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River cleanup takes off

Targets 3,000 tonnes waste extraction in 3 months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several hundred locals in a colourful boat procession were chanting slogans in support of saving the Buriganga as Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan pulled the lever of an old crane that scooped a mass of polythene and sludge from the river at Badamtoli yesterday.

A host of ministers, lawmakers, civil society members, top government officials, pressmen and hundreds of people watched the festive inauguration of the Buriganga clean-up drive of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority.

The BIWTA took up the pilot project to initially clean up one kilometre area of the riverbed near the Sadarghat launch terminal. It aims to extract over 3,000 tonnes of wastes in three months.

Two cranes were deployed yesterday on Badamtoli and Ananagar sides of the Buriganga. Eight dredgers will be deployed eventually, sources said.

BIWTA officials said they are planning to excavate up to one metre in the middle of the riverbed and two metres of shore on both sides of the Buriganga.

The BIWTA is supposed to dredge 3km from Babubazar ghat to Kamrangirchar Madrasa and another 1.5km in the river Turag from Tongi bazar area towards Gazipur.

The projects are supposed to be completed in June 2011.

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A man while dyeing clothes manually on the bank of Buriganga at Keraniganj watches the BIWTA drive to remove the garbage from the river yesterday. Manual dyers are mostly responsible for river pollution as they rampantly throw leftover chemicals into the water.

PHOTO: SHAFIQU ALAM

Dumping, cleaning go together

PINAKI ROY

Despite the fanfare accompanying the opening ceremony of the Buriganga River excavation programme yesterday, the practice of dumping waste into the river continues unabated.

Large amounts of garbage generated by the wholesale fruit and vegetable markets of Babubazar, Waizghat and Badamtoli are being thrown directly onto the riverbank and small factories, commercial and residential establishments are also contributing to the problem.

A top official from Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority who spoke on condition of anonymity said, "Yes we are worried [about the dumping of rubbish]."

"If we do not stop garbage being thrown in the river, nothing at all will change," he said.

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Implement all plans sincerely, quickly

PM directs colleagues, top officials

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday directed her cabinet colleagues and top bureaucrats to work sincerely for immediate implementation of various development projects.

She also asked Finance Minister AMA Muhith to immediately disburse funds for implementing her government's development plans on time. She directed the authorities concerned to make sure no project is delayed due to fund issues.

The directives were given at a regular cabinet meeting yesterday.

"Many development projects taken up in the last one year must be implemented immediately. Time is running out... you all have to work sincerely, make decisions quickly and implement those timely," a cabinet member quoted the prime minister as saying.

Chairing the meeting at the Prime Minister's Office, Hasina expressed happiness over the performance of her cabinet members and praised a few of them.

Hasina also thanked the media saying the media had played a significant role last year, which helped the government achieve success in different sectors.

She asked her cabinet colleagues to improve their performance so that the Awami League could deliver what it pledged before the ninth parliamentary elections.

"Warm-up time is over. You have learnt a lot during the last one year and time has come to perform," a minister quoted her as saying.

A number of the ministers and state ministers admitted in the meeting that they were new to the cabinet and they did not know how a government functions. "But we have learnt a lot following your guideline during the last one

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PM's speech focuses on success, lacks future plan

Observe civil society leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's speech to the nation was basically narration of her government's successes, criticism of previous governments and she avoided talking about specific issues and future plans, civil society members said yesterday.

A number of them contradicted her claim that the Anti-Corruption Commission was working independently and that prices of essentials were stable. They, however, appreciated the boost in agricultural production.

Hafizuddin Khan, former

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

ONE YEAR OF BNP-LED ALLIANCE

JS pledge forgotten

Culture of negative role of opposition parties sees no change

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The main opposition BNP seems to have failed to play its due role in parliament during the first year of the Awami League-led grand alliance rule because of strategic weakness and inconsiderate boycott of the House.

By joining the inaugural sitting of the ninth parliament on January 25, the main opposition raised a ray of hope for a change in the negative political culture of House boycott.

But opposition lawmakers very quickly switched back to previous culture, forgetting the oath of office to faithfully discharge duties and not to allow personal interests to influence the discharge of duties as MPs.

After taking oath along with party deputies on January 15, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia also announced her party deputies will play a constructive role in parliament.

The main opposition, which in the

Westminster-type democracy forms and runs a shadow cabinet, could not effectively oversee the executive's functions and raise strong voice in parliament due to the boycott on some issues, most of them related to "partisan interests".

In fact, BNP's parliamentary affairs remain in a shambles leaving almost all of the party deputies in the dark about the future course of action.

The BNP Parliamentary Party (BNPPP) did not hold any meeting for over 10 months. As a result, the party deputies could not discuss their parliamentary strategies.

The BNP lawmakers submit to the Parliament Secretariat notices and questions during and ahead of each session seeking answers from the ministers and times to speak on different issues in the House.

But they are made to continue the boycott

SEE PAGE 7 COL 4

People to judge govt success

Hasina says in address to nation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said in the last one year her government tried with all sincerity to live up to the public trust bestowed upon it in the last general election.

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Tender documents snatched, bidders beaten up

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criminals yesterday beat up officials of two companies, who went to bid for a tender at Dhaka Power Distribution Company office at Paribagh, and got away with their bid documents.

Sources claimed the incident happened before inactive policemen.

The Dhaka Power Distribution Company authorities cancelled the tender in an emergency meeting while official of Prime Power International, Abul Kashem, filed a general diary with Shahbagh Police Station in connection with the snatching.

Police and sources said yesterday was the last day for bidding for the work order worth Tk 65 lakh. The job was to repair and maintain transformers for one year.

Witnesses said when officials of Prime Power International and JHM Consortium reached the tender boxes on the first floor in the afternoon, the criminals snatched the bid documents and

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Govt fails in every sector

Says BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Total failure in every sector marks the first year of the Awami League-led grand alliance rule, BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain said yesterday.

"The grand alliance government has had no success in the last one year. It has failed in all sectors," he told journalists after a party meeting at the BNP central office in Naya Paltan.

The party decided to observe January 11 as "Black Day" by hoisting black flags at party offices, saying the emergency rule was imposed on the day in 2007 in the country violating the country's constitution and disrupting democratic process.

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The Daily Star - nielsen OPINION SURVEY Citizens speak

How do people rate Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Opposition Leader Khaleda Zia?

How do they look upon the state of governance? Where do they think the country is heading?

The Daily Star and Nielsen Bangladesh have once again conducted a detailed and precision opinion survey on how the citizens assess the government and the opposition, a year into the election. Grab the 4-page supplement on the survey with tomorrow's issue of The Daily Star and get to know about interesting views of the people.

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