

SAVE DHAKA

Traffic & Transport: Part-4

Wider roads only answer

By Krishna P Roy

Lack of adequate roads and lanes to accommodate increasing number of vehicles, insufficient number of traffic police and traffic signals, flaws in traffic markings and violation of traffic rules contribute to traffic congestion in the city.

According to experts, ideally a city should have 20 to 30 per cent road space of its total area for a sound traffic system. The 343.28 square kilometre Dhaka City has road space of less than 10 per cent of its area, said Prof Nazrul Islam of the Urban Studies Programme (USP).

He also pointed out that the city roads are not being increased, both in terms of length and width, keeping consistency with the increasing population and vehicles.

He, however, said that it is difficult to increase the roads in the city. In that case, he suggested installation of a mass transit system in the city.

Absence of bypass and parallel roads in busy city areas result in frequent traffic jams. The congested old city has a limited number of entry points which force all types of vehicles to take the same roads.

The Deputy Commissioner (Traffic) Mostaq Hossain Khan said that the 2231.30 km roads for a city like Dhaka is not sufficient for the plying of about 5.5 lakh vehicles.

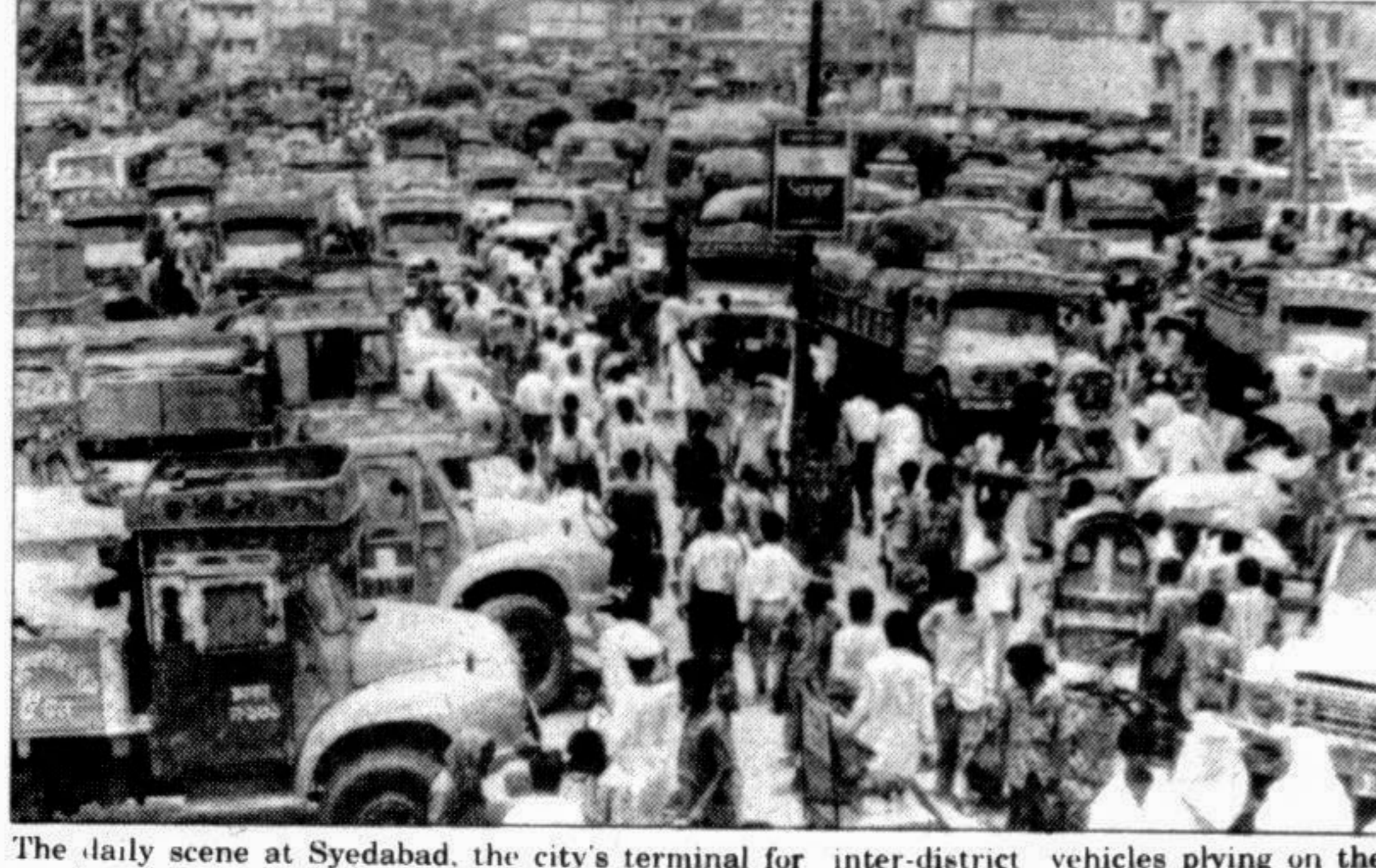
He also identified the level crossing in the city as obstacle to free flow of traffic. There are some 10 rail gates in the city where, he suggested, construction of overbridges is needed.

