

Tipai emits

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confined within officially informing the government that they have not started any construction yet.

"They also informed us that they would not construct the Phulertal barrage under the project," said Mir Sazzad Hossain, member of the Joint River Commission.

A Joint River Commission (JRC) meeting in September 2005 held in Dhaka India formally assured Bangladesh that they would not divert any water for their irrigation project, he said.

Hiding any information by the upper riparian countries about the use of common rivers is considered violation of the international water management convention.

The expert warn of an increase in salinity in the Meghna-Surma basin, unusual floods in har region, reduced water flow in the Surma, Kushiya and Meghna rivers in certain period, damage to the country's ecosystem and agriculture patterns in Sylhet region, among other impacts of the dam.

A chain of severe impacts is very likely as Bangladesh gets 7-8 percent of its river waters through the Barak.

Negative impacts of any large dam are very widely known around the globe. A detailed study by the World Dam Commission published in 2000 says adverse impacts of any large dams are irreversible for the lower riparian region.

The study after reviewing 1,000 dams from 79 countries concludes in its report: "The environmental impacts of dams are more negative than positive ones and in many cases dams have led to irreversible loss of species and ecosystems."

Indian High Commissioner to Dhaka Pinak Ranjan Chakrabarti at a meeting with Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain recently said though his country will have sole control over water flow at the proposed dam site, it would not make any barrage.

He also said Bangladesh would not be 'affected' by the dam.

However, experts fear once the dam is set up, it may reduce the natural monsoon flood patterns in the Sylhet region, adversely affecting cultivation and livelihoods on a vast scale.

"It will increase the risk of floods at the end of monsoon and, hamper the agriculture patterns during winter," said Ainun Nishat, eminent river expert of the country.

Rainfall patterns are changing due to climate change and a lot of rainfall takes place at the end of monsoon, said Ainun Nishat. If it rains at the end of monsoon, it will necessitate opening of the spillway gates of the dam and unusual floods will occur here, he added.

They would preserve the water during monsoon after building the dam and release it in winter, which will increase the water flow downstream.

"The land downstream the Barak in Sylhet region is wetland, where people grow crops during winter when it gets dry. If they release water during winter the wetland will be inundated and it will be a great impact on our agriculture," Nishat warned.

An increase in water level in the winter will cause a major impact on the ecosystem if the wetland gets inundated, he added.

He however said without checking every piece of information it is not possible to measure the total impact of Tipaimukh dam.

The experts fear India may hold up water flow during dry season and divert water at the proposed Phulertal Barrage 100 kilometres downstream Tipaimukh and 100 km upstream Amalsaid in Sylhet.

The Phulertal barrage would have a direct bearing on the Surma, Kushiya and Meghna rivers due to diversion of water for irrigation purposes in northeastern India. On hydropower component and rock fill dam, India claims no damage would occur to Bangladesh, but Bangladesh fears upstream water flow regulation.

Director General of Water Resources Planning Organisation (WARPO) Jaluddin Md Abdul Hye said, "We don't have enough information to talk about the issue."

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION AND GANGES WATER SHARING TREATY, 1996

According to the International Convention on Joint River Water, without the consent of the downstream river nation no single country alone can control the multi-national rivers.

But India seemingly does not care for these international laws despite being a signatory to this convention.

If India constructs the dam without the consent of Bangladesh, it will also violate the article 9 of Bangladesh-India Ganges Water Sharing Treaty, 1996.

Asked about a possible solution, Ainun Nishat said the solution has to be political. He added in the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty both the countries agreed to manage all the joint rivers on bilateral basis.

"So under the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty, both the countries can resolve by sharing

information and a joint team can study the adverse impacts on both the countries," Nishat added.

India handed over a number of primary project proposals to Bangladesh in 1979 and 1983. Later they conducted detailed studies about the project and completed the final design and environmental impact assessment but did not share those with Bangladesh.

According to the primary project proposals, the height of the Tipaimukh dam was fixed at 161.8 metres and length 390 metres to contain at least 15.9 million cubic metres of water.

ROLE OF THE FORMER GOVERNMENT
India completed the design and detailed studies and floated an international tender during the BNP-Jamaat rule, but the then government did not take up the issue properly.

At the 36th JRC meet held in Dhaka in September 2005, Bangladeshi delegates did not raise the Tipaimukh issue properly and failed to collect any information from their counterparts.

Just after two months India floated the international tender for the dam in November 2005, meaning they had nearly completed all the preparations during the JRC meet.

