

SAVE DHAKA ROUNDTABLE

Make room for floating people

By Reaz Ahmad

Population-wise, Dhaka may be considered one of the most rapidly growing cities of the world. Each year, an estimated three lakh people move into the city from the countryside with the intention of staying permanently.

The continued influx is changing the life-style in the capital. This large inflow worries town planners, who find it very difficult to plan accommodation for them.

Overall, the number of people is on the rise, while land remains limited. So, getting a place has become the number one priority to anyone who intends to settle down in this city of 8.6 million people.

The problems of land crisis and land use figured prominently at The Daily Star-BUET Roundtable on 'Save Dhaka' held recently.

Participants in the conference overwhelmingly expressed the view that a large segment of the land remains unutilized in Dhaka while a significant portion is occupied in a rather unproductive manner.

According to a rough estimate, half of the city's population live below the poverty-line. Some 1.5 million people live in shacks in most unhygienic condition that give them the identity of 'slum-dwellers'.

Again, a sizeable number of people who have no place to sleep just simply spend their nights without roof on their head.

The city's demarcated area was only 320 square miles when the now-defunct Dhaka Improvement Trust (DIT) came into being in 1956. Now the city area under the Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha (RAJUK) which is responsible for its development works, stands at around 590 sq miles.

Again, land area in the city that falls under the jurisdiction of the Dhaka City Corporation is about 345 sq km while the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) calculates 415 sq km area under it. But, "the real built-up size of the city is much smaller," said Dr M Shahidul Ameen, who teaches architecture in Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET).

Scarcity of land in Dhaka characterizes the geographical growth of the city itself, he said. The scope for horizontal expansion of Dhaka is restricted by rivers like Buriganga, Turag and Balu — which encompass the city from different directions.

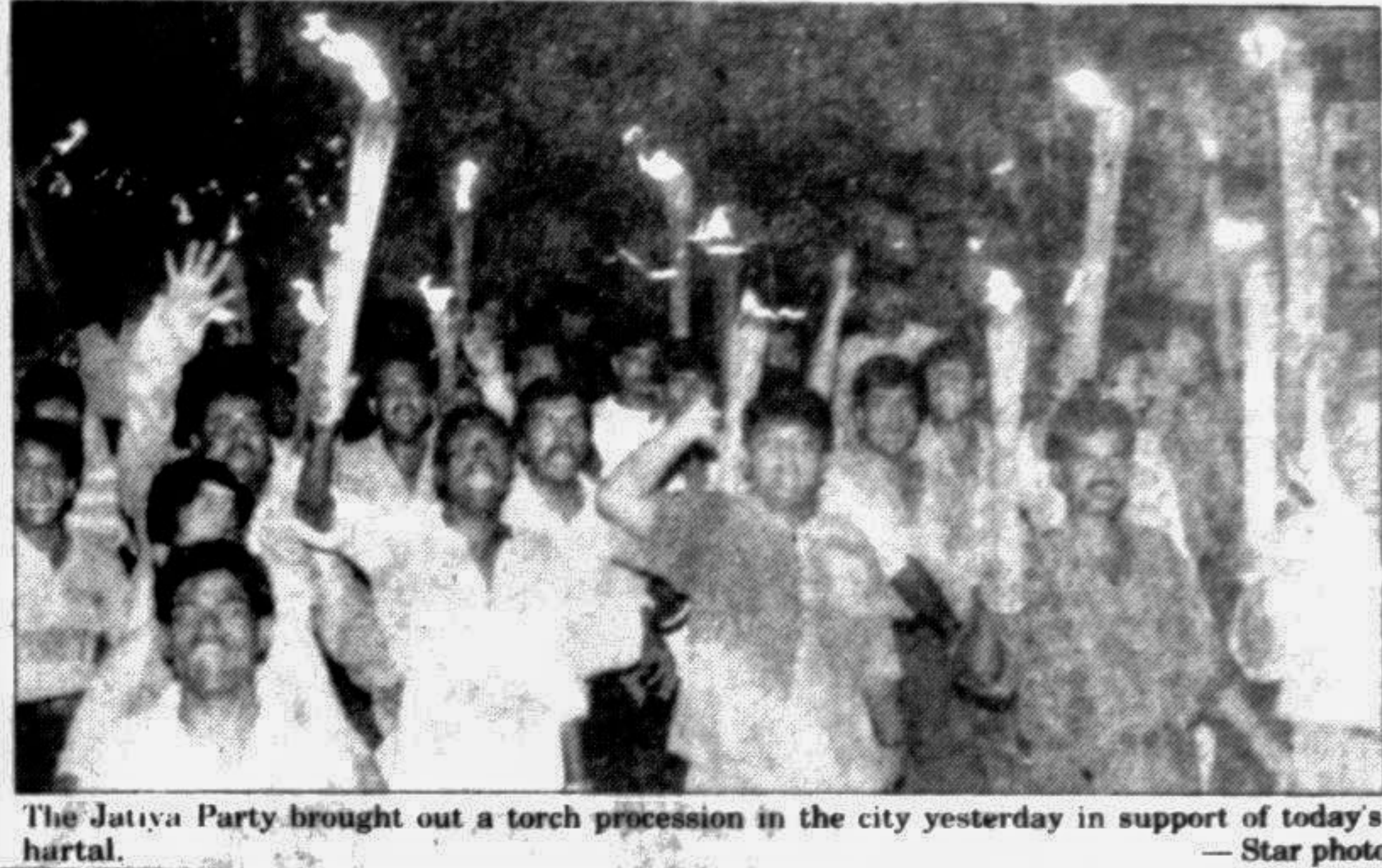
However, earth filling in the low-lying peripheral areas might be a way out in expanding the city, suggested Dr Ameen.

