

Wasa removes

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two-storey concrete buildings built encroaching upon the canal that stretches from Mirpur Mazar (shrine) to Kalyanpur, said Ruhul Amin, executive engineer of Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa).

Earlier, Dhaka district administration demarcated the alignment of the canal.

Wasa conducted the drive on the last day of a two-day eviction drive launched Wednesday at Baten Nagar.

The tall buildings have been built encroaching around 15 feet into the canal, said Amin.

Wasa evicted illegal occupancy along one kilometre of the canal Wednesday.

It employed around 70 day-labourers and an excavator to carry out the drive.

A magistrate from Wasa with riot police maintained law and order during the drive.

Amini

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investigation officer of the case, submitted the charge sheet before the court and appealed to issue an arrest warrant against Amini.

OC Azizul Haq of the police station on August 11 filed the case with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court against Amini for making derogatory remarks about the country's constitution.

On July 14, Amini reportedly told a meeting in the city's Lalbagh area that the recently amended constitution will be thrown into the dustbin. Two Bangla dailies - - Amar Desh and Amader Shomoy -- published the comment the next day.

Meantime, a High Court (HC) division on September 26 directed Amini to surrender before a trial court immediately after he appeared before the HC seeking an ad interim bail in the case.

Earlier on July 24, a Dhaka Judges' Court lawyer filed another sedition case against Amini on charge of making the same comment.

Ex-Jamaat MP

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that left at least five people, including an assistant commissioner of police, wounded and seven vehicles shattered on September 19, police sources said.

Hundreds of Jamaat men took to the streets on that day as part of their country-wide demonstrations to demand release of their top leaders who are behind bars on war crime charges. They clashed with police at Bahaddarhat crossing in the port city.

The Jamaat leader was taken to the DB police headquarters on Minto Road. He would be handed over to Chittagong police, said Nurul Islam.

Shahjahan was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment by a court in 2008 for a graft case related to the import of a sport utility vehicle under duty-free quota.

He is also accused in several other cases including two for murder.

AL infighting

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Bepari of the village, was the supporter of a faction led by Amirul Islam, industry and commerce affairs secretary of the district unit of AL.

Arju Mia, officer-in-charge of Gajaria Police Station, told The Daily Star that supporters of Amirul and Abdul Motin Montu, former chairman of the upazila, locked in the clash at about 1:45pm.

They were returning to the village after appearing before a Munshiganj court in connection with cases filed over previous enmity, he said.

During the hour-long clash, both groups used sharp weapons and exchanged several rounds of bullets, witnesses said.

Rafiqul received three bullets in his chest during the clash. He was rushed to Munshiganj Sadar Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

Locals said that Amirul and Montu-backed candidates had lost their ballots in the recently held union parishad election. From then, the supporters of both groups often lock in clashes in their attempts to establish supremacy in the area.

At least four cases have been filed against each other in last few days.

Grameen Bank

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Bangladesh, as a secular democratic country, was home to a free and robust media and a very vibrant civil society.

And with regard to Grameen, the Bangladesh minister told her American counterpart that as a statutory body, Grameen enjoyed all rights and privileges. She stated that the Bangladesh government was proud and so was the country "that we have a Nobel-winning institution. And we believe firmly, firmly believe, that it will continue to do the job that it is supposed to do with a lot of success."

During the meeting, which lasted 45 minutes, Dipu Moni raised a number of issues, including the extradition of Bangabandhu's killers from the US, trial of the 1971 war criminals, duty-free access for Bangladeshi products, Grameen Bank, freedom of press and climate change.

She informed Mrs. Clinton that it was extremely important for Bangladesh to hold the trial of those who had murdered the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of his family members in order bring to an end the culture of impunity which prevailed in the country for more than thirty-four years.

The Bangladesh foreign minister mentioned that of the six fugitives from justice, AM Rashed Chowdhury had been living in the US. She sought Washington's cooperation in the repatriation of the self-confessed killer to Bangladesh in the interest of upholding justice.

Responding to Dr. Dipu Moni's comments, Mrs. Clinton said the issue had been under judicial process and assured her that the State Department would look into it, said a foreign ministry press release.

