

Polluted water

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situation worsens they would be forced to evacuate the dormitories and disinfect the premises.

Brushing aside the allegation of contaminated water, Buet Registrar Mohammed Shahjahan in a statement on Monday said, in a ploy to delay the upcoming examinations, a clique of students are blowing up some stray cases of fever to spread panic on the campus.

The chief medical officer of Buet Medical Complex said they have detected Typhoid only in 25 students.

"Students of the halls catch various water-borne diseases, because many of them eat at cheap restaurants outside the campus," he claimed, adding the situation is not alarming as such incidents of typhoid are not uncommon.

But, some other sources in the medical complex said, in the last four days, around 150 students were found to be CRP positive, an indication of typhoid infection.

After providing some preliminary medical care, the Buet authorities advised the sick to go home, they added.

"My roommate fell sick two days ago. He has gone to his village home following the suggestion of the doctor at the medical complex," said Dipok Das, a resident of Sher-e-Bangla Hall.

Both Dipok and Mazharul Islam, a resident of Dr Rashid Hall, blamed polluted water for spreading diseases in the dormitories.

After the students had taken the issue to the varsity authorities, they did some cleaning of the overhead water tanks at the halls last Monday.

The students however are of the opinion that cleaning up the tanks is not enough, as the supply pipelines are contaminated, too.

A student delegation yesterday submitted a memorandum to Buet Vice Chancellor Alee Murtaza demanding immediate solution to the problem.

Bogra village

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Locals blamed the incident on a feud between two pro-BNP groups of contractors over the repair of the embankment that stretched 262 kilometres from the northern district of Kurigram to Pabna.

Many in other villages in Goshaibari union in Dhunat, part of Sherpur and Shariakandi in Bogra and Kadirpur upazila in Sirajganj left home for safety, while the rest are living through uncertainty.

Witnesses said the rain-fed river ran into the surrounding village in ferocity overflowing its bounds, the moment a gang cut a swathe through the embankment at about 2:30am.

Strong currents rushed roaring into the houses in a few minutes, blasting away over 500 metres of the dam, said Hafizur Rahman, who lost his rice mill and over Tk 17 lakh in rice.

"I heard water raging close to my home and a surge hit our room in a flash," Parvin, who lost her children Sulekha, 4, and Biplob, 6, told The Daily Star.

"As the water was rising, I held them tight so that they cannot be washed away," she said with a pause to blink her tears back. "I could not save them. I saw a strong flow of water washing them away," Parvin cried.

Three other dead were named as Russel, 5, Saidur, 7, and Julekha, 58.

Anwara Khatun and Mira Begum lamented the loss of their houses with all belongings, sitting frail on the unsurfaced road. "Where will I

go now?" an elderly Anwara said, her voice trailing away to nothing.

The incident cost Nazrul Islam Tk 15 lakh in lost property, including his house and sawmill.

"Victims' families have confirmed that at least five people have drowned until this afternoon (yesterday)," said local Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Moinul Hasan Mukul.

The local administration said the government allocated 100 tonnes of rice, 40 sanitary pans and 20 tubewells for the villagers. But officials said they would not distribute all among them, as they fear new areas may go under water and relief will be needed for them.

Villagers linked the sabotage to the feud between contractors of two groups led by UP Chairman of adjacent Bhandarbari Belal Hossain Babu with close ties to the ruling BNP and his rival Jahurul Islam Nannu, also local BNP leader, over the dam repair work -- an allegation other BNP leaders denied.

Talking to The Daily Star, the locals identified the saboteurs as supporters of either group.

In a complaint filed with Dhunat Police Station, Goshaibari UP Chairman Mukul termed the incident an act of sabotage.

The Dhunat UNO (Upazila Nirbahi Officer) and Water Development Board officials sent reports to the government describing the incident as an act of sabotage.

Diseases spread

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drinking water, clothes and medicines.

Different organisation including some left-leaning parties demanded declaration of the flood-hit districts as distressed areas and emergency relief for the victims.

The Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre in Dhaka said the situation was likely to deteriorate in Gaibandha, Jamalpur, Sirajganj and Pabna.

Fresh areas in Manikganj, Nawabganj, Narsingdi, Madaripur and Shariatpur may go under water soon, it said.

