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Down to Earth

Buriganga in Dire Straits

By ASM Nurunnabi

A very ominous picture of various damaging activities on river Buriganga has emerged. The damaging scenario extends in so many directions that the very existence of the river seems to be at stake. From a report of the Department of Environment (DOE), it appears that the pollution of the river has passed the critical level. Tons of refuse and waste — domestic and industrial — pour into the river daily, raising the solid level of the water at an alarming rate. The level of dissolved oxygen (DO) too has been depleted to zero from four milligram per litre at various points of the river, whereas a minimum of six milligram of DO is necessary for survival of aquatic life.

Now the river is already becoming a drying water body. The DOE survey report makes it quite clear why water pollution has turned so acute. Industrial wastes and other pollutants are being dumped into the river freely from all sides. In this respect, one of the main culprits is represented by at least 277 tanneries in the city's Hazaribagh area from which a huge quantity of polluted and toxic water flows into the river. Similarly, other industrial units situated along the river banks compound the intensity of water pollution.

Besides, onslaughts on the river are being carried on from other sources. Lately, we have seen pictorial reports of the large-scale encroachments on the river. Bamboo enclosures

on both sides of the river have occupied much of the space, leaving a very narrow strip in the middle of the river for navigation. Hundreds of acres of land on the river-bed have been acquired by unscrupulous people by earth filling.

Situation in this respect is very critical in the area stretching from Kamrangir Char to Kamalbagh slums. At Kamrangir Char alone, more than two hundred bamboo structured units over the river have been built as a slum complex sprawling over a mile of area.

And a profitable business is being carried on by renting these makeshift bamboo rooms to low-income groups.

On the other side of the river opposite to the Mitford Hospital, a large wholesale depot for sale of bamboos has reportedly come up. Even opposite the Sadarghat launch terminal, a multi-storied market has been built on the waters of the river. Industrial plots are being laid out adjacent to the China Friendship Bridge. Along the sides of the Salimullah Medical College Hospital on the river bank, bamboo hutments have been raised as slum dwellings.

Also incidence of unauthorised collection of tolls on both sides of the river and extortions by terrorist groups is rampant. As a result, a lawless and chaotic situation is reportedly existing. Due to this, people of the affected areas are passing their days in great distress.

8 killed, 10 injured in road accidents

Eight people were killed and 10 injured in separate road accidents in Narayanganj and Chittagong yesterday, report agencies.

Five people were killed and 10 injured in two road accidents in Lohagara and Mirersarai thanas in Chittagong yesterday.

They said a Cox's Bazar-bound truck at Thakurdighir bazar in Lohagara thana at about 5 pm, killing three people and injuring six. One of the injured died on way to hospital.

The dead were identified as Noor Mohammad, 36, Nurul Amin, 45, Abdul Jalil, 60, and Abdul Hossain, 55. The injured were admitted to local health complex.

In another mishap, a Chittagong-bound truck collided with a Noakhali-bound microbus near Joraganj bazar in Mirersarai thana at about 10 am. Driver of the microbus, whose identity could not be known immediately, died on the spot.

The accident left four people injured. They were admitted to local hospital. The truck driver managed to escape.

Police seized the vehicles. Separate cases were filed.

Another report from Narayanganj adds: Three persons, including an auto-rickshaw driver, were killed in a road accident at Akhbar Botola on the Dhaka-Sylhet road under Rugganj thana yesterday.

The police said the accident occurred when the Dhaka-bound auto-rickshaw carrying two passengers, collided head on with a bus coming from the opposite direction. Driver to the auto-rickshaw and the passengers died instantly.

The police identified the driver as Abdul Khaleque Dewan, 35, and identity of both the passengers could not be known immediately.

The police seized the bus but its driver escaped. The bodies were sent to Narayanganj General Hospital for autopsy.

A case was registered with Rugganj thana.

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Let's make things better

PHILIPS

A healthcare project likely to be replicated countrywide

By Naimul Haq

Nurses and midwives were also given six weeks' intensive training on pre-natal and post-natal care of patients.

The project, launched in 1994, covered Feni, Bhola, Sirajganj and Tangail districts. The project will be completed in June next year.

"Officials concerned are convinced that the project may be replicated and the World Bank, monitoring the project, has given a green signal," said a senior official of the Directorate of Health Services which is implementing the project.

Under the pilot project, medical officers of thana health complexes in four districts have been given six months' training on Essential Obstetric Functions (EOF) and anaesthesia.

If the project is replicated, all healthcare personnel in thana and union health complexes will be brought under a 'package' training programme in phases. This will significantly reduce child and maternal mortality rate in rural areas, by providing improved maternal and infant healthcare services at thana and union levels, the officials said.

