

RAIN PARALYSES CITY LIFE



Yesterday's heavy rain once again bared the weakness of the city's drainage, much to the sufferings of the city dwellers, from left, clockwise, (1) An water-logged Motijheel area, (2) Mouchak intersection, (3) a manhole kept open to pass the rain water in Malibagh, (4) Nazimuddin Road in Old Dhaka under knee-deep water, (5) two foreigners somehow manage to cross the road in front of Hotel Sheraton, (6) flooded Tejgaon area and (7) stranded people waiting for vehicles in Farmgate area.

'Strategic transport plan not pro-people, cost effective'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Urban transport experts yesterday at a seminar said the recommendations made in "Dhaka Strategic Transport Plan" (STP) will not benefit common people because they are not cost effective. "The aim of the government should be to maximize the benefits from minimum resources, but, here the concept is completely reversed", Dr Mahabubul Bari, senior assistant manager, Transport for London, UK observed while delivering the keynote speech at the seminar organised by Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) at the National Press Club in the city. The 20-year plan which was formulated to develop the transport system stresses the necessity of the five percent people, who are using car and occupy 50 percent of the road, he said. "The contributions for private cars would stand at 31 percent by 2024 from 18 percent and the participation of public transport would

drop to 21 percent from 34 percent, if the recommendations are implemented", Dr Bari observed. Besides, he said there are huge inconsistencies between the research findings and recommendations and it would not be pro-people and cost effective. "Of the 11 alternative options, the 1 (A) option was considered to be the best, though, finally, the committee recommended the number six option '2 (B)', he added. The 1 (A) recommends bus rapid transits (BRT) and 42 small roads projects, which was according to the experts the most effective option from economic, road safety and social points of view, he described. But the committee advocates three elevated express way, each 29 km, two bypasses, 56 road projects and mixed modality vehicles, which will cost 2.3 billion US dollar. However, though STP emphasised circular waterways, the proposed allocation was very little

only 0.44 percent. Dr Jubair Bin Alam, professor, civil engineering department, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) said currently Bangladesh is spending 1.5 percent of GDP for fossil fuel. If the STP plan is adopted, the country would have to pay 13 percent of the GDP, he added. Bapa President Prof Muzaffer Ahmad said though crores of Tk have been spent, people were not provided with a synchronised and eco-friendly traffic system. The water transport has not been given due attention, he added. Bapa General Secretary Mahidul Haque Khan regretted that the committee members should have been empathetic in their attitude, which they were not and made a plan which is not pro-people. Deputy Secretary Tapan Kumar Nath and Dr Shamsur Rahman, member STP non-technical group, also spoke on the occasion.



A discussion on 'HIV/AIDS and human rights' was organised by Badhan Hijra Sangha in association with HASAB at Dhaka Reporters' Unity (DRU) auditorium yesterday. Sitting from left are Pinky Shikdar, HASAB Executive Director Dr Nazneen Akhter and Rehana Sultana.

Separate gender identification for hermaphrodites demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday demanded separate gender identification for hermaphrodites to ensure their proper recognition in the society. They also demanded passports as well as voting rights of hermaphrodites to ensure their rights in the society. The discussion on 'HIV/AIDS and human rights issues with the journalists working in different medias' was organised by Badhan Hijra Sangha in association with HASAB at Dhaka Reporters' Unity (DRU) auditorium. The speakers said the hermaphrodites are the most neglected and marginalised community in the society, they added. The speakers said the hermaphrodites are also worst victims of mental and sexual abuse as they have no social and legal protection due to identity crisis. "We are leading an inhuman life as people from almost all strata disrespect us," said Khuki, a member of Badhan. "Our discrimination starts from the family where we are kept separately from other children due to social reasons," Khuki, also a hermaphrodite, added. "No one becomes a hermaphrodite voluntarily. We are also human being and we have the right to lead a life with

dignity," Khuki said. Speaking on the occasion as special guest HASAB Executive Director Dr Nazneen Akhter said the mental strength of the hermaphrodites is much higher than anyone as they are facing all sorts of discrimination. Though Bangladesh has achieved a lot of development in different sectors, there are few people who work for the development of the hermaphrodite community, she added. "We have to make our voice louder to put focus on the issue of the hermaphrodites and media can play a major role in this regard," she said. Advocate Rehana Sultana of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) urged the government to enact special laws ensuring the rights of hermaphrodite community in the society. Though the constitution ensures everyone's rights, the rights of the hermaphrodites is still neglected, she said, adding that change in the mindset is necessary to establish their rights. It is regretful that being a citizen of the country they face discrimination in every aspect of the society especially in education and employment sector, she said. Explaining various problems being faced by the hermaphrodite community, Badhan President Pinky Sikder said they face discrimination while renting houses, opening bank accounts and applying for passports. Pinky also demanded special

employment facilities considering them as the marginalised community. Joya Sikder, general secretary of Badhan, Naznin Yasmin Hira, programme manager of Manusher Jono Foundation, and Mahbub Islam Bhuiyan, representative of ICDDR,B, also spoke. Special Branch (SB) Police yesterday asked the people concerned not to be confused over a news item in a newspaper that said the photocopy visa that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) sends for the Bangladeshis willing to go to the UAE for jobs will be stopped from June 10. "It is for information for all concerned that the persons willing to go to the UAE for jobs will face no problem with photocopy visa at Immigration at the airport. The existing procedure will be continued," said a press release of SB Police.

