

Down to Earth

Road digging causes sufferings to city-dwellers

By A S M Nurunnabi

Lately, road digging in a large part of the city by different utility service agencies are causing sufferings to city-dwellers. The ordeal that started a few months ago shows no signs of letting up nor are there serious attempts to complete the operations quickly.

According to sources, lack of coordination between DCC and other agencies concerned like WASA, DESA and BTTB that have been digging different city roads for different purposes throughout the year is responsible for causing delay in project implementation.

In this connection, it has been pointed out that the already poor condition of city roads has lately worsened when WASA started installing new pipelines for Syedabad Water Treatment Plant under the Fourth Dhaka Water Supply Project from last September.

To cite some examples, WASA is at present digging up roads at Bashabo, Maniknagar, Jatrabari and Jurain areas for installing pipelines while DESA is digging up the Mirpur Road from Sobhanbagh area towards the Russell Square.

In addition to DESA's cable installation work, Dhaka Urban Transport Project authorities have been relocating the road dividers on Mirpur Road at Sobhanbagh and its adjacent areas under a demonstration project. Besides, a long stretch of rickshaw lane is already under construction from Dhanmondi Road No 2 bending towards Satmasjid Road. This ongoing lane project has narrowed down the existing road space creating congestion.

In defence of the road digging, it is stated that water, power and telephone are all essential services and for development purposes, it is essential to permit the agencies concerned to dig the roads for underground repair and installation work.

A number of officials of agencies concerned are said to have admitted the lack of coordination among the agencies executing different projects.

Non-students lobbying again to capture vital JCD posts

Intra-party hostility likely to intensify

By Staff Correspondent

The intra-party hostility in Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) may intensify over formation of its full-fledged central committee as its chief is trying to accommodate more non-students to strengthen his position in the organisation.

Sources said a good number of former leaders and activists who were either expelled from JCD or ousted from the Dhaka University campus five to ten years back are now lobbying to get vital positions in the BNP's student front.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, in mid-December last year, announced a five-member new central committee of JCD with Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu and Shahabuddin Laltu as its president and general secretary, allegedly at the influence of party hardliners.

But a full-fledged JCD central committee could not be formed even after one month of the announcement due to violent protests by the party rank and file against the Pintu-Laltu body.

Some senior BNP leaders then brokered an understanding on condition that "maximum number" of genuine and dedicated student leaders would be accom-

3 terrorists held in city

By Staff Correspondent

Police arrested three alleged terrorists after they were injured in a shootout with them near Bat Tala in Shantinagar area in the city yesterday.

They were identified as Mohammad Ali alias Saiful Islam, Sabbir Uddin Alias Sabu and M Zahirul Hasan alias Hasan.

The three were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital under police custody, police said.

Witnesses said an alleged gang of terrorists went to a supermarket in the area at about 11 am. Acting on a tip-off, police went there to nab them. Sensing presence of police, the gang fired shots. Then police also fired shots. Three of them were injured and arrested. The rest escaped.

Police recovered a revolver and three bullets and seized a micro bus used by the gang.

In another incident, police exchanged shots with another alleged gang of terrorists at Modhubagh and recovered two revolvers and two bullets.

The gang had gathered at a field in the area in preparation for some criminal activity. Acting on a tip-off, police encircled the field but the gang escaped firing shots.

Sources said the gang was led by Molla Masud alias Tikka, reportedly an associate of Subrata Bayen, a top leader of the notorious underworld gang, "Seven Star".

Vandalism by outgoing aides of Clinton

WASHINGTON, Jan 26: Some staff members of the Bush administration say they moved into their new offices to find numerous acts of apparent vandalism and they blame it on outgoing aides to President Bill Clinton, reports AP.

Bush staffers have grumbled that glass desktops were broken, keyboards doused with fluids and stripped of "W" keys and tags identifying phones numbers switched.

The new administration is

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An earth-carrying truck skidded off the road and moved onto a footpath near Shapla Chatter in the city's Motijheel area in the early hours of yesterday, knocking down two electric poles. - Star photo

Chanchal murder case sent to KMP for reinvestigation

From Quazi Amanullah

of all the main accused.

The then Police Commissioner of Khulna, M Anwarul Iqbal, in a letter to the police headquarters in Dhaka on October 23 last year had sought permission for reinvestigation.

The IO who investigated the case last delayed the hand-over of the case despite the official order from Dhaka, the sources alleged.

Wahiduzzaman Chanchal, a central leader of JCD, was hacked to death on the night of October 18, 1998 at a house in the city.