The then Indian water resources minister and JRC Co-chairman Priya Ranjan Dasgupta at that meet said, "We'll present Tipaimukh's planned design to Bangladesh when it is prepared."

The Indian minister also committed to Bangladesh that they would not construct any barrage at Phulertal point as per their initial plan.

But just next year, in July 2006, the pre-bid qualification of the tender for the first phase was opened. But the then BNP government did not conduct any technical study about the impacts of Tipaimukh or send any team to negotiate or visit the site.

Asked, Maj (ret'd) Hafizuddin, former water resources minister of the alliance government, said, "We repeatedly asked them to inform us about the Tipaimukh dam. But they didn't inform us anything, not even how much electricity they are going to produce."

"The Bangladesh governments are always in the dark about the issue," he observed.

About the JRC meet in 2005, he said the Indian minister assured that they would not build any barrage at Phulertal and they would inform later if they decide to build any barrage at any other point.

He added BNP will soon arrange a press conference on the issue.

INDIAN CITIZENS ALSO PROTESTING THE DAM
Information surfaced in different websites says several Indian organisations and civil society bodies are protesting the dam considering its negative impacts.

The websites also say the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) of India has found the design of the dam contains many errors, omissions, gaps, lacks in scientific rigour and falls far short of compliance of normative standards set by the scientific and academic community in India and the world.

The Action Committee Against Tipaimukh Dam (ACTIP), a platform protesting the dam, along with some other local committees from Manipur and Mizoram submitted a memorandum on March 14, 2007 to the president and prime minister of India in protest against the project.

They mentioned in their memorandum that once the project is implemented, an area of 286.20 square kilometres land will go under water forever.

Eight villages situated in the Barak valley will be completely inundated leaving over 40,000 people landless and more than 90 villages, mostly in Tamenglong district, adversely affected. Besides, about 27,242 hectares of cultivable land will be lost.

The Barak waterfalls and Zeilad Lake, which are connected with the history of the Zeliangrong people, an indigenous community in India, will go forever under water. All folklores and legends will have no monuments' proof and it will become a makeup story for the next generation.

In the memorandum they said the mega-dam proposed in Tipaimukh will smother this river, change its age-old knowable and reliable nature, and drown them all in sorrow forever.

The project is not for the common people, they said, appealing to the government to let the Aha run free.

How far they have advanced could not be confirmed, but the project is scheduled to be completed by 2012, different websites mentioned.

Recently, the Indian high commissioner said most of the Bangladeshi experts are making comments without having adequate information.

In response to the envoy's remarks, this correspondent tried to reach him in Dhaka, but he was not available.

None of the other high officials at the Indian High Commission in Dhaka could be contacted for comments despite repeated attempts in the last three days.

50,000 farmers

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and central districts, peat basin in Gopalganj, piedmont plains in the extreme northern districts, hilly areas in Chittagong Hill Tracts and Moulvibazar.

A separate organisation will also be selected for training and dissemination of training materials and information to effectively implement the project.

Under the SFC project, groups of 25 farmers will be formed and they will be provided power tillers or irrigation pumps, seeds and fertilisers free of cost.

"That pump or power tiller of a group will be used for cultivating or irrigating all the land of the group as well as other farmers whose land is nearby," SFC Project Director Moyeenuddin told The Daily Star on the sidelines of the Call for Proposal programme.

The farmers in the group will also be provided information on proper use of fertilisers. The soil of the farmers' land will be tested and they will be suggested what crops to grow, he said.

Moyeenuddin said appropriate use of fertilisers could increase 10 to 20 percent yield. Besides, organic fertiliser will also be encouraged.

After the project, the equipment the farmers received in groups will be their own. "We want farmers to have a practice of cooperation," Khandker Moyeenuddin said.

Addressing the programme as the chief guest, Additional Secretary to the Agriculture Ministry AKM Awal Majumder said they had found many inconsistencies in implementing such projects before. "Every step must be transparent so that the real poor, small and marginal farmers get the benefit," he said.

Joint Secretary to the Agriculture Ministry Saidur Rahman said the issue of climate change and its effects on soil must be considered, while implementing the project.

SRDI Director Hamidul Haque presided over the programme. EU representative Manzurul Alam also spoke.

4-lane

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it worthy of the day to reduce the number of road accidents.

Abul Hossain also stressed the need for taking collective steps by all agencies involved in traffic management and safety.