According to statistics available from the World Health Organisation (WHO), Director General of Health Services and other sources, about 30,000 women die in Bangladesh during childbirth which among the highest in developing countries. Seven babies in every hundred die during birth and 50 per cent are born under-weight (less than 2,500 grams).

Over 94 per cent of childbirth in rural Bangladesh takes place at home, majority of which are attended by relatives or neighbours who have no knowledge about medicare system.

Only 0.8 per cent of the total deliveries take place at thana health complexes, 0.7 per cent at private nursing homes while the lowest, 0.2 per cent at family welfare centres.

The existing high level of maternal and infant mortality can be significantly reduced if childbirth takes place under the supervision of Trained Birth Attendants (TBA), the officials said.



A woman in a remote Chittagong village being taken to hospital for childbirth. — Star photo

Indian Army Chief visits his ancestral home in Satkhira

SATKHIRA, Aug 8: The visiting Indian Army Chief, General Shankar Roy Chowdhury, spent more than an hour at his ancestral village at Town Sreepur in Debhata thana of the district today, reports UNB.

General Chowdhury reached Debhata High School ground by a helicopter and drove two kilometres in a car straight to his family's house at Town Sreepur this noon.

The Indian Army Chief, accompanied by his wife Krishna Roy Chowdhury, stayed in the house for sometime and recalled the sweet days of his childhood.

General Chowdhury is the grandson of Anukul Roy Chowdhury who was a landlord in the area. His family left the village after 1947 and stayed permanently at village Sodpur in Hasnabad thana of 24-Parganas, West Bengal.

Later, General Chowdhury visited the Town Sreepur BDR camp where he was received by Khulna Sector Commander Col Mohammad Shahidul Haque. He was also given a guard of honour there.

The India Army Chief exchanged views with the elderly people and local journalists in the BDR camp and recalled the days during the Bangladesh Liberation War.

He, along with Major M A Jall and Major Ziauddin, took part in the war against the Pakistan Army in Satkhira area under Sector 9.

Earlier Gen Chowdhury had visited the Jessore Cantonment.

On arrival at the Jessore Cantonment, the Indian Army Chief and the members of his entourage were received by the local Area Commander, Major General Abu Kaisar Fazul Kabir.



Artistes of Bulbul Lalitkala Academy rendering songs at its auditorium yesterday in observance of death anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore. — Star photo

Uniform edn

From page 1

the NGOs and many of those are following their own curricula.

Many kindergartens are found to be giving emphasis on teaching English while many others Arabic and Islamic studies.

The curricula of many of these schools are below the standard set for primary level while kindergartens and English medium schools are imparting education at primary level which is opposed to the values and culture of our society, sources pointed out.

The committee recommended a curriculum reflecting religious, social and moral values.

It also said the curricula should reflect the spirit of the Liberation War, and uphold the mother tongue, literature, culture and history of the nation at primary, secondary and higher secondary levels of education.

The committee also suggested the government to reconsider the policy of supplying books free of cost at primary level, irrespective of rich and poor.

Bid to commit suicide at thana hajjat

By Staff Correspondent

A woman who was arrested by Demra thana police Thursday night on charges of possessing pathedrine injection allegedly tried to commit suicide at the thana hajjat yesterday morning, police said.

Anwara Begum, 32, was arrested from West Jatrahari area in the city with 930 ampoules of pathedrine injection.

At about 10 am yesterday, police found that Anwara was trying to hang herself in the cell by using a saree. On-duty police foiled her attempt. She was later produced before the court.

It could not be known why the woman tried to commit suicide.

ALCWC

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The ALCWC meeting observed one-minute silence as a mark of respect to Bangabandhu and others of the August 15 tragedy and prayed for salvation of the departed souls.

The meeting instructed leaders and workers of Awami League and its front organisations to observe national mourning day in a befitting manner.

According to the programme, members of the AL central working committee will offer *fateha* at the mazar of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib at Tungipara on August 12.

On August 15, national and party flags will fly at half-mast and black flag will be hoisted at 5 am atop Bangabandhu Bhaban, AL central office and all party offices across the country.

The portrait of Bangabandhu will be garlanded at Bangabandhu Bhaban and wreaths will be placed and *fateha* offered at his mazar at Tungipara at 7 am on the day.

Fateha will also be offered at the mazars of other shaheeds of Bangabandhu family in the capital at 7:30 am. Feeding the destitute will also be arranged at different wards of the city from noon to 2 pm.

Special prayers will be offered at mosques, churches and temples and milad mahfil will be arranged.

A mourning procession will be brought out from the party's central office at Bangabandhu Avenue at 4 pm.

The ALCWC meeting called upon the people to arrange milad mahfil across the country and hold rallies and processions demanding trial of the killers of Bangabandhu and his family members.

