

Hospital triggers traffic trouble

Bangladesh Medical College turns parking lot into classroom

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 310-bed medical college hospital and a dental college, which provide extensive outdoor and emergency services, are operating at Dhanmondi Road-25 (old) without any parking facility, creating persistent traffic jams in the area.

Although residents of the area appreciate the services the Bangladesh Medical College Hospital and the Dental College, they complain that they are constantly subjected to traffic jam.

Some residents wondered how the authorities allowed two purpose-built medical installations to operate in a residential area without any drive-in or parking facility.

"These medical facilities attract thousands of people everyday but the management has not paid heed to the public suffering. They should immediately make drive-in facilities and extend their parking areas," said a long-time resident of Dhanmondi Road-25, requesting that his name be withheld.

According to Section-24 of the Building Construction Rules 1996, to construct a hospital or an educational institute the authorities must ensure that half of the plot is left



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh Medical College Hospital operates without any proper parking facility, creating chaotic traffic jam in front of the hospital.

Go-slow arsenic project worries donors

Fund disbursement unsatisfactory

NAIMUL HAQ

Progress in implementation of some major components of the Bangladesh Arsenic Mitigation Water Supply Project (BAMWSP) has been "extremely slow", according to a recent review report.

From December 2 to 11 last year, officials of the World Bank and the Swiss Development Corporation (SDC) reviewed progress of the five-year project, which ends this September.

The WB and the SDC along with the government are financing the US\$ 44 million project.

In terms of mitigation, main objective of the project, activities "remain inadequate. Only 59 of 714 mitigation schemes have been completed," the report said.

The BAMWSP "has not yet initiated any action to mitigate contamination in 11 municipalities where arsenic has been detected in production wells," it pointed out.

The mission, which reviewed the progress of the project, "is seriously concerned that only a fraction of the communities in the 'hot-spot' villages will receive safe water sources within the project period."

The report termed the overall performance weak and was critical of fund disbursement. "None of the initial allocation for research and development (R&D) has yet been utilised."

In view of the slow progress the mission made recommendation in five critical areas. They are acceleration of screening and mitigation programme, establishment of strategic partnership, monitoring and evaluation of arsenic mitigation initiatives, implementation of

communication strategies and development of longer-term pragmatic approach to arsenic mitigation.

The project director, Abdul Quadir Chowdhury, however, differed with the supervision report, claiming that the BAMWSP has achieved more than 50 per cent of its goals.

"I do not agree with some statements in the review report. We have made a lot of progress, which is reflected in our work."

"We could not complete work in most of the hot-spot villages because the safe water options offered to beneficiaries could not be disbursed as there were some technical problems."

"Most of the community-based organisations (CBOs) had asked for deep tube-wells (DTW) as safe water options out of four options. But we could not offer this, as we had no authority to install DTW without prior geological investigations."

"In such circumstances we had to revise a lot of offers to CBOs and so there was delay in many aspects."

The BAMWSP, under the local government division, was designed to achieve on-site mitigation in rural and urban areas, improved understanding of the arsenic problem and strengthening of institutional capacity of public sector institutions, communities and local government bodies.

The project is currently in the process of evaluating bids for screening in 147 more upazilas. It has also started its urban programme of screening in 390 production wells in 100 municipalities. Results of 252 production wells are now available.

Moyeen Khan 'resigns'



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan is learnt to have resigned from the cabinet.

Moyeen was transferred to the Ministry of Science and Technology from the Ministry of Information.

The portfolios of two other senior ministers and a state minister were changed at the same time. Dr Khan aside, others have joined their new ministries.

Khan, who has not joined the parliamentary session and cabinet meeting since the cabinet reshuffle on March 11, handed over the resignation letter to Prime Minister's Political Secretary (1) Haris Chowdhury the same night.

Ministers and high officials at the Prime Minister's Office have kept mum about his reported resignation.

The information could not be confirmed as both Moyeen Khan and Haris Chowdhury were not available. Dr Khan has not talked to the press since March 11.

The BNP sources said Dr Moyeen Khan was seen at different places.

PM visits Army HQ

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday invited Bangladesh Army Headquarters at the Dhaka Cantonment.

Chief of Army Staff Lt. Gen. Harun-Ar-Rashid and senior army officers briefed the Prime Minister about various programmes of the Bangladesh Army.

Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Dr Kamal Siddique, Prime Minister's political Secretary Mosaddek Ali and Defence Secretary KM Ehsanul Huq were, among others, present.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Mar 22		6-10 pm
Mar 23	6-00 am	

Prayer Timings		
Mar 22		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-00	5-
40 Juma	12-15	1-20
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-15	6-20
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

Summer catches DESA napping

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The summer began this year with usual loadshedding in the city causing miseries to people, belying a promise by officials of Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA).