On the issue of the war crimes trials in Bangladesh, the secretary of state expressed her satisfaction with the meetings US ambassador-at-large for war crimes Stephen Rapp earlier had with the Bangladesh authorities and hoped that the trials would be conducted in conformity with international standards.

Dipu Moni also urged the US side to enable duty-free access for Bangladeshi products into the American market. She also pointed to the need for a rectifying of excessive tariff. She sought

Mrs. Clinton's help in including Bangladesh under the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) since the country was eminently qualified for it.

Seeking Washington's cooperation in climate change mitigation, particularly in the matter of funding and transfer of green technology by the US, she said Bangladesh had been taking necessary steps to face the threat of climate change. The Bangladesh government, she said, had created a fund of \$300 million for adaptation programmes.

Welcoming the Bangladesh foreign minister to Washington, Hillary Clinton underscored the importance of US relations with Bangladesh, a secular, Muslim majority democracy.

She appreciated the various initiatives undertaken by the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, including interaction with countries in the South Asia region, particularly the initiative to address the outstanding issues with India.

"We want to work with Bangladesh and other countries in the area to promote regional integration so that there are greater economic opportunities, that many of the problems that prevent the free flow of commerce can be overcome so that the people of the entire region can prosper," Clinton said.

She assured Dhaka of continued cooperation in tackling terrorism. With regard to Bangladesh's request for facilities under MCC, she said the US side would work together with Bangladesh to that end.

Dipu Moni extended an invitation to Mrs. Clinton to visit Bangladesh. The secretary of state responded positively by saying she would like to visit Bangladesh next year. The foreign minister also extended, on behalf of the president and the prime minister of Bangladesh, an invitation for President Barack Obama to visit Bangladesh.

US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Affairs Robert Blake, Bangladesh Ambassador to the US Akramul Qader and Foreign Ministry Director General (Americas) Muhammad Abdul Muhit were present at the meeting.

Accused stalker

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Police Station, Officer-in-Charge Ashok Kumar Nandi said.

In primary interrogation, Gomosta admitted to his crime, district Police Superintendent (SP) Devdas Bhattacharyya said.

Visiting the area, the SP also asked the investigation officer in the case to submit the charge sheet at the earliest. Gomosta would be sent to the district judicial magistrate for recording his confessional statement, he said.

Gomosta stabbed Sharmin, a teacher at Purba Shujankathi Government Primary School, to death on Wednesday afternoon for refusing his amorous proposal on her way back home. Law enforcers yesterday found a sharp weapon near his house at Shanuarh village of South Goila union. He purchased the knife only a day before the killing, police said.

The victim, daughter of Shahjahan Sarder of the same village, was laid to rest at the graveyard of her in-laws house after three funeral prayers, attended by hundreds of people. The body reached Agoiijhara in the afternoon after an autopsy at Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College and Hospital.

Locals, teachers and students of different schools yesterday demonstrated in the upazila demanding speedy trial of the killer and also besieged the local police station. Teachers of all the primary schools in the upazila yesterday boycotted classes to protest

the death.

They also began observing a seven-day mourning programme that includes wearing black badges, hoisting black flags, forming human chains, handing over memorandum to upazila administration, arranging condolence meeting, said Sohrab Hossain, president of the Agoiijhara Upazila Primary Teachers' Association.

Police records say, Gomosta was earlier arrested at least three times and kept in custody for around 10 months on different charges of stalking and extortion.

The victim's family said the Jubo League leader, a drug addict, had been stalking Sharmin for long. He continued making unwanted amorous advances even after she had been married off to army person Sohel Talukdar of the neighbouring village. He was relentlessly harassing Sharmin even after facing a general diary (GD) and warnings by local elites.

Husband of the victim, who reached home from his work place in Chittagong early yesterday, alleged that Gomosta was an aide to upazila parishad vice-chairman and upazila unit Jubo League general secretary Jasimuddin Sarder, who used to back his misdeeds.

Jasimuddin, denying the allegation, demanded punishment of the killer. He said Gomosta was recently ousted from the area following pressure from locals and that his return in the area was unknown to him.

Railway

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at a speed of around 100 kilometres per hour, 20 km faster than the existing ones, said Shamsuzzaman, director of procurement of 11 nos metre-gauge locomotives project.

