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Lake project delayed by lack of money, manpower

By Morshed Ali Khan

Delay in releasing funds coupled with severe labour shortage has put a brake on the Dhanmendi lake development project, sources said.

A revised project proposal involving Tk 14.78 crore is awaiting approval of the Planning Commission. Once approved, it will be sent to Local Government Ministry which will in turn send it to the Finance Ministry. Then the fund will be released through a government order. Sources fear the bureaucratic tangle in releasing funds might cause the project to fall apart.

However, despite repeated attempts the officials of the DCC's Engineering Section could not be reached for confirmation.

Sources also said the lake development project was originally scheduled to be completed in June 1999 but the deadline

has been extended till end of this year.

The revised amount is nearly five crores more from the original projection of Tk 10 crore. The sources said, with some new components being added and some others slashed the project cost may go as high as Tk 20 crore. About three crore taka, spent for relocation of WASA, DESA and T&T lines, have not been included in the revised proposal. None could, however, clarify where this additional amount would come from.

Explaining the sluggish pace, sources concerned with implementation of the project also said that they were facing an acute shortage of both skilled and unskilled labour. At the moment about 100 labourers are working at the site

against a requirement of nearly 1000.

Site engineer Hafizur Rahman said the entire construction sector is now facing an acute labour shortage. He said thousands of unskilled labourers are now busy harvesting in rural areas. Moreover, hundreds of skilled manpower, such as masons, welder, bricklayers, casters and rod shutters have gone to the Middle East for a better prospects over the last two years, leaving a big vacuum in the construction sector.

Sources said several components including the length of walkways have been crossed off the project while some others have been added. Retention walls near BDR gate, Satmasjid Road, Road-27 ends and a concrete yard at Road -32 have been taken up. The concrete yard would cost an additional Tk 78

lakh while cost of the retention walls could not be known.

Meanwhile, large scale encroachment and residents' persistent refusal to relocate sewer lines leading to the lake have brought work on the western part of Road-32 to a complete halt. Officials said it was not possible to work there unless those lines were relocated and encroached lands restored. The 'Ideal Police Outpost' at Road-24 has its sewer lines directed into the lake. Sources said notices were served on the offenders time and again, but to no avail.

One DCC source said although it was decided that the Estate Department of DCC would take measures to do away with the encroachment through its legal wing, the department has so far done 'nothing'.

Pakundia rapists still at large

By Reaz Ahmad, back from Pakundia



Power and plight
UP membership could not give her the protection.

Star photo: Sk Enamul Haque

Two weeks after the reported rape of Union Parishad member Roushanara Begum, police hunt for the main accused continues while doctors are yet to ascertain the nature of the assault.

As mystery shrouds the May 1 alleged rape, incident of Roushanara, an elected member of Jangalia Union Parishad under Pakundia thana in Kishoreganj, district administration now shifts focus to other phenomena that could provide a clue in pursuing the case.

Only day before yesterday, the personal attires of Roushanara were sent to Dhaka for chemical test at the Institute of Public Health (IPH). If IPH results were positive, it would reinforce primary assessment that 'indecent assault' was inflicted upon Roushanara.

Doctors at Pakundia thana health complex, where Roushanara is now recovering from the trauma, would not say whether a rape was committed till final report comes from the office of Kishoreganj civil surgeon.

Meanwhile, relationship among the five accused and the male colleagues of the victim in the union Parishad has now come under scrutiny. Concerned sources cited some recent examples of 'non-cooperation' from the part of other male members in Roushanara's union.

Roushanara had lodged a case with the Pakundia Police Station on May 2, complaining that five persons stormed her Kazihati residence on the night of May 1 and Fazlul Haq, one of those five, violated her chastity after forcing her school-going daughter out of the house. Victim's husband, Hares Uddin,

rickshaw-puller, was not home at that time.

During a daylong visit to Pakundia on Wednesday, this correspondent came across a cross section of people in the thana headquarters and they all expressed deep concern about such attack on an elected representative at the grassroots level of local government administration.

Kishoreganj Deputy Commissioner (DC) AMM Farhad, who came to see Roushanara at the hospital for the third time on Wednesday, said district administration was seriously looking into the relationship between the accused and some of the union Parishad men.