Inadequate fund hampers DU research works

Bss, Dhaka

The research centres of Dhaka University (DU) have been unable to take up any major work because of insufficient budget. The 25 centres had a total budget of only Tk 147.65 lakh for research, laboratory and infrastructures for fiscal 2006-07, Tk 119.50 lakh revised budget for 2005-06, Tk 109.25 lakh for 2004-05, Tk 58.30 lakh for 2003-04 and Tk 38.47 lakh for 2002-03. On an average, the university could allocate only Tk 94.63 lakh per annum during last five years to its research centres. Due to the resource constraints, many of the centres could not function properly, said officials. Only a few centres had something for publication in the annual statement of the university in 2006. Allocation of nominal funds virtually kept a few research centres non-functional. During 2006-07, for example, DU allocated Tk 10000 to its Urban Research Centre, Tk

45000 for Nazrul Research Centre and Tk 45000 for Organic Pollutants Research Centre. An administrative official of the Social Science Research Centre said, "We had an allocation of Tk 2.60 lakh last fiscal for salary, research and publication." "We were unable to carry out any research activities worth mentioning because of resource constraints," he added. Officials of the different centres said paltry honorarium paid to their directors, gives them hardly any incentive to work. Many of the centres have also lost their importance as different faculties of the university have their own publications. All the faculties except Pharmacy publish the research works of their teachers. "The research centres take more time to select works for publication. Often, they do not properly evaluate the works and offer little honorarium," said a teacher of the Social Science Faculty. "Teachers are interested in getting their research papers published by their respective faculties, which is much easier to do," he added.

ATTACK ON UK ENVOY Hearing of charge sheet on June 26

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Hearing of the charge sheet in the case of grenade attack on British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury will be held on June 26, court sources said yesterday. Magistrate of Sylhet Cognizance Court-1 Devjit Sinha gave the order on filing of the charge sheet on June 9. Senior ASP of CID Munshi Atiqur Rahman submitted the charge sheets against outlawed Harkat ul Jihad Chief Mufti Abdul Hannan, his brother Mofizur Rahman, Delwar Hossain Ripon and Sharif Shahedul Alam alias Bipul in the court. Anwar Choudhury along with 70 others were hurt while 3 others killed in the grenade attack at the shrine of Hazrat Shahjalal (RA) in Sylhet after Juma prayers on May 21, 2004.

Fawzul Kabir Khan appointed power secretary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

M Fawzul Kabir Khan has been appointed secretary to the power ministry on president's quota for two years. Before joining as secretary, power division, he was the chief executive officer of Infrastructure Development Company Limited (IDCOL), a government-owned financial institution. He has been appointed for two years on contract, said the government release. M Fawzul Kabir Khan joined BCS cadre in 1979.

IGP talks tough against corrupt policemen

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Noor Mohammad yesterday sought cooperation from the people in developing good policing and urged them to be watchful of police activities. "Protest instantly or inform us if you see any policeman doing anything wrong or unfair... Speak up loud against anything bad they do... Today's problem was created due to keeping mum over the years," he said while addressing a meeting with civil society members at Rajshahi deputy inspector general's conference room. "A corrupt policeman, whatever position he may hold, will lose his job and land in jail and such elements cannot save themselves from the punishment by lobbying," the IGP said. "We want to get rid of the 100-year-old colonial image, change the existing concept of policing and it is

not possible without close cooperation of people," he said, adding, "We cannot bring any revolutionary change, we can keep the process of turning police into a symbol of reliability and trust going on." At Rajshahi Police Lines, the IGP asked policemen to change their behaviour and be friendly towards people. "We will show zero tolerance for misbehaviour and corruption," he warned. He also asked them not to harass anyone intentionally, and care for all citizens as they care for their own family members. "Those days are gone... there is none to control police from behind. This is high time to dispose of the bad image, we have no other alternative," he said. Noor Mohammad asked them to serve in an efficient, professional and honest manner, so that the negative perception of police is changed. He informed policemen about the caretaker government's consid-

eration for a package proposal to upgrade their salaries and develop logistic support. The package proposal include 25 percent incentives on salaries, 60 to 80 percent rationing facility and the use of 70 percent revenue income of traffic management for police. In the morning, the IGP inaugurated In-service Police Training Centre and Divisional CID's Forensic Laboratory inside the police lines and addressed two meetings of Rajshahi range police and Rajshahi Metropolitan Police (RMP). Noor Mohammad also met the superintendents of police of 16 districts of Rajshahi division at the same venue earlier. Rajshahi Deputy Inspector General (DIG) AKM Shahidul Hoq, Rapid Action Battalion Director Lt Col Shamsuzzaman Khan, RMP Commissioner Abul Kashem, Additional DIG of CID Binoy Krishna Bala were present in the programmes.