The engines will pull both passenger and goods trains on the Dhaka-Chittagong route, considered the country's most important rail route due to the Chittagong port, according to railway officials.

Over the years, the number of locomotives has been reduced to 295 from 486. Moreover, most of those are 30 to 40 years old, they maintained.

Scarcity of locomotives has long been blamed largely for the present deplorable state of the railway sector as the successive governments have failed to take initiatives to procure new engines.

BNP team

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others, were present during the talks.

Asked about the topic of discussion, Shamsar Mobin said, "It was a courtesy call at the invitation of the Danish embassy. No political issues were discussed as it was not a formal meeting."

A EU diplomat on condition of anonymity told The Daily Star that they met the BNP leaders as part of their regular dialogue with political parties.

Party insiders, however, said their leaders explained to the diplomats the necessity of the caretaker government system for a free and fair election.

They also told the envoys that the Election Commission should be reconstituted in consultation with all the political parties. Otherwise it won't win public trust, a meeting source told The Daily Star.

During the meeting, the BNP leaders also talked about the security of Khaleda Zia and the cases filed against her and her two sons.

On Election Commission's move to introduce electronic voting machine in the October 30 Narayanganj City Corporation polls, the BNP delegate told the diplomats that the system will create a scope for vote rigging, sources said.

Amnesty

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summit in Surrey in Canada's westernmost British Columbia province on October 20.

In a memorandum submitted last month to Canada's attorney general but only now released to the media, the London-based group charged that Bush has legal responsibility for a series of human rights violations.

"Canada is required by its international obligations to arrest and prosecute former president Bush given his responsibility for crimes under international law including torture," Amnesty's Susan Lee said in a statement.

"And no one, including the man who served as president of the world's most powerful nation for eight years can be allowed to stand above that law,"

The statement added.

"As the US authorities have, so far, failed to bring Bush to justice, the international community must step in. A failure by Canada to take action during his visit would violate the UN Convention Against Torture and demonstrate contempt for fundamental human rights," Lee said.

But Immigration Minister Jason Kenney blasted Amnesty for "cherry picking cases to publicise, based on ideology."

Bush cancelled a visit to Switzerland in February, after facing similar public calls for his arrest.

Amnesty cites several instances of alleged torture of detainees at the Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, naval facility, in Afghanistan and in Iraq, by the US military.

It's a big problem

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Awami League's efforts to cajole one candidate out of the polls scheduled for October 30. He said Awami League's effort was "direct interference".

He said the electoral laws say that the polls to all local government bodies are non-partisan in nature but the reality is different.

"Amend the laws if you [the political parties] want to keep influencing local government bodies' polls. We do not have any problem if the polls to local government bodies are made partisan in nature," Huda said.

Huda yesterday termed BNP-backed mayoral candidate Taimur Alam Khandoker's remarks on electronic voting machines (EVM) unwarranted. Taimur earlier opposed the use of the machines in the NCC polls and alleged that the machines would be used to

rig the polls.

"Such comment without examining the EVMs is unfortunate. It's an electoral offence," Huda said, adding, "The maximum punishment for committing such offences is cancellation of candidacy." He urged all not to ruin the atmosphere conducive to holding a free and fair election.

On deployment of the army, the CEC said the matter is also under the EC's consideration. "We are constantly observing the law and order in the electoral areas. We will go for army deployment, if needed," he added.

Frontrunners Ivy and Taimur have been demanding army deployment during the polls.

ELECTORAL DEBATE

The CEC said the Election Commission would organise an open electoral debate for mayoral candidates on

Everybody is extortionist

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employed in the transport industry that has over 5 lakh buses and minibuses. There are 7,490 workers' unions, 510 workers' organisations and 412 bus owners' associations.

"We admit we are involved in extortion. But you cannot stop this until you first control those with whose blessings we do it," said Mohammad Shahjahan, president of Tank Lorry Sramik Federation.

Ali Reza, acting general secretary of Biplobi Sarak Paribahan Sramik Federation, echoed the sentiment.

The other areas in this sector where extortion is endemic include welfare fund for the physically challenged workers, bus terminal operation, maintenance of truck and bus stations, and operation and maintenance of mosques, the committee chief added.