The body was recovered on the following morning from Nijkhamar area near Khulna University.

Chanchal's mother Badrunnesa Begum filed a murder case with Khulna thana on October 19. Later, Chanchal's

KHULNA, Jan 26: The Chanchal murder case has at last been sent to Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) for reinvestigation.

The case docket was given to KMP on Thursday night.

Inspector Rumi of Detective Branch of KMP has been asked to reinvestigate the case which was earlier investigated by three officers of CID, Khulna, police sources said.

An official order from the police headquarters in Dhaka on November 19 last year directed the CID, Khulna to send the case back to KMP for reinvestigation following demand by local Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) for "impartial investigation".

The three Investigation Officers (IOs) of CID had earlier submitted charge sheets in the case, allegedly excluding names

PM to address people-FFs rally at Barisal today

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Jan 26: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to address the fifth Freedom Fighters' people 'grand' rally at Bangabandhu Udyan in the town tomorrow.

She will also inaugurate the newly built Shaheed Abdur Rab Serniabat Teachers' Training College and Barisal divisional commissioner's Secretariat at Ichhakati.

Dr SA Malek, Political Advisor to the Prime Minister and chairman of the Combined Freedom Fighters Front (CFFF) and Chief Whip Abul Hasnat Abdullah are overseeing the preparatory activities.

Bomb blast at cinema hall at N'ganj: 25 hurt

NARAYANGANJ, Jan 26: At least 25 people were injured, two of them seriously when a bomb exploded in Gulshan Cinema Hall here at about 11 pm yesterday, reports UNB.

Witnesses said, the bomb exploded with a big bang when the night show of film "Krohn" was on.

The seriously injured Khorshed Alam, 30, and Momtaj, 35, were admitted to Narayanganj Hospital while others to local clinics.

"It's an act of sabotage as the bomb attack was made a day before screening of international films," said the owner of the hall. International Film Festival was inaugurated in the capital yesterday evening.

Rob Smriti Sangsad calls hartal in Khulna tomorrow

KHULNA, Jan 26: Shaheed SMA Rob Smriti Sangsad has called for a half-day hartal in the city on Sunday demanding immediate arrest and punishment of his killers, reports UNB.

The Sangsad is also demanding the arrest and punishment of those who were behind the killing.

Armed assailants killed city Awami League leader SMA Rob in front of his residence in Sonadanga Residential Area in the city on August 11, 2000.

Police have so far arrested 10 people in this connection.

DMCH plagued with constraints

Health ministry spends Tk 40 lakh on PM's reception but refuses additional allocation

By Naimul Haq

Abu Sayeed lay unconscious in his hospital bed. The 40-year-old Jamalpur farmer was admitted to DMCH and placed under the Neurosurgery Department with serious head injury in a road accident recently.

Six hours after the admission, he was yet to receive any emergency drugs or the bag of blood prescribed on the file kept beside his bed.

The hospital didn't have the required medicine. Sayeed's relatives couldn't afford to buy it either.

"I have no money to buy the drugs or the blood," said one of Sayeed's relatives. "I went to get the blood from outside but they demanded Tk 60 which I cannot afford."

He held a list of medicines written on a torn piece of paper. Prescription on official pads seemed a luxury.

Another road accident victim, Abdul Jabbar was in a similar crisis. His son had to buy emergency drugs like Ficlox, Phenobarbitone, Enocef and Oradoxon and even bandages

from nearby drug stores at unreasonably high prices.

The emergency ward, where most of the patients with head and spinal injuries are brought in, didn't have these in store. The hospital has a meagre supply of life-saving injections like Oradoxon, Diclonefec and in some cases common intravenous saline and disposable items like syringes.

The annual allocation of Tk 3.5 crore falls way short of DMCH's actual requirement. The hospital owes more than five

crore taka to several medical and pharmaceutical product suppliers. It also owes the Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) Tk 74 lakh in arrears telephone bills.

The Ministry of Health refuses additional allocation. Fund constraints, the officials argue. Incidentally, for a DMCH reception accorded to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina it sanctioned

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The left-leaning 11-party alliance brought out a procession in the city yesterday protesting bomb attack on the CPB rally at Paltan Maidan on January 20 - Star photo

Vegetable exporters get raw deal from Biman

Frequent offloading blamed for plummeting revenue

By Rafiq Hasan

Frequent offloading by Biman Bangladesh Airlines is posing serious problems for fresh vegetable exporters to the European and Middle Eastern markets.

