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Down to Earth

Hazards Under City's Surface

By A S M Nurunnabi

Dhaka's city life on the surface is bedeviled by several factors, such as tainted environment created by constant emission of lead and carbon monoxide...

Nine million residents of the capital are unaware that the worsening environmental situation is not the only factor that is threatening their life.

According to a study conducted jointly by some geologists and water experts of BWDB, mindless extraction of ground water is leading to gradual weakening of the soil.

ence if the extraction continues unabated. The study gives revealing information on the subject of water extraction in the city. It is stated that WASA now runs 205 deep tubewells in the city...

Other aspects of the study show that generally ground water level begins to decline from February and the fall continues till June depending on monsoon rains. Ground water development is generally based on vertical recharge. But Dhaka city reportedly shows a different characteristic in this respect.

of resistance gets weaker, experts fear that even a moderate earthquake may cause damage, as the study says that Dhaka city is situated in an earthquake prone area.

Most of the buildings in Dhaka city are unplanned and built without earthquake protection. Of course, ensuring earthquake protection is a costly proposition.

Another redeeming aspect, as pointed out in the study, is that Dhaka stands on natural thick, as much as 50 metres layer, which still protects its awesome burden.

Blair appoints partymen to some key posts

LONDON, May 2: Britain's new prime minister Tony Blair today appointed a raft of senior Labour Party figures to key posts in his government...

Robinson Cook was named Foreign Secretary, Gordon Brown Chancellor of the Exchequer (finance minister), Jack Straw Home Secretary (interior minister) and John Prescott Deputy Prime Minister, officials said.

Blair's Press Secretary, Alastair Campbell, also said David Blunkett had been named Education and Employment Secretary.

Labour's stunning victory swept aside big names from Major's 22-member cabinet, including his most likely challenger for the party leadership, Defense Secretary Michael Portillo.

Major will not be melted down. He will take up his place in the gallery of former British Prime Ministers.

Headlines The Independent Times of London headlined its story "Landslide victory for Labour."

The Sun, with a circulation of 4 million, headlined its story "Yes! It's me... Blair storms to No 10," the official residence of British Prime Ministers.

Ever since the 1979 election that first brought the Conservative Party to power, the Sun backed the party, first under Margaret Thatcher and since 1990 under her successor Major.

The liberal paper The Guardian, which backed Labour during the election campaign, headlined its story "Conservatives buried in a landslide... Blair's crushing triumph."

The Independent, which also backed Labour during the campaign, quoted Blair's pledge: "I will not let you down." A second headline in the paper read: "Tony Blair's Britain is born after historic landslide victory."

Adams, 49, was elected to the House of Commons as the member for Belfast West while McGuinness, 48, took the mid-Ulster seat.

Muslim MP

Britons elected their first Muslim member of parliament today. Pakistan-born Mohammed Sarwar, a millionaire businessman, was elected as Labour's MP for the seat of Govan in Glasgow with a comfortable majority.

Blair at Madame Tussaud

Even before the official ceremony could take place, London's famous waxworks museum Madame Tussaud had already deposed John Major as prime minister, putting Labour leader Tony Blair in his place.

The museum's staff had planned to place Major as head of the opposition party, but his resignation this morning as Conservative Party leader spoiled their plans.

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Army personnel constructing a box culvert at Fakirerpool in the city. — Star photo

PM visits city Flood Protection Project

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday visited different sites of the Dhaka Integrated Flood Protection Project and saw the development activities, reports BSS.

While visiting the 3.12 kilometre long canal including 2.12 km box culvert at Segunbagicha, Bijoynagar Road, Fakirerpool, Motijheel Toyenber Circular Road, Kamalapur Bazar Road and Manik Nagar Biswa Road, the Prime Minister directed the authority to complete the work on the project within the stipulated period.

The project — involving Tk 16 crore and financed by Asian Development Bank (ADB) — was taken up to remove the waterlogging problem in the capital city.

The construction work of the project was hampered at two points due to injunctions imposed by a court on petitions lodged by Rahima Akhtar and Azizur Rahman. The construction work at Bijoynagar, however, started after the government won in the lower court.

The work is now suspended near the Notre Dame College following the injunction given by the court on the petition of Azizur Rahman, officials said.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina also visited the construction site of underground sewerage near Osmany Memorial Hall which would pump out the stagnant water from the Bangladesh Secretariat premises.

She directed the LGRD Ministry to pump out the stagnant water from the secretariat to the pond at Osmany Park.

\$10m project to modernise BTW underway

Rehabilitation of Dhaka Television Project at an estimated cost of 10.22 million US dollars to equip BTW with modern and sophisticated technology is underway.

