction and inertia of the public utility agencies such as the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) and the WASA (Water and Sewerage Authority). They have been found to be slowest in the performance of their essential functions. Citizens who have the misfortune of living in the old town and the older parts of the new continue to suffer the most.

In the result, observers tend to feel that here is a city in decay and immediate measures can be delayed only at great peril to the health and well-being of the entire populace of the city.

Bangla Academy plans to broaden activities

By Staff Correspondent

The 38th founding anniversary of the Bangla Academy was celebrated Friday with a call for broadening the activities of the glorious institution for further benefit of the country.

The Bangla Academy authorities had earlier drawn up an elaborate programme to mark the day.

The day's programme began with the placing of wreaths at the Central Shaheed Minar and at the pedestal of the Bangla Academy by the officials and employees of the Academy.

The Academy, tastefully decorated on the occasion, remained open to public since 10 am in the morning. Children accompanied by their parents, visited the historic Burdwan House and witnessed exhibits put on display.

Video films and photography exhibitions were also arranged.

The Bangla Academy authorities published a booklet on "Bangla Academy at a Glance" on the occasion. In the evening, a discussion was arranged at the *Batumul* of the Academy.

The Postal Department released commemorative stamps to mark the day. Post and Telecommunications Minister Tariqul Islam attended the function as chief guest while Prof Moinazur Rahman Tarafdar presented the key-note speech.

Speaking at the meeting, the Post and Telecommunications Minister said the Bangla Academy is the due heritage of the entire nation.

The minister said there are differences of opinion among us but the Bangla Academy will remain above all petty and political interests. He said, "We will hold each other's hand here and for a few moments will forget all our differences and narrowness in this sacred premises."

The minister said the present government had given due importance to this prestigious organisation. He said a postal stamp was being released by the Prime Minister.

Hasina : BNP's corruption

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ing, the BNP had no masters but friends in the foreign nations. But it was Khaleda Zia who signed the 11-point contract of slavery with Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao," the Leader of the Opposition said.

She criticised the foreign policy of the BNP government and commented that Bangladesh had a poor image in the international politics due to its submissive foreign policy.

Referring to the problems of Mirpur, she said the BNP MP, elected through "media coup and vote rigging" from the Mirpur constituency, would never try to solve the problems of the area.

She pointed out that illegal land grabbing was at large in Mirpur and demanded an immediate stop to such activities.

Describing different plans of the AL she said her party was analysing the economic problems of the country which would be the basis of the AL's economic plan for Bangladesh.

The Awami League held a seminar on education recently which put forward a number of recommendations. According to these recommendations, the party has taken an education policy for the next 10 years

aiming at total eradication of illiteracy," she said.

She demanded immediate resignation of the government for losing credibility and reiterated her demands for holding elections under caretaker government.

She paid homage to Nurul Huda, Abdal Malek and others who died in Mirpur during the anti-Ershad movement.

The Chief Whip of the Opposition Nasim spoke of corruption involving a 25 crore taka bank loan against Khaleda Zia's son Tarek Rahman and brother Iskander.

He also said the parliamentary committee on corruption charges against the Irrigation Minister had not made any progress in its investigation so far and alleged, "the government has paid illegally US dollar 1.40 crore to an inefficient Italian firm, Saipem. We demand an explanation of this pay off."

He also accused the Works Minister of illegally grabbing nine kathas of land and concluded, "The government has nationalised corruption for which it will have to pay dearly."

The AL will hold a public meeting at Bangabandhu Avenue at 3 pm on December 6.

Pak FM

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wanted."

Foreign Minister Mostafizur Rahman received him at the airport. Pakistan Foreign Secretary Shahryar M Khan, High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Anwar Kemal and Bangladesh High Commissioner to Pakistan, Q A M A Rahim, were also present.

The Foreign Minister of Pakistan described the SAARC conference as "part of the process that was started in South Asia" and said, "We are not expecting anything earth shaking from it."

With regard to regional cooperation in South Asia because of SAARC, he said, "certainly there is progress, but there was scope to do more.

Replying to a question, he said he would discuss the issue of repatriation of the stranded Pakistanis.

Replying to another question on repatriation he said it would be held between the governments of Bangladesh and Pakistan and added, "it is not a party issue."

Answering a question on the Kashmir issue, the Pakistan Foreign Minister said, "We cannot raise it at SAARC. But when opportunity arises we will like to stress upon the Foreign Minister of India about the importance of the solution of the Kashmir issue."

Body to identify users of 'dyethylin glycol' in paracetamol

A high-powered committee headed by the Health Secretary was constituted yesterday to identify the persons responsible for using poisonous 'dyethylin glycol' in paracetamol syrup manufactured by some pharmaceuticals, an official handout said, reports BSS.

The committee was formed at a meeting of the 'Petition Committee' of the Jatiya Sangsad with Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali in the chair. The committee will submit its report by January 31.

Political stability

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Hasina, a number of ministers and representatives of trade bodies, the delegation visited the Chittagong Hill Tracts and the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar.