Prof Muntasir Mamoon of the Department of History, Dhaka University, strongly suggested that more than 6,000 acres of prime land under the Dhaka Cantonment and the BDR in Peelkhana should be vacated to make room for the city's expansion. No feasible solution to the land crisis in the city can be thought of without relocating these two areas, he observed.

In this context, RAJUK Chairman Humayun Khadem said that his institution was trying for property development in the peripheral areas.

A representative of the real estate developers expressed the view that time has come for concentrating on vertical expansion of the city as the scope for horizontal expansion has already been exhausted.

However, the vital question of providing living arrangements for the majority of the city's poor, who simply cannot afford either a piece of land or an apartment remains to be addressed immediately.



The Jatiya Party brought out a torch procession in the city yesterday in support of today's hartal.

US court rejects claim

BCCI can't return its assets to depositors

WASHINGTON, June 26: The Supreme Court refused today to order the failed Bank of Credit and Commerce International's US assets returned to depositors instead of forfeited to the government, reports AP.

The court, without comment, turned down the depositors' argument that their claim on the money takes precedence over the forfeiture agreed on in 1992.

Banking regulators closed BCCI branches around the world in July 1991 after an audit uncovered widespread fraud. The closure left claims of around 10 billion dollars.

In January 1992, four BCCI companies pleaded guilty to racketeering charges in federal court in Washington, DC, and agreed to forfeit BCCI's US assets — about 552 million dollars to the government.

Under the agreement, about half of the money would be given to a worldwide fund to reimburse BCCI depositors and creditors. The rest would be used to shore up financially troubled US banks secretly controlled by BCCI.

A group of nine individuals and companies challenged the forfeiture in federal court, claiming to represent more than 1 million BCCI depositors worldwide.

They contended they were innocent victims of fraud by BCCI and that the deposits should be returned to them.

But the nine did not ask a federal judge in Washington to certify them to represent other BCCI depositors. The judge denied the challenge to the forfeiture, saying it would disrupt the worldwide liquidation aimed at reimbursing all depositors and creditors for at least part of their losses.

The US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit upheld the judge's ruling.

HC acquits Ershad

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terim government of Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed.

The interim government at the time had announced the amnesty to all those who would surrender their arms to the nearest police stations within a stipulated time-frame.

Ershad's agent Mosharraf Hossain handed over those arms to the Commissioner of Police and it was his duty to tell him to surrender those arms to the nearest police station. In all fairness, the appellant is entitled to get the amnesty of the government," said Justice Naimuddin.

The verdict of the High Court came a day ahead of the Jatiya Party's planned six-hour general strike called to protest a "conspiracy" to involve Ershad in Manzur murder case as well as to press for his release.

In an instant reaction, former Vice-President Barrister Moudud Ahmed, who was present at the court, told reporters, "The verdict once again proved that Ershad is being repressed by the government through false charges and cases."

The former President, who was also convicted by special tribunals in two other cases on charges of corruption and abuse of power, has been serving sentences in the Dhaka Central Jail.

Two more appeals on behalf of Ershad against orders of the special tribunals are also pending in the High Court Division.