DESA officials earlier said they would be able present a "much improved service" in the capital this summer. But experience during the last few days proved otherwise. City dwellers in most areas complained of power failure for hours together every day since the summer began.

Yesterday, loadshedding was over 50 MW in the city and adjoining areas, according to sources.

But DESA control room and other officials, when contacted, juggled with figures to prove that it was only 18 MW during the peak hours.

The sources said the demand for power in the metropolis and adjoining area in the evening peak hour yesterday was around 1400 MW but the DESA was not taking load of more than 1150 MW.

Besides, a large number of distribution lines tripped during the peak hour yesterday.

In addition to this, there was 8 MW of loadshedding in the DESCO (Dhaka Electricity Company Ltd) command area in Mirpur.

People in most parts of Old Dhaka and other areas including Khilgaon, Malibagh, Goran, Moghbazar, Karwan Bazar and Khilkhet Told The Daily Star that power supply was disrupted in those areas several times yesterday.

When contacted last night, BPDB officials said they did not ask DESA to go for any kind of loadshedding.

Prior to summer every year, DESA implements a number of projects involving huge amounts of money and promises better service during the

Peace Corps lands again

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The United States will shortly resume its Peace Corps operations in Bangladesh, sources close to the US embassy said.

Peace Corps suspended its operation in the country in October shortly after the BNP-led coalition came to power. The reason for suspension of operations was learnt to be the organisation's mounting anxiety over demonstrations by the Jammal-Islami and other extremist religious parties in support of the then Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

The Peace Corps volunteers started coming in batches to Bangladesh since 1998 at the invitation of the Awami League government.

Some 75 volunteers were first flown out to Thailand from Bangladesh on the third week of October last. The volunteers waited in Bangkok for around two weeks to study the political situation in Bangladesh before finally deciding not to return to Dhaka.

A US State Department announcement then said: "As a result of demonstrations in areas where the Peace Corps volunteers were deployed, the Peace Corps has temporarily suspended its programme in Bangladesh."

The State Department also noted that while the demonstrations were generally happening on Fridays "they have the potential to take place any time and be unruly."

Peace Corps volunteers in Bangladesh worked in education, health and village development programmes. They were also involved in a host of other social activities.

"In the process, the volunteers were able to take back their experience home," said the director of the programme who visited Bangladesh a few months back.



PHOTO: STAR

BDR men guard various points in the city yesterday as the government passed a law to remove the portrait of Bangabandhu from government offices.

Tk 200cr lost thru' land registration crack

RAFIQ HASAN

High registration fees and taxes are leading to huge tax evasion, and sample audits in four metropolitan cities have found that this amount was as high as Tk 200 crore between 1993 and 1998.

The audits on nine sub-registrars' offices revealed that land prices were deliberately lowered to dodge non-judicial stamp fee, value added tax (VAT), gain tax and income tax at source (AIT).

If these taxes and fees are added together, a seller or buyer has to pay as high as 30 per cent of the land

price.

According to the audit reports, the government missed Tk180.43 crore in stamp fees, Tk 10.51 crore in VAT and Tk 5.47 lakh in AIT as land prices were shown less. On the other hand, another Tk 3.33 crore was lost as lands were registered without using any non-judicial stamps at Mohammad sub-registrar's office.

The sub-registrars' offices are under the Law ministry.

Out of the nine audited offices, four are in Dhaka, two in Chittagong and one each in Narayanganj,

Khulna and Rajshahi.

The breakdown of fee evasion at sub-registrars' offices in Dhaka is as follows: Gulshan Tk 71.26 crore, Mohammadpur Tk 42.24 crore, Demra Tk 14.16 crore, Savar Tk 27.10 crore, Narayanganj Sadar Tk 1.50 crore, Chittagong Sadar Tk 16.15 crore, Chandgaon Tk 5.09 crore, Khulna Sadar Tk 2.20 crore and Rajshahi Sadar Tk 69.80 lakh.

When contacted, Inspector General of the Directorate of Registration TIM Nurunnabi said land prices are often shown less through mutual understanding between sellers and buyers.

Remarks on Hasina's son refuted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former state minister for foreign affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury yesterday refuted a remark by LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan on the attendance of Sajib Wazed Joy, son of Sheikh Hasina, at a meeting with US Assistant Trade Representative John Rosenbaum.

On Wednesday, Mannan Bhuiyan told the parliament that the government was investigating how Joy got A-2 visa for the US, which is given only to mission officers. Joy illegally carried a visiting card containing the address of Bangladesh Embassy in Washington, he added.

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Draft SAFTA by December

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

The draft South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) will be ready by December this year, according to Secretary General of the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) QAMARAHIM.