Their scheduled meeting with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on Wednesday was cancelled by the PM's Secretariat citing the indisposition of the PM.

In reply to a question on talks with Sheikh Hasina, the Australian delegation leader said "She gave her views, narrated her party's policy and some problems in Bangladesh."

He did not elaborate. He said the democratic system in this South Asian country is improving gradually.

The members of the delegation, comprising the opposition and independent members, were: Stewart McArthur, Mrs Beverley McArthur, Collin Hollis, Mrs Silvia Smith, Jack Smith, John Bradford, Philip Cleary and John Carter.

The Australian High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Kenneth Aspinall, was present at the press briefing.

The Australian parliamentary delegation will submit a report to the Bangladesh Parliament which sponsored the visit.

The team left Dhaka for Nepal on a similar tour. Before coming to Bangladesh, the delegation spent one week in India.



A handicapped participant in "Dress as you like" examining poet Sufia Kamal as a mock doctor during the annual sports competition organised by the Kalyani, a school for the mentally retarded, on the occasion of the World Disabled Day yesterday in the city. — Star photo

SAARC FM's meet

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many months away.

The present Foreign Ministers' conference is being held halfway through the Dhaka summit held in April this year and the eighth summit scheduled to be held in India sometime at the end of next year. The Council of Ministers is expected to finalise a date for the next summit.

The meeting will also appoint formally the next Secretary General of SAARC for the two-year term beginning January. Foreign Secretary of Nepal Yadav Kant Silwal will be confirmed as the new Secretary General in place of incumbent

Dinesh Singh

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also wants a solution to this problem."

It needs study at expert level to determine the quantum of water and how much of it could be shared by Bangladesh. "This technical point to be determined by technicians," he added.

On repatriation of the Chakma tribals from Indian state of Tripura, Singh said Bangladesh should persuade the refugees to come back to their homeland. "Nobody in the world wants refugee, and we also want a solution to this problem," he told a questioner.

He described the Indo-Bangladesh relation as "very good" and said "we will try to have the best possible relation with Bangladesh."

To a question on the proposed visit of Rao to Dhaka, he said the Indian Prime Minister had accepted Begum Zia's invitation happily and would try to come to Bangladesh as quickly as possible.

On the Kashmir issue, the Indian Foreign Minister called it one of the bilateral problems between India and Pakistan, which should be solved through discussion in the spirit of Simla agreement. This agreement has provided opportunity to settle the problem, he added.

During his stay in Dhaka, the Indian Foreign Minister will hold talks with his counterparts of Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman received his Indian counterpart at the ZIA. Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka K Raghunath, Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Faruq Sobhan and Foreign Secretary Reaz Rahman were also present.

One killed in Sylhet clash

From Our correspondent

SYLHET, Dec 3: One person was shot dead and thirty others were injured in a clash between two groups of villages at Nadanjuri beel of Fenchuganj thana this morning.

Nazrul Islam alias Tamiel Ali, 45, of village Nijchattish was shot dead on the spot

shows a deep scar.

During the 'offensive', a Chakma settlement near the ghat was set on fire in which 28 houses were gutted. The tribals alleged that the Bengalis caused the fire. But Bengalis insist that it were the Chakmas who set ablaze the houses to make things worse. The military administration, however, was not sure as to who to blame for the fire.

After the incident, a silent war is going on in Naniarchar between the 10,000 tribals and about 8,000 Bengalis. It has been alleged that since November 17, the tribals had abducted 12 Bengalis from the char. They are believed to be dead. Last Saturday, a woodcutter, Faruq, was abducted from Gilachhari. A case was filed, but to no effect.

The law enforcing agency seems to be in an awkward position in Naniarchar. There are 49 police personnel in the char, about ten of them were present on the spot during the incident. It was apparent that more policemen could have been deployed to avert the clash.

But that would not have had any better results, a police officer said without disclosing his name. "We are almost helpless in the tribal areas. We have to follow a pacifying strategy which discourages any drastic actions like lathicharge and teargassing the tribals."

Sore of clash still festers

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started. Making it an issue the tribals started agitation and demanded withdrawal of the guard post. But Bengalis strongly wanted the post to stay.

Dhaka meet to generate confidence: Nepali Minister

The Nepalese State Minister for Finance, Mahesh Bhattacharya yesterday said he was very much optimistic that South Asia would soon move into economic cooperation through its preferential trade arrangement, reports BSS.

Talking to newsmen at Zia International Airport on his arrival here to take part in the SAARC Foreign Ministers' conference, Bhattacharya said the meeting which begins today would be an effort to generate confidence.

"We have tremendous respect for the Bangladesh Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia," the Nepalese Minister said, adding, "Under her leadership SAARC is moving ahead."

Bhattacharya said, really played a "tremendous role". Foreign Minister Mostafizur Rahman received him at the airport.

Maldives FM

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landmark in fostering the regional cooperation," he said. Regarding his country's role in the SAARC, the Maldives Foreign Minister said his country was contributing in framing various programmes of the forum since its inception.

