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Proposed Girdles of Waterways

By A S M Nurunnabi

The volume of Dhaka City's size in men and vehicles has been steadily building up to a monstrous proportion. The unchecked growth of slow-moving rickshaws all over the city compounded by the similarly proliferating mechanised vehicles has created such a horrendous situation that at present there are hardly any roads in the city whose intersections are free from long-term spell of wait to allow movement of vehicular traffic of various descriptions in alternative directions.

Lately some new ideas are being aired as possible means of easing the congestion. We have already a surfeit of plans and ideas as viable modus operandi for tackling the ever growing city congestion. Ambitious plans to this behalf with substantial volume of foreign aid for constructing fly-overs, bypass roads etc. are frequently heard. But there has been very scanty evidence so far of any achievement by way of their implementation. While the innumerable debate on possible relief in this sector continues, the size of the city with its population and their infrastructural needs suffering under severe strain has been bloating all the time.

In this context, the all-imp

Koirala asks King to dissolve parliament, call polls May 31

KATHMANDU, Dec 11: Nepal's Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala has asked King Birendra to dissolve parliament following the mass resignation of all 13 communist ministers in the government coalition, the state radio announced today, reports AFP.

Koirala also asked the King to call general elections on May 31.

All 13 communist ministers in the Nepal government coalition have resigned en masse on Thursday after they failed to reach an agreement with their Nepali Congress (NC) partners.

The Nepal Communist Party-Marxist and Leninist (NCP-ML) had issued an ultimatum to the NC it would pull out of the coalition, formed only

PM goes to Barisal today

From Staff Correspondent BARISAL, Dec 11: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to lay the foundation stone of the Doarika and Shikarpur bridges over the river Sandhya on Barisal-Faridpur highway, some 18 kilometres from Barisal town at 10 am tomorrow.

She will also address a public meeting at the Bangabandhu Udyan here at 3 pm.

These two bridges will be constructed with an estimated cost of Tk 1,276 crore, including Tk 90 crore financial assistance from Kuwait. Tk 22.76 crore will be provided by the Bangladesh government.

The construction of the bridges is expected to be completed by 33 months, official sources said.

FEMA says

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FEMA said that other irregularities and improprieties were also found such as faulty voter lists which prevented a number of voters from exercising their franchise.

"FEMA found suspicious movement and activities on the part of certain activities of certain political parties which would seem to lend substance to reports that the voting was being manipulated," it said without giving any further details.

The coalition reported "medium to heavy turn out of voters" and said that the presence of female voters was low.

FEMA also observed that the pre-poll situation in the constituency was marked by allegations of gross violation of election laws, rules and regulations as well as serious incidents of violence, intimidation and exercise of undue influence.

Observers in all 81 polling centres were posted by FEMA while five of its mobile teams comprising of members of its district and national committees inspected a large number of polling stations to oversee and check the progress in vote casting and, where relevant, verify allegations of fraud and irregularities, the report stated.

FEMA will investigate and document its findings in subsequent reports, the statement added.

Call of a fantastic future

By M Shamsur Rahman

Nazif Fuad Pritom will turn ten on the 26th. His parents promised him a computer on his birthday. He and his father have come all the way from Thakurgaon to choose one from the ECS Trade Show.

Nazif comes from a typical middle-class family. His father knows career in information technology (IT) is the ultimate challenge of the 21st century and has decided to buy his son a computer. His wife works for an NGO. Their income is limited, yet they don't mind. He has come to the show in the hope of buying a personal computer in reduced price.

The five-day computer extravaganza which began in the city's IDB Bhaban at Agargaon, has drawn quite an attractive number of visitors, from all walks of life, on the very first day. The organisers have arranged free bus services to bring the visitors in. Seventy-seven hardware and 37 software companies, 18 training institutes, seven internet service providers and 12 computer-related publication houses are displaying their products and services in 151 stalls. Finance Minister SAMS Kibria inaugurated the fair in the morning.

The visitors in the early session were mostly students, many accompanied by their parents. Some came to see new hi-tech IT accessories while others, like Nazif, came to buy.

"My wife has agreed to pay 50 per cent of the price. Our budget is 50,000 taka," Nazif's father Mosharraf Hossain said.

"My son can operate Windows 95 and 98," said the proud father. "He learned them from his uncle. My son will be a next generation programmer."

