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Down to Earth Growing Menace from Poly Bags

By A S M Nurunnabi

The steadily growing use of polythene bags has posed an ominous environmental problem for the city as well as in rural areas. The latest reports show that 162 crore polythene bags are dumped every year in the city alone. The Dhaka City Corporation and the WASA are unanimous in their opinion that the substantial causative factor for clogging the drainage and sewerage systems of the city is the stupendously high volume of discarded shopping bags.

many experts, this line of argument is not acceptable in the present state of recycling technology available in our country for such wastes. It is pointed out when polythene bags are dissolved through chemical and other means, they produce an adverse impact on environment through exudation of carbon monoxide and sulphur dioxide into the air.

It is further argued that if polythene shopping bags are abolished, it will involve shut-down of the plants producing these bags. In this respect, we tend to lose sight of the fact that on account of introduction of polythene bags, the manufacturers of jute bags have already been thrown out of employment, though compared to polythene bags, jute bags are cheaper, environment-friendly and offer greater opportunities for employment. There are other possible alternative uses of plastic/polythene materials in other fields, for instance, in the field of furniture-making. All this may have a beneficial effect by way of saving our trees. If such a shift takes place, it will also have appreciable impact in dealing with the problem of unemployment. In this context, jute-plastic industries hold great prospects for growth of various kinds of uses.

It may be recalled that government issued orders banning manufacture of polythene shopping bags from January 18, 1994. But these orders were not

implemented because of a contrary trend of opinion. And under pressure from the vested quarters, the processes of manufacture, sale and use of polythene bags continue unabated. It is understood that the authorities are now seriously considering recycling with proper safeguards against environmental pollution. But, according to keen observers, mere recycling won't do. Import of raw materials for polythene bags, if discouraged, will go a long way in tackling the growing menace. Since a considerable part of the population has their living linked with poly bag production, a complete freeze on it abruptly is not felt advisable. Rather a slow but sure plan to phase it out is considered to be the answer.

In this context, it may be mentioned that, according to a report back in 1993, the drainage system in the city of Mumbai in India was greatly choked by the inordinate accumulation of used polythene shopping bags in the drainage channels, as a result of which use of polythene bags was forbidden there.

The bottom line on the issue is that it is time to effect gradual discontinuation of the use of polythene shopping bags and at the same time explore all possibilities for alternative uses of polythene/plastics in these respects, which need to be environment-friendly.

Jamaat's return

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CHT treaty, had a discussion with ruling party leaders on March 12 on the their contention about joining the session.

Emerging from the meeting, Telecommunication Minister Mohammad Nasim told journalists that he assured Jamaat MPs that the government would produce the accord in the House for discussion and would not pass anything repugnant to the country's Constitution. With the Jamaat MPs standing beside him, the Minister further told newsmen that following the assurance, the Jamaat would return to the House during the current session of Parliament.

Meanwhile, Jamaat MPs informed the party's central executive committee about what had transpired in the meeting with the ruling party leaders, while the party has resolved to scrutinise the bills before returning to the House.

"The government has assured our parliamentary delegation that it would not propose anything in the bills which would be inconsistent with any constitutional provision. We want to see first whether the Treasury bench keep its commitment," Jamaat secretary general Muttar Rahman Nazami said last night.

Meanwhile, Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Abdul Matin Khasru told The Daily Star that he would try to move the bills in the House during the current session. "Before moving the bills, they would be scrutinised by a certain wing of the Law Ministry, the cabinet and the parliamentary standing committee concerned."

BUET incident: 65 teachers contradict report

By Staff Correspondent

A section of BUET teachers yesterday contested reports that the "general students" abstained from attending classes at all on Thursday.

"All their classes except the first period were held as scheduled," they said in a statement. Contradicting the claims by architecture students, 65 teachers, including the Dean of Architecture Prof Faruque A U Khan, signed the statement to say that "a portion of the adjoining fence" was indeed "cut open to let the students in" but that too was done to ensure safety of the protesting students.

"A very large number of students voicing their intention to attend classes on Thursday, were trying to force their way in. Since 40-50 students of Architecture department, including some girls, were preventing a large number of students from going to their classes, a number of teachers present and the Vice Chancellor took the initiative to repeatedly request them to open the gate. They ignored the appeal of their teachers and continued to argue and curse them."

"Fearing for the safety of these few architecture students, who could be possibly hurt by a possible stampede, the teachers ordered that a portion of the adjoining fence be cut open to let the students in. This move by the teachers saved the protesting architecture students who had earlier hawksawed the BUET lock and used their own locks to implement their strike."