Immediately after the verdict, given in a packed court, jubilant Jatiya Party workers brought out a procession in front of the Jatiya Press Club, witnesses said.

BSS adds: Ershad, who ruled the country for nearly nine years, was also sentenced to three years' simple imprisonment in a corruption case for amassing wealth beyond his known sources of income on February 4, 1992. In another corruption case, the Janata Tower Case, Ershad was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment on June 7, 1993.

About 16 cases are now pending against him.

The government may file an application for leave to appeal against the judgement and order of the High Court Division acquitting Ershad.

The Midnight File

MQM demands separate province

KARACHI, June 26: The leader of an ethnic party whose militants have paralysed Karachi for the past three days said today his people wanted a separate province. "It has now become the voice of every Mohajir that until and unless we have our own province, we will not get our legitimate rights," Altaf Hussain, leader of the Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM), told Reuters by telephone from his London base.

Satish Chandra new Indian envoy to Pakistan

NEW DELHI, June 26: India today named one of its representatives to the United Nations as ambassador to Pakistan in a reshuffle of top-level diplomatic corps. An External Affairs Ministry announcement named Satish Chandra, India's representative to the UN in Geneva, as the next high commissioner (ambassador) in Islamabad, reports AFP.

Mubarak's life

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came to Ethiopia through Sudan," Mubarak told the press upon arriving at Cairo airport.

"Sudanese trying to improve relations (with us) but Turabi is acting otherwise," Mubarak said, referring to Hassan Al-Turabi, the spiritual leader of the Islamic regime in Khartoum.

Arms and explosives which we seized (on Saturday) came from Sudan," he added.

Cairo announced on Saturday the discovery in southern Egypt of four arms caches with 600 kilograms of explosives and another cache on Sunday of 65 kilograms, saying they originated in Sudan.

"I am not certain of the nationality" of the attackers, Mubarak said. "We must wait, but from what I saw they were not at all Ethiopians."

In Jerusalem, Israel radio reported that seven people were killed in a heavy exchange of fire between the assailants and Egyptian and Ethiopian security personnel, but OAU officials said they knew of only four dead, all attackers.

The Israeli Foreign Ministry, however, said an Ethiopian policeman was killed.

Ethiopian officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said some of the assailants were in two vehicles which attempted to block the motorcade, then opened fire. Two others were atop a nearby building under construction.

Egyptian Information Minister Safwat El-Sherif said nobody in Mubarak's party was hurt, but in Jerusalem, Israel radio reported that one of the president's bodyguards was wounded.

An official of the Palestine Liberation Front's embassy in Addis Ababa said Youssef Rajeb Radi, the PLO ambassador to Ethiopia, was shot in the leg and taken to a city hospital.

President Bill Clinton said today he was outraged at the attempt to assassinate Mubarak, and vowed that enemies of peace in the Middle East would not succeed.

"On behalf of the American people, I wish to express my outrage at the attempt made today by terrorists to assassinate President Mubarak of Egypt. I am relieved that President Mubarak was not harmed, and has now returned safely to Cairo," Clinton said.

In Dhaka, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today condemned the attempt on the life of Hosni Mubarak.

In a message to President Mubarak, the Prime Minister said, "We are also greatly relieved to know that you are safe by the infinite mercy of Allah. We find no words to express our condemnation for this outrageous and most cowardly act by a band of terrorists."

Housewife commits suicide

By Staff Correspondent

Police yesterday recovered the body of housewife Nazmun Nahar Khan Rina who reportedly committed suicide at her Hazirpara residence in the city late night Monday.

Rina's husband Delwar Hossain Patwari is now in Italy. She was also abroad for long. She came back about a year ago and was living with her eight years old son. She was working in a foreign organisation.

The cause of reported suicide could not be known immediately.

Revised budget

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Pointing to the increased deficit in the fiscal '94-95, he said, "This is largely attributed to the enhanced food management operation. While the original budget allocated Tk 70 crore for the purpose, the actual expenditure was Tk 264 crore," the economist said.

In terms of financing the deficit, as against the projected 74.2 per cent contribution of foreign sources, the revised budget indicates it to be 66.6 per cent, he added.

"This apparent reduction in external dependence needs to be judged against inability to use almost seven billion US dollars foreign aid, which is in pipeline, as well as generation of supplementary resources by selling of T&F bonds (Tk 235 crore) and domestic borrowing from the banks (Tk 470 crore)," said Dr Bhat-tacharya.