"People told me that some of the accused were frequent visitors

to union Parishad office but we have to examine all the aspects first."

The DC explained that the government's endeavour to see empowerment of women at grassroots level has been frustrated in some places because of 'male ego-centric' attitude towards new female leadership in local government bodies.

Lying pale on a hospital bed, victim Roushanara herself narrated to The Daily Star how often her call for holding meetings with other male colleagues in the Parishad went unheeded.

Chairman of the Jangalia Union Parishad AKM Fazlul Haq Bacha acknowledged that three male members of the union, who were invited recently by Roushanara for

holding a meeting on distribution of sanitary latrines, did not show up.

The Chairman also said that none of the allegations brought against Roushanara in the past were proved correct. "Some people used to bring complain against her saying that she manipulated with VGF cards. But, those complaints proved wrong", said he.

Thana Nirbahi Officer (TNO) of Pakundia, Bikash Kishore Das suspected that prior enmity might have instigated such an attack on Roushanara but could not say in specific terms what sort of enmity he had heard of.

On the day the case was lodged, Pakundia police arrested two of the five accused, Golap Mia and Reaz Master, the latter a cousin of Roushanara's husband. But, till Wednesday none of the rest three, including the principal accused Fazlu Mia, could be arrested.

Officer-in-Charge of the police station, Md Nasrul Islam, told The Daily Star that a manhunt was underway to catch the other accused. He said, in case of failure, they might go for seizure of property of the accused.

Some people in Pakundia were suspicious about the deterioration of relationship between Reaz Master's family with that of Roushanara since the 1997 union Parishad elections were held. They said, another member aspirant, wife of Reaz Master, gave up her willingness to contest the poll as her relative and next-door neighbour Roushanara had vied for a seat.

Roushanara, however, did not reply to a query regarding 'cool relationship' with Reaz Master's family.

Reforms retarded

By Naimul Haq

The government is yet to implement the proposed 'unification' of the divided health and family planning services' at thana level and below, greatly affecting realisation of the objectives of health sector reforms.

A report jointly prepared by the government and the World Bank as part of Annual Performance Review said, "Delay in implementing the proposed unification process of health and family planning services at thana level and below is causing major obstacles in achieving goals of the reforms in health programmes."

Unification is one of the major components of planned change in the US dollar 2.9 billion five-year health and population sector programme (HSP), launched in July 1998. People now have to go to two different places for the services -- for health related problems they go to health centres while for reproductive health and

family planning services they go to family planning centres.

To make the services available at 'one stop', the government had decided to go for unification of the services.

The report said, "Progress on many key HSP initiatives, including the establishment of community clinics from where the proposed 'one stop' services would be available and improving quality and access, depends on the reorganisation of service delivery at thana level and below."

The report prepared during March-April this year also said, "Implementation of the agreed plans has slowed down. The health ministry needs to re-invigorate the process with more effort to increase understanding and ownership of the reform process at all levels within the ministry and in other ministries such as establishment and finance."

It further said that in order to achieve the objectives of op-

erational plans, "unification of the divided health and family planning services at thana and below needs to be implemented latest by June. Specific and decisive action is needed for the unification including finalisation of the job descriptions."

The report recommended that immediate action should be taken to transfer 10 per cent of family planning staff under the development budget to the revenue budget by June 15 as part of phased transfer of all required staff.

"Unfortunately, the unification process has not yet taken place due to some 'difficulties', said a health ministry official.

"For the proposed reorganisation, a statutory regulatory order (SRO) is required which involves specification of staff status and position, transfer order, salary structure and other. Until we have the SRO, it is not possible to implement the unification process."

PM leaves for the Hague today

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina leaves Dhaka today for the Hague to deliver speech at the Hague Peace Conference in the Netherlands, reports UNB.

The Hague Appeal for Peace invited the Prime Minister to attend the concluding session of its centenary celebration that began May 11. She will deliver her speech on May 15.

The Prime Minister is expected to meet UN Secretary General Kofi Annan on the sidelines of the peace conference.

