

Buriganga: A river or a refuse ground?

TAWFIQUE ALI

Despite pledged by the Ministry of Forests and Environment to save the Buriganga river from polluters, the water of the capital's lifeline has turned dark, stinking and is bereft of aquatic life.

None of the high officials of the ministry and the Department of Environment was available yesterday for comments in this regard.

When contacted at their residences, it was found that Secretary Sabih Uddin Ahmed, Director General of DoE Omar Faruq Khan and Director Reaz Uddin were all abroad. The minister, Shahjahan Siraj, too was away in Chittagong.

Frenzied waste dumping on both banks of the river from Hazaribagh to Keraniganj and beyond is virtually stifling the lifeline of Dhaka, with no-one apparently out there to enforce the environmental laws.

While dumping of untreated chemicals and solid wastes is rife in blatant violation of environment conservation laws, no law-enforcement efforts are in sight to deter the violators.

Along the riverbanks between Kamrangir Char bridge and the second Buriganga bridge, tons of wastes are dumped into the river every day.

"The fate of Buriganga makes me feel sad," said 35-year old Md Jalal, a Badrunnesa College staff, living in a shanty at the east end of the bridge. "They have killed the river," he lamented.

At several points close to the bridge traders were found washing and crushing clinical wastes, used batteries, plastic bottles and containers, and other discarded plastic materials in the river water. They dump the useless solid wastes of crushed materials into the river.

Huge piles of wastes, spewing pungent stench, come into view all along the banks even from a distance.

Several sluice gates release tar-black chemical effluents and other wastes into the river, being drained from across the city in wetlands adjacent to the river embankment.

In front of River View Dockyard and Engineering at Aganagar, south of the second Buriganga bridge, the river water has been tainted red and purple with a

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PHOTO: STAR

Waste water loaded with toxic chemicals from a dyeing factory in Keraniganj flows untreated into the Buriganga River to the east of the second bridge, adding to the woes of this already pollution-choked river.

Put human security before national

AI secy-gen urges world leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Secretary-General of Amnesty International (AI) Irene Khan yesterday said the American-led 'war on terrorism' violates international law and justice and has encouraged other governments to ignore human rights in the name of national security.

"Real security comes through respect of individual human rights and the rule of law," she said calling for a 'paradigm shift' in the global security perspective through recognition of the fact that insecurity and violence are best tackled by



Irene Khan

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upholding human rights.

Irene Khan was speaking at a seminar on 'Global Peace and Security: Recent Events in Perspective' in the city.

The Bangladeshi-born chief of the AI, a London-based international human-rights watchdog, said a country must strengthen its legal structure as human rights is closely linked to justice and the rule of law.

In the context of Bangladesh, she said democracy here is devoid of

Manufacture, not assemble cars

JS body asks Atlas, Progati

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The public undertaking committee of the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday asked two industries, Atlas Bangladesh and Progati, to manufacture cars and auto-rickshaws instead of assembling their components.

The committee also asked the Atlas Bangladesh to stop manufacturing Mishuk and produce three-wheelers run on compressed natural gas (CNG) or vehicles even better.

It also asked Atlas authorities to present a model production of 20 to 25 CNG-run three-wheelers by

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Poor business climate drying up FDI flow

Commerce minister tells CPD-FBCCI dialogue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh did not attract foreign direct investment (FDI) due to the poor business environment and infrastructure and delay in implementing policies, Commerce Minister told a dialogue in the city yesterday.

The investment climate has to be better and these are the issues that should be addressed properly, Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury said. "Our image is negative

because of the confrontational politics."

The minister was speaking at a dialogue styled 'Investing in Bangladesh: How Enabling is the Business Environment,' co-organised by the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) and the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), an independent think-tank. CPD Chairman Professor Rehman Sobhan moderated the discussion held at Hotel Sonargaon.

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Travel agents stick to their strike threat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The body representing the travel agencies of the country yesterday issued an ultimatum to the Board of Airlines Representatives (Bar) to withdraw or postpone by tomorrow the decision taken on agency commission cut.

If the decision is not withdrawn or postponed by tomorrow, the Association of Travel Agents of Bangladesh (Atab) will go for an indefinite strike from January 1.

Atab will also hold a general meeting on Wednesday to finalise an action programme, its President M Muhaimin Saleh said yesterday at a press conference on 'Issues of Agency Commission' held at the National Press Club.