The traffic division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police is severely understaffed and it has no modern equipment to control the traffic system, the DC (Traffic) said.

In the traffic division of DMP, there are one deputy commissioner, four assistant commissioners, 11 inspectors, 214 sergeants, 11 sub-inspectors, two assistant sub-inspectors, 88 haidivers and 1137 constables.

The DC (Traffic) pointed out that the Dhaka city has only 1468 traffic police whereas the Indian capital Delhi has 12,000 traffic police having almost the same population.

It is inhuman that a traffic policeman has to remain standby at city streets for four



The daily scene at Syedabad, southern routes.

hours, he said adding, and it is really difficult for him to control vehicular movement for four hours.

He also informed that a proposal has already been sent to the government to increase the number of traffic constables to at least to 3500 immediately.

"We have no wrecker, no speed-detector, no smoke-detector, no alcohol-detector," he said adding that the department had to borrow a wrecker from Chittagong last year.

He said they had toed 2679 vehicles and filed some 2.29 lakh cases against traffic rule violators last year. Some Tk 1.83 crore was also realised as fine during the same period. The traffic signals in the city are also not adequate and there are many faulty signals, admitted Mostaq Hossain and called for coordination of signalling system in some key points of the city.

Many of the city roads do not have traffic markings contributing to free-style movement of vehicles and consequent traffic jam. These roads

were carpeted early last year. But those are yet to have appropriate road divider markings and zebra crossings. The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), however, recently started work in this regard.

The absence of markings frequently leads to uneven competition between fast and slow-moving vehicles. Rickshaws and rickshaw-vans often ply through the middle of the roads, obstructing movement of cars, mini-buses and buses.

The absence of traffic markings is a major cause of accidents on many streets, particularly those having speed-breakers but no zebra crossings.

Pedestrians trying to cross streets often find themselves in a virtual jungle of automobiles impatiently honking horns. The problem is compounded at night when most of the drivers usually miss the speed-breakers and lose control when their vehicles jerk suddenly. Luminous signs or reflectors are essential to guide the drivers at night, sources concerned point out.

Violation of traffic rules by many pedestrians is also a big problem. It is regular scene in the city that pedestrians take the streets leaving pavements and try to cross the roads wherever they want.

There are footovers in the Farm Gate and New Market areas, but pedestrians seem reluctant to use these overbridges. And it is also seen that many of them try to cross the road by jumping over the fence erected under the bridges to force pedestrians to use the footovers.

Another interesting case is that many would wait for hours in rickshaws or other vehicles trapped in a traffic jam, but would not wait for a few minutes to reach their destinations.

Such habits of the people would have to be changed. "They should walk to have a congestion-free city," said Prof Nazrul Islam.

The DC (Traffic) expressed the view that people should be educated about traffic rules. He suggested that traffic rules could also be included in academic curriculum.

BGMEA chief criticises

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with AAFLI regarding child labour and wants to do away with child labour once for all," the statement said.

AAFLI is requested to refrain from making any malicious statements in future," Redwan Ahmed said.

The BGMEA statement came as a reaction to an earlier press statement by the AAFLI's Country Director Terry Collingsworth in which he criticised the BGMEA's refusal to sign an MOU on child labour and said it displayed a cruel indifference to the children.

In a statement published in different dailies Saturday, Collingsworth had said that the BGMEA Executive Committee had participated in the drafting of the MOU and had given the impression that its other members approved the draft.

Rejecting this statement, Redwan Ahmed said, "The BGMEA always maintained that only the general members would decide on the fate of the draft MOU through an extraordinary general meeting (EGM)."

He explained that BGMEA rules do not authorise its executive committee to take any major decision without prior approval from an EGM.

