

OHAKA WEDNESDAY AUGUST 29, 2007

Tidal water woes of North Agrabad residents

DWAIPAYAN BARUA

More than one lakh people living at North Agrabad ward in the port city have long been experiencing inundation due to onrush of tidal water even in the dry season.

The residents of CDA Residential Area and different blocks of Halishahar housing estate are the worst sufferers.

Tidal water of the Bay of Bengal enters the area of the city centre through Mohesh Khal (canal) from the river Karnaphuli.

The residents want a permanent solution to the problem through renovation and proper maintenance of the canal and the adjoining drains as well as building a sluice gate at the Saltgola point.

Most of the 40,000 residents living in around 350 plots along 29 roads of the posh CDA Residential Area are now forced to shift their houses elsewhere as abrupt inundation keep them hostage during the high tide of every full moon.

"There was a time when boats carrying goods moved through the canal and one could take pride being a resident of this posh residential area amid such a scenic beauty," said Khaifur Alam Suzzan.

"But, now the area is emerging rather like a sorrow and water trap forcing us to think of shifting

houses to elsewhere," said Suzan, a businessman of shipping sector who had been living in the area for around four decades.

Ground floors and underground water tanks of most of the houses go under water during high tide and the situation worsens during downpour, said Sirajul Islam, president of Agrabad Residential Area Socio Cultural Association (ARASCA).

The situation deteriorated after June 11 devastating rain when the whole area went under chest-deep water and it is worsening day by day, he said.

During the full moon tide, the residents are to face a great hurdle twice a day while going out for work in the morning and returning home in the afternoon.

Of the residents, miseries of over 4,000 studying in nearby educational institutions like Hati Khor High School, Agrabad Girls High School and Agrabad Mahila College at CDA residential area, Bank Colony School, Agrabad Government Colony High School, Forest Colony School and Kalakalai High School know no bound due to the inundation and waterlogging even in the summer.

Patients coming to the nearby Chittagong Maa O Shishu Hospital and people visiting different offices in the area also

fall victim to the inundation during high tide.

Anwara Alam, principal of Agrabad Mahila College at Road No 17, said they were forced to suspend classes before the scheduled time for break almost everyday during the first fortnight of this month since tidal water flooded the class rooms and office rooms.

The inundated roads also cause accidents, injuring people while returning home by vehicles or rickshaws at this time when private cars getting stuck under knee-deep water are a common scene.

ARASCA Secretary General ABM Rezaul Karim said they urged the acting city mayor M Manjurul Alam at a meeting recently to raise the height of roads in the CDA residential area, including Road No 17 where three renowned educational institutions are situated.

Around 70,000 residents of Muhuripara, Panwalapara, Dailapara, Uttara, Agrabad Excess Road, Shyamali, Shantibagh, K-block and L-block of Halishahar housing estate are also facing the same problem due to the inundation.

Acting Chief Engineer of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Nizamuddin Chowdhury said tidal water usually enters the port city through 22 points of



Students on the way to schools and colleges are seen braving tidal water that inundates CDA residential area during the high tide while a rickshaw van, right, makes its way in the tidal water.



STAR PHOTO

different canals stretching from Kalurghat Mohra to North Patenga.

The water entering through other 21 points recedes immediately after the high tide without affecting nearby areas.

But, the water entering through Saltgola point of Mohesh Khal near Chittagong port get stuck to create waterlogging and inundation at CDA Residential Area and adjoining areas since the locality

sits three feet below the tidal level, Nizamuddin said.

He said CCC has already started re-excavation of Mohesh Khal through eviction of encroachers up to Chhotopool point.

Re-excavation or renovation might not help much as the area is situated beneath the tidal level unless a sluice gate at Saltgola point is constructed, Nizamuddin said.

AIMM Mainul Hoque, who has

been living in CDA residential area for 24 years, urged the authorities concerned to take short-term and long-term measures to rid the residents of the posh residential area of inundation and waterlogging.

Road accidents on rise in Ctg

50 killed in 12 mishaps in two and a half months

NUR UDDIN ALMGIR

Loss of lives in road accidents marked a sharp rise with at least 22 people killed in four accidents within a span of four days since August 11 in the port city and Chittagong district.

Reckless driving, lack of awareness among the drivers, poor traffic management and absence of stern measures against violators of traffic rules were blamed for such road accidents.

At least 50 people were killed in 12 accidents in the city and district in the last two and a half months since June 8 while many of such road crashes remained unreported, sources said.

Of them, 31 were killed in five most grisly accidents that took place on Bhatiari Link Road, Customs intersection in the city, Sitakunda, Pahartali city gate and at Mirer Sarai on August 11, 12, 13 and 15 and on July 14, sources added.

In all these cases, the drivers excepting one responsible for Sitakunda accident have managed to flee, said the sources.

"Cases are filed in connection with the road mishaps only to be withdrawn later with the accused settling the matter giving a very little compensation to the victim's family," said Assistant Director Sheikh Ataullah of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA).