England 76/0 at tea

TRENT BRIDGE, England, Aug 8: Stoppag opener Alex Stewart hit a scintillating half century as England replied boldly to Australia's 427 all out in the fifth Ashes cricket Test here Friday, reports AFP.

Stewart, captain Mike Atherton's second opening partner in this series, hammered 52 runs off 62 balls in England's 76 for no loss at tea on the second day. Atherton was unbeaten on 18.

Dacoity at city house

By Staff Correspondent

An unidentified gang took away cash, gold ornaments, share certificates worth about Tk four lakh from a house at Jigatola under Dhanmondi thana in the city early yesterday.

Police said the gang entered the house of one Forhaduddin Ahmed breaking open iron grills at about 2 am.

A case has been filed with Dhanmondi thana in this regard. However, none was arrested in this connection till last night.

Pir Dudu Miah laid to rest

FARIDPUR, Aug 8: Pir Mohsenuddin Dudu Miah was laid to rest at his family graveyard at Bahadurpur in Shiberchar thana of Madaripur district today, reports UNB.

His namaj-e-janaza, conducted by his brother Pir Mohiuddin Dadan Miah, was held at Bahadurpur Shariat Madrassah premises after Jumma prayers.

A large number of people, including leaders of political parties and his devotees, took part in the janaza.

Communications Minister Anwar Hossain and BNP leaders Abdus Salam Talukder, Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, Abul Khair Chowdhury and Imam of Baitul Mukarram Mosque Moulana Moniruddin also attended.

Five Year Plan

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crore for the Press Institute, Tk 5 crore for the Film Development Corporation and Tk 14.26 crore for other programmes.

The private sector investment in the mass media is expected to be in newspapers, journals and periodicals.

Under the draft FFYP, 95 per cent of the population and 90 per cent of the geographical areas of the country will be brought under TV coverage by providing more powerful TV relay broadcasting stations and a second channel will be opened primarily for educational programmes.

Appropriate facilities will be set up to bring the total area and population of the country under radio coverage. Bangladesh Betar will implement 18 development projects including establishment of broadcasting stations at Comilla, Thakurgaon, Rangamati and Mymensingh during the fifth plan period.

Private sector will be encouraged to set up FM broadcasting centres.

Modern laboratory facilities will be developed at NIRC for conducting training for the radio, TV and other electronic media personnel and for research.

A scheme will be undertaken to fund educational films and a film will be produced on the life of Bangabandhu.

The other programmes in this sector under FFYP includes creation of a modern archive for research, preservation and maintenance of the classic films and computerisation of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS).

Running with a borrowed uniform

ATHENS, Aug 8: An Eritrean distance runner was the centre of attention in a heat for the women's 5,000 metres Thursday even though she finished three minutes behind the winner, reports AP.

Habtemariam Nebiat elicited loud whistles and cheers at Olympic Stadium by running without a bra and with an oversized vest, leaving her breasts exposed for much of the race.

Seemingly unaware of the reason for the fuss, the 18-year-old runner continued around the oval with a blank look. In the last few laps, she tugged at her shirt in an apparent attempt to cover up, only to further expose herself.

Genet Gebregiorgis, an Ethiopian who was in the same heat and spoke for Nebiat afterward, said Nebiat does not have a proper uniform and had to borrow one.

"She has no sponsor. She is poor," Gebregiorgis said.

Eritrea a country of 3 million people, gained independence from Ethiopia in 1993.

Frozen food EC team to visit in Nov

By Staff Correspondent

The European Commission has extended the August 15 deadline by a month to allow export of pre-ban consignments of frozen fish including shrimp from Bangladesh to the European market.

A BBC report said last night that the EC sent a letter to the Bangladesh government in this regard yesterday.

The EC letter also said that they would give a fresh opportunity to export frozen fish only after the EC delegation scheduled to visit Bangladesh in November, certifies that the shrimp processing plants in the country are maintaining the required standard and hygienic conditions.

Otherwise the ban will continue, said the BBC quoting an official of the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock.

PM convinced

From page 1

August 3 with a 'green passport' but declined to mention the visit as a business trip. He faxed some medical documents to The Daily Star in favour of his claim that he had gone to Singapore for treatment.

The state minister also told The Daily Star that as the Prime Minister was not at home then, he had sought permission from Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad for going abroad and the latter verbally gave him permission. "I also informed Dr S A Malek, Political Advisor to the Prime Minister about this," he added.

He said as his health was deteriorating, he could not wait for a written permission (GO) and "my staff arranged the visit. As immigration at the airport wanted to see the GO and it was not possible then to show the GO, they gave the green passport instead of diplomatic passport."

"I found that I was carrying the green passport only when the plane touched the tarmac of Changi Airport in Singapore," Abul Hossain said.