BNP demonstration

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tions brought out a militant procession yesterday from Mukhtang, which, after parading different city streets, was terminated at Shahbag crossing with a brief rally, addressed by the party's city unit convener Sadek Hossain Khoka MP.

Addressing the rally, Khoka alleged that AL "terrorists" in presence of telecommunications minister Mohammad Nasim, cast false votes and captured polling centres after evicting BNP agents. "People of the country will try Nasim for his crime" he alleged.

"The terrorist minister had killed many political leaders in 1974 after bringing them out from Pabna jail. People of this country know his past and present misdeeds," he alleged.

Khoka claimed that the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has lost people's support and is now trying to cling to power depending on BDR and police forces.

He urged the police to remain neutral during opposition's agitation programmes and to stop repression on BNP activists. "Don't resort to repression on our men unnecessarily... Don't be too much enthusiastic. List of the enthusiastic policemen

Zillur urges BNP to withdraw hartal

Awami League general secretary Zillur Rahman yesterday blasted BNP for calling hartal on Sunday "on the plea of rigging" in Thursday's Pabna-2 by-election, reports UNB.

In a statement, he said the by-election result was the reflection of people's confidence in the Awami League government's commitment to ensure their rights to vote and food. It also reflected the development aspiration of the people, he added.

Welcoming the "verdict of the people" of Bera-Sujanagar constituency, he said rejecting the results and calling hartal are part of a pre-planned conspiracy and negative politics of BNP.

The LGRD and Cooperatives Minister congratulated the Election Commission, polling officials, an employee and members of the law enforcing agencies for conducting a neutral election.

Terming BNP's allegation of rigging as false, fabricated and motivated, he said. "They (BNP) are now accusing others as they could not forget the vote rigging by them in the past."

Zillur expressed resentment over the hartal programme and urged BNP to withdraw it.

He also called upon the countrymen to reject the "illogical" hartal if BNP does not withdraw it.

JCD activist chopped to death in Feni

FENI, Dec 11: A group of armed men chopped one JCD activist to death and severed both the legs of two others at village Udranjpur in Dagonbhuiyan here last night, reports UNB.

Police and family sources said armed hoodlums numbering about 30 surrounded a house in the village and forcibly picked up Sabuj, 25, Mofiz Uddin, 22 and Abul Kashem, 23. They chopped Sabuj to death and cut off both the legs of two others.

The miscreants themselves took the three victims to the Dagonbhuiyan health complex from where the injured were shifted to Feni Sadar Hospital.

The body was sent to Feni hospital morgue for autopsy. A case was filed in this regard.

Sabuj was a wanted accused in Sramik League leader Milon murder case. Milon was killed in October.

District unit of Jatayatabadi Chhatra Dal and Juba Dal in separate statements condemned the incident and held BCL responsible for the killing one and injuring two of their workers.

Khulna city AL leader shot dead

KHULNA, Dec 11: Unidentified assailants gunned down a local Awami League leader in the city this evening, reports UNB.

Police said the miscreants shot Shahjahan Ali Sheikh, 29, Convener of Awami League Ward number 14 unit, at Eijar crossing in Boyra area at about 7:30 pm as he was having tea standing in front of a tea stall.

Shahjahan was rushed to Khulna Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

The reason behind the killing could not be known immediately. Police visited the spot.

Computer Samity urges Khaleda to withdraw hartal

Star Business Report

Bangladesh Computer Samity (BCS) requested the opposition leader Begum Zia to withdraw Sunday's hartal.

The call from the computer dealers came at a hurriedly called press conference at the IDB Bhaban yesterday.

The five-day computer extravaganza which began in the city yesterday was also extended till December 16.

Present, among others, in the review meeting were BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, joint secretaries general Ashraf Hossain and Haris Chowdhury, Mohammad Shahjahan MP, Amanullah Aman MP, Nazimuddin Alam MP, Golam Sarwar MP and Khairul Kabir Khokon.

Meanwhile, Jatya Party (Z-M) co-chairman Kazi Zafar Ahmed and JAGPA president Shafiqul Alam Prodhhan, her alliance partners, met Begum Zia separately at her Minto Road official residence last night.

They exchanged views on prevailing political situation. Among others, BNP leader Sadeq Hossain Khoka and Amanullah Aman were present at that time.



