

Greens for protection of floodwater retention points

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Environmentalists and urban experts at a press conference yesterday urged authorities to implement the Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (DMDP) immediately to ensure protection of flood flow zones (FFZ) and floodwater retention ponds (FRP) for a livable habitat of future generation.

Developers are encroaching and filling earth on the FFZs around Dhaka city posing a serious threat to the city dwellers as the FRPs, identified in the DMDP, are not being preserved for containing and flowing out flood water, speakers alleged at a press briefing organised by the Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (BPA)

Encroaching and filling the FRPs and the FFZs is a violation of the open space and water body protection act 2000 but no action has been taken so far against any developer, they said.

Speakers at the briefing held at Jatiya Press Club also demanded the Rajdhanii Unnayan Kartipakkha (RAJUK) to draw out a detailed area plan (DAP) of the city urgently.

There were as many as 30 FRPs spotted at different city points in

Dhaka master plan prepared in 1995, they said.

The RAJUK drafted out the DMDP at a cost of Tk 16 crore and it was approved in 1997.

"Even after six years of its approval, the DAP has not been started and land grabbers are filling earth in the FFZs as the RAJUK failed to identify and mark the FRPs in those areas," said Prof Nazrul Islam, an urban expert and vice president of the BPA.

The RAJUK marked only two water bodies at Kalyanpur and Mirpur-Chandpur area, the speakers informed the press.

They also demanded inclusion of environmentalists, urban experts and civil society representatives in the RAJUK's decision making body in charge of reviewing the DMDP.

Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed, Prof Muzaffar Ahmed, Prof Badiul Alam Mojumdar and Prof Naser Ezaj Khan and Abu Naser Khan, environmentalists, were present at the press conference.

Jail killing case

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Barrister M Amir-Ul Islam appearing for the petitioner raised the apprehension of not getting justice in the lower court.

The special public prosecutors and the investigating officer of the case were removed after the present government took office following the last general elections, he said.

The HC observed that there was no necessity to transfer the case from the lower court. The case is pending with the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka.

On November 3, 1975 four national leaders Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmed, AHM Quamruzzaman and M Monsur Ali were killed by some mid-ranking army officers inside the Dhaka Central Jail.

Following the HC verdict, the case is now open for trial in the court which was conducting it.

Political killings

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of a market at Elephant Road on August 18.

An Awami league leader, Motiur Rahman, 48, vice-president of Panchokroschi union was shot dead at Ullapara in Sirairganj on August 6.

Nurul Biswas, 50, a BNP leader of Charatarpur union of Pabna was shot dead on August 1.

Unknown assailants shot dead BNP leader Anwarul Haque Anu, 40, and injured his brother at Johnson Road in old part of the city on July 18.

Abdus Samad Khan, 50, an Awami League leader of the party's Pallabi unit, was gunned down in front of his residence on July 11.

Mukter Hossain, 33, a BNP leader and youth secretary of ward 74, was shot dead near his house at Satrapur on July 1.

Rats in JS

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Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shaheed echoed with Abdul Hamid on rat disturbance at his JS office.

The kitchens of the canteens, store rooms and toilets at the JS are frequently littered with left-over of food, which attract the rats, said an official of the JS, requesting anonymity. The MP hostels face like problems, he added.

"Many important documents are not preserved so well as to prevent the rats from damaging those," the JS official alleged.

Prof Noor Jahan Sarker of the department of zoology of Dhaka University said a pair of rats on average can produce 12 offspring in every two months. Each rat eat more than 10 kg food a year, which includes things like paper. But each damages another 20 kg for reserve, she added.

Prof Noor suggested the use of rodenticides and regular cleaning drives on the JS premises to prevent rat damages.

Hartal on Thursday

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chair at the party's Bangabandhu Avenue office.

It also decided to stage a countryside demonstration on August 27. The AL will bring out silent processions in different places including Dhaka, while a 'gayebana janaza' for the slain leader will be held in front of the party's central office.

The AL enforced a dawn to dusk hartal on August 16 demanding execution of the judgement in the Bangabandhu murder case.

After the meeting, Abdus Samad Azad told reporters that police did nothing when Monzurul Imam was shot by the criminals. "That proved the involvement of the ruling party in the crime," he asserted.

Yesterday afternoon, the AL workers demonstrated at the Russell Square to protest the killing and a rally was held in front of the AL office at the Bangabandhu Avenue.

