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Down to Earth

City roads pose serious threat to vehicles, pedestrians

By A S M Nurunnabi

After the recent floods, most of the city roads damaged by them presented a dismal picture. Though a beginning has been made for repairing some of the roads, they still pose a serious threat both to the vehicles and the pedestrians. Even before the floods which began about two months ago, the city roads were not, by and large, in good shape, particularly in the low-lying areas. When such roads went under water during the floods, the then existing cracks degenerated into deep furrows and holes. The gutter asphalt layer in many of the roads peeled off in many places, and what with the cracks, furrows and holes, many of such roads became unfit for movement of vehicles. Even in the areas which were not submerged by flood water, the roads suffered from waterlogging — a continuous nagging problem for the city when there are heavy downpours.

It was understood that the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) made an allocation of Taka 20 crore for repairing the damaged roads. Obviously this amount may turn out to be quite inadequate as the work of repairing the roads makes some progress because of the magnitude of the work involved. However, it can hardly be overemphasised that those roads which suffered greater mutilation on account of the floods and are now a driver's nightmare, should be attended to first on a priority basis.

Though it is common knowledge that roads are damaged during floods, and are expected to be repaired as soon as possible, it has been the sad experience of the citizenry that the DCC authorities are, most of the times, lukewarm in their response to the public demand. A greater alacrity on their part

in tackling such situations is expected in the interest of easing the civic life of the city.

Of vital importance is the question of maintaining the quality of construction of the roads. It has been a consistent story that despite millions of taka spent each year, the city roads present no sign of durable improvement. In fact, roads in rotten condition have been the usual picture. Except for a few important roads, excessive bumps, depressions and pot-holes characterise the city's road network. On such roads, comfortable ride is impossible and sometimes it is hazardous. Under these conditions it is not possible for vehicles to move at a desirable speed with the added impediment of slow-moving rickshaws with their locust-like growth. The nation pays a heavy price on this account. It suffers incalculable loss in lost man-hour and unnecessary fuel consumption.

Such situation is not found in similar cities in the developing countries. There, roads carry more traffic and considerably heavier vehicles and trucks than our city roads. Yet the roads in those countries are smoother and more durable. The reason seems to be that these roads are designed and constructed with appropriate standards and technology to last longer than the Dhaka city roads.

The poor quality of work in construction of roads in Dhaka city is reportedly, in a large measure, due to the work awarding system of the DCC. The normal practice here is to award the work order to the lowest bidder. There lies the rub. Certain contractors in their bid to win a particular work order quote a price much lower than the estimated cost of the work. The contract awarding authority does not seem to

Road accidents kill 12 in five districts

By Staff Correspondent

Twelve people were killed and 26 others injured in separate road accidents in five districts of the country yesterday.

Of them, five were killed in Khulna, two in Dhaka, two in Narayanjan, two in Mymensingh and the rest one was in Jessore.

In Khulna, five people were killed and one person was critically injured when a Bagerhat-bound minibus smashed a private car near Srighat on Khulna-Bagerhat highway yesterday, police said, according to UNB.

All the victims were travelling by the Rupsha-bound private car that met with the accident at about 4 pm.

One of the dead was identified as Jewel, 23, while the identity of four others could not be known immediately.

Police seized the bus but its driver managed to escape. A case was filed with Bagerhat thana.

A mother and her minor daughter were killed in a road accident at Tipu Sultan Road in the city yesterday morning.

Witnesses said Rokeya, 24, as her daughter Sharmin, 4, of South Basabo died on the spot when a truck hit their rickshaw. They were going to Sadarghat terminal.

The bodies were sent to Mitford Medical College Hospital for autopsy. Police seized the truck but the driver fled away.

In Narayanjan, two people were killed and another 10 injured when a mini bus skidded off the road and fell into a roadside ditch at Langaband on Dhaka-Chittagong highway at 11 am yesterday.

Identity of the deceased — aged about 30 and 32 — could not be known immediately.

Official sources said preparations were under way to round up all those involved in violence and terrorism.

In his statement Altaf said the MQM was at a critical point as a state operation has begun and they are searching for you (party workers) like wolves."

MQM represents the large Urdu-speaking settler community living in southern Sindh province. The party has its headquarters in the provincial capital, Karachi, and sub-offices in several other cities.

