

CDA marks old buildings in Chittagong

SHAHADAT HOSSAIN RIAD, Ctg

The Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) has so far marked about 80 century-old rundown buildings including some archaeological ones in the port city in the wake of the death of 19 people in a Shankhari Bazar building collapse in Dhaka recently.

"It will take a week more to finalise the list of vulnerable buildings to suggest their demolition," said Nur Hossain, member secretary of the CDA.

He said a three-member committee headed by CDA Superintendent Engineer Abdul Halim was preparing the list of ramshackle buildings housing thousands.

Old buildings in the prime port city is mainly located in the old quarters of Ghat Farhadbegh, Chaktai, Khatungaj, Patharghata, Firingibazar, Korbanigonj, Andarkilla, Chandanpara and

Ambagan.

Local residents accuse the CDA and the Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) of not paying due attention to the rundown buildings, many damaged in a series of earthquakes in the last few years.

The CDA started listing the century-old buildings on June 13 to take precautionary measures. Immediately after the earthquake of 2002, the CCC issued notices to some owners to tear down their buildings, but the appeal went unheard.

When contacted, Chittagong City Corporation Superintendent Engineer Nizam Uddin said the corporation would also prepare an independent list of risky buildings soon.

"We have issued letters to ward commissioners, ward secretaries and engineers to submit the holding number of risky buildings separately so that we can prepare an authentic list," he added.

Five of first

FROM PAGE 1

The five members of the nine-member authentication committee -- Prof Salahuddin Ahmed, Dr Anisuzzaman, Prof Safar Ali Akand, Dr Enamul Huq and Prof Shamsul Huda Farun -- issued the statement, which termed the Dolipotra 'inconsistent, uncalled for and objectionable'.

The statement demanded reprint of the documents in a non-distorted form.

The new edition of Dolipotra, published by the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs, has warped historical facts by adding a chapter on the proclamation of Bangladesh's independence. The reprint has taken out the original proclamation of independence through a message signed by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and contains an inserted text that names late president Ziaur Rahman as the first proclaimer.

The 'planted' information was not there in the first edition of the Dolipotra, product of a project initiated by Zia himself. The book first came out in 1982 with noted poet and journalist Hasan Hafizur Rahman as its editor.

"The latest version of the Dolipotra has given rise to confusion among people and it is our duty to speak out on the issue as members of the first authentication committee as the chairman and member secretary of the committee have expired and two other members are now abroad," the statement said, explaining the rationale behind their protesting the publication of the latest edition.

"We want to make it clear that we had recommended inclusion of facts in the Dolipotra only after being sure of its authenticity. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was killed long before the project was initiated. There was no effort or motive to glorify him (Sheikh Mujib) during our project work. We did not do anything out of devotion and aversion."

"When General Ziaur Rahman was the president, members of many intelligence agencies collected the documents before printing and examined those. It would not have been possible to publish the volumes if there were anything compromising the glory of General Ziaur Rahman," the statement said.

The declaration of Bangabandhu was found in the proclamation of independence of Mujibnagar. The denial of the declaration of Bangabandhu ultimately hits the constitutional base of the liberation and declaration of the independence.

The statement said those who have omitted the declaration of Bangabandhu quoting Indira Gandhi's speech should remember that Yahiya Khan in his address to the nation on March 26 planned to punish none but only Sheikh Mujibur Rahman accusing him of secession from Pakistan.

"Why are they forgetting that Bangabandhu's historic March 7 address encouraged the nation to wage a war for liberation and Zia also considered it as a green signal for independence? Why are they forgetting that only radio announcement could not start the liberation struggle?" they asked.

The source of Zia's radio proclamation, which was incorporated in the Dolipotra, was the tape record of the programmes of Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendro, which is now in the custody of information ministry and its printed version was destroyed for security reasons.

It is a different thing if any other version of the proclamation of Ziaur Rahman has been found now, but there is no doubt about the authenticity of proclamation of Ziaur Rahman as compiled in the Dolipotra, the statement added.

Pay commission

FROM PAGE 12

Harun Pasha and Manik Lal Samaddar and former chairman of Securities and Exchange Commission Moniruddin Ahmed will be the full-time members of the commission.

The part-timers are Vice Chancellor (VC) of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) Prof MA Hadi, former VC of the Islamic University of Technology Dr Anwar Hossain, former VC of the BAU (Bangladesh Agricultural University) Dr Shah M Farooq and Prof Wakil Ahmed of Bangla Department of Dhaka University.

The other members include Director of Campaign for Population Education Rasheda K Chowdhury, General Secretary of MCCI CK Haider and M Emadul Huq, a joint secretary of law ministry.