Our Gopalganj Correspondent reports: Opposition Leader and AL President Sheikh Hasina, while addressing a rally at Tungipara yesterday, alleged that the ruling party killed Monzurul Imam in a planned way.

Expressing her deep shock over the killing, she blamed the sons of the prime minister for their 'role' in the crime. She said, 'rule of violence' has been established in the country by the four-party alliance govern-

ment.

Meanwhile, the leaders of the Supreme Court Bar Association told a meeting yesterday they will form a human chain tomorrow on the court premises to protest the killing of Advocate Monzurul Imam. Barrister Rokonuddin Mahmud presided over the meeting while it was also addressed by Barrister Shawkat Ali Khan, advocates Subrato Chakrabarty, Mahubey Alam, Ozaer Farooq and Mahubul Ali.

Manzurul Ahsan Khan and Mujahidul Islam Selim, president and general secretary respectively of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), in a joint statement yesterday protested the killing and said such killing projected a deteriorating law and order scenario.

The CPB leaders demanded immediate arrest of the killers and their punishment.

Awami Sangskritik Forum also condemned the killing.

President of the Ganotantrik Ainjibi Samity Barrister Shafiq Ahmed and General Secretary Advocate Zeyad al Malum demanded a fair and impartial probe into the killing.

Barrister Mainul Hossain, former president of the Supreme Court Bar Association, also expressed deep shock over the killing in a separate statement.



PHOTO: AFP

An activist of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party kicks a policewoman during an anti-government demonstration in Islamabad yesterday.

Speaker urges AL to join CPA meet

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The speaker and the deputy speaker have initiated moves for the participation of the main opposition Awami League (AL) in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) conference.

The move came following the AL's threat to boycott the conference accusing the government of politicising the process to host it in Dhaka from October 4 to 12.

Both Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar and Deputy Speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui urged the AL to participate in the activities preparatory to the conference that the AL has boycotted so far.

The speaker talked to Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shahid by telephone and asked him to nominate AL deputies to the sub-committees for the conference.

Jamir Uddin, also chairman of the conference steering committee, is likely to send a letter to Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina, seeking her cooperation to the hosting of the conference.

On his talks with the speaker, Shahid said: "I told the speaker that we (AL) will hold a meeting tomorrow (Tuesday) and discuss all the issues."

He said he raised objections over the formation of the steering committee without any consultation with the opposition and inclusion of two non-parliamentarians -- M A Harris Chowdhury and Md Mosaddek Ali -- in the committee.

Both Harris and Mosaddek are political secretaries to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.

Shahid said the speaker assured him of meeting the opposition demands once they joined the committee meetings.

The deputy speaker, who is the chairman of the coordination committee of the conference, called the opposition chief whip on Sunday urging opposition lawmakers to attend the committee meetings.

The AL on Sunday said that the government did not consult with it for holding the conference in violation of the CPA charter and denied the main opposition of its rights.

"The CPA is a non-partisan body, all the lawmakers are its members. There is no scope to organise the conference unilaterally," Shahid told

The Daily Star.

"If the government does not change its attitude to the opposition, the AL will boycott the upcoming conference."

Earlier this month, Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid lodged a complaint with the CPA, saying: "If the trend of ignoring the opposition continues, it will not be possible for us to join the conference."

More than 400 delegates from the 48 member countries are expected to attend the conference.

Former PCJSS leader shot dead in Rangamati

UNB, Rangamati

A former leader of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) was shot dead in Kawkhali Upazila yesterday.

The victim, Krishna Shangkar Chakma, 38, of Betchhari village, was shot near Kawkhali Bridge while returning home from a bazar at about 9am.

Witnesses said a gang of 15 surrounded him and fired several shots, leaving him dead on the spot.

Sources said Shangkar Chakma was killed by armed assailants allegedly belonging to a group opposing the CHT peace accord.

As soon as the news spread, hundreds of local tribal people rushed to the residence of Chakma Raja Barrister Debashis Roy and submitted a memorandum demanding restoration of peace in the area.

Meanwhile, PCJSS in a statement yesterday strongly protested the murder of their leader and alleged that the anti-peace group has so far killed 70 of their leaders and workers.

They also strongly protested the attacks and arson in Ramharipara and Krishmachhara villages in Naniarchar Upazila by the anti-peace group on Saturday.

The PCJSS also alleged that the attackers had set ablaze 10 houses and kidnapped some 16 villagers.

Khulna city AL chief killed

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leader, branding him as a 'class enemy'.

