

DOWN TO EARTH City's Water Logging

By A S M Nurunnabi

The monsoon is yet to come. Meanwhile the unexpectedly heavy downpours during past week had thrown the city into disarray. That was another reminder that unless urgent steps are taken to solve the problem of water-logging, city life is destined to be a nightmare in the rainy season and whenever it rains a little heavily.

Digging of city roads has been found to be a yearly phenomenon, particularly before the advent or during the rainy season. But in the eyes of observers, such annual event this year appeared more extensive than ever before. The digging even affected the nicely carpeted roads lately done on the eve of the South Asian Federation Games and the mayoral elections. Such digging poses a galling problem obstructing free flow of excess rain water. As we are already aware, the problem has been accentuated by the wide-ranging acts of filling up of most of the city's natural canals which served to dispose of excessive waters accumulated during heavy rains. Another contributing factor is the reclamation of the many ponds and ditches for housing projects. These once acted as repositories of excess water.

It is always the areas with a surface level lower than those which abut on the river which suffer most. In the light of this principle, it has been noted, for instance, that Chawkbar is, seldom flooded even when

Nazimuddin Road and Nimtali area are drowned in several feet of water. Motijheel also becomes water-logged without any effect on Sadarghat.

In most cases, when flash flooding occurs following a heavy shower in the city or any part of it, this was not the result of a temporary rise in the level of Buriganga, but was caused by such obstructions as mentioned above which prevent excess water from finding its natural outlet in the river.

So at bottom, the problem of water-logging has been created by the senseless blockage of water arteries of the city and untimely and ill-coordinated works carried out by different utility agencies.

Keeping in view the existing situation, the problem is sure to intensify with the fast growth of the city. The storm sewerage constructed in the city centre will be put to a hard test this year. But there is little hopeful indication that it will be able to meet adequately the challenge of the test, because last week's heavy downpours have already shown that the accumulated rain waters find no easy escape and they remain on the roads for days. Even a most brief downpour turns many city roads into pools, causing immense suffering to the citizens. So there is cause for concern that city dwellers may face worse time in the coming days.

Observers feel that much of

the problem and suffering of the people can be mitigated if the City Corporation, now under a new leadership, takes up the task of co-ordination between and among the various utility agencies. Through advance co-ordination, all diggings should be completed before the roads are carpeted well ahead of the monsoon. Observers also suggest that if any emergency calls for such underground works, it has to be ensured that the roads dug are repaired within a specific time.

Among other suggestions made for solution of the problem, one is that the entire area south of the Cantonment and Banani, served at present by a network of drains not connected to each other or to the river, could be saved from water-logging if they are linked to the river at several points so as to let excess water into the Buriganga freely. The drains will of course need to be deepened at some points with a general gradient in the direction of Buriganga. The suggested interconnected network of drains is expected to be a blessing to the greater part of the city. Another suggestion is that since the filling up of the natural canals inside the city and also of ponds and ditches has contributed to our present plight as experts have opined, the question of excavation or re-excavation of some of these outlets may be considered.



People of Hatiya brought out a procession in the city yesterday in memory of those who perished in the devastating cyclone on April 29, 1991. — Star photo

Voting in South Africa ends

Counting begins today, final results tomorrow

DURBAN, Apr 29: Voters in black-dominated rural areas stymied by a lack of ballot papers and other election problems had an extra day Friday to join millions of their compatriots in choosing South Africa's first post-apartheid government, reports AP.

African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela, expected to become the country's first black president, said Friday morning he was "confident that we will be able to pronounce these elections as having been free and fair."

"The will is there to address these irregularities and I think that is more important than concentrating on the mistakes that have been made," Mandela said during a series of interviews with foreign media, including The Associated Press.

While the rest of the country finished its three-day election Thursday, people in areas encompassing the former black homelands of Transkei, Ciskei, KwaZulu, Venda, Lebowa and Gazankulu were

given a fourth day. Elsewhere, weary election workers cleaned up voting stations and prepared for counting, scheduled to begin at 6 am (0400 GMT) Saturday. Final results were anticipated by Sunday.