It is possible to reduce the number of road accidents by 20 percent within three years and by half in 15 years following the fourth road safety action plan, he said.

Lawmaker Shajahan Khan said it is important to adopt flawless methods for road construction to bring down the number of road accidents. He said stern actions must be taken against those involved in forging driving licences.

BRIA Chairman Kamrul Hasan, who chaired the seminar's inaugural session, said the number of accidents could be reduced significantly if all people could be made aware of traffic rules.

He said although the fatality rate in road accidents is much higher than that of AIDS, the awareness campaign on road accidents is given less importance.

Roads and Railways Division Secretary ASM Ali Kabir said although statistics point the yearly death toll in road accidents at around 4,000, the actual figure is higher than that.

The statistics in the keynote paper of Dhaka Transport Coordination Board Executive Director Abu Bakar Md Shahjahan at the seminar show a total of 3,749 people were killed in 4,869 road accidents in 2007 while the number of deaths was 1,597 in 1994.

He said road accidents cost Bangladesh US\$ 39 billion every year.

Abu Bakar cited overloading, overtaking and driving at high speed as main reasons for the rise in casualty in road accidents, he said.

Earlier, after an inter-ministerial meeting at his secretariat office yesterday the communications minister said the government has decided to invite bid for constructing metro rail in the capital.

Chaired by the minister the meeting formed a seven-member body to determine the terms and condition for the bidding and estimate feasibility of the project.

The committee would submit its report within a week and afterwards it would be placed before the cabinet committee on economic affairs, the minister said.

"On approval from the cabinet committee, we will fix terms and conditions for tender and feasibility study before inviting bids," Abul Hossain said adding, "We will have to place the feasibility study and the tender at a time to save time."

He said the investor must carry out the feasibility study at his own expenses. He said the metro rail would be constructed and operated by the investors and after a certain period of time he would have to hand over the authority to the government.

Winds dying down across the US

AP, Washington

The wind, a favorite power source of the green energy movement, seems to be dying down across the United States. And the cause, ironically, may be global warming - the very problem wind power seeks to address.

The idea that winds may be slowing is still a speculative one, and scientists disagree whether that is happening. But a first-of-its-kind study suggests that average and peak wind speeds have been noticeably slowing since 1973, especially in the Midwest and the East.

"It's a very large effect," said study co-author Eugene Takle, a professor of atmospheric science at Iowa State University. In some places in the Midwest, the trend shows a 10 percent drop or more over a decade. That adds up when the average wind speed in the region is about 10 to 12 miles per hour.

There's been a jump in the number of low or no wind days in the Midwest, said the study's lead author, Sara Pryor, an atmospheric scientist at Indiana University.

Gang tries

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from whom he bought it in March, were sent there to evict the residents and let him have possession of the house.

Retired government officer Abdul Quayum, 90, and his family live in that house on Gulshan Avenue in the city. Shereen Alam Chowdhury, daughter of Quayum, said they are the owner of the house since 1969. Her parents have been living there since 1974, she said.

Shereen said, "I woke up around 1:30am hearing screams from the ground floor and found a gang of 25 to 30 people wearing black masks with sticks and iron rods. They were beating up our driver and guard Naser and Shafiqul."

She said the intruders were also shouting for the keys to the house.

She said she immediately called Gulshan Police Station but nobody picked up. So she telephoned her next-door neighbour Abdul Awal Minto, former president of FBCCI, and her cousin Ruhul Qader who rushed to the spot and caught the 11 intruders with the help of locals and security guards.

The rest of the criminals managed to escape the scene on a microbus on which they came to the house, she said.

The criminals hung a signboard in front of the house that read "ATN Bangla is the owner of the plot and the house", Shereen said.

She alleged that the criminals tried getting her father into the microbus and kidnapping him.

Mahfuzur Rahman told The Daily Star over telephone, "I bought the house and the plot of land in March from Abdul Rashid Khan, the actual owner, but tenant Quayum has illegally been occupying the house for a long time ignoring repeated requests to vacate it."

However, Mahfuzur Rahman filed a general diary with Gulshan Police Station on June 3, 2009. He stated there that he bought the house and the plot on November 18, 2008. He also said Quayum paid him Tk 30,000 as monthly rent only once and has not been paying the rent since. Mahfuzur claimed in the general diary that Quayum threatened to kill him.

"Quayum also received Tk 4 crore from me unethically

Procurement

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parliament proceedings since this session began on June 4 protesting against not being offered 'respectable' number of front row seats in parliament.