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Bremer takes U-turn on WMD

AFP, London

The US civil administrator for Iraq Paul Bremer yesterday denied the existence of laboratories in Iraq making weapons of mass destruction for which British Prime Minister Tony Blair says US-led teams have massive evidence.

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Prayer Timings		
December 29		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-45	6-10
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-27	5-32
Esha	7-00	7-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		

2 Iraqi children, GI killed in blast

AL-JSD unity talks likely after Jan 10

REUTERS, Baghdad

A powerful roadside bomb blast in a central Baghdad shopping street killed a US soldier and two Iraqi children yesterday, a day after attacks in the holy city of Kerbala killed six foreign troops and 12 Iraqis.

Yesterday's blast wounded at least 14 people including five US soldiers, eight members of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps and an Iraqi translator working with troops, the US Army said.

"A soldier from the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment and two Iraqi children standing nearby were killed when the IED (improvised explosive device) detonated as a convoy was passing," said Captain Jason Beck, a spokesman for the 1st Armored Division.

"At this stage we don't know how serious the injuries are."

Beck said the explosion occurred at around 10:15 a.m. (2:15am EST) when the streets of Baghdad's Karada district, a bustling area of shops and stalls, would have been crammed with people.

The attack raised to 211 the

number of US soldiers killed in action since Washington declared major combat over on May 1. Attacks appear to be continuing at a consistent pace despite the capture of former dictator Saddam Hussein on December 13.

As part of efforts to wipe out the insurgency, US forces launched overnight raids on suspected Saddam loyalists.

The raids came after guerrillas killed six foreign troops and 12 Iraqis in the holy city of Kerbala on Saturday, the biggest attack in Iraq since the former president's arrest.

The Kerbala attacks also wounded 37 soldiers, including five Americans, and dealt another blow to nations that have answered the US call to send troops to help stabilize Iraq.

However, Thailand said on Sunday it had no plans to withdraw medical and engineering troops from Iraq despite the deaths of two of its soldiers in the Kerbala attacks, which also killed four Bulgarian soldiers.

The attack involved suicide bombers, mortars and

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REAZ AHMAD

The main opposition Awami League (AL) and left Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Inu) are likely to open a dialogue soon to discuss the launch of a unified anti-government movement.

After informal talks between AL President Sheikh Hasina and JSD chief Hasanul Haq Inu on Friday night, sources in both parties hinted at a formal meeting between their frontline leaders after January 10.

As the AL has already called a daylong countrywide shutdown for January 3 and a grand rally in Dhaka for January 10 and the JSD (Inu) is busy with a freedom fighters' rally in the city on January 7, the parties are preferring to holding the dialogue after January 10.

On Friday night, Inu met Hasina at her Dhammondi house, mainly to apprise her of the preparations for the freedom fighters' rally.

JSD leaders said freedom fighters from across the country would converge in the city's Paltan Maidan and discuss 'assaults on the spirit of the Liberation War under the BNP-Jamaat coalition'.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil, who was present at the meeting, told The Daily Star that Hasina gave Inu some suggestions about the war veterans' rally.

On alliance-building between the AL and JSD, Jalil said: "We're in the dialogue process with other political parties for a unified movement against the government."

Inu told The Daily Star that on the sidelines of discussion on the January 7 programme, they also touched on other socio-political issues.

"We also discussed how the AL and the JSD can come closer in a movement against the alliance government."

The JSD has been pushing for a greater unity among pro-liberation parties since July this year on the plank of putting up a national government.

It has already communicated the proposal to the AL and some parties under the 11-party grouping, including the Workers Party and the Communist Party of Bangladesh.

The JSD move has so far got little response as the left parties are still

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PHOTO: STAR

The main road in Tongi is burgeoning with devotees on the second day of the Biswa Jitema yesterday.

ANSAR-SHIBIR NEXUS

5 ansars sacked for abetting in bomb-making

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

Five ansars arrested in the city on December 24 on charge of abetting Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) activists in making bombs inside an abandoned residential hotel have been dismissed from their services, Ansar sources said.

The five -- Noor Mohammad, 35, Rajab Ali, 26, Humayun Kabir, 24, Hamidur Rahman, 26, and Matiur Rahman (age unknown) -- are now in custody at Khulna District Jail along with four ICS activists who were also arrested after a bomb exploded on impact inside the Rupsha International Hotel.

They were earlier accused under the Explosives Act and taken on a five-day remand for interrogation.

A two-member probe committee of Ansar will submit its report on the incident tomorrow to the

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