Private pocketing in public time

By Rafiq Hasan back from Pirojpur

A senior doctor at a government hospital was found doing private practice during duty hours.

The Resident Medical Officer (RMO) of Pirojpur Modern Government Hospital was seen seeing patients taking fees in his office room during duty hours on May 3. A number of patients were sitting in the room when this correspondent visited the hospital at around 1 pm.

The patients told this correspondent that they came to consult the RMO. "We do so when ever needed and some of us are here for the third time," one of them said.

Asked if the doctor charged any fee, another patient said, "For every visit, we give Tk 100."

The RMO admitted that he privately sees in his office only those patients who seek special care.

"Every day I am approached by many patients coming from distance places. They request me to see them privately and as early as possible so that they can go back home the same day," he said.

This correspondent saw a police officer coming to the RMO with his son who was bitten by a stray dog. The doctor prescribed some medicine and Si Anwar offered him the usual fee of Tk 100. He hesitated to take the money but finally took it.

When the RMO was busy seeing patients privately, indoor patients on the 1st floor of the hospital continued to suffer.

Some of the indoor patients alleged that the doctors hardly pay any attention to them. The male ward remains almost without any duty nurses round the clock.

"None of the doctors came to see me since this morning," said Abu Zafar who was suffering from high fever for seven days.

Another patient in the same ward said, "The doctors are too busy to see us. They have admitted us here but hardly pay routine visits."

Meanwhile, the hospital

faces acute shortage of doctors. Three emergency medical officers recently posted in the hospital were still to join duty. Besides, medicine, orthopaedic and gynaecology departments have no consultants for long.

Most of the patients alleged that they are not supplied with drugs.

Regarding this, the RMO said, "We are facing acute shortage of drugs and other medical accessories supply for the past two months. In such circumstances, we are compelled to ask patients to arrange drugs and other medical accessories on their own."

The Civil Surgeon, Bipin Bihari Sarkar, was not available for comments.

Director General of Health Services Prof A K M Nurul Anwar, when contacted, said, "First of all, private practice at government institutions (hospitals) is illegal. If any one is found seeing patients privately, stern action will be taken against him. But the offence has to be proved."

Asked about punishment for such offence, he said, "Usually departmental action is initiated, which includes explanation from the offender. If the offence is proved, depending on the grade of the offence, we may decide to issue warning, put one under temporary suspension or hold up promotion."

Beyond

From Page 1
Iqbal Bachhu, Yusuf Rahman Babu, Khairul Ahmed, ASM Farooque, Enayet Hossain Seraj, Shakil Kasem remain a glorious chapter in our cricket history. They dared, they lit the torch and paved the way for others to follow. And the others to their undying credit have fulfilled our ultimate desires. We are in England now bidding to lay hands on the World Cup. What could be more rewarding or satisfying?

Watch out world, we have come a long way and we are getting better all the time.

It is no longer a long, long way to Tipperary anymore.

Wonder rice to wane hungry cries

By Reaz Ahmad, back from the Philippines

In line with IIRI's goal of developing 'new plant types', Transgenic Rice comes as yet another wonder, promising the world a new solution to hunger.

"Transgenic Rice is a 'rice plant' with an alien gene or genes from other foreign sources, such as wild relatives of rice, virus, bacteria and fungi. Techniques of genetic engineering is being applied to induce novel characteristics in traditional rice plants," said an IIRI scientist.

Talking to some visiting Asian journalists late last month, IIRI scientists said genetic engineering would help enhance pest and disease resistance, increase tolerance to flooding and drought, raise yield potential, improve nutritional value and reduce production cost.

In recent years, though IIRI has developed a number of Transgenic Rice varieties, their availability to farmers remained a far cry for some technical reasons and controversies.

The biosafety guidelines in the Philippines, where IIRI is headquartered, do not permit field test of transgenic rice in that country. Most of the Asian countries including Bangladesh do not have their own set of biosafety guidelines yet.

IIRI scientists told the journalists that development of transgenic rice outside Transgenic Greenhouse could not be done by IIRI until the Philippines Biosafety Guidelines permitted field test. Transgenic Greenhouse is a controlled environment in which IIRI conducts test on genetically modified rice plants.

