

Where all the sewers run

M. AMINUL ISLAM

Rivers around the city are at risk of becoming even more polluted because of delay in a sewerage project.

Failure to implement another scheme to rehabilitate a trunk sewer line to the city's only waste treatment plant threatens the rivers all the more.

As these two major projects

wait in the sideline, the city's solid waste is being dumped into the rivers, mainly the Buriganga.

Officials of the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) say they have been unable to raise the Tk 1,200 crore needed for the two projects-- North Dhaka (east) Sewerage Construction, and Improvement of Sewerage System in Dhaka City.

Last year, China offered supplier's credit for the con-

struction of the Tk 987.95 crore North Dhaka (east) sewerage project.

But the government turned it down because of unfavourable terms.

WASA officials still believe that Beijing can be convinced to make the funds available in the form of a soft loan.

Japanese funds for the Tk 200

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PHOTO: STAR

River in distress... A man pours Buriganga water from a bucket to show how the river has been polluted with sewage and industrial waste beyond any limit.

Dhaka wants peaceful solution to Iraq crisis PM tells Rocca

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka has reiterated its position to the visiting US Assistant Secretary of State Christina Rocca that it wants to see a peaceful resolution of the Iraq issue under the United Nations umbrella.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia made Dhaka's position clear when Christina Rocca met her yesterday.

Christina Rocca's visit here is being considered 'significant' against the backdrop of a possible US-led war on Iraq. She is on a mission to win South Asian countries' support to the US position on Iraq issue.

Rocca, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia, also made a courtesy call on Foreign Minister Morshed Khan yesterday and discussed bilateral, regional and international matters including the Iraq crisis.

Rocca, who is in charge of South Asia in the US State Department, came here from Islamabad where she urged Pakistan, a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, to vote for a possible US-sponsored resolution to backwar on Iraq.

It could not be confirmed whether Rocca sought 'any sort of support' from Dhaka.

However, on February 11, US Ambassador Mary Ann Peters said Washington would seek Dhaka's

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Architects urge PM to stop construction at Sangsad Bhaban

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Institute of Architects, Bangladesh has urged the prime minister to put an end to the construction of structures around the Sangsad Bhaban area and preserve the tone of the original plan.

The original architectural view of the Bhaban, designed by famous architect Louis I Kahn, has already been hampered by several constructions in the vicinity, a press release of the institute said yesterday.

The press release said, as the Bhaban is recognised as a notable architectural structure, it has to be 'protected'.

They also asked the government to apply to the UNESCO so that the Sangsad Bhaban and all notable architectural structures under the Sher-e-Bangla Nagar master plan may be considered as part of the 'world architectural heritage'.

CEC denies comment on mid-term polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) M A Syed yesterday denied having commented on a mid-term election and termed the newspapers as a 'rumour industry'.

Some newspapers yesterday quoted Syed as telling the Election Commission officials to prepare for a mid-term election at an unscheduled meeting on Saturday.

"I did not make any comment which has been carried in some newspapers," Syed told newsmen at his office yesterday.

However, he said he would not send any rejoinder against the published news. "It (midterm election) is a matter for the government to decide," he said.

Syed was unhappy with the Election Commission Secretariat for issuing a press release claiming 'the UP polls have been running peacefully'.

At Saturday's meeting, Syed had reportedly said the EC press release "does not reflect actual polls situation across the country".

The CEC was also quoted as saying that the government was not properly helping the Election Commission to conduct the Union Parishad polls.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission has decided to deploy paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) in some places to avoid electoral violence.

The CEC yesterday had a meeting with some candidates of Union Parishad poll. The candidates briefed him about the situations at those places. It could not be immediately known in which places BDR would be deployed.

Treasury benchers grill Khosru over price hike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Treasury bench members grilled Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury for his "weak handling" of the price hike of essentials.

The minister defended himself saying repeatedly that the government neither fixes nor controls prices in a market economy.

"And we are going to introduce an independent quasi-judicial watchdog body to monitor the commodity market," Khosru told the House while facing a volley of questions from both treasury bench and opposition lawmakers.

BNP lawmaker Mashuiur

Rahman referred to the commerce minister's remarks on market economy does not give the traders the licence to fix prices arbitrarily.

Even in the United States of America, the greatest exponent of market economy, price tags are put on every commodity. "Why Bangladesh cannot introduce such a system," asked the ruling party MP.