More areas in the districts of Dhaka, Narayanganj, Manikganj, Nawabganj, Narsingdi, Madaripur and Shariatpur may be swamped and the situation in most places in Naogaon and Bogra may remain unchanged.

In Manikganj, the flood situation worsened in the last two days inundating more areas and disrupting road communication.

In Gaibandha, the misery of flood affected people climbed further as some youths began extorting Tk 100 for a square feet on embankments in protection money.

Rivers across the district were flowing much above the danger level inundating 130 shoals inhabited by over two lakh people.

All the educational institutions in the affected areas were closed indefinitely.

In Sylhet, the situation did not improve although water started receding from some areas. The Surma and Kushiya rivers are still flowing above danger levels, officials informed.

Gushing waters were entering new villages under Manikpur, Birsori and Barohal unions breaking through the Surma and Kushiya dykes in Jakiganj upazila. Fresh villages in Kanaighat upazila also went under water in the last two days.

In Sunamganj, the situation marked a little improvement with a downward trend in the water level of the Surma. Ninety-one flood shelters were set up in the district, including 21 in municipal areas.

Low-lying areas in four upazilas of Habiganj district were inundated in the last two days. Baniachang, Lakha, Ajmiriganj and Nabiganj upazilas are now in the grip of

floods.

In Rangpur, embankments on the Brahmaputra at Rajibpur and the Dharla in Kurigram sadar were damaged, causing 450 houses to collapse in the raging rivers in the last twenty-four hours.

All offices and educational institutions under three unions in Rajibpur upazila went under five feet water as rolling waters cascaded down from hills in India.

Moazzem Hossein, upazila nirbahi officer of Rajibpur, said that the floods suddenly marooned two lakh people in the upazila.

Thousands of people took shelter on rooftops of their submerged houses, but no help reached the stranded people.

The flood forecasting centre said the Brahmaputra-Jamuna started receding in the upstream while the Ganges-Padma continued further rise at all points.

Most rivers in the Meghna and the Southeastern Hill basins recorded fall.

Thirty of 85 monitoring stations recorded rise, 36 marked fall and one remained steady yesterday. Twenty-one points flowed above danger level.

Dhaka Saarc

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Hafizuddin (Jatiya Party), who wanted to know if bilateral problems like water issue would be resolved during the Dhaka summit, the prime minister said bilateral issues are not discussed under the Saarc charter, but the summit creates opportunity to discuss such issues on the sidelines.

About the Safta signed at the Islamabad summit, she hoped that the deal would contribute immensely to increase trade and investment in the region, especially protecting the interests of the least developed countries, including Bangladesh.

She said three meetings of experts have already been held to implement the Safta, discussing non-tariff barriers, including rules of origin and list of restricted items.

About Bangladesh's membership in Asean, she said: "We are trying to become its member. We've good relations with Asean countries and our Look East policy has been praised by all."

Dengue

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DCC alone cannot curb mosquito population."

He also mentioned that some areas including Bashundhara, low-lying areas of Badda and Dhaka Cantonment in the city do not come under the DCC's jurisdiction, and said if mosquito control programmes were not launched simultaneously in those areas the city corporation's efforts alone would not be effective.

The mayor said he has initiated a programme to aware people on Aedes and keeping their houses and the adjacent areas clean to prevent the dengue carriers from laying eggs.

Under the programme, five-member teams of boy scouts and girls guides will go from door to door in the city from July 15 to motivate and help people clear their houses of empty containers, the most favourite breeding ground of Aedes mosquitoes. The DCC has already trained 4,500 boys and girls for the 15-day operation.

The mayor also stated that the DCC now has sufficient insecticide for spraying in the city areas.

BNP, AL agree

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The date has been deferred to July 31 due to the delay in getting consent from the BNP, BGMEA sources said.

BGMEA is optimistic about clinching a commitment from the major political parties not to call hartal in at least a year for the sake of the country's largest foreign currency-earning sector.

"It's a tremendous boost for us. It is going to be a historic dialogue as both ruling and opposition parties will sit across the table to discuss a serious national issue," said Anisul Haque, coming out of the meeting.

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina earlier assured BGMEA leaders that her party would not call hartal if the ruling BNP makes similar commitment to hartal while in the opposition.

