



Dhaka Wasa digs trenches on a road at Palashi in the capital to install sewerage lines. The photo was taken yesterday.

Come monsoon, come city road-digging

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Like in every monsoon, road cutting in different areas of the capital has been stepped up by utility service providers and mobile phone companies apparently competing with each other, causing immense sufferings to people.

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) allowed service providers and mobile phone operators to cut 74,000 square metres of road in the current fiscal year.

Bangla Link is now cutting 2,694 square metre footpath and 151 square metre road from Mohakhal Kaderia Tower to Banani rail cross-

ing and 8,680 square metre road from Mirpur-1 to Bhasanteek, City Cell is cutting 3,838 square metre road from Pacific Tower to Kuril Biswa Road, Atek 740 square metre from Mohakhal Brac Centre to Khwaza Tower, Gramene Phone 1,784 square metre from Mohakhal Khwaza Tower to Gulshan Shooting Club and 921 square metre from Mirpur Gol Chokkor to Grameen Bank building to get optical fibre connection.

Road cutting by service providers for various tasks is now going on in full swing at various points in Dhamondi, Moghbazar and Gopibagh areas.

Sidewalks of the roads are also being cut near Karwan Bazar market, Dhamondi Boys' School and in some other areas.

DCC sources say they must use their annual funds for various jobs by the end of June, and road cutting is part of the process.

But urban experts attributed this situation to lack of coordination among the DCC, Dhaka Wasa, Rajuk and other organisations concerned.

When contacted, Kazi Muhammad Sheesh, former chief engineer of Wasa, said "Road cuttings for improving the drainage system should have been done long

before but the problem is we do not take any step until we get into serious trouble".

Earlier in 2003, the DCC had framed guidelines for road cutting and repair but to no effect.

The guidelines said there should be no road cutting during June to October. Besides, there must be signboards at the sites mentioning the timeframe of digging and repairing, and earth must be removed within 24 hours of digging so as not to block the way for vehicles and pedestrians, it said.

But in blatant violation of the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Cheated, they toil in Malaysia

Bangladeshi workers not getting actual salaries for greed of recruiting agencies, outsourcing companies

PORIMOL PALMA

Thousands of Bangladeshi workers are living inhuman life in Malaysia due to unemployment and underpayment because of cheating by the recruiting agencies in Bangladesh and the outsourcing companies in Malaysia.

Allegations are also there that the employers often deduct salaries of the workers on various grounds that were never mentioned in the job contracts.

The employers also force the workers to work for longer hours and do not provide enough food, accom-

mmodation and other facilities, which they are supposed to provide.

The Daily Star recently obtained documents of at least one company, which is exploiting the workers in various ways.

The Malaysian outsourcing company, Outline Square (M) SDN BHD, which hired 100 Bangladeshi workers through Bangladesh recruiting agency Link Up International (Ltd), is one of such companies that is paying a worker only 50 to 150 Malaysian Ringgit a month whereas the salary written in the job contract is over 900 Ringgit.

According to a recent Malaysian

rule, the outsourcing companies can hire workers from Bangladesh through recruiting agencies here.

The outsourcing companies are responsible for the workers' salaries, lodging, transport, medical expenses and insurance.

The exploited workers recently made an appeal to the Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur with no effect until now.

In their complaints, the workers alleged that according to the job contract forms signed in Bangladesh,

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Laws, role of locals must to save forest

Observes regional workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five people were killed and two others injured by lightning in Bogra and Sirajganj districts yesterday.

The dead were identified as Jahangir Alam, 18, and Sumon, 20, of Alamgiri upazila in Bogra; Shapla, 9, Sharmin, 21, of Tarash upazila, and Mosharrif, 31, of Chouhali upazila in Sirajganj.

In Bogra, the victims, Jahangir of village Koiguri and Sumon of village Benoir were struck by lightning while shopping at Alamgiri Bazar at around 4:00pm. Both died instantly, according to UNB.

Lightning also injured two people at the bazar, but their identity could not be known.

Shapla, 9, and Sharmin, 21, daughters of Abdul Hamid of Gurga village in Tarash upazila, of Sirajganj were struck by thunderbolt in front of their house at about 3:30pm.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Participation of local community and amendment to laws of colonial times are essential for efficient management and conservation of forests, said conservation and legal experts and social activists of South Asian region in the capital yesterday.

It is time the governments and policymakers take into account the rights of the indigenous people and forest dwellers for sustainable extraction of forest resources and participatory management of forests.

Conservationists, legal experts and social activists of Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal made the recommendations at a two-day South Asian regional

workshop on Protecting Forests and Forest Dwellers: Role of Law. The workshop was organised by Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela) with support from Oxfam Novib at the Brac Centre in Mohakhal.

Raja Devasish Roy, a lawyer of the Supreme Court (SC), said that the Forest Act of 1927, inherited from the colonial era, is more a police-oriented legal instrument and colonial in nature than a pro-people document of forest management.

"The act must duly be amended to reorganise the forest department freeing it from its virtual role of law enforcers," Roy said, adding, "It must be updated to provide different types of management mechanisms for forests."

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4

Evacuation of people from foothills starts

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong district administration yesterday started evacuating people living close to hills or in foothill slums to different parts of the city to avert further land or mud slide casualties.

On the first day, the authorities shifted over 200 people of some 60 families from several foothill slums of Motijharna at Lalkhan Bazar. They were to stay at Lalkhan Bazar Govt Primary School where the authorities had opened a temporary shelter.

Contacted, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Md Ashraf Shamim said all the ward commissioners of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) and all upazila nirbahi officers (UNO) of the district were instructed to identify the areas and people vulnerable to landslides or such disasters, so that they can be moved to safety.