Referring to the sectoral pattern of supplementary allocation under the revised ADP, he termed those "physical infrastructure biased". The social infrastructure sectors seem to be lagging behind, he said.

Japanese grant

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for the construction of the Meghna-Gomti bridge.

The fund provided this year represents the final portion of the five-year project and will mainly cover the supplementary works surrounding the already-opened bridge.

The last exchange of notes will bring about Tk 376.8 crore as the first portion of the two instalments under the debt relief programme to be extended this year.

Under the debt relief programme, Japan has been providing grant assistance to Bangladesh with a view to relieving her of the debt burden of past OECF loans extended up to 1987, in compliance with the resolution by UNCTAD.

This grant is provided as untied commodities aid, which will enable the recipient to purchase commodities and equipment from anywhere in the world.

Teenaged boy succumbs at DMCH

By DMCH Correspondent

A teenaged boy, assaulted by unidentified youths at Jatrabari, succumbed to his injuries at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday morning.

The victim was identified as Kamal Hossain, 18, son of Alim Uddin of 190 South Jatrabari, medical sources said.

The cause of the killing could not be known immediately.

According to sources, a group of about 10 youngmen called Kamal, a motor mechanic, from his house at around 11 pm Saturday.

Editors

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The Daily Inqilab A M M Bhabuddin, Editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam, Executive Editor of The Janakantha Borhan Ahmed, Editor of The Bhorer Kagoi Matir Rahman, Editor of The Daily Tista Mizanur Rahman, Editor of The Daily Uttara and Vice-President of Council of Editors Prof Mohammad Mohsin, Editor of The Financial Express Moazzem Hossain, Editor of The Daily Probashi Mostafizur Rahman, Editor of The Daily Dabanal Khandaker Golam Mostafa and Editor of The Daily Probaha Ashraf Haque were present in the meeting.

Border confice

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The Indian side will be led by Director General of Border Security Force (BSF) D K Arya.

He will be assisted by Additional Director General R K Sharma, two Inspectors General of BSF headquarters and Inspector General of North Bengal, South Bengal, Tripura, Cachar and Mizoram, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur and Nagaland and staff officers from BSF headquarters.

Writ against Justice Rouf

Petitioner's counsel concludes submission

The presidential order to the effect that Justice M A Rouf, while holding the office of the Chief Election Commissioner, would continue to hold the office of a judge of the Supreme Court, was questioned in the High Court yesterday, reports UNB.

Pleading a writ petition against Justice Rouf, Barrister Amrul Islam submitted before the court that the order made by the President was violative of Article 118 (2) (5) of the Constitution.

He told the High Court division bench comprising Justice Habibur Rahman Khan and Justice M M Ruhul Amin that the appointment of Justice Rouf as the judge of the Appellate Division "is out of the ambit of this order."

The writ challenging the authority under which Justice Rouf is holding the office of a judge in the Appellate Division was filed by convenor of the Coordination Council for Lawyers' Advocate Shamsul Huq Chowdhury on June 11.

Barrister Islam said the 11th Amendment to the Constitution has been wrongly placed under the Fourth Schedule because the Constitution never contemplated addition of anything to the Fourth Schedule after the enactment of the Constitution and Article 150 does not contemplate the 11th Amendment.

The 11th Amendment, Islam said, is violative of the fundamental structure of the Constitution since the legislature transgressed its limit by declaring the 11th Amendment to have been validly made, exercised, tendered and administered according to law.

He said the legislature can only make law and it is the function of the judiciary to give a judgement as to the validity of any law passed by Parliament.

Therefore, through the 11th Amendment, the legislature has encroached upon the exclusive domain of the judiciary and hence struck at the very root of the concept of separation of power which is inbuilt in the Constitution. Thus it must be struck down, he argued.

Summing up his argument yesterday afternoon, he said Justice Rouf's appointment has been done in violation of the independence of the judiciary because it has been done without consultation with the Chief Justice. This is a convention which has been followed since 1862 till date and which was guaranteed under the Article 95 of the 1972 Constitution.

Barrister Islam was assisted by Barrister Tania Amir, Advocate Saleem Ullah and Advocate Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury.

Later, Additional Attorney General Abdul Wadud Khondaker began his submission before the court till adjournment.