The killing resulted in a series of car bashing and arsons that whisked normal life in the city to a near-standstill. Protestors ransacked BNP's city office and the residence of BNP lawmaker Ali Asgar Lobi.

Witnesses to the murder said the gunmen opened fire on 65-year-old Monjurul, also member of the AL advisory council, killing him instantly and charged a string of bombs when the rickshaw puller refused to stop his vehicle on Shamsur Rahman Road, only 50 yards from home.

The killers, carrying sawn-off .303 rifles, had been lying in wait for the victim since 9:00am and left the scene in three groups after the ambush firing blanks shots and exploding crackers, some roadside stall holders said of the incident.

Police in a manhunt arrested seven persons with a swan-off rifle and bomb-making materials for their alleged involvement in the killing.

The murder prompted hundreds of supporters and activists of the AL and its front organisations -- Jubo League and Bangladesh Chhatra League -- to go on the rampage in the city.

The angry demonstrators also smashed a large number of rickshaws and vandalised roadside shops in a quick and sharp reaction against the murder of their leader.

An AL procession was brought out at 11:30am and an angry mob,

equipped with clubs and iron rods, attacked the city BNP office on KD Ghose Road, rushing out of the demonstration.

The protesters broke a television set, an air-conditioner, a refrigerator and furniture and raced to Mirzapur Road where they attacked the residence of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) President Ali Asgar Lobi.

They damaged three cars parked in a garage at the residence of the ruling BNP lawmaker and broke electric fans and windowpanes on the ground and first floors of the house.

Furniture was vandalised in seven offices of BNP-backed ward commissioners, which came under attack from the agitating AL adherents.

Hotel Castle Salam, Khulna City Corporation, GrameenPhone office, Zia Hall, Aarong and hundreds of houses and shops were attacked in Khalishpur and Daulatpur, among other places.

The BDR, Armed Police Battalion and riot police have been deployed in city and industrial belts to contain sporadic violent incidents.

Police lobbed at least 150 tear-gas shells and fired 30 bullets to disperse unruly crowds who made several attempts in different areas to loot shops and houses. The law enforcers picked up four people on charge of vandalism.

A countryside hartal will be enforced on August 28 to protest the

murder of Monjurul. The units of Khulna district and city AL will enforce a daylong hartal in Khulna city on August 30 as part of their agitation.

AL President Sheikh Hasina will arrive in Khulna city this morning from Tungipara to attend a condolence meeting to be held in the party office. Other central leaders, including AL General Secretary MA Jalil, will accompany her.

Leaders of all political parties including Khulna Mayor Shaikh Tayebur Rahman have condemned the murder, describing it as a dastardly act.

Police Commissioner ABM Bazlur Rahman told the news agency UNB that a crackdown was launched to arrest the killers.

Thousands of people, irrespective of political affiliation, attended the namaz-e-janaja of Monjurul at the Circuit House Maidan. He will be laid to rest at his family graveyard at Boyra, party sources said.

Monjurul, born on November 9, 1939 in Boyra, Khulna, was made president of the city committee in 1983. He contested three parliamentary elections in 1991, 1996 and 2001 from Khulna-2 constituency but could not win.

Monjurul took part in the language movement of 1952 and was put behind bars for an anti-Ayub Khan movement in 1964. He entered Khulna Bar in 1965 and joined the AL in 1966. In 1971, he took part in the liberation war.

JS body unhappy at health ministry work

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parliamentary standing committee on government assurances yesterday expressed dissatisfaction on the slow progress of health and family welfare ministry in fulfilling assurances given by ministers at the Jatiya Sangsad.

The committee at its meeting reviewed the progress status of the assurances and urged the ministry to take necessary steps to fulfil them.

Ministry officials informed the meeting that in the eighth parliament, ministers and state ministers gave 16 assurances. Of these three have been fulfilled while others are on the way to being fulfilled.

On the other hand, 54 assurances were given in the seventh parliament of which only 19 were fulfilled.

However, the committee observed that in spite of what the ministry officials said, most assurances were only in the paper-work stage.

"There is a serious lack of co-ordination in the implementation of projects," Abdus Sobhan, committee chairman, said yesterday.

Among various assurances given by the ministers, were providing ambulances and X-ray machines, recruiting doctors and building health complexes in different constituencies of the Jatiya Sangsad.

Committee members Alamgir Haider Khan, Mostafa Kamal Pasha,

S A Sultan and Mia Golam Parwar attended the meeting.

FBCCI polls

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building at Motijheel and its adjacent areas got overcrowded as candidates and voters gathered round a number of canopies erected by different panels with sitting arrangements.