"I'm very happy that it's finally happened," said a satisfied Dirk Bakker, 33, helping fellow election workers close the polling place in Durban's City Hall late Thursday. "It looks like a miracle."

See also Page 5

Despite predictions of election violence and a spate of bombings early in the week blamed on white extremists opposed to black rule, most balloting occurred in an atmosphere of calm.

Police moved to avert any further trouble from far-right whites by declaring 15 towns west and southwest of Johannesburg unrest areas. That gives police expanded powers to detain people and break up public gatherings in the towns, all pro-apartheid strongholds.

Teachers continue strike

From Page 1 Col 4

leaders, after a meeting at the Sheikh Borhanuddin College, called on the State Minister for Education Eunus Khan at his residence to inform him of their decision to continue their strike that began on April 18. The committee leaders, also told the minister that the government had accepted only a portion of the committee's 15-point charter of demands and urged the government to accept the remaining demands, including implementation of the national pay-scale for non-government schools and colleges. However, the minister expressed his inability to give any assurance in this respect, sources said.

The liaison committee, meeting with Abdur Rab in the chair, resolved that the striking teachers were firm to make today's demonstrations at the district headquarters successful and also to take up more action programmes to compel the government to accept their demands. They will assemble at the city's Bahadur Shah Park at 11 this morning.

The Bangladesh Teachers' Association (Ashraf-Nazrul), in a statement last night, said it had called off the strike for the interest of the seven lakh SSC examinees and for the greater interest of the country, although the association's main demand — nationalising the teachers' jobs — was not accepted by the government.

Education Minister Barrister Jamrudin Sircar will address a press conference at his Secretariat office at four this afternoon.

DMP restriction

Meanwhile, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner has restricted gathering and movement of more than four people together within 200 yards of the SSC examination centres between May 2 and 19.

DMP Commissioner A N Hussain in a statement yesterday said the restriction was imposed to ensure smooth and peaceful holding of the SSC examinations in 94 centres in the Dhaka metropolitan area beginning May 2.

Iranian pilgrims

From Page 1 Col 5

ernment but we will hold these rituals," added Reyshahri in a speech at a mass prayer meeting in the Tehran University.

Saudi Arab's conservative leaders ban any political activity during Hajj. The Saudi Interior Ministry last week reiterated that any pilgrims found carrying banned political books, pictures of leaflets would be punished.

More than 400 people, mostly Iranians, were killed when clashes broke out during an Iranian demonstration in Mecca during the 1987 hajj, leading to a three-year break in relations between the two Gulf powers.

Since ending a three-year boycott of the hajj in 1991, Iran has held political rallies during the pilgrimage each year although in a relatively low-key fashion.

Opposition meet

From Page 1 Col 5

Sources said most of the opposition groups are in favour of the Chief Justice heading the caretaker government.

They said the draft of the common bill seeking a caretaker government may not be placed before the House because such constitutional amendment bill cannot be passed without the support of the ruling party.

The Awami League, the Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami had earlier submitted separate bills to the parliament secretariat to this end.

The Opposition is expected to present a common formula for a caretaker government before the nation shortly.

Russian spy caught inside CIA gets life term

ALEXANDRIA, Va. Apr 29: Aldric Ames, the highest-paid and highest-ranking Russian spy ever caught inside the CIA, was sentenced to life in prison without parole in what a prosecutor called "the most damaging spy case in the history of this country," reports AP.

Ames, 52, pleaded guilty without a trial and admitted being paid 2.5 million dollar by the Soviet Union and then Russia since April 1985 for US secrets.

Once head of counterintelligence in the CIA's Soviet-East Europe section, Ames admitted disclosing the identities of 10 Russian officials and one East European who were spying for the United States or Great Britain.

Prosecutors said at least four Soviet KGB or GRU (military intelligence) agents among that 11 were executed. "He traded people's lives for 2.5 million dollar," US Attorney Helen Fahey said.

In Moscow, President Boris Yeltsin charged the United States had turned the Ames case into an anti-Russian political campaign, according to remarks published Thursday.

He told Russian intelligence officers that the United States

is increasing its spying in Russia, but thinks Russia has no right to do the same in the United States.