In the absence of any regular air cargo services from the country, fresh vegetable exporters depend solely on the Biman's passenger services. Each flight on the Dhaka-London route has a capacity of 20-25 tonnes, said informed sources.

Biman's space control section often offloads huge quantity of vegetables despite earlier booking. Once offloaded, the vegetables rot quickly, causing huge losses to exporters. Other airlines are not chosen because they hardly operate any direct flights from Dhaka to London.

Most flights are time-consuming and not suitable for vegetable exports, exporters said.

Only British Airways have direct Dhaka-London flights via Kolkata. However, it allows only three tonnes on each flight, which can be used by one exporter alone.

More than 150 exporters always vie for space on Biman flights. Even after allocation of space, authorities cancel bookings without any prior notification or explanation, complained exporters.

Some 25 to 30 tonnes of vegetables are offloaded every week by Biman's Dhaka-London flights alone. Around 100 tonnes of fresh vegetables are sent to

EC inviting election observers thru' diplomatic missions

The Election Commission is sending invitations through diplomatic missions to international poll-observation groups for monitoring upcoming general elections, reports UNB.

Officials at the EC Secretariat said yesterday that they were exercising caution this time in allowing observers in the parliamentary polls following widespread allegations of bias of a major monitoring group in 1996 elections.

"The Commission welcomes every interested group and individual to observe the elections, but they must have to prove their neutrality at any level of the polls," said one official.

They hinted that this year all local observers would need police certificate to prove that they are not associated with any political party or group.

In 1996 general elections, only people who desired to observe the polls individually needed police-verification report, but not those who were engaged by monitoring organisations.

In the last polls, we only verified the neutrality of the monitoring organisation as a whole, but not that of its individual monitors. But later we knew there were biased observers engaged by FEMA," said a senior EC official.

He cited newspaper reports and other sources indicating that there were large numbers of observers of Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (FEMA) who were involved with the politics of Bangladesh Nationalist Party.

FEMA Joint Secretary Advocate Salma Ali, however, categorically denied the allegation saying they were very cautious in

recruiting all the observers across the country.

"We engaged the representatives of the civil society in FEMA. In the last elections we had recruited all the observers after talking to local people who certified that they were not involved in any politics."

She said there might be one or two individual cases of bias towards certain party, but it was totally out of FEMA's spirit. "This year we will be more cautious so that not a single allegation comes."

Chief Election Commissioner MA Syed said all observers are

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Bus collision kills 42 in Pakistan

LAHORE, Jan 26: Two passenger buses collided head on in eastern Punjab province on Friday, killing 42 passengers and injuring 48 others, several of them seriously, the state-run news agency reported, reports AP.

Hospital officials feared the death toll could continue to climb because many of the injuries were critical.

The accident near Pattoki, 60 kilometers (36 miles) southwest of the Punjab provincial capital of Lahore, occurred when one bus was trying to overtake another. The injured were taken to hospitals in Lahore, the Associated Press of Pakistan reported.

Speeding vehicles and unsafe passing makes travel on Pakistan's country roads treacher-

27 students of Khulna varsity punished

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Jan 26: Khulna University authorities yesterday punished 27 students for ransacking the office rooms at the administration building and assaulting teachers and employees of the university on January 21.

Of them, one is male and 26 are female students. The authorities expelled the male BBA student, cancelled admission of 22 first year female students and ousted four others from women's hostel.

The situation has further worsened following action against 27 students.

The agitating students demanded immediate withdrawal of punishment against 27 students and removal of the Vice Chancellor and the Treasurer.

Denying the charge of ransacking the administrative building and assaulting the teachers, officials and employees on January 21, the agitating students blamed the honorary Treasurer for creating law and order situation on the campus by inviting armed cadres of the ruling party.

The armed cadres of the ruling party entered the campus and swooped on the agitating students, leaving six injured, the students alleged.

The incident occurred on January 21 when the Vice Chancellor ignored the students' demand for extension of the female dormitory to resolve accommodation problem.

The six-member probe body is expected to submit its report tomorrow, said a spokesman of the Vice Chancellor.

APSU calls hartal in Ctg Feb 15

CHITTAGONG, Jan 26: Opposition-backed All Party Students Unity has called a dawn-to-dusk hartal here on February 15 demanding release of their activists and withdrawal of the PSA cases filed against them, reports UNB.

The programme was announced today (Friday) in a meeting of the Unity with Nazimur Rahman, city unit president of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), in the chair.

They will also hold a grand rally at Laldighi Maidan on February 10 to press home their demand.