GLAMOUR TAKES TRADITION ALONG: Bengali women and sarees go together better than anything else. These two ladies at a fashion show titled Chironot Bangladesh organised by Zonta Club IV at a city hotel yesterday are terrific examples. —Star photo

Gold, banned medicines seized at ZIA

By Staff Correspondent

Customs authorities at the Zia International Airport seized 420 grams of gold in bars, 400 grams in ornaments and contraband medicines valued at about Tk. 51 lakh in separate incidents yesterday.

A customs surveillance team seized the gold from a passenger, Shaheen Sikder bearing passport number 0647859, who arrived at the airport at about 8:00 in the morning by Emirates flight EK 612, customs sources said.

The passenger declared 420 grams of gold in bars but the surveillance team found another 400 grams in ornaments from his possession. As per the regulation, officials seized all of them as he had given a wrong statement, sources added.

In another incident, the custom surveillance team recovered contraband medicines and photo films worth about Tk. 13 lakh from two suitcases.

Customs officials on a tip-off seized both the suitcases, destined for Sylhet, when they reached the airport from Dubai. One of the suitcases carried a tag [no. XI1113280], customs officials said.

Separate departmental cases were filed.

10 shops, 2 motor garages gutted in Chittagong

CHITTAGONG, Dec 11: At least 10 shops and two motor garages were gutted in two separate fire incidents in the city last night, reports BSS.

In the first incident, 10 shops were damaged at Mikhan Nagar, Bakalia here. Fire originated from an electric short circuit at about 3 am, police and fire service sources said.

Seven fire service units extinguished the blaze which lasted for an hour.

Minister for Labour and Employment M A Mannan today visited the place of occurrence. He talked to the affected people and assured them of all possible help.

The second fire incident took place at Askarabad under Doublemooring thana last night which gutted two motor garages.

Originated from a lamp, the fire lasted for about half an hour.

Five fire fighting units brought the blaze under control at 10 pm, the sources said.

Double murder

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was arrested from his house in village Golabari in Bhuapur of Tangal.

Acting on Rafiqul's confession, Tejaگون police rushed to the spot again and dug out the money hidden under the floor of his house.

In another incident, detective police arrested an alleged criminal from a city hotel and recovered two revolvers from his possession at late Thursday night. Police identified him as Babul, 30, arrested from Al-Farouque hotel at Kamalapur.

A case was filed with Motijheel police station.

Now comes WASA with water in bottles

By Nazmul Ashraf

Good news for consumers of drinking water in bottles! Dhaka WASA is coming up with something a lot cheaper. For almost half the price of the popular brands, it will market purified water in similar bottles to compete with some 25 private companies in business.

"A one-litre bottle of WASA-produced pure drinking water may cost Tk 6 or 8 against Tk 15 to 20 being charged by the private companies," said Khondakar Azharul Haque, Managing Director of the WASA.

Haque said last week that the Consumers' Cooperative Society of WASA was preparing for the production of purified bottled water.

The Society has already set up an office at Segunbagicha for the project which is likely to start in a few months, sources said adding WASA's laboratory and quality control system will be used for the purpose.

The WASA chief executive said the bottled water available in the market is not mineral water as claimed by the producing companies. "Those are only purified water. But their quality or purity is not always maintained."

"WASA produces one of the best quality water in the world in terms of purity. Our water is 100 per cent pure at the production level but the purity goes down to 70 per cent while it reaches the consumers due to faulty pipelines," he said. Besides, he said, the quality falls further because of reservoirs used by consumers.

In case of bottling drinking water by the WASA, 100 per cent purity will be ensured, the MD said.

B'baria incident

5 eminent citizens to exchange views with members of public

By Staff Correspondent

Five eminent citizens will exchange views with the members of the public on Monday's incidents of violence at Brahmanbaria in which several hundred women, NGO workers were assaulted by a section of madrassah teachers and students.

The exchange of views will take place today at 10 am at the WVA auditorium at House no 20, Road no 2, Dhanmendi Residential Area, a joint statement issued by the five citizens said on Thursday. They have also sought cooperation of all to make the discussion successful.

"We, the peace loving conscious citizens of the country strongly condemned the medieval barbarism by fundamentalists," they said. Signatories to the statement are: poet Sufia Kamal, Neelma Ibrahim, Prof. Kabir Chowdhury, Justice K.M Sobhan and Kazi Ferook Ahmed.

They expressed grave concern over the terrorist activities and apprehended renewed violence following the incident.