They also claimed "the general students had brought out a procession the previous night soon after some students gave slogans calling for strike." The statement also charged the resigning architecture teachers with "involving students and provoking them against their university" and called it an "unholy alliance."

Meanwhile, the BUET Registrar gave a similar statement and claimed that the classes were held as usual.

ALCWC

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be taken up at the meeting. Last month's induction of two BNP lawmakers — Dr Alauddin and Hasibur Rahman Swapan — into the council of ministers may also come up for discussion.

Besides, ALCWC members representing various regions of the country may raise the issue of power disruption in the ensuing summer the sources said.

Sharif

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"I assure you that we, in Pakistan, are ready to go the extra mile in journeying towards co-operative and good neighbourly relations with India," the Pakistani leader said last night.

He said Pakistan hoped that "our sincerity will be reciprocated in removing the underlying causes of conflict and tension so that durable peace based on justice and equity can be brought to our region."

Sharif said Pakistan and India stand at the cross-roads at a time of massive global transformations. "We are the inheritors of proud civilisations but our rich potential for economic growth has remained subdued."

"We have a special responsibility to step out of the old mind set of confrontation and tension to a new outlook enthused by the ideals of peace and development," he said, adding "this what we owe to our peoples."

\$250m Gorai restoration project by June this yr

The government is expected to launch a 250-million US dollar Gorai river restoration project by June this year to ensure dry season flow in the Gorai, official sources told BSS yesterday.

They said donor agencies and countries including the Netherlands and Belgium were providing fund to implement the project.

The project has been undertaken on a priority basis following the three-point action plan adopted unanimously by the representatives of the donors at the three-day international seminar on water resources management held in Dhaka last week.

The action plan suggested a short-term programme of dredging of the Gorai river as soon as possible to provide some immediate alleviation of the environmental degradation of the Ganges dependent area (GDA) to take early advantage of the opportunities provided by the Ganges water sharing treaty.

"A window of opportunity has opened up with the signing of the 30-year Ganges water sharing treaty," Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak said adding, "We want to ensure optimum use of Ganges water by taking up programmes like

Gorai restoration and Ganges barrage." He said work of the Gorai excavation with the financial assistance of the donors would begin in the current financial year (1997-98) to divert the flow of Ganges water in the river Gorai for ensuring dry season flow in it.

On completion of the project, the suffering of the millions of people of the country's south-western region caused by the shortage of water in the river Gorai will be mitigated, Razzak said.

The minister said the multi-lateral and bilateral donors had also supported the government's initiative to conduct a feasibility study to construct Ganges barrage for maximum use of Ganges water available in the river Padma during dry season after the signing of the water treaty.

Razzak said the updating of the pre-feasibility studies for identifying the areas of feasibility study to construct Ganges barrage had already started to complete it within three months, according to three-point action plan.

According to sources, the experts have also taken into consideration the three separate pre-feasibility studies conducted earlier.

Acute power shortage in Barisal region

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Mar 20: Nearly 13 mw power is being supplied in Barisal division since 6 pm to day against the demand for 35 mw.

The Barisal region includes Barguna, Jhalakathi, Swarupkathi, Gourmadi, Bakerganj. According to PDB sources, power supply was only 5 mw during dry time today.

The disruption was caused as two units of a gas turbine power plant here remained shut down from today due to technical faults, the sources added.

Nari Samaj

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It also protested the way the girl was questioned for identifying the arrested accused man, Obayedul Mather. "Police have no right to torture a child in this manner," it said.

The women's forum alleged that the process of identification of the rapist and other related incidents were similar to the strategies which were followed by high police officials and the then government to save the culprit policemen following Yasmin's rape in Dinajpur.

Aquittal of some of the accused policemen including an SP in the Yasmin rape and murder case gave a sense of immunity to such criminals. Besides, due to faulty investigation, the court was bound to release the policemen involved in Shima rape case, said the SNS press release.

"We are demanding punishment of all the criminals," the release added.

50 injured

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and additional police forces were deployed at the ghat. Ferry services between Natakhol and Aricha were disrupted for 12 hours and resumed after 11 am today.

The injured policemen were admitted to Bera thana health complex and Sirajganj Hospital.

The newly constructed Natakhola BIWTA terminal was inaugurated on Wednesday by Shipping Minister A S M Abdur Rob amid stiff resistance from ghat workers.

BIMSTEC meeting

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Thailand for Economic Cooperation.

The original idea of the grouping was mooted by Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India and Thailand and was initially referred to as the 'Bay of Bengal Economic Cooperation Organisation'.