Besides, a representative from the Armed Forces and a joint secretary or high-level representative from finance ministry will be among the part-time members. Establishment ministry will appoint an additional or joint secretary as full-time member.

"The commission can co-opt a maximum of two part-time members, if necessary," the announcement said.

The commission will make its recommendations considering the overall economic condition and balance of government's income and expenditure. It will also review the current salary, allowance and other facilities of the officials and employees of government, autonomous and semi-autonomous organisations, state-owned banks and financing institutions, universities and industrial enterprises.

While formulating the recommendation the commission will take into account the expenditure of a four-member family and educational expenses for two children.

Factories attacked

FROM PAGE 1

The trade unionists who grouped under the Industrial Workers-Employees Protection Coordination Committee called the strike to demand reopening of closed mills and factories, a halt to the government's privatisation policy and implementation of minimum wages for industrial workers.

The 11-party alliance, Left Democratic Front, Workers Party of Bangladesh, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Jatiya Samik League, Jatiya Samik Federation and Samajtantrik Samik Front also extended support to the 13th hartal in six months and strike in mills and factories.

At least 1,000 garment workers gathered in Tejgaon Industrial Area at 8:00am to go on strike, a move that sparked an altercation with a factory owner as he refused to let his workers go.

A group of 25 then went on the rampage damaging Aparupa Garments, Associate Garments, Nasa Garments, Padma Polycon and Millennium Garments and Top Clean, a dry-cleaner's. They also vandalised six vehicles parked close-by.

At least 20 workers suffered minor injuries as the police clubbed the strikers after they hurled bricks at law enforcers, who later picked up seven workers from the scene.

The police tried to prevent CPB

activists and other hartal supporters bringing out processions, prompting scuffles in front of the National Sports Council and Rupali Bank in Paltan, where the police picked up seven activists.

Hours later, law enforcers clubbed another procession of CPB activists and striking garment workers in front of the National Sports Council, grievously injuring three activists. The CPB leaders said police clubbing left at least 15 activists injured in Paltan.

The trade unionists' forum staged a hartal-hour rally in the capital, where speakers said they would launch a tough movement if the government did not take steps to protect the industries and workers.

A woman bus-passenger and her daughter were injured while getting down from a bus as its driver drove away recklessly amid a shower of bricks at Paltan crossing. The strikers damaged the windshields of the bus.

Government offices ran their normal operations, but educational institutions remained closed during the hartal. Traffic was thin with only buses and autorickshaws plying major roads. Supermarkets and showrooms closed and long-haul bus services and air flights were suspended during the hartal.

The hartal in Barisal and the strike passed off peacefully.

Ctg arms haul

FROM PAGE 1

under the officer-in-charge (OC) of Karnaphuli Police Station, and the second IO, Assistant Superintendent of Police AKM Kabiruddin of Criminal Investigation Department (CID), had handled the case.

"The discrepancies would not have arisen if the two senior police officers had been extra-careful in handling this important case," the PP told The Daily Star.

He said, "Since inconsistencies are there in the charge sheet, I am a bit suspicious of whether proper justice can be meted out to the accused."

Although every body knows that 10 truckloads of arms and ammunition had been seized, the IO had proceeded with the case concentrating on only five of them.

Interestingly, IO Kabiruddin did clearly mention the number of trucks as 10 on the cover page of the 447-page docket submitted to the court. The title reads 'The Docket of 10 Truckload of Arms Haul Case'.

When his attention was drawn to this point, the IO replied he had been influenced in doing so by newspapers reporting involvement of 10 trucks.

At around 5:45pm on May 1, exactly one month into the haul, he had seized two more trucks at Dampara Police Line.

After assigned to the case on April 21, Kabiruddin at no stage of his investigations gave any specific details on these two trucks or their owners. He also did not mention whether those trucks had been used for transporting the arms or something else.

The IO has listed 71 persons as witnesses, of whom 55 are policemen. But he did not include the then deputy commissioner (port) of Chittagong Metropolitan Police and now DC (north), Abdullah Baki, although he had led the whole operation of the late-night arms haul on April 2.

"It's true he (Baki) is an important man in this case and I didn't include him as a witness, but the court if feels it necessary can summon him or hear him," Kabiruddin argued yesterday while talking to The Daily Star and two more dailies.

On the reporters' queries on the case, he mostly kept mum and denied any insincerity on his part in preparing the charge sheet or handling the case. He claimed whatever he had done during his investigations, including preparing the charge sheet,

was done as per the instructions and advice of his superiors.

Court sources however alleged both the IOs had ignored sections 523, 516A and 517 of Chapter XLIII ('of the disposal of property') of the Criminal Procedure Code that require reporting of any seizure and taking order regarding its disposal from a magistrate.