The Philippines is the third country in Asia after Japan and India to introduce biosafety guidelines. Bangladesh is now in an advanced stage of introducing its own guidelines.

There are strong controversies worldwide over possible environmental fall back and the threat genetically modified crops might pose to human

health, the scientists pointed out.

They are also concerned about food-allergy characteristics of some genes taken from foreign sources. After ingestion, these may reach blood circulation and trigger allergic reactions.

Bacterial Blight (BB) is one of the most destructive diseases of rice throughout the world. At IIRI, a gene called 'Xa-21' was transferred from a wild species to its modern variety IR-24. Preliminary field experi-

ments conducted in China showed that new transgenic rice called IRBB-21 is resistant to BB.

Stem border damage is also a serious problem in rice, causing estimated losses of 10 to 30 per cent of the total yield. Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt) is a common soil bacterium capable of producing insecticidal proteins. IIRI has developed transgenic rice with Bt genes -- known as Bt Rice -- to address stem borer problem.

Banking on PM's blessings

Shantu Larma says he is happy, seeks her help

Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma alias Shantu Larma, who took charge as Chairman of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council (CHTRC) Wednesday, called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office yesterday, reports UNB.

The Prime Minister greeted Shantu Larma with a bouquet and said it has been possible for the government to take up various development programmes in the hill districts following restoration of peace in the region.

Minister and the CHTRC Chairman were held in a very cordial atmosphere. Press Secretary to the Prime Minister Jawadul Karim told newsmen after the meeting.

"I am very happy ... I sought help and blessings of the Prime Minister for discharging my duties," said Larma.

Assuring the Prime Minister to work for the overall development of the hill districts, Larma said, "We want peace and development."

Welcoming the CHTRC Chairman, the Prime Minister

said the CHT area has immense potential for tourism and setting up of industries, particularly the agro-based ones.

She said the government has taken initiatives for development of the region and our development partners have assured of all-out assistance in this regard.

CSM workers call hartal in Chittagong May 30, 31

CHITTAGONG, May 13: Chittagong Steel Mills workers enforced a dawn-to-dusk shutdown in the port city today protesting pay-off decision of the government, reports UNB.

Offices, shops and schools remained closed during the shutdown.

Transactions at the Chittagong Stock Exchange did not take place during the period.

Cargo handling at Chittagong Port was disrupted due to hartal.

No major incident was reported.

Our correspondent adds: The still mills workers held a rally at EPZ gate in the evening.

They announced a fresh agitation programme, including a two-day hartal in the port city on May 30 and 31 to press home their demand for reopening of the mills.

"If we strictly implement the law, then we have to arrest thousands of people from Dhaka alone because the law clearly prohibits drinking of alcohol without a license," said a top DNC official.

The government should either totally ban it or issue licenses to open bars for this huge population of alcohol consumers," He also said opening of bars with proper regulations might also help control drug abuse like phensidyl and heroin.

Carew & Company also produces an unspecified volume of a 'cheap' brand called Bangla or

country liquor for the poorer section, particularly for ethnic minorities -- people from Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Meghalaya and other parts of India who had migrated to Bangladesh to do jobs the general public refused to accept at the time.

The four distilleries of the country, Jamuna, Rangpur, Marshal and Darshana, produce ethanol or rectified spirit for use in homeopathic medicines. But ethanol is widely consumed as an intoxicant. These distilleries also produce some 'denature spirit' for industrial purpose.

Sources concerned said the Chittagong Hill Tracts and other tribal areas of the country are the only areas where alcohol related problem is relatively low. They said the tribal people produce their own brew from rice known as dochoori and keep the local demand within their control. They said a large quantity of this liquor is

also channelled to the capital where a big market is always available.

Most of the foreign liquors in the registered bars are initially bought from a flourishing black market well known to the authorities. These registered bars although few in number sell them at an exorbitant price with the excuse that the government levy on alcohol import is very high. The government quota of liquor for a registered bar is far less than what the bars actually sell, according to DNC sources.