The readymade garment buyers will start coming over in Bangladesh during September and October to place orders for the next season. They would get a wrong signal if hartal culture goes unabated," said the BGMEA boss.

During yesterday's meeting, Bhuiyan also felt the need to find an alternative to hartal as a political agitation. "We may take lesson from the political agitation in other countries to solve our problem."

Philippines pulls

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coordinating the pull-out of the humanitarian contingent with the Ministry of National Defence. As of today, our headcount is down from 51 to 43," she said.

She did not specify whether the move amounted to compliance with the kidnappers' demands that the entire Filipino contingent leave Iraq by July 20, a month earlier than scheduled.

Even so, Washington was quick to label the announcement as a worrisome signal, saying any pullout would send a wrong message to the Iraqi kidnappers.

And the US promptly sent some signals of its own. Mr Richard Boucher, US State Department spokesperson, said: "We certainly noted the remarks and are disappointed to see remarks like this at a time when Iraq is fighting for stability and peace."

Manila is performing a delicate balancing act. It wants to maintain its image as a stalwart ally in the US-led coalition in Iraq. But while giving in to the demands of the kidnappers may cast doubts on Manila's commitment, the government is facing nationwide calls for it to make all efforts to save the life of de la Cruz.

And while coalition partners are urging the Philippine government to display fortitude, many Filipinos want it to choose compassion for their fellow citizen and his family. Francisco de la Cruz, brother of hostage, said: "We will be very happy if the soldiers are withdrawn and our brother released."

Chat Dimaano, leader of Migrant Workers' Organisation, said: "We still need to see a complete withdrawal of our soldiers from Iraq and we need to see Angelo alive and back here with his family."

Despite the desperate calls, Philippines officials have refused to clearly show their hand.

With no clues as to what they are doing, all anyone knows for sure is that the CARBOMB is still negotiating.

The suspected car bomb was the first big guerrilla attack in Baghdad since an interim Iraqi government took over from US-led occupiers on June 28.

"This is naked aggression against the Iraqi people," said Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, standing by burnt-out vehicles near a main entrance to the heavily defended "Green Zone" compound.

"We will bring these criminals to justice," he vowed, adding that seven Iraqi civilians and three National Guards had been killed and 40 people wounded.

Deafened passersby and a man with blood oozing from his chest staggered from the site of the explosion. "My God, my God," screamed one panicked woman among the scores of workers, visitors and journalists lining up for security checks to get into the US-defended area.

The blast occurred hours after news that Islamist militants led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi had killed one of two Bulgarian truck drivers held hostage in Iraq. They vowed to kill the second within 24 hours unless US-led forces freed prisoners.

Bulgaria said it would not pull its 470 troops out of Iraq despite the killing of the driver and the plight of the other. (Reuters, AP, CNA)

India's river-link

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Faruk urged India to equally treat Bangladesh and Nepal before implementation of the project.

Sharing his working experience as a World Bank economist in Nepal, he said India had raised possible consequences of being a lower riparian country when Nepal proposed to set up a hydroelectric project.

"But now India is denying Bangladesh may face the same problems as the country will become a lower riparian country once the project is implemented," he added.

Former chief justice Mustafa Kamal, who chaired the session, said the verdict of Indian Supreme Court on the project's implementation by 2016 is forcing the governments of Bangladesh and Nepal to take the issue to international arena.

At another session titled Institutional Capacity Building and Expansion of Saarc, first general secretary of the regional body and former Bangladesh foreign secretary Abul Ahsan termed Saarc Secretariat one of the weakest of its kind.

He said member countries nominate different officials from their

foreign offices as Saarc Secretariat staff, which is not a professional attitude.

"In the Asean (Association of South East Asian Nations), office staff are recruited through competition among the nationals of the member states," he said.

Saarc Secretary General QAMA Rahim also spoke at the session. OP Shah, chairman of Centre for Peace and Progress, Kolkata presented the keynote paper, while Foreign Service Academy Principal Jamil Majid delivered the designated speech on the topic.

Zealots

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the headmaster said.

On June 17, he received similar threat in a letter sent to him, which he ignored, he added.

English teacher Mohammad Mosharraf Hossain recently left the school after unknown criminals threatened to kill him for failing to pay them extortion money. Sayeed said adding that two other teachers are also fearing attempts on their lives as they also refused to pay tolls.

