



PHOTO: STAR

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 Mohakhali Kaderia Tower to Banani rail cross-

ing and 8,680 square metre road from Mirpur-1 to Bhasantek, City Cell is cutting 3,838 square metre road from Pacific Tower to Kuril Biswa Road, Aktel 740 square metre from Mohakhali Brac Centre to Khwaza Tower, Grameen Phone 1,784 square metre from Mohakhali 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 Dhanmondi, Moghbazar and Gopibagh areas.

Sidewalks of the roads are also being cut near Karwan Bazar market, Dhanmondi 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

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## Tigers fly out for Colombo

SPORTS REPORTER

A 15-member Bangladesh cricket team left Dhaka last night to play their third full series in Sri Lanka.

The Tigers, under the leadership of ace batsman Mohammad Ashraful, will play three Tests and as many one-day internationals during their 40-day stay in the island nation.

"Our main target will be to take the Test matches into the fifth day. We have to bat well to fulfil the goal in this tough series. I am confident that this time we will not face the same kind of embarrassment that we experienced last time (in 2005)," Ashraful told reporters at the Zia International Airport.

Bangladesh lost both the Tests inside three days during their last trip.

Bangladesh open their tour with a three-day practice match at the Colombo Colts ground from June 20.

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## 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-

modation 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 a Bangladeshi 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.

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## 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 landslide 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

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## 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, Matijharna and Bakalia Bagarbill 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

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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 Dhanmondi 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 AHSAN 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

leaders either in jail or distanced from her, the former premier still shows unwavering determination that she would come out strong by disproving all charges if she is given a fair chance to fight.

"I can always prove that I had never taken any money from anyone. My bank accounts and tax returns are there to speak for my claim," Hasina said. "The people are still with me and they will not believe an iota of the propaganda against me. I know a conspiracy is afoot to file a string of cases against me. But I am not afraid. I am willing to face anything for the people."

The embattled leader seemed to have shed some weight but still looked resolute during the interview. She spoke her heart out on the recent purge of Awami League

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## 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 Rabiussani (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 for

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## Lightning kills 5

STAR REPORT

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 Alamdighi upazila in Bogra; Shapla, 9, Sharmin, 21, of Tarash upazila, and Mosharraf, 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 Alamdighi 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 Gurta village in Tarash upazila, of Sirajganj were struck by thunderbolt in front of their house at about 3:30pm.

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## Laws, role of locals must to save forest

Observes regional workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Participation of local community and amendment to laws of colonial times are essential for efficient management and conservation of forests, said conversation 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 Mohakhali.

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 of forests."

The provision of handing over private land ownership to the government in the case of social forestation has to be reviewed, he said, adding that logging provision in the forestry master plan has to be checked too.

Former adviser to a caretaker government Sultana Kamal, who chaired the second session of the workshop, said, "The forest laws and policies are related to policing rather than protecting the forests and forest dwellers."

Under the repressing laws, government often tend to harass the indigenous people integrally related to and dependent on the

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PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Residents of Nandipara near Golabari Bridge in the capital illegally take water from Wasa line using plastic pipes. The photo was taken yesterday.

### 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.