Section 523 says: "The seizure by any police officer of property taken under Section 51, or alleged or suspected to have been stolen, or found under circumstances which create suspicion of the commission of any offence, shall be forthwith reported to a magistrate, who shall make such orders as he thinks fit respecting the disposal of such property or the delivery of such property to the person entitled to the possession thereof, or, if such person cannot be ascertained respecting the custody and production of such property."

This law had obviously not been obeyed when the first IO released three trucks, secretly, some allege. Kabiruddin said: "The OC of 'Karnaphuli Police Station' had released those trucks without my knowledge. After I came to know about it, I seized two more trucks."

The IO's linking of the case with a smuggling syndicate operating in a large area stretching from Akiab in Myanmar to Chittagong Port and Teknaf is nothing but a guesswork, sources allege. It is his personal observation that had been included in the charge sheet, without mentioning any source and although no-one of the witnesses said anything in this line.

"I know it to be a safe route for smuggling of arms and other things, and the syndicate was involved in the bootlegging. That's why I wrote those few sentences," explained Kabiruddin.

Chittagong Bar Council President Ibrahim Hossain Babul, who is also a former public prosecutor, said, "The charge sheet has lot of loopholes that may eventually lead to acquittal of the accused in the case."

"In view of the discrepancies, I also doubt whether the court will accept the charge sheet at all. If it feels it necessary, the court may even give order for further investigations, in order to cure the charge sheet of the defects."

The hearing on the charge sheet is scheduled to take place on July 15 Thursday.

Plan to make toll collection computerised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The communications ministry has decided to computerise the toll collection system of all major roads and bridges to curb corruption and irregularities at the toll plazas.

The ministry took the decision at a high-level meeting yesterday.

All the toll plazas, from where more than Tk 1 crore is collected a year, would come under a specific package programme and the computerised system would start functioning from the next financial year.

Communications Minister Nazmul Huda presided over the meeting attended, among others, by Communications Secretary Shafiqul Islam and Chief Engineer of the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) Sheikh Rabiul Islam.

Huda asked the RHD to conduct a survey, prepare the package and submit the documents for floating an international tender for computerisation of the toll collection system, said a press release of the ministry.

The decision came in the wake of a series of reports in the press on the irregularities and misappropriation of government funds at the toll plazas, according to the ministry officials. Gross irregularities were reported in toll collection in the Japan-Bangladesh friendship bridges over the Meghna and Gumti rivers.

Knee-deep

FROM PAGE 12

But it was not enough.

Vehicles haphazardly placed on the roads created a chaotic situation. The vehicles, mostly passenger buses, could not move as traffic from all corners of the city poured in soon after the downpour trying to overtake each other.

The badly-affected roads and areas were Matuhak to Moghbazar, Gulistan to Islampur, Indira Road to Farmgate, New Market junction, Green Road to Panthapath, Razarbazar and Kathalbagh low-lying areas, Mirpur section-10, Nayatola, Madhubagh and Sadar Ghat.

Finance ministry

FROM PAGE 1

the purchase of the aircraft to overcome flight dislocations on domestic and regional routes and on routes to Middle-Eastern countries.

The national flag-carrier was in disarray following purchase of two outmoded F-28 aircraft, which were frequently failing to keep flight schedule for mechanical breakdown, sources said.

The authorities have decided to sell off the F-28s, which joined Biman fleet just two months back, and two other aircraft in order to add new-generation planes to its fleet.

Channel turns

FROM PAGE 12

Member (Operations) Captain Kamrul Hossain.

"Despite the adverse situation in the channel, we had to allow movement of a few incoming and outgoing vessels, but only after taking precautionary measures and remaining alert to avert mishaps. The situation is such that our ship crews find it too tough to sail," he observed, adding, "We (CPA) already have put our staffs and the coast-guard on high alert, fearing accidents anytime from anchors being torn by the heavy current making the vessels go out of control."

Elaborating on the possible hazards Hossain said, "The fierce current of water downflowing from the Kaptai Lake through the port channel during the low tide may force the ships drift away into the sea or to hit other vessels anchored around. So we are keeping our eight tug boats ready round the clock to tackle any such untoward situation."

CPA Chief Hydrographer Habibur Rahman informed, "Observing the turbulence in the channel, we have alerted over megaphones the operators of ships and other water crafts in the Karnaphuli to take precautionary measures, like tying up their vessels to avoid displacement. We are also watching over them."

Movement of ships along the channel is now allowed during the high tide, port officials said.

The inclement weather also has hampered cargo handling at the premier port of the country that annually handles around 1,500 cargo vessels.