The election to the apex trade body this year is being held under a reformed electoral process having two tiers.

In the first phase, the directors will be elected and in the second phase tomorrow, the elected and nominated directors themselves will elect one president and two vice-presidents for a two-year term.

Twenty-four directors -- 12 each from the two groups -- will be elected to office through direct balloting. Fourteen others -- seven from each group -- have already been nominated as directors by the government.

The two groups alternately share the presidency and this year it is the association group's turn.

Four candidates are vying for the presidential post. Among them, Abdul Awal Mintoo, a selected director from the Bangladesh Association of Banks, Abdul Matlub Ahmad of the Bangladesh Cement Manufacturers Association and MA Rouf Chowdhury of the Bangladesh Vegetable Oil Refiners and Vanaspati Manufacturers Association are contesting the election with separate panels. MA Awal, a selected director from Bangladesh Textile Mills Association, is appearing as an independent candidate.

(Read more on Business Page)

Simon

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the captors' latest call to Mostaq for Tk 10 lakh in ransom came at 4:30am yesterday.

Police, however, said they could not make any headway in their operation to rescue Zaker until yesterday, seven days after his abduction.

A kidnab case was filed with the Patiya Police Station yesterday in connection with the abduction of Zaker, a second year student of Al Jamia Al Islamia Madrassah at Patiya.

His father Alhaj Omed Ali filed the case accusing four alleged criminals of Moheshkhali in Cox's Bazar district. The accused are: Matir Rahman, Abdul Karim, Saleh Ahmed and Feroz Ahmed.

The case said the suspects had earlier threatened to kidnap Zaker for ransom.

Md Hossain, elder brother of Zaker, told The Daily Star yesterday that the kidnappers demanded a ransom of Tk 10 lakh three days after his abduction on August 19.

Cancun draft

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Bangladesh earlier rejected the first draft declaration of the Cancun ministerial, as it did not reflect the interest of the LDCs.

Dhaka also sent the message to the General Council of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) stating that it wanted to see the interest of the LDCs protected in the final draft.

Commerce Minister Amir Khosru told newsmen on Sunday Bangladesh would not sign any agreement at the meeting if it did not protect the interest of the LDCs, including Bangladesh. "Instead of signing a bad agreement, it is better not to make a deal. Bangladesh has received a draft, but is expecting a revised text of the meeting."

The fifth WTO ministerial meeting will open on September 10 in Cancun, Mexico.

The commerce ministers of the LDCs at the three-day meeting in Dhaka from 31 May to 2 June adopted a 14-point declaration to negotiate with the rich nations in the fifth WTO ministerial meeting.

Proposal on sponsors picking bank directors under review

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

A proposal to empower sponsor directors of private banks to nominate new board members is under government scrutiny.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday assured the Bangladesh Association of Banks (BAB) that the government will take 'necessary steps' in this regard. The BAB met the finance minister to highlight the difficulties banks are facing because of a recent central bank rule.

The rule introduced in April limited the number of directors in any private bank to 13. The Bangladesh Bank (BB) also restricted the tenure of directors to six years.

Most private banks now have over 20 directors, many of them serving for more than six years.

Because of the BB rule, many private banks find the number of their

board members going below 13.

For example, Southeast Bank has eight board members instead of the previous 15, creating operational problems.

The BAB yesterday told the finance minister that the sponsor directors should be empowered to nominate new board members to avert functional difficulties. It also demanded that the number of board members be raised to 15.

The finance minister assured the BAB of taking 'effective steps'. But he suggested the bankers to implement the new BB rule first. "If you face any problem, we can discuss and resolve it," he told the BAB team led by Syed Manzur Elahi.

The 29 private banks have 488 directors. Eight banks have less than 13 board members while most of the rest have over 20. With the introduction of the BB rule, more than 100 directors will have to quit by September.

Top cops face music

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perform their duties," Babar said.

After Jamal was abducted on July 24, the officials repeatedly hinted his imminent release.

Basing on their comments, ministers and high government officials went public with the announcement that Jamal would be rescued soon.

On Saturday, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Shahudul Haq told the parliamentary standing committee on home ministry that police would release him from his captors within 48 hours. The deadline expired on Monday.

Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury on Sunday told the press that the government had definite information on the whereabouts of Jamal and he would be rescued soon in an operation by the joint forces.

But as police could not make any headway till yesterday, the government decided to take the punitive measures.

The law and order in the country's main port city took a tumble last month.