"It's interesting that there

is no discord between our politicians--be they in power or in opposition--when it comes to extortion," Israfil continued.

"The federation led by the minister enjoys advantage in extortion, to the chagrin of the other organisations."

The fear of being extorted by police is so intense among the drivers that it sometimes causes accidents as the drivers try to avoid the cops, he added.

Sharing his experience with journalists, the lawmaker said the 60-km journey between Natore and Shibganj of Chapainawabganj requires a bus to pay Tk 760 in extortion.

"After the meeting, my impression is that extortion cannot be stopped; it can only be checked to some extent if we try our best," said a frustrated Israfil.

The committee would meet other stakeholders before coming up with a set of recommendations.

AL votes for Osman

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Mahmud Swapan -- visited Shamim Osman's campaign office in Narayanganj where the candidate was informed of the decision of the party high command.

The trio did not, however, meet Selina Hayat Ivy, the other mayoral hopeful from the AL in the October 30 polls.

AL insiders said party President Sheikh Hasina sent the three-member delegation to Narayanganj to convey the party's decision to Shamim Osman.

They added that Ivy might stand aside from the campaign in a few days.

In an immediate reaction, Shamim Osman said all the leaders and supporters of the Awami League in the district had been cheered by the decision.

Referring to Ivy as his younger sister, Shamim urged her to work with him to win the election. "We are passing through a crucial time as the opposition parties and the anti-liberation forces are out to hinder the war crimes trials. In these circumstances, all progressive forces will have to work together," he said.

"I hope Ivy will respond to my call and withdraw from the electoral race and work for me," he added.

However, Narayanganj town unit AL President Anwar Hossain, who is known to be close to Ivy, said she would not quit the race.

"It's a local government non-partisan election. So there is no question of party support here. Ivy has the support of the locals and she will run in the election," he told The Daily Star.

Shamim Osman, a former AL lawmaker, and Ivy, vice-president of Narayanganj city unit AL, had both been expecting party backing for their candidacies.

Tension ran high in Dhaka and Narayanganj over the past many days when the top leadership of the party, including Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, failed to persuade either of the two to stand down. Sheikh Hasina herself sat thrice with the two separately in vain.

On October 9, the party at a

meeting between Hasina and some senior leaders at Gono Bhaban "unofficially decided" to back Ivy in the polls. As a "reward" for pulling out, meeting sources had told The Daily Star, Shamim would be offered posts in the party and in the government.

The move failed as Shamim, who now has no party post, reportedly refused to accept those "rewards".

A number of senior AL leaders had earlier told The Daily Star that either of the two would pull out on Wednesday, the last date for withdrawing candidacy, but neither of them did.

According to the nomination paper submitted to the Narayanganj election office, Shamim stands accused in five cases including murder, corruption and theft.

Ivy has no cases filed against her.

Another frontrunner Taimur Alam Khondaker, who is contesting the polls with support from BNP, faces nine graft charges.

Meanwhile, Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda yesterday expressed dissatisfaction at the "direct interference" of the ruling AL in persuading one of its aspirants to step aside.

Birishiri tree

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Officer-in-Charge of Durgapur Police Station Abul Kalam Azad said he did not get any letter from the zila parishad asking him to stop the chopping down of trees.

The High Court on Tuesday directed the government to maintain status quo for 10 days on felling of trees on both sides of a road between Janjail Bazar and Durgapur upazila in Netrakona. The order came following a writ petition filed by Liton Mrong, general secretary of Garo Baptist Convention.

Liton Mrong yesterday said cutting trees is continuing. Two contractors at the spot instructed workers to continue their work.

October 25 to apprise the voters of the candidates. Bangladesh Television, Bangladesh Betar and bdnews24.com will cover the three-hour-long debate live, he said.

Six mayoral aspirants will be invited to take part in the debate at Narayanganj. Voters will be allowed to ask candidates questions about their plans if they become the mayor.

He said Shushashoner Jonney Nagorik (Shujan), citizens for good governance, will hold another debate for councillor candidates.

