

# 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 reservoirs 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 Chawkbazar is seldom flooded even when

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.

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 hope that 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.

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.

Mandela 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.

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.

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