Planning Minister AK Khandker, who placed the Public Procurement (Amendment) Bill, 2009 on February 29, proposed passing of the bill yesterday incorporating the respective parliamentary standing committee's recommendations.

This amendment allows the government to buy products or services from development partners, foreign countries and organisations under loan, grant or other contracts.

Home Minister Sahara Khatun placed the speedy trial bill on March 29, proposing the act be made effective till April 6, 2010.

Under the act, 159 cases were being investigated and 1,246 cases were in trial as of March 3.

The BNP government enacted the law in 2002 for two years but later its effectiveness was extended to six years.

The Fakhruddin-led caretaker government last year extended its effectiveness two more years with an ordinance which ceased to have effect as it was not ratified in parliament within a specified timeframe.

Wind measurements plotted out on U.S. maps by Pryor show wind speeds falling mostly along and east of the Mississippi River. Some areas that are banking on wind power, such as west Texas and parts of the Northern Plains, do not show winds slowing nearly as much. Yet, states such as Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Kansas, Virginia, Louisiana, Georgia, northern Maine and western Montana show some of the biggest drop in wind speeds.

"The stations bordering the Great Lakes do seem to have experienced the greatest changes," Pryor said Tuesday. That's probably because there's less ice on the lakes and wind speeds faster across ice than it does over water, she said.

Still, the study, which will be published in August in the peer-reviewed Journal of Geophysical Research, is preliminary. There are enough questions that even the authors say it's too early to know if this is a real trend or not. But it raises a new side effect of global warming that hasn't been looked into before.

to vacate the house,"

Mahfuzur told The Daily Star.

He claimed he bought the house maintaining all legal procedures and paid around Tk 30,000 in government fees.

However, Mahfuzur refused to talk in details about the so-called former owner of the house Abdul Rashid.

Meanwhile, Shereen told The Daily Star that her mother bought the plot, No-69 (CWS-A)-13-A, in 1969 and they have been living there since her father's retirement from government service in 1974.

She said they do not know Abdul Rashid who allegedly sold the plot to Mahfuzur Rahman.

Locals said the elderly couple have been living there for many years and they know them as the owner of the house.

Abdullah Awal Minto, former president of FBCCI, said, "I moved here in 1986 and found Quayum as my neighbour. As far as I know they own the plot."

Shereen filed a case with Gulshan Police Station yesterday accusing around 30 people including the arrested 11.

Investigation officer of the case Sub-inspector Jahangir Alam said they produced the 11 detained persons before a Dhaka court with a prayer for seven-day remand each.

The court granted two-day remand for each of the 11 accused.

Jahangir said they could not ascertain the motive behind the attack but hoped that after interrogation in remand it would be clear.

BNP's budget

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there during the speech. After they analyse the budget speech, the party will give its formal reaction to the proposed budget.

A five member-team, led by former minister Osman Faruk, will assist the chairperson analyse the budget. The other members of the team are Dr Mushfiqur Rahman, MKAnwar, Abdul Awal Minto and Dr Mahbubullah.

Meanwhile, in response to Speaker Abdul Hamid's call to join the budget session, the BNP-led opposition yesterday said they are "ready" to join the House if their demand for one more seat in the front row is met.

"Our lawmakers are attending parliamentary standing committee meetings but we will return in parliament sessions once the speaker made an amicable solution of seating arrangement," Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abidin Faroque told press in a briefing at Jatiya Sangsad Media Centre.

Asked whether the opposition will return today, the day the finance minister delivers his budget speech, the opposition chief whip replied, "We hope to get good news from the speaker within the next 48 hours."

"I will be waiting to see them in parliament during the budget session," said the speaker.

He made the call while talking to reporters at the Jatiya Sangsad Media Centre.

The speaker also asked the main opposition to place their demand in the House.

BNP on Tuesday hinted that it might return to parliament before or on the day of the budget speech in the House.

The main opposition however did not join parliament proceedings yesterday.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Tuesday said her government sincerely wants the opposition to join the parliament to make the House centre of public welfare.

The BNP-led opposition boycotted parliament proceedings since the budget session started on June 4.

Budget to spell out steps to end outages

Says energy adviser

UNB, Dhaka

Power and Energy Adviser to the prime minister Taufiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury has indicated that the national budget being placed in parliament today will provide directions to resolve the nagging power crisis.

"We are hopeful the budget will give some directions to resolve gas and power crisis," he told the editors of a selected group of newspapers at the secretariat yesterday.