He pointed out that the garments importers had indicated earlier that they were not ready to accept Bangladesh garments if produced by child labour irrespective of any agreement the

BGMEA reached with any organisation for phased elimination of child labour.

The BGMEA members felt that organisations such as the Unicef, ILO and other NGOs, involved in the drafting of the MOU, could not give the assurance that after the signing of the proposed MOU importers worldwide would be convinced to import apparel from Bangladesh during the phasing out period. Therefore, the EGM, through a ballot Wednesday, rejected the MOU.

The EGM further resolved that the garments exporters welcome any programme to provide education, health care facilities and rehabilitation of the displaced child workers, if those were taken by the Ministry of Social Welfare of Bangladesh and organisations such as the ILO and the Unicef.

Describing the exact nature and scale of the existing child labour, which BGMEA would eliminate by October this year, Redwan Ahmed said that the children were engaged in work of very simple nature like thread cutting and taking the materials from one table to another.

It was decided unanimously at the EGM that on the expiry of the stipulated time all the garments factories of the country would be kept open for fair and honest verification and inspection by any UN agency to check if any child was still working in those factories, the statement said.

The Midnight File

Pakistan discusses regional security environment

ISLAMABAD, May 20: Pakistani civilian leaders and top military officials discussed the regional security environment amid tension with India following the burning of an Islamic shrine in Kashmir, official sources said. The internal and external security matters were discussed at a meeting of the federal cabinet's defence committee chaired by Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, the sources said, reports AFP.

60 Pak troops killed in Siachen: Indian daily

NEW DELHI, May 20: Indian and Pakistani troops fought their largest skirmish in nearly three years on an icy mountain slopes near the Siachen glacier this week, an Indian newspaper reported today. As many as 60 Pakistanis may have been killed, reports AP. The Times of India quoted unidentified sources as saying Indian soldiers opened fire after noticing Pakistani troops movement on Wednesday. Two Indian soldiers were wounded in an exchange of fire that continued for about 11 hours.

Indian defence spokesman was not immediately available to comment on the report because of the weekend. But Pakistan flatly denied the incident. "It is so absurd," said Pakistani army spokesman, Maj A K Chishti in Islamabad. "Nothing of that sort has happened. Skirmishes do occur, but there has been nothing major in that area for a long time."

The front page report in the Times said the battle occurred southwest of the Siachen glacier, a Himalayan wasteland between Pakistan and China that is the world's highest battlefield.

LDF leaders get bail

Six central leaders of the Left Democratic Front, accused of damaging cars in the city's Motijheel area on April 2 during a demonstration, were granted bail yesterday, reports UNB.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Shahiduddin Ahmed granted ad-interim bail after all six accused — Hasanul Huq Inu, Dilip Barua, AFM Mahbubul Huq, Mir Hossain Akhtar, Golam Mahmud and Shirin Akhtar — surrendered before the court.

WB withholds credit

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sector jute mills and privatise one large mills, and downsize nine of the "best performing" jute mills by June and December of last year respectively. The closure programme remained stalled while the Privatisation Board's initial sale offer of four jute mills received lukewarm response. The government is also not getting adequate response for the sale of the foreclosed assets of the BJC and the four closed mills. Some progress has, however, been made in the retrenchment and debt restructuring components of the programme. Another 8,000 workers of the BJMC have been retrenched. Steps have also been initiated to restructure the nearly Tk 4,000 crore jute sector debt and the process for the private sector jute mills have already been completed. Interim financing for 18 months for the private sector mills and for three years for the public sector mills have also been started. The government has also retired a substantial portion of the debt of the BJC and the closed mills by issuing some Tk 1000 crore worth of bonds to the respective banks.

JP gherao

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They also stressed the need for extension of the time for data collection and inclusion of expatriate Bangladeshis in the voters' list. Justice Sadeque said necessary measures would be taken to accomplish the registration task smooth and fairly.

Central leaders of the Jamaat, Moulana Abdus Sobhan, Abdul Qader Mollah, Prof Mujibur Rahman, Makbul Ahmed and ATM Azharul Islam were present in the delegation.

BNP starts hearings

If the internal problems were not resolved immediately, the party might face odds in the coming elections, they had warned. So far divisional conferences were held in Rajshahi, Chittagong and Dhaka and conferences in Khulna and Barisal would be organised soon.

The party Chairperson and other policy makers took the issue of factionalism seriously following the Dhaka Divisional Conference, sources said. BNP insiders said that the problems and possible patch-up formula were discussed during the closed-door meetings between the district leaders and the party Secretary General. MPs and leaders of the respective districts were attending the meetings being held at the party central office everyday in the evening.