On Monday Sharif accused a provincial lawmaker and seven other MQM activists of being involved in the October 17 murder of former Sindh governor Hakim Mohammad Saeed.

Sharif gave the party three days to hand over the accused, threatening a split otherwise.

The MQM denied the allegations and in turn blamed Sharif for the murder of a party activist, Fashi Ahmed, who died in police custody after being arrested over the murder of the former provincial governor.



Arafat may retire in February

BEIRUT, Oct 30: Citing poor health, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat plans to retire as early as February after the implementation of the recent land-for-security agreement with Israel, a newspaper said today, reports AP.

The leftist Beirut newspaper, Al-Kifah Al-Arabi, said Arafat told Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak last week that he wants to quit because of "poor health and extreme weakness."

The newspaper quoted Arab diplomatic sources in Cairo, where the two leaders met.

Arafat, 68, has been dogged by persistent rumours of failing health but the Palestinians have dismissed the speculation as subversive propaganda.

Hassan Asfour, a top negotiator, repeated that response Friday.

"It is illogical" to say that Arafat will quit because of health problems since he was fully fit during negotiations with the Israelis at the Wye Plantation, Asfour told The Associated Press.

"He was in better shape than all of us. And remains to be," he said.

Arafat has been variously reported to be suffering from Parkinson's disease and depression, and is often seen on TV looking pale and tired, his lower lip trembling and his hands shaking.

This is not the first time reports of his imminent resignation have appeared in the Arab press.

Nine dacoits caught in Jessore

From Our Correspondent

JESSORE, Oct 30: Nine dacoits were caught red-handed by local people at Basundia Bazar under Kotwali thana in the district in the early hours today.

According to local people, when a gang of dacoits were looting the bazar, local people geroed the dacoits and caught nine of them. They beat up them mercilessly.

They were identified as Mesbaul, 30, Asgar, 30, Mozful, 28, Ashraf, 26, Rofiqui, 32, Mithu, 20, Kamar, 32, Shahidul, 30, and Hafizul, 20.

Of them, Mesbaul, Asgar, Mozful and Ashraf were admitted to Jessore General Hospital in critical condition while the rest five were handed over to local thana.

Extortionists

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of this report last night.

According to hospital sources, the gang led by one Abdul Hai demanded Tk 10 thousand from the family a few days back. Following refusal of paying the amount, the gang attacked his house at about 6:30 pm on Thursday.

The gang stabbed Hossain and his wife. They also assaulted Hossain's four girls when they tried to resist the attackers, sources added.

Laloo Prasad

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the crime-racked state after federal police started criminal proceedings, was taken into custody on Wednesday.

His uneducated wife, Rabri Devi, now heads the government in India's second most populous state.

"This is unfortunate," said chief whip of Yadav's Rashtriya Janata Dal Party, referring to the rejection of the bail petition.



Volunteers at the Bangabandhu National Stadium taking away the pitch-cover as the rain momentarily lets up. —Star photo

PM urges teachers, guardians Help new generation know true history of Liberation War

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called upon all, especially the teachers and guardians, to put their best efforts to facilitate the new generation to know the glorious history of the Independence and War of Liberation, reports UNB.

"We've restored the process of knowing undistorted and real history of the nation, which will help future generation in making their character strong and progressive," she said while addressing a huge gathering of school students at the Trade Fair ground in the city yesterday morning.

Thousands of students from different schools of Dhaka, Narayanjan and nearby districts came to the huge venue to join a speech and question-answer competition.

Central Command Council of Bangladesh Muktijoddha Sangsad organised the competition marking the National Mourning Day.

Ten students from different schools showed their oratory performance in front of the Prime Minister and delivered their extempore speech on various aspects of Bangabandhu's life.

The Prime Minister expressed her astonishment listening the excellent deliberations by the little boys and girls said "I was listening with great wonder how the little boys and girls have depicted the glorious and heroic history of the nation."

No step yet

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he further said.

He informed that the Chittagong chamber would soon write to the government for taking measures to turn Chittagong into commercial capital.

Jafrul Islam Chowdhury MP, former president of Chittagong chamber, said that lack of infrastructures here forced 'migration' of business from Chittagong to Dhaka. Activities at important business hubs including Khatungani, Asadganj and Chaktal have slumped, Chowdhury said.