Medicine traders observe strike

By Staff Correspondent

Medicine traders observed a half-day country-wide strike yesterday at the call of the Bangladesh Chemists and Druggists Samity (BCDS) protesting a government order postponing the biennial election of the Samity due in September.

Sarbahara Party leader killed

From Our Correspondent

JHENIDAH, June 26: A regional leader of the outlawed Sarbahara Party was killed during a fierce gunfight with police at village Durbakundi in Kot Chandpur thana, here today.

The dead person was identified as Sabbir alias Humayun.

Akhtaruzzaman

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Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali did not formally inform the House the 90-day absence of more than 140 opposition MPs yesterday also. He chaired neither of the two sittings on the day.

Parliament sources hinted that the Speaker's formal statement in the House about the absence of the MPs is likely to be delayed until the passage of the budget on June 29. A section of the press speculated that the Speaker would make the statement yesterday (Monday).

Referring to Akhtaruzzaman's application the Chief Whip said "I would like to request you to defer this matter and also the other normal business until the budget is passed." Deputy Speaker Humayun Khan Panni, who was in the chair, accepted the request.

Toll collection

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increased alarmingly, hindering smooth flow of traffic and disrupting communication," said the source. "Creating such obstruction on the roads is a violation of the provision of Bengal Highways Act, 1925."

About allowing the BDR to set up such check posts in the border areas, sources concerned said this is required to stop smuggling through land routes.

"However, any other authorities or agencies, who will need to put up check posts for certain reason, will have to obtain prior permission from the Roads and Highways Department," they said.

When contacted, an official of the Roads and Highways Department said they have received orders from the government in this regard. The department will implement the orders with the help of law enforcing agencies, he added.

Flood

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people were still in distress as the flood situation in four thanas of the district remained unchanged although rivers in the area receded slightly.

Water Development Board source said the Ghagot, the Teesta and the Brahmaputra were still flowing above danger levels in Sadar, Fulchhari, Saghatia and Sundarganj thanas.

With water sliding down the Jamuna, the flood situation in Sirajganj district showed signs of improvement yesterday.

According to official sources, the Jamuna was flowing 33 cm below danger level here. But its tributaries, including Ichhamati, Karatoa and Chumani, remained static.

Civil Surgeon office said at least 1,000 people were attacked by diarrhoea. Several medical teams have been working to tackle the situation.

JP hartal

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demand for Ershad's release, said party sources.

Political observers apprehend violence during today's hartal as, they said, the government might be tough on the pro-hartal activists.

According to insiders, the JP will intensify the release-Ershad campaign side by side agitating for a caretaker government to conduct the next general elections.

Meanwhile, the JP organised rallies and processions in different city areas to drum up support for today's hartal. The JP acting chief Mizanur Rahman Choudhury and secretary general Anwar Hossain Manju, in a statement last night, called upon the city people to observe the hartal. They also condemned police action against party workers in the last few days.



The Nirmul Committee brought out a procession in the city yesterday marking the first death anniversary of its leader Jahanara Imam.

Pandemonium in Parliament

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visibly nervous Keramat Ali told the angry MPs that the funds were given as per rules. Each thana got Tk 50,000 and additional funds were approved under special arrangements following applications by the MPs concerned, he added. The minister's explanation was rejected outright by the enraged lawmakers.

The lawmakers became angry when Keramat Ali placed the thanawise allocation of government funds for mosques which showed that Patuakhali Sadar under received Taka 8.4 lakh while 50 thanas got no allocation. Besides, 10 thanas under Rangamati district and another 8 in Khagrachhari district did not get any allocation, as per the list.

Other thanas of Patuakhali, got funds ranging from Tk 1.17 lakh to 3.38 lakh and mosques in the capital got the highest allocation—Tk 11.76 lakh. Mithamoin thana in Kishoreganj, Shingair in Manikganj, Kamarkhand in Sirajganj, Khoksha of Kushtia and Bancharampur of Brahmanbaria got Tk 2,000 each. Keramat Ali tried to explain but dozens of MPs stood up and joined in a chorus of hurling blunders at him. "Most people seem to dissent with your reply... Can you clarify, please," the Deputy Speaker requested the minister.

As the bureaucrat-turned minister came up with the same explanation, the Deputy Speaker said, "I think this answer is not acceptable to the honourable members... Pls, give if you have a logical answer."

At one stage, Shipping Minister M K Anwar, also a retired bureaucrat, tried to help his Cabinet colleague, but the Chair refrained him, to allow Keramat to give an appropriate reply.

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