Ames said he never learned the fate of those he betrayed. But reading his first public statement since his February 21 arrest, Ames expressed "deepest sympathy" for those "who may have suffered from my actions."

He professed "profound shame and guilt" for "this betrayal of trust, done for the basest motives" — money to pay debts.

Nevertheless, Ames told the court, he did not believe he had "noticeably damaged" the United States or "noticeably aided" Moscow.

Ames's Colombian-born wife, Rosario, 41, also pleaded guilty to conspiring to commit espionage and evade income taxes. The government said she aided and supported her husband's treachery without ever handling or transmitting secrets to the Russians.

US District Judge Claude Hilton deferred her sentencing until August 26 so the government has time to see whether Ames fulfills his agreement to tell investigators everything he disclosed, how he operated and any help he may have received.

Dapunia elections

From Page 1 Col 8

to the CEC's request, the candidates have refrained from bringing out any processions. They did not even use loud-speakers during campaigning.

The voter club members arranged a display of single-colour posters carrying the names, photographs and symbols of all the chairman candidates. Similar posters for the member candidates were also displayed.

Besides, the club members also arranged combined projection meetings for the candidates where the contestants were allowed only to present their respective programmes and personal qualifications for the post sought. The club members asked the candidates not to indulge in mud-slinging against each other and they

complied with the advice. There was, however, no bar to door-to-door campaigning.

CEC Justice Rouf, who hails from this union, has even announced rewards for those candidates who will win the polls with minimum election expenditure.

The polling in Dapunia is scheduled to begin at 7 this morning and continue until 12 noon. Ninety-two out of 19,920 voters have so far died since the distribution of ID cards among the voters, EC sources said.

A large number local and foreign observers are expected to travel to Dapunia to watch the polling under the novel system. The EC has also invited the district-level leaders of all the political parties to observe the model polling.

400 feared killed as troops of 2 Yemens clash

SANAA, Apr 29: About 400 soldiers have been killed or wounded in fighting between North and South Yemeni troops 50 km from the capital Sanaa, political sources said today, reports Reuters.

The two-day battle involved around 200 tanks from both sides and was the worst clash since North and South Yemen merged four years ago, the sources in Sanaa said.

"I believe about 400 people have been killed or wounded one political source said, a figure agreed by others."

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

Printed & Published by A. S. Mahmud, Managing Director, on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd, 52, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000, from City Publishing House Ltd, 90 Kakrail, Dhaka-1000. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: House No: 11, Road No: 3, Dhanmandi R/A, Dhaka-1205. PABX: 500092-4, Commercial: 500091 (Direct), Fax No: 88-02-863085, GPO Box No: 3257, Cable: DAILYSTAR, DHAKA.

Two killed in Karachi clash

KARACHI, Apr 29: Two people were killed and 15 wounded today in a gunbattle between police and an angry crowd in Pakistan's troubled southern city of Karachi, witnesses said, reports Reuters.

The gunbattle erupted after police arrested four leading activists of the local ethnic-based Mohajir National Movement (MQM) party as they emerged from a mosque in the volatile Liaquatabad area after Friday, midday prayers, witnesses said.

Lalbagh killings:

One more held

By Staff Correspondent

Detective Branch police arrested one Kalu alias Kalla from village Ati under Keraniganj police station yesterday morning for his alleged involvement in the post-DCC polls Lalbagh killings in the city last January 31.

A team led by Assistant Police Commissioner M Humayun Kabir raided the village and arrested Kalu.

The carnage a day after the Dhaka City Corporation polls, left six people dead.

The prime accused Alhaj Abdul Aziz is still at large.

Pope breaks leg in bathroom fall

VATICAN CITY, Apr 29: Pope John Paul II broke his right leg in a fall and was taken into surgery Friday. Doctors predicted weeks of recovery then a long period of therapy, reports AP.

The 73-year-old pontiff was expected to receive an artificial bone replacement in the area where the femur meets the hip joint.

The pope fractured the top of his right thighbone and dislocated a joint when he slipped in his bathroom late Thursday. He was taken to Gemelli Polyclinic hospital in Rome, the same facility where he was treated in November when he fell down some stairs and fractured his arm.