The leaders suggested strategy for the next elections and emphasised strong unity of the partymen to face the electoral battle, the insiders said.

Maid murder

From Page 1
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Voter registration

From Page 1
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T&T plan to levy, regulate E-Mail providers protested

By Staff Correspondent

The recent Telegraph and Telephone Board (T&T) decision to impose strict new guidelines on the growing number of E-Mail and other on-line computer service providers has created dismay among both Bangladesh users and the global INTERNET community.

In a recent notice, the T&T Board said henceforth it would both regulate and provide services in the area of electronic data communication.

The government move follows growing private sector investment in the field of hi-tech data communication technology such as INTERNET, Bulletin Board Services, Satellite Services, Voice-Mail, etc.

The Board has prepared a set of guidelines which propose to impose licence fees on all service providers and regulate their businesses and the technology used.

In a recent statement, existing local service providers expressed their concern saying that the proposed "Policy and Guidelines for Liberalising the Value Added Services in Bangladesh" would severely hamper the spread of electronic data communication technology as well as delay efforts to connect businesses to the global INTERNET.

INTERNET is a vast modern computer network that connects hundreds of thousands of individuals all over the world. Access to the INTERNET is normally provided by internationally registered service providers. The first commercial INTERNET service provider became operational in Bangladesh in November, 1993 with the initial assistance of the UNDP, the ITC (International Trade Centre) and the Export Promotion Bureau.

Over 130 organisations are currently using E-Mail on the INTERNET from Bangladesh, allowing them to save costs and increase business efficiency. There are currently five such service providers in

commercial operation in the country while more are expected as demand grows. The government has proposed to adopt an X.25 data communications network nationwide and an X.400 systems as the standard for electronic messaging. According to the service providers, these two standards are outdated and inadequate for working with INTERNET applications. In a combined statement, published recently, the existing service providers in Bangladesh noted that the projected T&T Board's network was designed without consultation with the local private sector experts, or the needs of the local market. Moreover, experts overwhelmingly apprehended a steep rise in subscription fees due to the imposition of licence fees. The concerned user and business houses strongly feel the government should reconsider the implications and adopt state-of-the-art technology.

CEC
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meet the leaders of all political parties," he said. The CEC said he would soon meet the political leaders to seek their cooperation and recommendation to formulate a code of conduct for holding a free and fair election. He said the decision to appoint enumerators for preparing voters' list from among local educated youths was reversed following allegations by the opposition leaders. They personally made the allegations, he said without naming the leaders. "I always welcome allegations because constructive allegations would help correct errors," Justice Sadeque said. Teachers of schools and colleges, family planning field workers and government employees would now mainly do the job of data collection for fresh voters' list, he added.

Malaria claims 96 in Sylhet

SYLHET, May 20: Ninety-six people died of malaria in the district since April 1 until Saturday of whom 52 were in Gowainghat and 36 in Jaintapur — the two worst affected bordering thanas, official sources said. Deputy Commissioner Abu Taher Khan told BSS that there was sufficient stock of medicine and the health officials and district administration had taken up all measures to combat the situation. He urged the NGOs to provide mosquito nets and transportation facilities to reach the remote hilly malaria affected areas. Civil surgeon office sources said 13 medical teams are working in the affected areas on emergency basis.

AL marchers

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police contingent deployed there. No casualty was, however, reported. It could not be ascertained who were involved in the explosions. Earlier, Sheikh Hasina said the government had demonstrated its "autocratic character" by ignoring the Opposition in appointing the CEC. "They (BNP) talk about democracy but behave in an autocratic manner," she said. "We demanded of the government to consult the parties represented in Parliament before appointment of the CEC. But the government has appointed the CEC, taking an unilateral decision," she said. The BNP has failed to run the government but is out to snatch away people's franchise, Hasina said. "We can not accept such activities of the government."

The AL chief also criticised the government for its inactivity in mitigating the sufferings of the storm-hit people of coastal areas. "The ruling party leaders frequently move about by helicopters for party activities. But we have not yet heard that a single helicopter landed in the affected areas," Hasina said. The AL chief also alleged repression and harassment of her party leaders and workers in different areas of the country.

Abdur Razzak said they would not take part in elections under a CEC appointed at the will of the government. The AL does not accept this appointment, he said.

Congress history favours Rao

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contradictions. "They are gradually losing grip on the electorate. The Congress will weaken further ahead of the next Lok Sabha elections, which are round the corner."