The alliance was initiated considering the great potential for increasing the trade among these countries by taking advantage of geographical proximity of the countries in the Bay of Bengal region and also on the eastern coast of the Indian Ocean.

"BIMSTEC is being seen as a bridge between three SAARC countries — Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka and two ASEAN nations—Thailand and Myanmar. It is in fact the first and only institutional link between SAARC and the ASEAN," a top foreign ministry official said.

A South Asian diplomat said "the bridge-link between SAARC and ASEAN could only expand the potential of BIMSTEC. It would help increase the vibrancy of the region as a business and a commercial hub both for inter-regional trade and as a catalyst for attracting foreign investors."

Abul Hasan Chowdhury felt that many of the experiences of ASEAN—both its tremendous successes and some setbacks since its inception—will now be

Mismanagement, internal politics

From Page 1

Mazed's order ineffective as Dr Mohammad Hossain Mondal was holding the office of the DG. Dr Mondal was also made OSD at that time. He was later appointed DG of Bangladesh Jute Research Institute.

Dr Mazed was made BARI's Director General in 1995. Since then, he is 'all in all' to take decision in any matter. Most of his decisions are taken to protect the interests of his 'own people'. This has created frustration among the scientists, some officials alleged.

Dr Mazed's move in 1992 to 'capture' the post of the DG created a division among the officials and employees, hampering the congenial atmosphere, they said.

Citing one of many instances, they said, a junior Chief Scientific Officer (CSO) has been given the charge of Plant Breeding Division although there were at least two senior scientists to head the

wing. Similar placement has been made in the Plant Pathology Division. A renowned breeder researcher and plant scientist was posted in the Tuber Crops Research Centre and a potato researcher in the coconut research wing, they said.

A CSO who had been charged with at least 10 offences under the BARI service rules is still heading the Soil Science Division. The CSO had allegedly 'captured' the office of the Director of Support Services on February, 1995 and 'seized' some research papers, valuable slides and documents, according to a complaint made by the Director to the DG.

Dr. Mazed admitted feud among some senior officials but said it was not so serious or to hamper research activities.

Asked about non-publication of annual reports, the DG said it was due to shortage of manpower.

Bureaucracy a major obstacle to privatisation process: Nasim

Speakers at the concluding session of a seminar in the city yesterday found privatisation a complicated and sensitive process which needs government's strong political will and a consensus among major parties, reports UNB.

Privatisation Board and Rapport Bangladesh Ltd jointly organised the two-day seminar on Privatisation in Bangladesh.

Addressing concluding session at Hotel Turban in the afternoon, Telecommunications and Housing Minister, Mohammad Nasim sought positive cooperation from all political parties, including BNP and Jatya Party, to make privatisation programme a success.

38 children

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Bangladesh in small groups. The newspaper also claimed that some of them said their parents had sold them.

Despite signs of poverty on their faces, the children were found cheerful, the newspaper said. They ask visitors in Bangla, "have you come here to take us home?"

The elders told the newspaper that they were not part of the racket but only accompanied the children posing as parents for money. One of them, Farid, a school teacher, said the agents had assured him a safe passage to the Gulf.

Vidyakar, who runs Uduvum Karangal told the daily that the children may face psychological problems if they are taken back home immediately.

"Repeated pleas and representations to various authorities have, so far, fallen on deaf ears," The Hindu quoted Vidyakar as saying. Vidyakar suggested that the Indian government should take up the issue with some international rehabilitation organisations for the safe return of the children.

Soon after the children were rescued, an official of Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi visited them at Madras, promising steps for their return home. But no action followed, the daily said.

Aurora

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came at the Zia International Airport by Prof Anisuzzaman, Akku Chowdhury and Tariq Ali, the trustee members of Muktiuddho Jadughar (Liberation War Museum) which hosted the Indian general's visit.

Foreign Ministry official Masud Mannan and Indian High Commission officials Brig D Lahiri and Devashish Chakravorty were also present at the airport.

General Aurora is here on a five-day visit at the invitation of Muktiuddho Jadughar to join its second founding anniversary ceremony on Sunday. He will deliver the "Museum's Anniversary Lecture" in the afternoon.

The retired general, commissioned in Indian Army during the British rule in 1938 and hailing from Jhelum district of Punjab, was the Eastern Command Chief of the Indian Army in 1971.

He will go to Savar today to place wreath at the National Memorial.

Aurora will also meet Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

"Government is firmly committed to privatisation, which is to be carried forward for encouraging private entrepreneurs and rejuvenating the economy," Nasim said.