"The first draft of the accord has already been prepared and I am hopeful that the final draft would be ready within the December 2002 deadline," said Rahim, who took over as the SAARC secretary-general in January this year and is now on a four-day visit to India.

The career diplomat from Bangladesh believes that political tension among the member-countries will not impede economic

co-operation in the region.

"Tension has always been there in the region. Despite that, the SAARC was set up. There is no reason to believe that the association cannot move ahead in the face of such tensions," Rahim said in New Delhi when asked whether free trade in the region was possible amidst political disputes among SAARC countries.

"If eagerness of the member-countries is any pointer, I am confident that the importance of SAARC will increase in the coming years," he added.

On Wednesday, Rahim met Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh and Deputy Chairman of the Indian Planning

Commission KC Pant and briefed them on the status of SAARC programmes and the grouping's future plans.

He also sought India's views on some proposals mooted by him. The SAARC secretary-general said efforts had been stepped up to reconstitute the Regional Commission for Poverty Alleviation and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has agreed to fund for this. A decision to this effect was taken at the last SAARC summit in Kathmandu in January.

Pant told Rahim that a uniform methodology and database on poverty should be adopted to prepare the poverty profile of the SAARC countries.

200 tola gold, Tk 7 lakh looted at Hathazari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Armed robbers looted 200 tolas of gold ornaments and Tk 7 lakh in cash during an attack on the house of a local UP chairman at Hathazari in the district here in the early hours of yesterday leaving three persons injured.

The robbers shot some 50 rounds of fire during the attack as police who were positioned nearby, were 'mysteriously silent and inactive', local people alleged.

Following the incident, three police officials of the thana concerned were suspended for negligence of duty while a two-member probe committee headed by Aurangajeb Mahboob, Additional Police Super, Chittagong (North), has been formed to investigate the incident.

The suspended police officials are sub-inspectors Zahid Hossain, Abdullah Al Mamun and Amir Hossain.

Police and witnesses said a group of eight armed robbers entered the five-storey building that houses the residence of the local Hathazari UP chairman Ilias Talukder at the Egara Mile area of the thana headquarters at

Hearing on petition for return of Shahriar's passport Mar 24

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka yesterday fixed March 24 for hearing on the petition seeking return of Shahriar Kabir's passport seized by special branch (SB) of police in connection with the sedition case.

Judge Ahmed Jamil Mostafa passed the order upon a Criminal Revision by the defence lawyers, seeking return of Shahriar's passport, following rejection order by the CMM's Court.

The CMM's Court rejected the petition on Monday.

The defence lawyers submitted the petition with the Sessions Judge's Court seeking return of

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No court order on Nasim's bail given yesterday

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The metropolitan sessions judge's court, Dhaka, yesterday did not pass any order on the bail petition of AFM Bahauddin Nasim, assistant political secretary to Awami League Chief Sheikh Hasina, in connection with the foreign currency smuggling case.

Judge Ahmed Jamil Mostafa now fixed Saturday for further hearing about the passport seized from Nasim by CID.

Earlier, the court had fixed yesterday for order on the bail petition and had directed the prosecution side to submit his passport to it.

The prosecution side submitted

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'Rogue' elephant still roams

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The 'rogue' elephant that has been sentenced to death for the second time still roam the Ramgarh forests in Khagrachhari.

The death sentence was handed down without proper trial and evaluation of behaviour of the animal that trampled to death three people, including a soldier of the Bangladesh Army.

It is now open to anyone with a gun to shoot the animal dead after the forest department declared it rogue and liable to be killed within three months of the passage of the order.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Bangladesh has taken up the case and has written to the forest department to permit its experts to make a multi-disciplinary survey for an evaluation of the elephant's behaviour, the IUCN sources said. The elephant is believed to be still in Ramgarh forests.

The IUCN elephant expert, Anisuzzaman Khan, said the behaviour of the animal must be studied to observe whether it developed any abnormalities.

It must be seen whether the animal had been forced out of its habitat range and the herd it belonged to in the face of encroachment on its forage ground and because of the wound it sustained after it escaped from

Cop turns gun on himself

BSS, Ctg

A police constable committed suicide by shooting himself with his own shotgun at his Battery Gali residence here yesterday morning.

Police said Nasiruddin Sheikh, 24, a constable of the Police Riot Control Division under Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP), shot himself at about 7 am following an altercation with his wife.

Following the incident, neighbours took him to Dampara Police Hospital where attending doctors declared him dead.

In a note found in his pocket, the constable said nobody was responsible for his death.

Investigation was going on in connection with the incident, Deputy Commissioner (North) of CMP NBK Tripura told BSS.

Nasiruddin hailed from Madhukhali thana of Faridpur district.

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