No case was filed till 6:00 yesterday evening.

Saifur's 'no'

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specific legal measures, including arrest, raid and seizure, against tax defaulters.

"The government has many weapons to collect tax. If necessary, it will seize their [the traders'] commodities," Saifur warned.

Traders owe the National Bureau of Revenue (NBR) Tk 300 crore as outstanding value-added tax (Vat) for the last three years. In Dhaka alone, they have defaulted on Vat to the tune of Tk 200 crore.

The finance minister in a conciliatory tone added, "We shall ensure that no trader is harassed in the name of Vat collection. The taxmen will use the legal measures including arrest as the last option only, when all else have failed."

At a meeting with NBR Vat officials yesterday, Saifur stressed achieving the high Vat collection target of Tk 9,500 crore in this fiscal. Following the meeting at the Secretariat, he told the press, "There are many business houses that have not paid Vat for the last few years. If we don't pay our taxes, how will the development programmes be carried out? Now that we have given notice to them, they are threatening us of strike and other agitation programmes."

"We have noticed the same trend while dealing with bank loan defaulters. When we notify defaulters to pay back, they allege we are harassing them," the finance minister quipped.

"This can't go on. They will have to pay Vat or we shall take appropriate legal measures," Saifur affirmed. The minister instructed NBR officials not to resort to legal mea-

sures against traders unless they have no other alternative. "They should follow a sequence of actions in Vat collection. Firstly, Vat officials will phone the traders asking them to pay their taxes. Then they will send them letters, hold meetings with them and resort to all possible forms of interactions before turning to legal measures," he elaborated.

Saifur said, "In case of legal measures, Vat inspectors will not visit the business houses, assistant commissioners will."

Officials at the meeting discussed zone-wise Vat collection. It turned out that the only zone to have exceeded the collection target is headed by a female deputy commissioner, Tasmina Hossain Luna.

Drawing attention to this achievement, the finance minister observed women officials tend to perform better because they are the least corrupt. So, he said, more women officials should be given the charge of Vat collection.

Describing the problems they are facing, Vat officials told Saifur that as many as 361 Vat inspector posts are vacant, making it tough for them to cope up with the workload needed for achieving the target.

In response, the minister said filling up the posts would be put on a fast track. "If the Public Service Commission can't recruit against these posts fast enough, the NBR will do the hiring directly."

"And, in filling up these posts, we shall give priority to women candidates," he added.

On writ petitions that often slow down Vat and tax collection, Saifur said he will talk to the law minister about it to arrive at a solution.

AL calls 6-hr

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The meeting also asked the government to erase the new insertion containing 'false' information in the reprint of Swadhinota Juddher Dollpatro, the official history of the country's Liberation War, depicting late president Ziaur Rahman as the first proclaimer of independence.

"The insertion is a clear violation of the constitution which names Bangabandhu as the leader who had declared the country's independence," said AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil after the meeting.

Jalil said the meeting had decided to issue an ultimatum shortly to the government asking it to delete the distorted history and, if the demand were not met in the ultimatum period, to go for tougher action.

AL will hold a seminar in the city on proclamation of independence, in which programme personnel and staffs of the two Liberation War radio centres -- Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendro and Kalur Ghat Betar

Kendro -- will participate.

The AL central working body also demanded immediate implementation of the sentences awarded to Bangabandhu's killers.

Besides, it also called out a month-long programme beginning from August 1 to mark Bangabandhu's death anniversary. The programme includes milad mahfil, feeding the destitute, blood donation, mourning procession and special prayers at mosques, temples and churches.

AL central and local leaders will also attend similar programmes to be held at Bangabandhu's grave in Tungipara.

On August 15, one minute after the hartal ends, leaders of the AL and its front organisations will place wreaths at the portrait of the slain leader in Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in the city at 12:01pm.

That day the national flag will be kept at half-mast at the offices of AL and its front organisations across the country.

Kahn's son

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sequence in Dhaka, I can tell you that the world has finally seen the parliament complex and they are thrilled by it. People all over the world will come to see it."

Nathaniel Kahn said: "Please, save the land around the parliament. It will help the people of Dhaka and be a source of pride, heritage and yes, tourism in the future."