He added, "If all political parties support the programme, we need not seek advice from foreign consultants."

Former finance minister and BNP lawmaker M Saifur Rahman chaired the session while Jatya Party's labour wing leader Shah Mohammad Abul Zafar, N K Alam Chowdhury MP, journalist Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, Privatisation Board Chairman Kazi Zafarullah and Finance Secretary Dr Akbar Ali Khan also spoke.

Speaking as chief guest, Nasim identified bureaucracy as a major hindrance to the privatisation process.

"Why does a life take five months to reach the next table? Why will it need so many signatures?" he asked, stressing the need for simplifying the procedures.

Apparently unhappy with the private sector's performance in telecommunications, the minister said Gramone Phone has violated its commitment and failed to give proper services to its subscribers.

He said when World Bank or IMF prescribe selling out the SOEs, they should help find out the buyers as well. Because, in Bangladesh context, it is not easy to get so many buyers intending to buy whatever the government wants to dispose of.

The BNP leader favoured strong regulation and supervision of the government to ensure a good result of privatisation.

He said the judicial procedure regarding the privatisation should be expedited.

Three raped

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and police arrested one Syed Ahmed in connection with the incident.

In another incident, a Rakhai girl, Mong Mong, 17, was allegedly raped by five youths at Jhalipara in Teknaf. She was admitted to Sadar Hospital.

Police arrested two people, Shamsul Alam and Taib, for their alleged involvement in the incident.

In Ukhiya thana, an 8-year-old girl, Romana Barua, was allegedly raped at Jadimura in Rajapalung union.

She blamed a monk of a local pagoda for violating her, but he denied the allegation.

Vajpayee

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weapons into its arsenal. Although India is believed to be capable of making nuclear weapons, previous governments have never publicly advocated doing so.

On Thursday, Pakistan, also believed to be nuclear capable, said it was willing to enter into an agreement with India to restrict the development of nuclear bombs, missiles and conventional weapons.

Vajpayee sought to dispel tension, telling reporters in New Delhi on Thursday: "We want friendly relations with Pakistan." In a friendly gesture, Vajpayee greeted a Pakistani field hockey team visiting India to play a series of matches.

BSS adds: Defence Minister George Fernandes said today that his country would not fight shy of inducting nuclear weapons or conducting repeated tests of Agni ballistic missile to ensure its security, territorial integrity and unity.

"If there is a need to take hard decisions we will take them," the minister told newsmen soon after assuming the charge of the high-profile defence portfolio.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Ministry of Education No. S 14/13U-3/93/60/Edn Dated: 10-03-98 NOTICE It is recently observed that, some individuals/entrepreneurs' organisations, immediately after submitting application for establishing private university to the government have been operating fulfilled programme of university including appointment of teachers, admission of students (male/female).

Research Council recently. Some others were trying to get him removed to become the DG of the institute. Dr Mazed alleged.

He admitted that about 45 scientists left BARI in the last three-four years. Most of them went abroad. Dr Mazed however said that they were now trying to attract young scientists giving them scholarship and other benefits so that they stay in the country.

A former BARI scientist who is now working in an international organisation said a number of scientists left the institute and some of them went abroad because there was no atmosphere for research. Dr Mazed was made OSD when he was a Director of BARI in 1992. Earlier in the year, he had issued an order claiming himself as Director General of the Institute. Later, the Ministry of Agriculture made Dr.

তিতাস গ্যাস ট্রান্সমিশন এন্ড ডিস্ট্রিবিউশন কোম্পানী লিঃ (পেট্রোবাংলার একটি কোম্পানী) ফোন : ৯৫৬৩৬৬৭, ৯৫৬৩৬৬৮, ৮১৯৩৯৯ (দিবা রাত) বিশেষ দৃষ্টি আকর্ষণী বিজ্ঞপ্তি তিতাস গ্যাস কোম্পানীর পরিবহণ ও বিতরণ নেটওয়ার্ক পাইপ লাইন "প্রাকৃতিক গ্যাস নিরাপত্তা বিধিমালা, ১৯৯১" অনুযায়ী মাত্র নীচে স্থাপিত। ভূ-গর্ভস্থ বিভিন্ন ব্যাসের গ্যাস পাইপ লাইন কোন কারণে ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হইলে স্বাভাবিকভাবেই গ্যাস প্রবাহ বিঘ্নিত হয়, গ্যাস বিতরণ ও সরবরাহে সমস্যা দেখা দেয় এমনকি দুর্ঘটনার কারণে জানমালেরও ক্ষয়ক্ষতি হইতে পারে।