Char Gazaria incident: probe body formed

NOAKHALI, Dec 11: A six-member body was formed today to probe the incident of attack on villagers and kidnapping of girls from Char Gazaria, a bordering village of Ramgati with Daulat Khan thana of Bhola district, reports UNB.

Local people said the kidnapped girls were left at a place near Char Gazaria early this morning.

PM renews pledge for terror-free campus

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina reaffirmed her pledge to reinforce a process of fair politics and restore violence-free campus, reports UNB.

"We have succeeded in restoring a stream of sound politics at least to some extent, and we'll achieve more in future," she said at the Golden Jubilee of Begum Badrunnesa Women's College yesterday morning.

She sought cooperation from guardians, teachers and students in her government's mission to free educational institutions from violence and restore sanctity of campus enabling flourishing of knowledge and free-thinking.

Education Minister A S H K Sadique also spoke at the function chaired by principal of the college Prof Nilufar Huda.

Sheikh Hasina was a student of the Eden Intermediate College, later renamed Begum Badrunnesa Women's College, and was an elected vice-president of the college students union.

She said her party has roots in people's love and confidence. "Our politics is not dependent on student politics as we do not need to use them as a tool for survival."

Unless any national issue arises, what is the necessity of student movement, she wondered, with regard to current trends of campus politics.

"Terrorism does not deliver... politics banking on terrorism and devoid of ideology cannot last long," she said.

Elaborating on the motto of her politics and the objectives of her government, the Prime Minister said, "We want to make Bangladesh into a Sonar Bangla, once dreamt by Father of the Nation, which will ensure food and shelter for all, and raise head aloft with dignity."

Hasina said she lost everything on the black August 15 night of 1975 and had nothing to gain for herself. "My only objective now is how to free the country from hunger and poverty."

Stressing the need for expansion of women education she said women's rights could not yet be established as it was desired.

"No nation, state or society can progress keeping behind the

Trans-Asian highway

From Page 1

mar and the state ministers of India and Bangladesh. All the sessions would be held at the Sonargaon Hotel. A 10-day BIMSTEC Bazaar featuring various products including traditional items from the member countries would be held at Baridhara on the sidelines of the conference.

The ministerial meet will include two working sessions and be rounded off with a dinner by Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad. A press conference will be held later on the concluding day.

The three-day international forum is expected to give increased attention to attracting international cargo traffic to Chittagong Port for bolstering regional trade, providing trans-shipment arrangements and catering as a major shipping hub for refuelling and warehousing.

Plans for construction of a large container terminal by a foreign company in Chittagong is likely to receive adequate focus from the neighbouring countries looking for more favourable harbour facilities. A detailed study would be commissioned shortly for enhancing the infra-structural facilities at the Chittagong Port, sources said.

The new regional grouping is expected to get a more concrete and durable shape at the Dhaka meet, said State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury while talking to The Daily Star.

He will preside over the working sessions of the 3-day conference.

The Dhaka meet is also likely to identify the thrust sectors of the organisation. Plans are on the anvil to find ways and means of focusing on expanding trade, investment, tourism, exchange of scientific and meteorological data.

Talking to The Daily Star, Abul Hasan said that ESCAP is authorised by BIMSTEC to conduct a study for construction of the highway. Stretches of the highway already exist and it is a matter of linking up and providing facilitation services.

Discussions are also expected to take place to draw up a possible list of tariff concessions and create free trade zones in the BIMSTEC countries.

The original grouping comprising four littoral countries of the Bay of Bengal — Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand — was launched with the name of BISTEC.

Later at a ministerial level meeting last December in Bangkok, the four founding members agreed to admit Myanmar, renaming it BIM-STEC.

Khaleda

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per a blue print".

"We cannot accept this shameful and naked vote da-coity. We cannot allow snatching of people's voting rights. So the election will have to be cancelled immediately and re-polling held," she said.

Besides terrorism let loose by Awami League activists in presence of ministers, many leaders and activists of BNP and its front organisations were arrested under false cases and houses of many others were raided forcing them to flee, she alleged.

Days before the election, voters were threatened not to cast votes. On the polling day, voters, particularly women, were harassed and obstructed from coming to polling centres, she alleged.

The Election Commission and the local administration did not take any step despite repeated complaints, the BNP chief alleged.

Referring to removal of Returning Officer by the CEC, she said it was nothing but an eye-wash. "The DC, before his removal, had completed all preparations to co-operate with the ruling party candidate".