EC team 'disturbed'

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facing the court is her matter. She is mature enough to take her decision," she added.

On her meetings with the Speaker, Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad and leaders of political parties, she said functioning of parliamentary system in Bangladesh is "on a positive track".

Parliament should be the venue for expression of democracy, she noted adding that formation of parliamentary committees are very important for strengthening parliamentary democracy and keeping tabs on the government through scrutiny.

She cited the experience of the European Parliament in this regard.

Ms Pollack also hailed the CHT peace agreement and the water-sharing treaty with India and described those as major achievements of the government.

On possible help for flood control, Ms Pollack said a long-term strategy for water management was discussed with the government leaders and her delegation offered the assistance of the Dutch who have a long experience in flood control. Her views were supported by Jan Weibenga, MEP from the Netherlands.

On SAARC she said: "We are very supportive of the SAARC which may help overcome intractable political problems like the Kashmir issue between the neighbours just as the EU helped sort out differences between its members."

Replying to a question on export of frozen food including shrimp from Bangladesh to Europe, she said the problems in this regard have been sorted out.

"But Bangladeshis must remember that Europeans are fanatical about quality of foods which they must maintain," she added.

She also said that the outstanding issues in the current negotiations on EU-Bangladesh co-operation agreement would be settled quickly.

Ambassador Michael Drury said that the 'third generation agreement' between Bangladesh and EU for trade and economic cooperation is expected to be signed before the end of the year.

He said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been invited to witness the signing ceremony at Brussels.

"The first generation agreement was signed in 1976. A second agreement was not required since the first accord worked smoothly, Drury added.

Constitutional provisions ignored

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okayed by the Cabinet. Once passed by the JS, each of the 460 thanas will have local government bodies sometime next year.

However, according to The Upazila Parishad Bill, 1998, only the chairman of an Upazila Parishad will be elected directly by the people.

There will be three female members on the Upazila Parishad. They will be elected indirectly. Female members of the union parishads and municipalities under an upajila will elect them.

Rest of the members will be in the Upazila Parishad without any polls for this purpose. According to the proposed law, the chairmen of all the municipalities and union parishads under an upajila will automatically be members of an Upazila Parishad by virtue of their positions.

But Article 59 of the Constitution dealing with formation of the local bodies dictates otherwise. It says that the local government in every administrative unit of the Republic shall be composed of persons elected in accordance with law. This means, all the members of a local government have to be elected by the people.

The LGC recommendations in this regard, which have been ignored by the ministry of Local Government, are however consistent with the said constitutional provision and its spirit.

The bill is now lying with the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives.

According to the standing body sources, the LGRD ministry is mounting pressure on the committee members to clear the bill without any change. But some members of the JS body, including at least two belonging to the ruling party, are reluctant to okay the bill in its original form, as they are convinced that "it is ultra vires of the Constitution — both content and spiritwise."

Replying to a question, an influential ruling party MP on the JS body told The Daily Star on Thursday: "Perhaps the ghost of General Ayub Khan's 'basic democracy' has prompted the LGRD bureaucracy to opt for indirect election of the members of the proposed upazila bodies."

However, some members of the parliamentary body might seek the Prime Minister's intervention on this "controversial issue", the sources said.

The BNP government of Begum Khaleda Zia had dissolved the upazila system in 1991. The BNP did not go for setting up of any kind of local government bodies at thana level, although it was its constitutional obligation to set up elected local governments at every administrative unit of the state.

SA beat SL

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Right-arm seamer Elworthy, playing only his sixth one-day international, drew the first blood. Bowling a teasing line, he claimed three of the Sri Lankan top order — Kaluwitharana, Jayasuriya and batting maestro batsman Aravinda de Silva — in his three successive overs. Elworthy finished with three for 21 in his four overs. He was ably supported by off-spinner Symcox, who took three wickets for 27.

The day-night match got off to a delayed start due to overnight rain and light drizzle in the morning. The rain damaged the outfield, specially the bowler's run-up at the VIP end.

A massive work by the dedicated groundsman and volunteers finally made possible at least a truncated match, much to the delight of the full-house crowd at the big bowl. Some of the early bird fans had braved the rain and waited for more than nine hours, which drew showers of praise from World-Tel commentators.