The government formed committees to investigate and make recommendations after more than 250 had died from drinking poisonous liquor in the last four years. The committee formed after Gaibandha tragedy that killed about 70 people submitted its report with recommendations. But the report is now gathering dust, sources said.

ডেলটা লাইফ ইনসিওরেন্স কোম্পানীর
ইজিএম অনুষ্ঠানে অন্তর্বর্তীকালীন
নিষেধাজ্ঞা আদেশ জারী

ডেলটা লাইফ ইনসিওরেন্স কোম্পানীর সমানিত উদ্যোগ পরিচালক, সমানিত শেয়ার হোল্ডার এবং সমানিত পলিসি গ্রাহকদের সদয় অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে ডেলটা লাইফ ইনসিওরেন্স কোম্পানীর আগামীকাল ১৫ মে ৯৯ হোস্টেল পূর্বদিকের অনুষ্ঠানে ইজিএম অনুষ্ঠানের উপর মাননীয় ২য় সহকারী আদালত, নারায়ণগঞ্জ কর্তৃক অন্তর্বর্তীকালীন নিষেধাজ্ঞা জারী করেছেন যা নিম্নরূপঃ

বাসীপক্ষ হলফনামাসহ দেহকাঃ বিধি আইনের ৩৯ আদেশের ১ ও ২ ক্রমের এবং ১৫১ ধারার বিধানমতে অত্র মোকদ্দমা নিষ্পত্তি না হওয়া পর্যন্ত ১-৪ নং বিবাদীগণ যাহাতে বিপত ১৪/০/৯৯ই তারিখে পুনঃ বোর্ড মিটিং এর গৃহীত সিদ্ধান্ত মোতাবেক আগামী ১৫/৫/৯৯ই তারিখে অতিরিক্ত সাধারণ সভা করিতে না পারে তন্মতে ১-৪ নং বিবাদীগণ বিরুদ্ধে অস্থায়ী নিষেধাজ্ঞার আদেশদানের এবং অত্র অস্থায়ী নিষেধাজ্ঞার দরখাস্তের অনাদি না হওয়া পর্যন্ত উক্তবিধি বিবাদীগণের বিরুদ্ধে এক অন্তর্বর্তীকালীন নিষেধাজ্ঞার আদেশ দানের প্রার্থনা করিয়াছে।

বিজ্ঞ কৌশলী বক্তব্য বিস্তারিতভাবে জনসাধারণের দখল, হলফনামা এবং নথী পর্যালোচনা করিয়া ১-৪ নং বিবাদীকে অত্র নোটিশ প্রাপ্তির ৭ দিনের মধ্যে এই মর্মে কার্য দর্শাইবার নির্দেশ প্রদান করা হইল যে, কেন তাহাদেরকে বাধার প্রার্থনা মতে অস্থায়ী নিষেধাজ্ঞার আদেশ দ্বারা বিরত করা হইবে। ইতিমধ্যে দরখাস্ত নিষ্পত্তি না হওয়া পর্যন্ত ১-৪ নং বিবাদী যাহাতে জলসাধর হলফনামা, হোস্টেল পূর্বদিক, ঢাকা ১৫/৫/৯৯ই তারিখে তাহাদের নির্ধারিত ইজিএম করিতে না পারে তন্মতে অন্তর্বর্তীকালীন নিষেধাজ্ঞার আদেশ দ্বারা বিরত করা হইল।

নিবেদক
ডেলটা লাইফ ইনসিওরেন্স কোম্পানী লিঃ
এর পক্ষে
কতিপয় পরিচালক, শেয়ারহোল্ডার
ও পলিসি গ্রাহকবৃন্দ
সি-৩৮২

Editor : Mahfuz Anam
Published by the Editor from City Publishing House Ltd., 90 Kakrail, Dhaka-1000 on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd., 52 Motijheel C.A., Dhaka-1000. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: House No: 11, Road No: 3, Dhanmandi RA, Dhaka-1205. PABX: 866772-4, Commercial: 866771, Fax No: 88-02-863035, GPO Box No: 3257, Cable: DAILYSTAR, DHAKA. Internet edition address: http://www.dailystarnews.com and Email address: dstar@bangla.net

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