Officials in the Economic Relations Division (ERD) told BSS yesterday that Japan, the largest development partner of Bangladesh, had given positive indication to provide fund for the project as grant following discussion with the government last month.

A study mission that will arrive in Dhaka in August is expected to finalise an agreement in this regard, they said.

Earlier, at the request of the government, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) had sent a study team headed by Naoya Kuwahara of its training division of Immigration Center to confirm the final components of the project.

BCL activists snatch arrested colleague from police

NATORE, May 2: A group of Chhatra League activists today snatched their colleague, Mamun, from police custody.

Mamun was snatched away immediately after he was arrested from Allpur area in the town in connection with some cases. Police sergeant Kibria and constable Shaiful was injured when the Chhatra League activists attacked the police party with lethal weapons and snatched Mamun, police said.

2 jute godowns gutted in Gournadi

BARISAL, May 2: Two jute godowns and four shops were gutted in separate fire incidents at Toriki and Sorikal Bazar in Gournadi thana of the district on Wednesday and Thursday, reports UNB.

BCL factions' gunfight in Ctg: 5 hurt

From Staff Correspondent CHITTAGONG, May 2: At least five people including a police man were injured during a gunfight between two rival factions of Chhatra League this evening in Shoolshahar area of the city.

Of the injured, one Sekander, a shopkeeper, admitted to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital with bullet wounds.

According to police, the trouble erupted following the death of a Jubo League activist Faruk, 28, at the hospital today.

Faruk was injured seriously a few days ago as a mob attacked him to resist alleged kidnapping of a garments worker, police said.

Several vehicles including a police van were also damaged during the melee.

Laloo Prasad refuses to resign

NEW DELHI, May 2: A corruption scandal threatening to undermine India's new government worsened here today as a key figure in the coalition refused to resign despite mounting allegations against him, reports AFP.

Newspapers today said Laloo Prasad Yadav, Chief Minister of the eastern state of Bihar, was refusing to go despite calls from opposition parties for him to be sacked.

"Come what may, I am firm on my decision, the question of my resigning is ruled out," the Business Standard quoted Yadav as saying late yesterday in Patna, the Bihar capital.

Yadav, a prominent leader of the multi-party United Front coalition which formed a government in New Delhi April 21, has been linked to a 271-million-dollar swindle along with 54 other politicians and officials in Bihar.

Cricket stadium

From Page 1 paper in April 1995, to provide the PWD with the relevant papers.

An NSC official said, "We have made so many stadiums around the country. Moreover, since 1994 we have been working on the cricket stadium, we can't understand why the work should go to PWD."

The official said they had written back to the Ministry about their desire to complete the project themselves. "If there is a directive from the PM's Secretariat, we will have to abide by it, but it will be said," he said.

Asked about the time they might take to complete the stadium if they started work immediately, the NSC official replied, "With the Prime Minister's active support, we will complete it within two years."

Meanwhile, on the basis of the PM's Secretariat's letter, PWD Azimpur Division office in Segun Bagicha immediately moved to complete a Topographical Survey of the Maghbazar site. The PWD has also sent a letter to the Deputy Commissioner to take necessary steps to identify the 17.44 acres of land for the stadium.

Out of the 17.44 acres of land, Roads and Highways Department and Bangladesh Railway own 12 and 2 acres respectively. The remaining 3.44 acres belong to private owners.

Some officials feared the acquisition of the private lands could lead to a time-consuming legal battle. Some others brushed aside such possibilities and pointed out that in view of a national consensus on the construction of the stadium, there would not be any problem.

When asked whether PWD would prepare a new project concept paper replacing the old one prepared by the NCB, the official replied that the stadium would be built on the basis of a series of consultations.

20 injured in N'ganj bldg collapse

From Our Correspondent NARAYANGANJ, May 2: At least 20 persons were injured, seven of them critically, when a two-storied building collapsed in gas explosion at Adamjee Jute Mills area this evening, fire brigade sources said.

Of the injured, 13 have been sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. The critically injured persons are: Ramzan Ali, Abdur Rahim, Kalu Mian, Ahanullah, Abdul Malek, Zhanab Ali, Mir Hossein.

The explosion occurred after the building at Baju Colony was filled with gas originating from piled up garbage in stagnant water around it. Ten rooms of the building were damaged.

Fire brigade personnel with the help of local people rescued the injured.

3 fake passport holders arrested

By Staff Correspondent Three persons who were arrested from the Zia International Airport (ZIA) on Wednesday night were placed on a one-day remand yesterday, police said.