In some cases police discourage filing of cases for road accidents for bribe from both the accused and the plaintiff in the name of negotiating the matter, said transport owner Maruf Hussain citing an instance involving his transport.

Lack of mobile courts and monitoring encourages drivers to run vehicles without legal documents or fitness certificates to cause more accidents, said the passengers and pedestrians.

Rashedul Hasan, a bus passenger, said, "Mobile courts are



Trucks are seen in competition, posing a serious threat of accidents at Customs intersection in the city, left, while a city service bus in such a competition smashed a microbus, right, leaving five people of a family dead on August 12.

rarely seen. Only Chittagong Port Authority Magistrate Munir Chowdhury occasionally conducts some mobile courts."

Munir Chowdhury said he sent some 150 people in jail in one year and fined many vehicles

for reckless driving.

The mobile courts and punishments also helped check reckless driving and bring down the number of accidents to some extent, he said.

He said, "Though the city

dwellers welcomed the drive it could not be continued due to agitation by the transport workers and owners as well as the pressure from the political high-ups favouring them."

Holding the carelessness and

mind-set of the accused drivers responsible for the accidents, he said, "You would not find any fault in documents and certificates that show the drivers are competent and skilled as well as the vehicles are fit."

Ataullah said, "Our drivers are not well trained and very often care a little about the safety of the

passengers or pedestrians. Sometimes, they leave the steering wheels to their helpers or assistants that cause accidents."

He said some changes are needed in the Motor Vehicle Ordinance 1983 to check reckless driving.

Munir Chowdhury said the maximum penalty up to Tk 5000 is very negligible to streamline reckless driving. But six months to one year's imprisonment of a poor driver was sufficient to make the drivers alert, he added.

He underscored the need for proper monitoring of the cases to ensure punishment of the accused drivers.

He said at least four magistrates, including one for conducting mobile courts against reckless driving and faulty vehicles for a maximum of one year, can help improve the situation a lot.

Ataullah said, "Our drivers are not well trained and very often care a little about the safety of the

passengers or pedestrians. Sometimes, they leave the steering wheels to their helpers or assistants that cause accidents."

He said creating awareness among the passengers, pedestrians and drivers is needed to avoid accidents.

He said BRTA conducts mobile inspections with the help of police and takes action against the drivers and vehicles having faulty documents.

Mohammad Sarwar Hossain said lack of road dividers and islands also encouraged the drivers to overtake each other, causing accidents.

Assistant Commissioner (Traffic) of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) Mohammad Iltumish underscored the need for bringing in changes in the process of issuing licence for improving skill of the drivers.

He suggested orientation programmes for the drivers at least for three days before handing over licences to them.

the week that was

Brac Bank branch shifted

Brac Bank shifted one of its branches from Bank Building to PDB Bhaban adjoining C&F Tower in the port city on Thursday.

Imran Rahman, managing director and chief executive officer (CEO) of the bank, inaugurated the branch on the first floor of C&F Tower at Agrabad commercial at a function.

Acting Head of Retail Banking Javed Amin, Head of Corporate Banking Khaja Shahriar, Head of Marketing and Corporate Affairs Zahid Ibrar Hossain and Branch Manager Ahmed Saifuddin Khaled were present at the ceremony.

Imran said with its latest facilities the branch at the new location will be able to offer better service.

Referring to Army Chief General Moeen U Ahmed's recent suggestion for financing small and medium business groups, he said Brac Bank has already launched different loan schemes for the small and middle entrepreneurs and different sections of people like teachers and students.

Saifuddin Khaled said the branch has been reshuffled to offer various facilities like ATM service, credit cards, several loans and deposit schemes in the interest of the small and medium entrepreneurs and corporate clients.

Businessman fined

A mobile court on Sunday fined a

businessman Tk 1.08 lakh for not removing his illegal structures from the bank of Rajakhal Khal (canal) in the port city.

The court led by Chittagong City Corporation Chief Revenue Officer Magistrate Syeda Sarwarjahan also demolished several illegal structures on the canal during the drive.

Besides, the court unearthed an illegal factory of tea and some rotten vermicelli and sealed off the factory.

The factory owner managed to flee sensing the presence of the court, sources said.

The court also asked several illegal occupiers to remove their structures

immediately.

Police Open House Day observed

The "Open House Day" was observed at the service delivery room of Panchali Model Police Station on Sunday.

Deputy Commissioner (North) of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) Mostafa Kamal presided over the function.

Mostafa called upon the local people to identify problems of their

areas and help police to solve them. "We have to fight unitedly to free the society from burglary, robbery, drug peddling and other unsocial activities," he said.

The local people called for increasing police patrol in front of schools and colleges and removing the illegal business firms from residential areas.

Assistant Commissioner Mizanur Rahman, Panchali Police Station Officer in Charge (OC) Himangshu Kumar Das, Dr MA Mannan, Ward commissioners Ahamadur Rahman Siddiqi, Golam Halder Mintu, Mohammad Gias Uddin, Woman Commissioner Anjuman Ara, Monwara

Begum, Akramul Karim and Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury spoke also spoke.