On SAPTA, he said there should be a collective programme, not individual initiative, in implementing SAPTA (South Asian Preferential Trade Arrangement). "We will not benefit much from it but we are looking to the interest of the people of the region."

Foreign Minister Mostafizur Rahman received him at the airport.

Bhutanese FM

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less South Asia does it, it will be marginalised." Foreign Minister Mostafizur Rahman received him at the airport.

describing economic cooperation as a vital area for regional cooperation, he said South Asia Preferential Trade Arrangement (SAPTA) will safeguard the interest of all the seven member countries of SAARC.

He said, under the leadership of the Bangladesh Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, SAARC is moving satisfactorily.

The seventh SAARC summit in Dhaka, he said, was a landmark.

The Midnight File

5 Assam policemen killed in road mishap

SILIGURI, Dec 3: All five personnel of Assam police were killed on the spot when the jeep in which they were travelling skidded and fell into a deep gorge near Sonapur in Meghalaya on the Silchar-Shillong-Guwahati national highway, yesterday. According to the Cachar district Superintendent of Police, Mukesh Sahay, the vehicle, which was escorting the Assam Public Health Engineering Minister Dinesh Prasad Goala probably lost control when negotiating a curve, reports PTI.

Yeltsin's draft constitution criticised

MOSCOW, Dec 3: Communists and other hard-line parties criticised President Boris Yeltsin's draft constitution Friday, claiming it would give him unlimited powers. Yeltsin's opponents apparently were encouraged after the president backed off a recent warning not to criticize the draft. Valery Zorkin, former head of Russia's Constitutional Court, told a meeting of 1,500 representatives of 58 parties and movements the draft gives the president "not only the executive, but legislative and judicial powers," reports AP.

PPP, allies win 6 NA seats in by-polls

ISLAMABAD, Dec 3: The

Pakistan People's Party (PPP) of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto won more than half the seats contested in federal and provincial by-elections, final results showed today, reports Reuter.

The PPP and its allies won six of the 12 contested National Assembly (lower house) seats and seven provincial constituencies in Thursday's voting.

The opposition Pakistan Muslim League (PML) of ex-Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif took three lower house seats and two in the provinces.

Independents won two National Assembly seats. The result in the 12th lower house race was withheld by a court order. One provincial assembly seat went to an independent candidate.

Sharif charged Bhutto's government with trying to rig the elections after he escaped unhurt when gunmen opened fire on his car during voting in the central Punjab capital of Lahore

on Thursday.

"The present government has broken all previous records of rigging. The government has failed by trying to rig the electoral process in the most shameful and blatant manner," Sharif said late on Thursday after the incident.

He stopped short of accusing the government of orchestrating the shooting — "I had a narrow escape," the ex-premier told reporters.

But he said that as a result he had decided to turn down an offer from the Prime Minister for reconciliation talks.

Witnesses said Sharif's car was hit by several bullets from gunmen who opened fire from a rooftop when he arrived at a polling station. An elderly bystander was injured in the shooting, they said.

PPP leader Faisal Saleh Hayat accused Sharif's PML of staging an attack on the car.

Shots were also fired at the car of a senior official of the ruling PPP as he drove around a Lahore constituency.

The by-elections for the 12 lower house seats took place without the unprecedented military deployment that accompanied the October 6 general elections, and the provincial polls three days later.

Sharif rejects

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incidents in Lahore on Thursday in which, he stated a new attempt was made on his life, leaving a deep scar on the democratic system.

"It is a miracle I am still alive," he said, explaining that he had been fired upon from a rooftop while visiting a polling station in his home constituency.

"One bullet whizzed passed me, hitting the wall and raising dust which I felt in my eyes. It was that close a call," he said.

Sharif said the attack came as PPP leaders felt they were going to lose.

Even the Prime Minister had gone to Lahore "hoping to celebrate the fruits of her rigging," but she had to leave after knowing that she had lost Lahore, he said.

"We are convinced that it (Bhutto's government) is a regime that believes not in democracy but in fascist, strong arm tactics," he said.

A senior PPP leader, Faisal Saleh Hayat, who had earlier rejected as drama Sharif's claim of an attempt on his life, said that he too escaped a murder attempt by PML workers in Lahore.

BJP invited to form govt in Rajasthan

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attended by PGA president Murli Deora MP and Advisor of the Khan Foundation and State Minister for Planning Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan among others.

The organisers are expecting at least 35 parliamentarians from abroad and 25 from the host country Bangladesh.

Fali S Nariman of the International Commission of Jurists and Ambassador Lars-Olof Ekstrom of the International Electoral Institute Commission will attend as the speakers at the two-day conference.

The conference will be followed by another two-day conference on "population, poverty and life-style" beginning at the same venue on Monday.

DISPLAY AND SALE OF FINE HAND EMBROIDERED HOUSE HOLD ITEMS AND APPARELS AT HOTEL SONARGAON ROOM : TITAS TIME : 10 A.M. TO 6.30 P.M. DATE : TODAY, 4th DECEMBER. ESNEETA

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