The three were allegedly carrying fake passports and were scheduled to leave for the USA. One of them identified himself as an MP and was carrying a forged passport of the MP, police said. Immigration officials halted the three while Cantonment police arrested them.

Rewards

From Page 1 Pikepara under Mirpur thana. The DMP release urged the persons, having information about the four wanted men, to contact the Deputy Commissioners of the Detective Branch at Mintu Road, DC (West) or Assistant Commissioners (AC) Tejgaon and Mirpur zones.

BNP meeting

From Page 1 Uddin talking to this correspondent, said that efforts were being made to bring the feuding factions on the same platform for a reconciliation during the visit of Begum Zia.

A meeting of all local leaders of BNP was organised yesterday at the party office to make Begum Zia's meeting a success, he said. It was decided not to chant any slogan during the meeting in favour of any particular local leader except for the party and its chairperson, he added.

Loan defaulters

From Page 1 it suggested transfer of those to the District Judge's Court where those would be appealable under the proposed bill.

Some other suggestions of the proposed bill are: "The government shall, in consultation with the Supreme Court, appoint the judge of the Money Loan Court (MLC) from amongst the sub-judges and a sub-judge so appointed, shall exclusively deal with money loan cases, and shall not deal with any case civil, criminal or otherwise."

"The hearing of any suit in an MLC shall not be adjourned for more than three times at the instance of a party and such a suit shall be disposed of within a period of 180 days from the date of its institution."

"The court may allow further adjournments at the instance of a party, subject to the payment as a condition precedent, of an adjournment costs of not below Tk 1000 and not exceeding Tk 3000 for each such adjournment."

"The Judge of the Money Loan Court shall not be required to hear oral argument of a party of the suit after closure of evidence. But a party may, if intends, submit written argument, with copy thereof given to the other party. The other party shall have the right to make a written reply."

JP

From Page 1 dinner with the party chairman at the residence of Nazirul Rahman Manju.

"It is the first step towards a long path," Anwar Hossain Manju, secretary general of the party said when asked about the outcome of the meeting.

Anwar Hossain Manju, talking to this correspondent also said that Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury had been made the first vice chairman, Kazi Zafar the second vice chairman and Shah Moazzam Hossain the third vice chairman.

Manju who was made the first vice-chairman earlier, has now been made the fourth vice chairman.

A JP press release late last night said that its president member Razia Faiz resigned from the post of chief coordinator of the Jatuya Mohila Party, the women wing of the party.

PM at Tongi

From Page 1 nalsing the recommendations for the wage commission.

Sheikh Hasina said that her government had taken an epoch-making decision to provide housing facilities for the low income groups.

She said low cost multi-storied flats would be constructed and allotted among the low income group people who would pay up the total cost on the basis of monthly rent and would be the owners of the residential units. Besides, her government would also provide khas lands among the landless people so that they could get an address and destination of their own.

The prime minister pointed out that during Bangabandhu's government the percentage of landless people was 35 to 37 which rose to 70 per cent because of the misrule of the past successive governments.

She said that the slum dwellers of the cities including the capital would be properly rehabilitated and they would also be given allotment of the low cost apartments to be built for them in different slum areas including that of Bashantek and Tongi.

Responding to the demands of local people, the prime minister announced that Tongi will be upgraded to a full-fledged thana and the government will take more steps to provide facilities for the Biswa Ijtema there.

Presided over by Sraniak League president Abdus Salam Khan, the rally was also addressed by Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, Awami League leader Amir Hossain Amu, Abdul Jalil, State Minister for Labour and Manpower M A Mannan, Rahmat Ali MP, Akhtaruzzaman MP, Sraniak League general secretary Ahsanullah Master, Tongi Paurashava Chairman Ajmatullah Khan, and labour leaders Fazlul Huq Montu and Roy Ramesh.

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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JU seats

From Page 1 Admission Committee at a meeting on Sunday decided to start the written test from May 11.

The written tests for 'Kha' (Social Science), 'Ga' (Arts), 'Gha' (Life Science) and 'Ka' (Science) units will be held on May 11, 12, 13 and 14 respectively. However the tests for the Departments of Drama and Dramatics and Geology will be held on May 13. The written tests will begin from 9 am everyday.

Insurgency

From Page 1 port said, is Bhutan where a number of insurgents have been at work. It suggested the need to have some understanding with the King of Bhutan to keep constant watch on these insurgents.

The Home Secretary also submitted before the committee that as a result of the recent offer made by the Prime Minister for unconditional talks with the underground militants in the north-east, the situation has somewhat improved in Nagaland. The home secretary further said that developments in Tripura are, however, a matter of concern as ethnic riots between tribals and non-tribals occur time and again.