Earlier, South Africa's impressive total was built around brilliant Kallis knock coming in defiance of the inclement weather. He hammered his third one-day century playing only 91 balls, the quickest of the tournament so far.

Coming into bat at number five with South Africa reeling at 3/57, the stockily-built right-hander set the stadium alight with a flurry of shots all around. Kallis, who was particularly harsh on off-spinner Muralitharan, smote five sixes, so far the highest in an individual innings in the tournament, and as many fours in his flawless innings.

The Middlesex all-rounder held the South African innings together after Cullinan departed after a 43-ball 30. He shared 81 runs for the fifth wicket with skipper Hansie Cronje, who scored a workmanlike 20. Despite wickets falling at the other end at regular intervals, Kallis was generally well-supported by the lower middle-order to throttle the Proteas to a commanding total.

Among the Sri Lankan bowlers, leg-spinner Upul Chandana and left-arm seamer Nuwan Zoysa took two wickets each. Muralitharan returned most expensive with figures of one for 48 in his six overs.

Kallis was the obvious choice for the man-of-the-match award.

South Africa may have won the rain-ruled match, but the real victors were the two sporting captains who agreed to continue play and the marvellous crowd that kept waiting.

MP hostel

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Police said Jisan was an absconding accused in a number of murder cases, including the case in connection with the killing of Syed Shafiqul Huq Khokon who was shot dead in the city's Malibagh area on July 4. Babu and Mizan were absconding accused in arms cases.

Separate cases were have been filed with thanas concerned against the arrested persons, police said.

Teenage boy

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Being interrogated by police Biplob, however, accused his family members of infringement of his freedom.

Biplob attacked his family members with a bill hook when they were sleeping at around 3 am, police said.

At one stage the inmates of the house managed to catch him and handed him over to the police.

Biplob was produced before the CMM's court and the court sent him to Dhaka Central Jail. Police lodged a case with Shabujbagh thana in this connection.

A 15-year-old boy Babu killed his elder brother with an axe at his residence in city's Shanir Akhra in the early hours of Sunday.

Bail for Pinochet

LONDON, Oct 30: The High Court in London today granted conditional bail to former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet while the House of Lords — the country's highest court — ponders his fate, reports AFP.

Betel leaf growers

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village fought a battle to save 50-year-old paan boro from the deluge. The fight cost him nearly Tk 25,000 which he spent on constructing a dike around his garden and hiring people to guard it round-the-clock, not to speak of the tireless endeavour on his part.

But the deluge won. At the height of the flooding, in mid-August, water overflowed the dike and claimed the garden that used to be him his one annual profit of nearly Tk one lakh.

Beaten, Motahar, who also lost a similar battle during the 1988 floods, has now decided to abandon his age-old family occupation. After the flood water receded, he planted seasonal vegetables on his 20 decimal of land.

"I'll put my land under timber after the laal shaak (red-leafy vegetables) and lau (gourd) harvest. I'm now sick and tired and have no patience left," a frustrated Motahar said.

Tara Mia, another victim of the area, faced a similar onslaught. Floodwater inundated his three-year-old betel leaf garden on 30-decimal of land.

"I constructed an earthen dam around the land and employed four to five persons to keep constant vigil against the rising floodwater. Each guard was paid Tk 300 and supplied food four to five times a day. But all went in vain," he said.

His battle lost, Tara Mia salvaged what he could of the withering plants and replanted them on a higher ground to produce cuttings. His far-sighted effort paid off as there is now an acute shortage of cuttings that can only be made from mature plants — most of which have been destroyed by the floods.

These days, Tara Mia's garden is regrowing with the scions of the original plants. The two-month-old shoots are nearly three-feet-high and the betel leaves will be ready for picking in nine months.

"To avoid harassment," Tara Mia did not seek bank loans for restarting. "I just borrowed Tk 15,000 from my family and friends."

Motahar, Ali and Tara are among 1311 betel leaf growers of Sadar thana in Munshiganj district whose farms were destroyed by the deluge, according to the local branch of Bangladesh Krishi Bank. There are 2196 growers affected by the flood in the district.

On the occasion of the Wills International Cup cricket being held at Dhaka from Oct 24-Nov 1, 1998

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See Star Sport Now!

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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