The government has fixed kerosene price at Tk 17 per litre and soya-bean oil at Tk 48, but people have to pay Tk 19 and Tk 52 for the two commodities, he observed. "It cannot be accepted."

MPs from both the government and the opposition welcomed

Mashuiur's remarks.

Earlier, while formulating his question, Mashuiur was interrupted by the

Chair, but most of the ruling party lawmakers were seen seeking time for his question formulation.

Mashuiur told the speaker that he (speaker) did not go to his constituency in the last two months and did not have to face questions from people. "But we have to answer questions. And we cannot take the responsibility of the commerce minister's weakness."

In reply to these questions, the commerce minister told the House, "The government cannot

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Gang kills forest officer, loots arms

UNB, Cox's Bazar

A gang killed a forest officer and looted three firearms from his office on the Teknaf border in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

The gang of 14 attacked the Maddhyam Hila forest office at about 1.30pm and killed Farhad Uddin Talukder instantly with lethal weapons upon resistance, said sources.

The killers took away three rifles and ammunition from the office. Senior officials visited the spot, said the sources.

The Upper Range Forest Office at Ramu was robbed of arms and ammunition in a similar attack on February 8.

Artho Rin Adalat Bill 2003 placed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government introduced a bill in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday to set up courts for speedy recovery of long pending bad loans.

State Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Shahjahan Omar piloted the Artho Rin Adalat Bill 2003 proposing repeal of a similar Act passed in 1990.

The House was told that bad loans in the country amounted to Tk 35,000 crore till date.

Opposition lawmaker Suranjit Sengupta opposed placing of the bill, saying there should have been debate on it in a special committee. He suggested formation of a special committee to allow opposition members to debate it.

But the minister in charge said the previous law was not enough to deal with bad loans. "Passage of this law will enable the country to have a healthy economy by eliminating the unhealthy practice of defaulting on loan," Shahjahan said.

The opposition objection was rejected by voice vote.

The bill proposed formation of several Artho Rin Adalats in each district or one for several districts, whichever is convenient.

The Artho Rin Adalat will dispose of a case within 90 days after submission of written reply by the accused. However, the court may get another 30 days if there is proper reasons.

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Clueless on Khulna blasts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Police are yet to find any clue to the bomb blasts that killed a traffic sergeant and injured another ten near the International Trade Fair in Khulna Saturday night.

Senior officials of the Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) could not confirm whether attackers wanted to kill anybody or sabotage the fair at the Circuit House Maidan.

However, a police officer told The Daily Star that Sergeant Ariful Islam intercepted seven young men who tried to enter the fair venue without tickets at about 7.00pm Saturday.

The group threatened the sergeant with dire consequences while leaving, the officer added.

A five-member team of the Criminal Investigation Department

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PSC's another prank with job seekers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Examinees aspiring to become Cipher Officers under the Ministry of Defence felt deceived yesterday when the Public Service Commission (PSC) asked them to take written exams instead of a scheduled multiple choice questions (MCQ) test.

"As per previous instruction of the PSC the test was scheduled to be held in the MCQ format," a press statement issued by some examinees claimed.

Khandoker Ohidul Islam, one of the examinees (Registration number: 000333) said the authorities initially distributed answer sheets

for the MCQ test among the examinees prior to distribution of question papers.

However, the authorities recalled the answer sheets and asked the examinees to sit for a 'written test'.

When the examinees declined, the authorities told them that those who would not sit for the test would be disqualified.

The test over, the examinees tried to organise a demonstration against the PSC 'deception', but police clubbed and dispersed them.

No PSC officials were available last night for comments.



PHOTO: AFP

BRILLIANT BICHEL: Australian all-rounder Andy Bichel (C) is the toast of his teammates after taking an England wicket yesterday. After grabbing career-best 7-20, he later partnered Michael Bevan to take the world champions to victory.

Bichel blows England away

AFP, Port Elizabeth

Andy Bichel starred with both bat and ball to guide reigning champions Australia to a record 12th successive one-day victory when they defeated a battling England by two wickets in the World Cup here on Sunday.

Bichel took seven for 20, the second-best figures in World Cup history, before his unbeaten 34 off 36 balls helped Michael Bevan, 74 not out, put on 73 for the eighth wicket as Australia won with two deliveries to spare.

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TODAY'S MATCHES
Namibia vs Netherlands
 Venue: Bloemfontein
 Live on BTv at 1:45 pm
New Zealand vs Canada
 Venue: Benoni
 Time: 1:45 pm
South Africa vs Sri Lanka