20 hurt

FROM PAGE 12

mob ransacked the UP office and besieged the police team.

A special force led by Additional Superintendent of Police Hafizuddin from Bhola rescued the police team at midnight, assuring agitating people of action against the cops responsible for the torture.

Hafizuddin said police lost a shotgun and a rifle with 40 bullets during the clashes.

Police yesterday arrested 18 people including two students -- Prince and Sohail -- of class six at Anjur Hat High School.

Local political and human rights organisations condemned the police brutality. All the males including young boys have left the area to evade arrest and police harassment.

UN urges Asia to confront Aids

Bangkok meet decries funding failure

AGENCIES, Bangkok

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has warned of dire economic consequences in the Asia-Pacific region unless leaders act decisively to tackle Aids.

Annan, speaking before the opening of the 15th international Aids conference in Bangkok, said the region had reached a crucial turning point, and governments needed to make a co-ordinated response.

His comments followed a call by UN health experts for Aids testing to be made routine in the developing world.

"Here in Asia, HIV/Aids stands at a turning point," Annan warned. "How you address this challenge will impact on the very future of the region."

"In recent decades, more people have escaped from poverty in Asia and the Pacific than in any other part of the world, but these gains may slip away from you."

Infection rates in Asia are still much lower than in sub-Saharan Africa, but the huge populations in countries like India, China and Bangladesh mean that even low rates produce large numbers of infected people.

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao acknowledged on Saturday that Aids has reached every level of society in China.

And experts are warning that, unless more is done to combat the spread of the disease in such countries, it could cause a pandemic surpassing the scale already seen in Africa.

The global battle against Aids faces

Dissident Workers Party workers form new committee

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five dissident Workers Party leaders, who were expelled from the party last month, declared a 23-member committee with Saiful Haque as its coordinator yesterday.

The declaration came at a press conference held at Dhaka Reporters Unity auditorium.

Addressing the press conference, Saiful Haque, former politburo member of the Workers Party, said the new committee was formed to uphold the political ideals of Workers Party.

Saiful Haque said the leaders of Workers Party led by Rashed Khan Menon have shifted from the party's original stance and joined hands with a bourgeois political party like Awami League (AL) only to serve their personal interest.

He said a group of people has been making death threats against them since their statement against the Workers Party central leaders.

"Most of the leaders and activists of the Workers Party have extended their support to us and that's why the demoralised leaders of Workers Party have adopted unfair means to confront our movement," Saiful claimed.

Saiful also claimed that Haider Akbar Rono, politburo member of Workers Party has already contacted and might join them.

5 Marines

FROM PAGE 12

to figures by the US Defence Department.

Meanwhile, five Iraqis were killed in a spate of attacks on Saturday and insurgents again targeted a gas pipeline near the northern oil city of Kirkuk, as Iraq's interim government confronted a growing hostage crisis.

A pipeline connecting the Kirkuk gas fields with the Beiji power plants to the west was attacked with a crude bomb that set a small section of pipeline on fire, said Ahmed al-Hassan, head of security at the Northern Gas Company.

Kirkuk, north of Baghdad, has been a theatre of tension and violence among it's Arab, Kurd, Turkmen and Christian communities.

The attack there came five days after another pipeline in the gas network was sabotaged.

North of Kirkuk, a member of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and translator for the multinational forces was stabbed to death.

Earlier, unknown assailants opened fire at the offices of the Union of Farming Cooperatives, killing a guard, said police Major Burhan Talib.

The union groups Arab landowners and farmers from the agricultural plains of Al-Hawijah and Al-Riad southwest of Kirkuk.

Meanwhile, in the Sunni Muslim stronghold of Ramadi, west of Baghdad, US marines said they shot dead two members of an armed gang who attacked them on Saturday, while a hospital official reported that five Iraqis had been wounded.

"There was a clash at approximately 6:15 am today near a taxi stop in Ramadi between US marines and approximately seven enemy fighters dressed in black," said a marine spokesman.

"Those seven fired on the marines from the taxi stop. The marines returned fire, killing two of the attackers and seized the vehicle they used, which had a machine gun mounted on the back," he said. (Reuters/AFP)

catastrophic failure because of a lack of money, a senior official warned, as 17,000 people gathered here for the world's largest Aids conference yesterday.

Richard Feachem, director of the Global Fund to fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria, said disaster loomed unless key contributors such as the United States and Europe put up the 3.5 billion dollars needed for programmes in 2005.

"If the Global Fund cannot continue to grow in its support for programmes against Aids, TB and Malaria, the result is catastrophic, and we will not win," Feachem told reporters.