Neither the Foreign Ministry asked for the green passport nor the passport was declared invalid when he received the diplomatic passport in 1996, he went on.

Farmers in Rangpur demonstrate for fair price of jute

RANGPUR, Aug 8: With the gradual decline in jute price, farmers demonstrated in the town Wednesday demanding an immediate rise in price of the agri-product to an optimum level to save them from ruinous, reports UNB.

They also held a rally at the Town Hall which was followed by a procession that paraded different streets chanting slogans in favour of their demand to fix the jute price at Tk 500 per maund.

The farmers at the rally accused the ruling party of reneging on its electoral commitment to revamp the jute sector by ensuring a fair price for it.

They alleged jute was being sold between Tk 150 and 200 per maund while its minimum production cost is over Tk 350. They called for opening jute purchase centres at district and thana levels to ensure its fair price.

Presided over by Saweruddin, the rally was addressed, among others, by farmer leaders Mahamudul Hasan Manik, Nazrul Islam Hakkani, Advocate Sumsuzzaman, Chanda Ghosh, Abdul Qudus and Anwar Hossain Bablu.

Cong apologises

From page 1

ever, that he had no immediate plan to topple Gajral's multi-party centre-left coalition.

"It is our political responsibility to let the government survive," he said, while stressing that only his 112-year-old party could provide long-term stability to the world's largest democracy.

The Congress has been trying to return to power since it was voted out last year. But it is still struggling to retrieve lost support after ruling India for more than four decades.

Water crisis

From page 1

jured policemen included Patrol Inspector Muminul, Sub-Inspector Aminur and constables Santosh, Mofazzal, Sarwar, Atiar and Borhanuddin. They were admitted to Rajbargh Police Hospital.

Police said people of Bangshail area had also put up demonstrations three months ago following disruption in water supply for three days.

House building

From page 1

Life and Pragati. The consortium also includes Beximco Investment Company Limited and Shaw Wallace.

NHFC sources said if the authorities grant it licence to operate, it will go for financing the urban housing needs in a big way. More foreign partners including international financial institutions from Germany and the World Bank are likely to join the consortium.

DBHFL began its operation on July 15, last year. It has a paid up capital of Tk five crore. It expects to raise the paid up capital to Tk 20 crore, an official of the company said.

It comprises the country's major NGO, BRAC and two insurance companies — Delta Life Insurance Company Limited and Green Delta Insurance Company Limited.

The company's lending operation has, however, been small so far. Out of 100 or so applicants, only 33 have been given loans.

'Poverty alleviation scheme must ensure human dignity'

NEW DELHI, Aug 8: Founder of Grameen Bank Prof Muhammad Yunus said here today that a poverty alleviation scheme must provide every poor with the opportunities to reveal his creativity and ensure human dignity, reports BSS.

"To create a poverty-free world, we need new analytical framework which takes ensuring human dignity to every human being as its central task," he said while speaking at the third D T Lakdawala Memorial Lecture on the "towards creating a poverty-free world" in Nehru Memorial Museum auditorium.

Organised by the Institute of Social Sciences, the function was presided over by Indian Finance Minister P Chidambaram.

Home Minister Inderjit Gupta, Samata Party Chief George Fernandez MP, Geeta Mukherjee MP (CPI), Acting High Commissioner of Bangladesh in New Delhi, Alim Ull Haque, academics and diplomats were present.

Prof Yunus in his 75-minute lecture dwelt on the activities of the Grameen Bank and suggested measures to remove the curse of poverty from the society.

He said the policy needed for eradication of poverty must be much wider and deeper than the policy for the provision of more employment.

Referring to the Grameen Phone, Prof Yunus said it is a nationwide cellular telephone company which hopes to serve about one million cellular phone users in both urban and rural areas of Bangladesh by the year 2003.

Many of the Grameen borrowers, he said, will become the telephone ladies of the villages. "A poor woman who never saw a telephone or even an electric bulb in her life will own a cellular phone and start selling the service of the phone to the villagers to earn better income," he added.

He said ultimately Grameen borrowers will become the owners of the telephone company by buying up the shares, as they did in the case of Grameen Bank.

Prof Yunus said with the modern development of information and communication technology, every person on the planet will have an e-mail address by 2003.

He said technology and economic necessity will bring the humanity closer to a borderless and distanceless world. "If we start feeling comfortable, we can move from regional to inter regional, and finally to global agreement to allow free and unhindered flow of people, finance, commodities and services from any location of the planet to other location."

Speaking on the occasion, Indian Finance Minister P Chidambaram paid tributes to Prof Yunus and said the Grameen Bank had proved that the poor people were credit-worthy and they were willing to be self-employed.