PM: Hajj

From Page 1 Col 8

ness. "Everything is at a very early stage," an official said. "But we'll try to make the best out of it." What he meant is that the Foreign Office will try to use the occasion to promote certain bilateral interests. But given the format of such visits, it's unclear how they would do it.

The Prime Minister will have an opportunity to meet King Fahd, who will be in Jeddah during the Hajj, but an exclusive meeting is a remote possibility, said a source.

Begum Zia, according to a diplomat, will be one of many foreign dignitaries from the Muslim world who would come to perform Hajj.

"King Fahd normally hosts a reception for them and there is hardly any opportunity to discuss bilateral issues beyond exchanging pleasantries," a diplomat who served in the Middle East said. In the past such chance encounters with the Saudi King were used as public relations exercises intended mainly for domestic consumption, the diplomat said.

This will be Begum Zia's second visit to Jeddah after she became Prime Minister. The upcoming visit, like the previous one, would not be an official one.

Immediately after she was sworn-in three years ago Begum Zia made her first overseas trip to Jeddah to perform umrah.

She will be accompanied by an entourage of about 16 members but the number could rise at the final stage, an official said.

It is not yet decided who would be included in the Prime Minister's entourage.

The Midnight File

UN may extend protection beyond 'safe areas' in Bosnia

TEL AVIV, Apr 29: US Secretary of State Warren Christopher said Friday the United Nations could extend its protection beyond six 'safe areas' in Bosnia if other areas come under Serb attack. Christopher, here for talks on Mideast peace prospects, told reporters we are watching the situation very carefully in Bosnia Herzegovina, reports AP.

40 drowned in Kenya

MOMBASA, Kenya, Apr 29: Forty people drowned and about another 200 were missing after an overloaded passenger ferry capsized between Mombasa island and the Kenyan mainland Friday, officials said. The Mtongwe ferry, designed to carry 150 people, was packed with about 300 commuters going to work when it capsized during the five-minute trip from that mainland to Mombasa early today, reports AFP.

Syria not serious about peace, says Rabin

TEL AVIV, Apr 29: Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin accused Syria on Friday of not doing enough to show it is serious about making peace, an Israeli official said, reports AP.

Rabin met twice Friday with US Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who arrived from Cairo, where he oversaw the final stages of talks to implement Palestinian autonomy in the occupied territories.

Washington's attention is now turning to negotiating the deadlock between Israel and Syria over the strategic Golan Heights. Christopher is to leave for Syria on Saturday.

AFP adds: The period of Palestinian autonomy will be only three years not five, after which a permanent settlement will be applied in the occupied territories. Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said today.

Anti-Indian rally in Kathmandu

KATHMANDU, Apr 29: More than 2,000 communists in two separate groups took to the streets today shouting anti-government and anti-India slogans in protest at a raid last month here by armed Indian police, witnesses said, reports AFP.

The two groups, each led by the Democratic National Youth Organisation (DNYO) and the United People's Front (UPF), also attacked the government for its policies and for the recent hike in electricity prices by more than 100 per cent.

CHT peace

From Page 1 Col 7

the visit here. As for a resumption of repatriation by the first week of next month, as indicated by the Foreign Secretary in a recent press briefing, Upendra Chakma rejected it outright saying "I don't know on what basis he said this."

However, the meeting between the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) and the government will be held as per schedule on May 5, Upendra Chakma assured.

A district Magistrate of Tripura Chandra Shekhar Chatterjee, 10 Bangladeshi tribal leaders, Kalpa Ranjan Chakma, MP and the DC of Khagrachhari Yar Mohammad were also present on the occasion.

Deputy Commissioner of Khagrachhari Yar Mohammad, later talking to the pressmen, contradicted the reports of Upendra Chakma and claimed that land belonging to the repatriated refugees were duly returned.



EXTENDS THEIR HEARTIEST
CONGRATULATIONS AND WARM
FELICITATIONS
ON THE OCCASION OF
NATIONAL DAY OF NETHERLANDS



The Reliable Airline

Jahangir Tower

10 Kawran Bazar, Dhaka
Tel : 813005/815354/815839