"The process has just started and we would open more temporary shelters at places where it is required," he added.

The families evacuated yesterday

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Living on dangerous slope

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD, Ctg

Over 50 thousand people living in different foothill slums in the port city are under serious risks of falling an easy victim to landslides, especially during the rains.

The latest study carried out by Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) reveals that some one lakh out of 14 lakh disadvantaged people, mostly factory workers, day labourers, or self-employed in different informal sectors, are living in some 1,814 slums in the port city.

Of them, over 50 thousand live in the slums situated at the risky and treacherous slopes or bottom of hills where they can rent rooms at cheaper rates but safety of lives is hardly taken into consideration there.

Following the study report, the CDA has taken an initiative for rehabilitating the disadvantaged people, sources said.

The series of landslides that buried alive over one hundred people in Chittagong on June 11 prompted the CDA to start identifying areas to rehabilitate the disadvantaged people to avert human disasters brought about by landslides.

It is also planning to build up

physical barriers around the hills through development of walkways and tree plantation to check growth of slums in the foothill areas.

According to the study report, around 92 per cent of the disadvantaged people living in the study area of Lalkhan Bazar, Motijharna and Bakalia Bagarbil came from different parts of the country in search of work or self-employment opportuni-

ties.

The slums providing them with shelter comprise thatched (72%) and semi-pucca (28%) houses, which are vulnerable to natural calamities.

Unscrupulous and influential locals and vested quarters set up

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

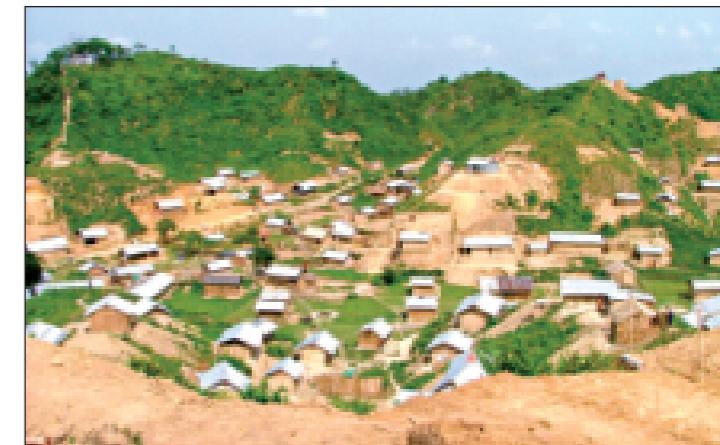


PHOTO: STAR

A slum is set up in a valley at Salimpur in Chittagong city ignoring the threat of mudslides that could endanger lives of the slum dwellers. Recent landslides in the city killed at least 126 people.

Security relaxed at Sudha Sadan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday relaxed the tight security around Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina's residence Sudha Sadan at Dhamondi in the city.

One of the three tiers of the security blanket around Hasina's house was removed after several days of heightened watch ahead of the AL chief's planned visit to the United States to see her expecting daughter. Hasina postponed the tour as the government did not allow her to leave the country.

Earlier on Thursday, the government imposed restrictions on Hasina's leaving the country for "the sake of investigation" into the graft cases filed against her.

A total of 12 platoons of police were deployed around Sudha Sadan.

Hasina's Political Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury, AL Women Affairs Secretary Dr Dipu Moni and Workers Affairs Secretary Habibur Rahman went to meet Hasina yesterday morning.

Hasina wants reforms deeper than her party leaders do

ZAYADUL AHSEN with HASAN JAHID TUSHER

As demands for reforms grow louder within Awami League (AL), its President Sheikh Hasina wants to delve deeper into the issue, going beyond what some of her senior party leaders have recently come up with.

In an exclusive interview with The Daily Star Thursday night (Star will also interview BNP chairperson), she said that the 21-point reform proposal that her colleagues drew up outside her involvement needs further amendment on many points.

She believes not only the party president's post but no other party position should as well be held by the same person for more than two terms. Not only the chief of the party should be barred from becoming prime minister but all central com-

mittee office bearers should be prohibited from becoming ministers or state ministers.

"One group of people should run the party and another set should run the government," Hasina explained.

Plagued by corruption allegations of all hues and senior party



SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

3-yr National Hajj Policy okayed

UNB, Dhaka

The regular weekly meeting of the Council of Advisers yesterday approved a three-year National Hajj Policy, aiming to remove the problems of hajj management.

Chaired by Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, the meeting also approved the draft Gas Ordinance 2007 stipulating comprehensive measures for properly dealing with the potential economic sector of natural gas.

Under the new hajj policy, the month of Rabiusani (Islamic calendar) has been fixed for announcing hajj package while Rajab 29 as the last date of receiving applications from aspirant pilgrims.

It has been made mandatory in the policy that the owners of hajj agencies will have to go to Saudi Arabia for renting standard residences for pilgrims.

Regarding the house renting, the hajj agencies, as per the existing rule of Saudi Arabia, will have to take clearance from Bangladesh embassy in Saudi Arabia. And all information related to the rented houses will have to be submitted to Bangladesh Hajj

Missions in Makkah and Madina, and the country's embassy in Saudi Arabia.

In the policy, a provision has been incorporated for punishment of the agencies that will be unable to provide proper service to pilgrims as per announced package and agreement.

The civil aviation ministry will fix common fare of Biman by

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Notice

Our online edition www.thedailystar.net has been shut down since yesterday due to technical glitches. The site will be up as soon as the problem is solved. We regret the inconvenience of the readers.