The Architectural Archive, University of Pennsylvania, meanwhile is organising an exhibition throughout the United States on the works of Louis Kahn.

Architect Kazi Khaleed Ashraf, now in the United States, has been assigned to curate the exhibition that will feature Kahn's greatest creation, the parliament complex of

Bangladesh.

The parliament complex came under the spotlight in October 2002 when the government took up a Tk 6 crore project to construct two residential buildings for the speaker and deputy speaker in an area that Louis Kahn had marked as open space.

A High Court bench in June declared the construction illegal and directed the government to take necessary steps to declare the parliament complex a national heritage.

The Appellate Division on July 7 declined to pass a stay order on the June 21 High Court order and also brushed aside the government's plea to put an embargo on media coverage on any construction work at the parliament complex.

Bush

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Dennis Altman, a professor of politics at LaTrobe University, Australia.

ABC is "the old Nancy Reagan edictum of 'just say no'," he said. "You have to actually be in a pretty good position of power to 'just say no'. Most young women are not in that position of power."

Raoul Franssen, a young Dutch aid worker in Africa who has HIV, said "rather than being taught not to have sex, young people... should be enabled to make the choice, be this abstinence or partner reduction or having access to condoms that is right for them."

"They should be supported in discovering their sexuality, its pleasures and its risks. The key lies in giving us a choice, not an ideology."

The champion of ABC is Uganda, whose president, Yoweri Museveni, was lavishly praised by Tobias for "sheer leadership and will" in fighting back HIV in his country.

But University of Pretoria researcher Mary Crewe said she doubted whether ABC was as influential as this in Uganda.

"ABC was introduced late in Uganda's prevention campaign, and there is evidence that the epidemic was already on a natural downward curve," she said.

Crewe poured scorn on the starchy, thou-must-not tone that invariably accompanied abstinence campaigns.

It had little resonance for young people who were burning with sexual energy and eager to experiment.

"We have to make abstinence sexy, not holy," said Crewe.

Altman suggested that governments, religious leaders and families get home the message that "there are other forms of sexual pleasure than intercourse," including oral sex and masturbation.

"If the alternative is a massive infection, then people should have to face the fact that prudery should be pushed out of the window."

Half the importers

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seized and bank accounts and properties seized.

The NBR has sought help of the Bangladesh Bank to detect the fraud importers. The central bank will notify all banks about the fake importers so that they can locate the culprits.

The NBR also sought help of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI), which is yet to respond.

30 hurt

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JSD President Hasanul Huq Inu and General Secretary Syed Jafar Sajjad, among others, fell victim to police assault. Police also used force on women activists of the JSD.

JSD President Inu at a rally in front of the JSF office later accused the government of upholding interest of the anti-liberation axis Rajakars.

The government is not willing to tolerate minimum criticism of the Rajakars, he said. Liberation, democracy and the constitution is not safe anymore in the hands of this government, he added.

Inu called upon the progressive forces to oust the government before anti-liberation forces capture state power and damage the nation further.

"There's no alternative but to trying the killers and collaborators of the Liberation War in 1971 under a special tribunal to establish peace and justice in the country," he said.

He said it was a historic mistake to forgive the killers and collaborators of the 1971.

Zafar Sajjad, Mainuddin Khan Badal, among others, were present.

Gas supply

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similar programmes to urge the government to ensure gas supply to the northern district town.

Farid Mamud Hasan, general secretary of Rajshahi Traders Allied Council, an alliance of 32 local trade bodies, said they would observe a half-day strike on August 22, four-hour hunger strike on July 27 and organise a human chain at the city's Zero point on August 14.

British

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to the incident and appreciated the government measures against terrorism.

The envoy said his country is interested to impart training to Bangladesh police.

Chowdhury also appreciated the government's achievements in health and education sectors, particularly women education and empowerment, and poverty reduction.

On foreign investment in Bangladesh, the envoy said there are a lot of investors in the United Kingdom who are willing to invest in Bangladesh.

He responded positively as the prime minister sought more British scholarships for Bangladesh students and assistance for training of civil servants to ensure good governance.

The British envoy renewed the invitation to the prime minister to visit the United Kingdom and have an audience with the British Queen.