RMG workers, owners asked to show patience

Speakers at a dialogue urged both the workers and owners to show patience, tolerance as well as patriotism for the safety and development of the prospective readymade garment (RMG) sector.

The dialogue on 'Development of Environment in Readymade Garment

Factories' was held at Chittagong Press Club (CPC) on Sunday.

Bangladesh Integrated Social Advancement Programme (BISAP), a non-government organisation, arranged the dialogue.

BISAP vice-chairman and former consultant of World Bank MK Pasha presided over the dialogue while Executive Director of Fairtex Buying House Mujibur Rahman, Director of SK Attire Garments Md Musa, chief executive officer SM Tareq Jowad, programme manager Mahbubul Alam and worker leader Mahbub Mintu spoke.

Training workshop for nurses ends

A 13-day training workshop for nurses of child day-care centre concluded in the port city on Saturday.

Theatre and Arts for Less Fortunate (TALF), a social development organisation, organised the workshop where 15 nurses took part.

Narcotic Control Department Metro Sub Region Deputy Director Wajiduzzaman was present as the chief guest in the concluding function of the workshop.

Wajiduzzaman in his speech said the day-care centres were playing an important role for looking after the children of working mothers.

The training will help the nurses take a better care for the children, he hoped.

TALF Project Coordinator Hafizur Rahman presided over the function while Kaniz Farzana also spoke.

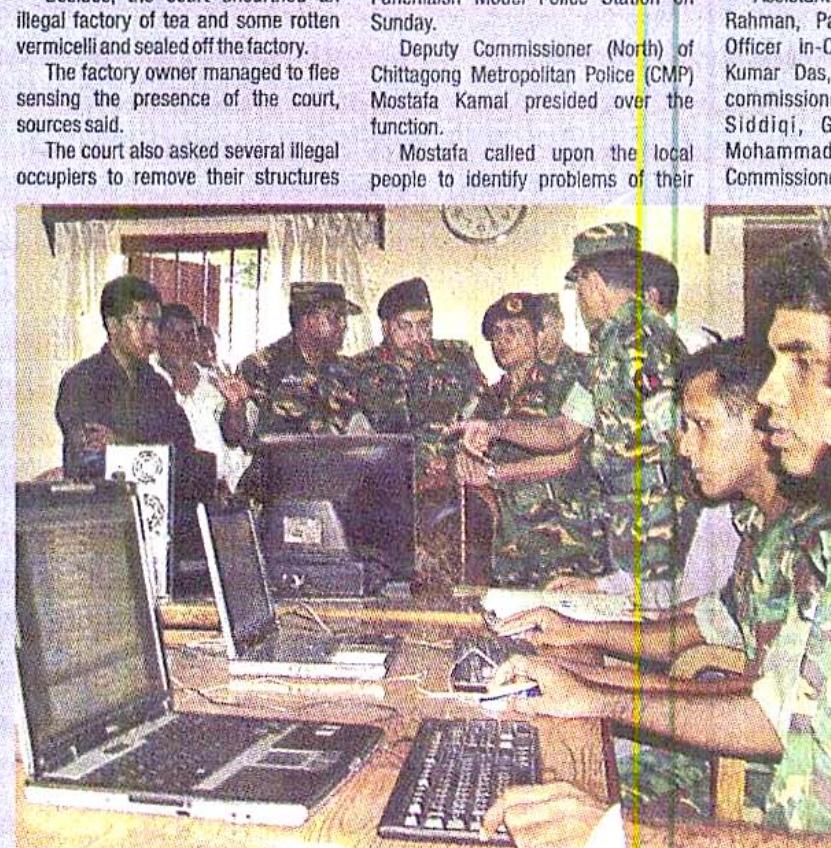
Later, the guest handed over certificates among the participants.

Commissioners hail draft ordinances

Commissioners of 41 wards under Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) hailed the Chief Adviser (CA) and the local government adviser for approval of draft ordinances for six city corporations.

The ward commissioners at the 26th general meeting chaired by Acting Mayor M Manjurul Alam at CCC auditorium on Monday hailed the ordinances having provision for forming a three-member panel of mayors, inclusion of a female commissioner in the panel and remunerations for the ward commissioners.

A statement sent to the chief adviser office and local government ministry termed the decision timely. The commissioners in the statement said they have long been demanding remuneration in vain as the consecutive governments hardly paid heed to it.



Major General Md Abdul Mubeen, GOC of 24th Infantry Division, inspects the process of voter registration with photograph and national identity card at Sitakunda Upazila Headquarters on Saturday.

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Artist Enayet Hossain briefs Indian Assistant High Commissioner Subrata Bhattacharya about his works at the Logo Exhibition organised by Academy of Performing Arts at Theatre Institute of Chittagong (TIC) on Wednesday.

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