Apart from Jamal, criminals kidnapped four others for ransom and one of them, businessman Rezaur Rahman Zakir was killed. A wave of killings, extortions and other crimes swept the city.

The home ministry notified the punitive measures against the top police officials in a gazette.

The notification said Rajshahi Metropolitan Police (RMP) Commissioner SM Sabbir Ali was to replace the CMP commissioner, while Additional DIG of Rajshahi Shamsul Alam and Tangail SP Mahbubur Rahman would take the positions of the additional DIG and SP of Chittagong.

Our Chittagong office adds: The failure of law-enforcers to rescue Jamal despite assurance of the IGP plunged the victim's family and the business community in the city into utter frustration.

"It is quite frustrating that Jamal Uddin could not be rescued, even after assurances by the home minister and the IGP," said Farid Ahmad Chowdhury, chairman of Bangladesh Steamer Agents Association and former president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"Earlier, the commerce minister also vainly assured his quick rescue."

"We didn't see any reflection of the assurances of the home minister and the IGP in police activities," said SM Nurul Haq, vice-president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers' and Exporters Association.

50 injured

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The injured police personnel are constables Mofizul Islam, Judge Miah and Shahabuddin of Beanibazar Police Station and constables Azizul, Raihan Kaosar, Abdul Kader, Farid Ahmed, Monir Hossain and Jahir of Range Reserve Force from Sylhet. Identity of the other injured could not be known immediately.

The clash centred on the authorities' bid to snap power connection on charge of non-payment of bills by subscribers.

Local sources said subscribers of Sylhet Pali Biddyt Samity-I in Beanibazar were demanding for the last few months reduction of power tariff and end to corruption. They also held several meetings to press the demands home but to no effect.

The subscribers then stopped paying electricity bills about three months ago as part of an agitation programme by Beanibazar Pali Biddyt Grahak Adhikar Aday Committee.

Yesterday, a team of biddyt samity-I officials, backed by three magistrates and a good number of police personnel first went to the residence of Tofajal Hossain to disconnect power lines. But local people resisted them.

Then at a meeting with local elite and leaders, they were requested to suspend their move for three days. But at about 3:00pm, the officials went to the house of former upazila chairman Tojamul Ali to snap power connection.

This led to a clash between police and a mob. Police fired about 150 rubber bullets to bring the situation under control. Chase and counter-chase between the two sides continued till about 5:00pm.

A big contingent of police headed by an additional superintendent was sent to Beanibazar from Sylhet.

Mumbai carnage

FROM PAGE 1

The blast in the car park of the Gateway of India blew out window panes of the upscale Taj Mahal Hotel. A number of cars were destroyed, hurling metal parts of vehicles metres into the air.

Taxi driver Kanak Raja said chaos followed the explosion.

"Within a few seconds splinters from the taxi were flying about," he told AFP.

"The roof of the taxi was ripped apart and thrown at least 100 metres near the entrance of the Taj Hotel."

Bus driver Tanaji Pawar said he saw panic-stricken men and women running.

"It was a scene of complete anarchy and chaos. I knew when I lifted some of the injured that they had no chances of survival. They were dead."

The second explosion was outside one of the city's most popular Hindu temples inside the densely populated old city, demolishing a ramshackle shop selling fruitjuice.

Both areas were cordoned off, with scores of police scouring the scene for clues. Sniffer dogs were brought out to search for other bombs around southern Bombay, the city's financial heart.

The Mumbai Stock Exchange slumped around three percent immediately after the blasts and closed down 2.92 percent on what

dealers said was panic selling.

The bomb blasts came amid improving ties between India and Pakistan, although New Delhi has repeatedly demanded Islamabad do more to clamp down on cross-border attacks by Muslim militants.

Mumbai was in the eye of bloody Hindu-Muslim riots following the 1992 demolition of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya.

The state of Maharashtra, India's national capital New Delhi and the western state of Gujarat, torn by months of riots that claimed 2,000 lives last year, were put on high security alert after the explosions, officials said.

Police were put on "high vigil in sensitive areas like railway stations, religious places and cinema halls," said a statement from Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi's government.

In New Delhi, the city's entire police force, particularly those deployed at vital installations, were on highest security alert, officials said, adding that reinforcements were rushed to markets and public places.

Mumbai was rocked by a string of bombings in 1993 which left at least 300 people dead and scores more injured. The blasts were seen as a Muslim backlash the previous year's riots in Mumbai, home to the radical Shiv Sena Hindu party.