Gujral felt that the split in one of the world's most venerable political parties is just the beginning of an inevitable dismemberment process. "It is difficult to predict right now what will happen," he said. "The prospect of many MPs leaving Rao depends on how much Sonia Gandhi will back them (the dissidents)," Gujral said.

Somnath Chatterjee, a very influential legislator and head of the Communist Party-Marxist, was more critical of the Congress Party itself. Said he: "The party is guilty of being totally alienated from the people. It was already suffering reverses in state elections." Chatterjee was of the opinion that the Congress is no longer pro-people. "The split is hastening up the end of the Congress regime in India." He also added that the Congress has always been known for its internecine squabbling and dissension within its ranks. The Marxist leader blamed the Congress for having lost its democratic and secular character. "It compromised in places like the Babri mosque issue and had alienated the minority. The party has still given no explanation for the Babri mosque incident nor has it expressed any regret," he added.

That a schism over leadership should set back any party, particularly one that has such a long history as the 109-year-old Indian National Congress, only bring to focus the organisation's inherent weaknesses and inner contradictions. It also brings to the fore the Congress' lack of an ideal democratic polity based on rules, tradition and conventions for a normal changing of the guard. The split in the mainstream Indian Congress, popularly known as Congress (I) — after the late premier Indira Gandhi — follows three earlier splits. Significantly, on all previous occasions, the leader who held the reins of the party, survived while those who had tried to challenge or unseat the incumbent were eventually marginalised, either

pushed into political oblivion or forced to seek their fortunes in other parties or alliances. It was mainly leaders from the north and the members of the Nehru clan, to be more particular, who succeeded in carrying the mantle of the Congress Party, that owed its birth to the patronisation of the British colonial masters. The prime reason for the successes of Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv in surviving challenges to their leadership, as one observer of the Indian scene pointed out, may be the fact that the legacy of Jawaharlal Nehru still appeals to a large section of the masses and continues to bind and galvanise them as well as die-hard Congress supporters. The sheer charisma of the House of Nehru-Gandhi, which has ruled India for more than three decades, still remains and continues to wield considerable clout, as evidenced from continuous talk of inducting Rajiv Gandhi's widow, the Italian-born Sonia, into the vortex of Congress and Indian politics.

Other observers like to attribute the very survival of the Congress to this hereditary party, describing it as the real 'glue' of the party. That may be the reason why even much before the Tejwari-Arjun Singh challenge to Rao's leadership, the rank and file of the dissident Congress had approached Indira's elder daughter-in-law either to lead them or try and bring about a reconciliation among the pro and anti-Rao factions.

But Sonia, no novice in the intriguing art of Indian politics, has apparently still managed, not without a considerable degree of political adroitness, to avoid taking a position by throwing her weight behind any of the factions. So far, at least on the surface, she has refused to answer the "call of duty" to the cause of the Congress or India, to be more precise. Although some 30,000-plus Congress members belonging to various tiers attended the specially called meeting Friday to express their resentment against the 73-year-old Rao and express support for the 71-year-old Tiwari, it was reportedly attended by only a dozen rebel MPs.

How many others among the 264 Congress MPs come out openly to extend support

Khulna Newsprint Mills

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weeks. Creating leakages in the condensers of the boilers. Although the factory resumed production on May 17 after a 65-hour break, the water treatment experts of the KNM, requesting anonymity, told The Daily Star that the ever-receding inflow of sweet water due to Farakka barrage, together with the increased level of saline water during the tides contributed to a rise in the chloride content of the water.

The KNM authorities now fear that the mills may never return to normal capacity again because the question of continuous sweet water supply for the cooling of its turbines, still remains undecided. A temporary solution to the problem of running the boilers has been found by arranging water from the deep tubewell of the Dada Match Factory. But a solution to the bigger question of finding enough water

remains to be found. Because of the huge volume of water needed for this purpose, it can neither be fetched from afar by barges nor can any existing deep tube-well supply it. The Bhairab river remains the only answer, KNM officials told this correspondent. "We still have not been able to make any headway in this regard," said Md Anwar Hossain, managing director of the KNM.

Nevertheless, the KNM authorities have decided to set up a deep tube-well at Dhagraim, 20 miles from the plant, to meet the sweet water shortage, one source says. When asked about the feasibility of setting up a water treatment plant or water reservoir, the KNM authorities appeared not to have given the matter any thought and had no tentative answer.

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