"We will not turn around the HIV/Aids pandemic, we will not stop TB, we will not roll back malaria. It's absolutely black and white," he added.

Activists have criticized the administration of US President George W. Bush for launching its own mechanism to funnel 15 billion dollars over five years to fight Aids in Africa and the Caribbean, instead of using the Global Fund, which provides cash to countries for their own projects.

Australia meanwhile pledged to more than double its contribution to the regional fight against HIV/Aids by 2010, warning that Asia risked becoming the new epicenter of the global pandemic.

(AFP/BBC ONLINE)

Naser denies link to attack on Shahin

UNB, Dhaka

Ruling BNP lawmaker Naser Rahman yesterday lamented that his status was downgraded after joining politics as even an MP with poor education background spoke against him.

Denying an allegation that he (Naser) unleashed threat on MM Shahin, he said the independent MP only showed shabby mentality by bringing such a 'false' accusation in the House.

Naser, son of Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, in a personal explanation said Shahin, failing to join the BNP, brought the charge against him.

He also clarified that Shahin (who contested the 2001 election as an independent candidate) was failing to get a BNP ticket failed to return to the BNP not because of him but the party high command.

"Why should I threaten to silence him through clubbing when Shahin is already silent. I'm also not going to contest from his constituency," he told the House, adding that he has no business with Shahin.

Naser also disclosed that the independent MP also gave 'false' information about his academic qualification that was used in a documentation on the history of the Jatiya Sangsad.

"Shahin in that document described himself as a computer science graduate from Frankfurt University in 1981," he said. But it was found that no such subject was taught there at that time, he added.

As he sought the expunction of Shahin's statement, Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar said he expunged the assertion where Shahin called Naser a byproduct of a voter-less by-election. "I will also take from your statement as much as it is required," Sircar said.

When Shahin spoke on Thursday, Naser was not in the House. And as Naser countered yesterday, Shahin remained absent.

Islamist group's

FROM PAGE 12

Similar death notices had been sent to 22 journalists two days ago and three DU teachers two weeks back.

In the circular, Patowary said Islamist organisations including Hizbut Tahrir, Harkatul Jihad and al-Qaeda have the photos and addresses of the 10 and announced to hoist the flags of Islam and Pakistan soaked in their blood.

The maulana also termed the 10 dangerous enemies of Islam and constituting a strong barrier to reinstate Pakistan. "These sinners are the most prominent ones among those the Quran ordains to kill."

Talking to The Daily Star last night, only Mujahidul Islam Selim said to have received a letter containing the threat addressed to him at the CPB office, while the rest of the 10 said they had heard about it.

"By denying their existence, the coalition government has instilled such audacity in the Islamist militant groups that they don't hesitate to issue death threats to university teachers, journalists and writers," Shahriar Kabir remarked last night.

"After this threat, if any one is hurt, the government will have to bear the responsibility," he added.

Agreeing with Kabir's view that the government's inactivity has prompted the Islamist zealots to tread more extreme grounds, Selim said "The letter also proves that the scheme and the threat to revert to Pakistan are not imaginary ones but real."

"I am not surprised that people who had failed to kill us in 1971 have returned to butcher us again," said Inu. "But the government, it seems, is not particularly concerned about these fanatics like Bangla Bhai who want to do away with the country's intelligentsia. Rather, the government actually is patronising them," he alleged.

2 die in Sylhet flood

FROM PAGE 1

Sirajganj are likely to go under water.

Most points of the rivers in the Meghna and South Eastern Hill basins recorded a rise in water and the Brahmaputra-Jamuna and the Ganges-Padma recorded a further rise.

The Buriganga in Dhaka swelled 7cm and the Shitalakkha registered a further rise at Narayanganj point and the Turag at Mirpur point. The Sangu rose by 240cm at Bandarban and by 159cm at Dohajari.

The Padma erosion washed away buildings, including Munshiganj Upazila Court Bhaban and BRDB office, while traffic on Munshiganj-Louhajang-Mawa Highway came to a halt as its Ghordor part developed cracks and potholes.

Some 700 traders in the area are living their days out in anxiety, with some having already moved to safety. All offices in the upazila complex, including the UNO office, were being shifted to safe places yesterday afternoon.

Our Bogra correspondent quoted government officials as saying the floods turned severe in Sonatola, Shariakandi, Dhanut, Shairpur and Gabroli upazilas in the district.

A number of schools and other educational institutions remained closed because of floods and waterlogging and a government official said 5,000 families were marooned in the river belt and low-lying areas.

Our Gaibandha correspondent adds: The rail links between the northern districts and the capital snapped. The district administration said 40 unions went