He stated that there has been a great change in Jammu and Kashmir after the installation of the popular government. There is much more rapport now between the government of India and the state government though there have been some incidents of killings by the militants.

15 'outsiders'

From Page 1 eign companies for bringing in "unnecessary-extra people" from Bangladesh. Gustavson was appointed the organiser by the World Bank, which sponsored the round tables.

The official delegation for conducting the round tables consisted of eight officials of the Energy Ministry, the Petrobranga and the Law Ministry. However, some 15 'private citizens' also accompanied the delegation and participated in the round tables.

Gustavson, said that the "private citizens" tried to "strike deals" with the participating companies. Gustavson said that their "interference" at the round tables was irritating.

The round tables were held against the backdrop of Bangladesh's opening up of 15 hydrocarbon exploration blocks for bidding by oil and gas companies.

Bangladesh had earlier organised two such round tables, one during the eighties and the other in 1993.

Application forms will be available in the Agrani Bank branch on the campus till May 25.

The decision was taken at a meeting of admission sub-committee with Vice Chancellor Prof Abdul Khaleque in the chair.

Anniversary of Jahanara Imam's birth today

The 68th birth anniversary of late Jahanara Imam, a crusader against anti-liberation forces, will be observed today, reports UNB.

Different socio-cultural organisations, political parties and student bodies have taken elaborate programmes on the occasion.

The programmes include laying of wreaths at the Mirpur grave of "Shaheed Janani", procession, discussion, cultural function and a reception to four leading personalities.

Jahanara Imam was born on May 3 in 1929 in a respectable Muslim family at village Sadulapur of Murshidabad district. Despite many hurdles, she obtained higher education.

Bappi Lahiri

From Page 1 us to stop the programme", said Kambor Ali, adding, "We are requesting all concerned to take refund of their ticket money from the counters from where they had purchased the tickets."

The two-day concert organised by Musica, however, could not be held as scheduled on April 29 and 30. The programme was to be participated by five Indian artistes: Monisha Koirala, Bappi Lahiri, Salman Khan, Aswini Bhawe and Baba Sehgal.

According to Lahiri, the artistes were invited by Kambor Ali to perform in cultural programme for charitable purposes. There was no involvement of money for the performance, he added.

However, the air tickets and their stay at the hotel were arranged by the organisers, he pointed out.

The two-day programme could not be held at the Dhaka Stadium on the first day allegedly because of some problems between the stadium authorities and the organisers.

The Ministry of Cultural Affairs, which had earlier granted permission for the concert later cancelled it on the second day. The ministry also cancelled all such permissions a handout said on Thursday.

RU tense

From Page 1 between ICS activists and police. The ICS activists went on a rampage on the campus, ransacking residences of some teachers and some offices during the clashes with police.

Meanwhile the University authorities simplified the process for submission of application forms and extended the time for collection of forms by ten days.

Labour's landslide

From Page 1 With tearful staff members leaning out of windows, he walked out of No. 10 and stood with his wife, Norma, and their two children. While he spoke, moving men were taking cartons out of the back door and loading them on a truck.

Britain is "in better shape" than it was in when he became prime minister six and a half years ago, with interest rates and inflation low, and unemployment and crime rates falling, Major said.

The incoming government will inherit the most benevolent set of economic statistics of any incoming government since before the First World War," he said. "I hope very much in the interests of the whole British nation that they're successful in retaining this economy in the future."

Major then went to Buckingham Palace to tender his resignation which the Queen accepted. After 32 minutes at the palace, Major drove off with his family to the Oval cricket ground in south London to have lunch and watch Surrey play the British Universities team.

Mob, police clash in Ctg: 20 hurt

From Staff Correspondent CHITTAGONG, May 2: At least 20 people were injured including five police personnel during a mob last night at Chagachor village under Chandanaisa thana.

Police said the clash erupted at 10 pm last night as a police team tried to stop a variety show where gambling and obscene dance were the main attraction. The show was organised by local people at Chagachor village.

Police resorted to baton charge when the mob started pelting bricks. Twenty people were arrested from the spot.

Young man shot in city

By DMCH Correspondent A young man sustained bullet injuries when some unknown assailants fired at him in the city's Khilkhet area under Cantonment thana yesterday afternoon.

Dual, 28, son of one Nayeab Ali, was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with bullet wounds in his abdomen and left thigh.

Blair greeted

From Page 1 election. "The overwhelming mandate given by the people of your country to you manifest their abiding faith in your leadership and confidence to guide them into the 21st century," she said.

Begum Zia wished premier Blair's good health, happiness and success as well as further progress and prosperity of the people of the United Kingdom.

She also hoped that the ties between the two countries would grow further in the years to come.