Taufiq, a former energy secretary, also informed that the government plans to set up some small-scale wind and hydro power plants at the coastal and water-body areas to meet the local demand.

The Power Development Board has already moved to implement some hydro projects with 50 megawatt (MW) capacity under private sector. He, however, did not give details of the proposed hydro projects.

State Minister for Power and Energy Shamsul Haque Tuku was also present at the meeting convened to discuss the government's daylight saving measures advancing the clock by an hour from June 19.

He also said that about 200 MW electricity and 8-9 million cubic feet gas per day will be saved through the daylight saving measures.

Editors Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury of Bangladesh Observer, Alamgir Mohiuddin of Nayadiganta, Mostafa Kamal Majumdar of New Nation and Deputy Editor of Financial Express Shamsul Haque Zahid attended the meeting.

Govt to scrap

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to get rid of such practices.

Mannan said he will be fair in such matters. "No matter how powerful leader or influential person one may be, the government will not give any allotment without following the prescribed rules and law."

Referring to Rajuk's allotment of housing plots in Uttara and Purbachal projects, he said that, so far, 1.65 lakh applications have been submitted against over 6,000 plots.

"We will complete the difficult task with utmost transparency," he said.

Opportunists

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lawmakers are the first to know the contents of the budget document.

To ensure that entrepreneurs are not able to take any undue advantage through having advance knowledge about the contents of an upcoming budget, in Bangladesh it is usually placed in the House on a Thursday, the last working day of a week.

Yet every year the media manages to publish some reports giving some ideas about how the new budget might be. But this year the taxation part of NBR in the next budget was already published almost verbatim, in advance.

The finance minister earlier hinted to the media that prices of motor vehicles and cigarettes might go up. He also told journalists that they were getting too much of excess information about the next budget this year.

The finance ministry sources said now the leak has become a source of much embarrassment for the finance minister.

Another source in the ministry said, as the finance minister had given some hints about the next budget, NBR officials took it a notch higher by divulging some more to journalists.

5 major structures

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Five of them have obtained court stay orders on eviction.

But a number of religious structures on the river Turag were given immunity from eviction taking into consideration the religious sentiment, said the officials concerned.

The drive in Turag is now being conducted only on the Tongi part of the river.

A total of 63 structures were identified as illegally built upon the river on Tongi part while 69 were on the Dhaka end.

The drives in both the rivers resume this morning.

Our Narayanganj correspondent reports: The team also tore down a section of a five-story building owned by Jahangir and finished demolition of a portion of another building of the same owner.

Shahnewaz obtained a court's stay order on eviction of another building he owns.

PDB's bidder

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million Euro, plus Tk 20 crore) is also not very attractive compared to the prices offered by the three other bidders who participated in the fifth tender for the project. The read out price offers by the other bidders were actually around 95 million dollars. But those prices proved to be higher than the one offered by SEC when the tender committee added the cost of spares.

A high official of PDB noted, "Everybody knows who is making it happen. But the scope for entertaining inexperienced companies was created during the regime of the immediate past caretaker government."

"Secondly all bidders made a common mistake over promising payment of taxes. They said they would bear the taxes as per the tax rules of the present time. That happened because of PDB's mistake in preparing the tender terms. PDB documents said the bidders would have to bear the taxes without stating according to which time period," he added.

"In PDB, the tender committee is not dictated by the board. The committee sends its report to the ministry, and the ministry gives the final nod. This is unlike government run companies such as Gas Transmission Company Limited, where the board may overturn tender committee recommendations," he pointed out.

"The ministry must decide what kind of contractors should be encouraged to build power plants. Do we need to invite potato traders here by relaxing the clauses?" he quipped out of frustrations.

Anti-crime drive

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of check-posts and mobile courts will also be increased, he added.

The commissioner said the special drives would be carried out at the crime-prone zones of the city.

He claimed that law and order in the city is improving as more arms and narcotics have been seized. "Arms and narcotics recoveries during the last month show the improvement and our sincerity," he said.

"This time deaths in police encounters have been added to those of murder," said the commissioner.

The DMP chief in monthly crime report said the number of homicide dropped to 22 (in 21 incidents) in May from 24 in April. A total of 31 people were murdered in May last year, he added.

The report said DMP arrested 7,477 people last month including 38 listed criminals, 1,019 on warrants and 115 more under section 54. In May DMP recovered 24 firearms, 90 rounds of ammunition and 33 sharp weapons while narcotics worth Tk 33,55,140, according to the report.