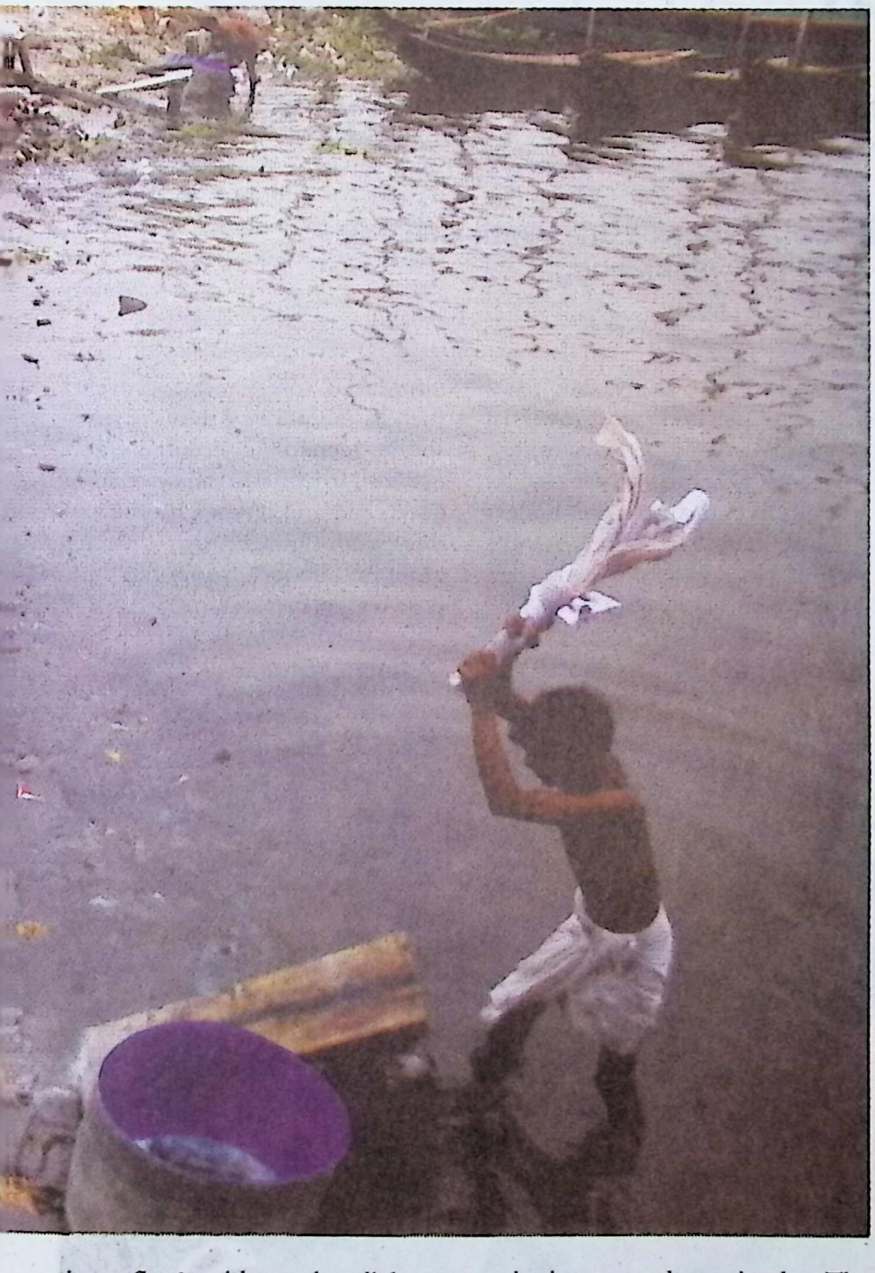
either banks of the rivers, encircling the capital with vast walkways. The streets are well-lit with solar panels and the elite River Police patrol the area with their walkie-talkies to update each other regularly. The clean water of the rivers flows without the slightest hindrance where laden vessels, river buses, floating restaurants, traditional fishermen and boatmen pursue their everyday businesses. Children walking with their parents along the broad walkway stop and gaze in wonder at half a dozen rowers speeding past in their kayaks. A group of gardeners water the plants and mow the lush green slopes. Elderly men play garden chess at a piazza beautifully created along the walkway where scores of onlookers watch patiently. The party partially dissolves with the setting sun and the concurrent sound of azan from loud speakers atop hundreds of mosques for which the capital Dhaka is so famous.



AMDADUL HUQ/DRIKNEWS

The silver lining

The silver lining in the clouds is already emerging. The High Court on June 25 issued a set of directives for the government to save the rivers around the capital from encroachment and pollution. The HC orders come at a time when The Daily Star and Channel-i jointly conducted an intensive campaign to save the rivers. The historic directives were termed by legal experts as 'comprehensive' and hailed for clarity and understanding.

The directives are as follows:

- Demarcate Buriganga, Sitalakhya, Turag and Balu rivers by November 30.
- Declare the four rivers as ecologically critical areas till then
- Officials involved with river demarcation cannot be transferred till completion of the task
- Complete demarcation without any discrimination and influence
- Provide sufficient security to officials during the work
- Install pillars by May 30, 2010 to protect demarcated river boundaries
- Remove all garbage and illegal structures from the rivers by November 30, 2010
- Construct walkways and plant trees on the river banks by May 31, 2011
- Continue on-going eviction drive
- Dredge the source areas of the dying rivers within five years
- Government officials will be held responsible if court directives are not followed duly.

Morshed Ali Khan *is special*