SYMBOL ALLOCATED

The returning officer yesterday allocated election symbols to mayoral and councillor candidates in the NCC polls. Shamim was allocated "wall clock", Ivy "inkpot-pen" while Taimur got "pine-apple".

Drone kills three militants in Pakistan

BBC ONLINE

A US drone attack yesterday killed at least three suspected militants in north-west Pakistan, intelligence officials said.

They say the drone fired two missiles close to a compound in the town of Miranshah in the North Waziristan tribal region, near the Afghan border.

North and South Waziristan are regularly targeted by drone missiles.

The US says the region provides sanctuary to al-Qaeda and Taliban insurgents who are involved in attacks on Nato forces in Afghanistan.

India launches four satellites

IANS, Andhra Pradesh

An Indian rocket yesterday successfully launched an Indo-French tropical weather satellite and three other smaller satellites into orbit from the spaceport here.

India became the second nation in the world to launch such a mission. The Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) rocket Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) scored past the half-century mark by launching the Megha-Tropiques and other satellites.

ISRO chairman K Radhakrishnan told reporters: "The PSLV-C18 has been a grand success. Very precisely, four satellites were injected in circular orbit."

Padma bridge

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his office yesterday.

The minister said only two deals -- requisition of land for the project and resettlement of the people affected by this -- have been made so far, and with complete transparency.

He claimed that this is the first time such work has been done in an honest way. In the past, graft allegations were made at this stage of construction of the Jamuna Bridge, he said.

The WB has already "temporarily halted" its \$1.2 billion loan for the bridge project following allegations of corruption, and the government has decided that the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) will probe those.

Asked whether the project can be implemented with domestic resources in case the WB does not fund it, the finance minister said it is not possible. The WB financing will be required.

He declined to say anything when asked whether the WB's allegations involve the communications minister and his business firm.

The minister had earlier said the government would issue a statement regarding the graft allegations. Asked about this, he said it is a "delicate" matter.

Muith told another questioner, the government will have to decide its strategy. It has to choose between two options -- to go for a big fight with the WB or follow its decision.

He also said the present government will start construction of the bridge even if it cannot complete it during its tenure.

4 held

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we called in police," Moulvibazar Forest Beat Officer Chandan Majumder, who led the drive, said yesterday.

Shaheen of Comilla and Sumon and Matin of Sunamganj were held on charges of keeping the snakes. The forest team recovered ten snakes including four cobras from them.

Police picked hotel owner Babar Rahman, a Bangladesh-born British citizen, as he obstructed the officials in the discharge of their duties.

Chandan Majumder also said there were seven smugglers but some managed to flee.

According to a forest department source, the snakes were caught from different residential houses and bushes in the town. A few days ago another consignment of snakes was sent to the capital.

The four have been sued under Wildlife Act with Moulvibazar Sadar Model Police Station.

They were produced before court yesterday and sent to jail, said Azharul adding the snakes were released at Lawachara National Park following court permission.

Rejoinder

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The rejoinder said, "with a view to setting up power plants, the companies started acquiring land through purchase from the people of the locality through negotiation." The process of acquiring land is almost at its last stage. In order to ensure that the companies do not encroach upon any khas land or river area, the companies demarcated river boundary through BIWTA and the office of the Deputy Commissioner, Dhaka. The companies have never put pressure upon any person nor have they frightened any one for selling land in their favour. No incident of taking commission from anyone also took place. Rather the management acquired the land by providing more than the value determined by the government. The managements of the companies are trying to acquire some more land than what is necessary for two power plants. It may be pointed here that the land which we are purchasing is the paternal property of Anwar Hossain, chairman of Vakurta union, and "no project has been chosen yet to implement in that area (Amusement Park)."

The photograph that accompanied the news surprised us. The management denies the "veracity" of the photograph. It is quite clear, why such news item, of a power development project bearing a national interest, has been published. The chairman and the managing director of the companies is an honourable member of parliament and respectful towards the law and order of the country. Being jealous of his popularity, some people might have made false accusations against him."

Our Reply

The site selection for the companies' projects was never done with the consent of the land owners there or approval of the Department of Environment (DoE), BIWTA or the Office of the Deputy Commissioner. One fine morning, multiple dredgers were deployed and the low-lying land there and the Atr Khal were filled up within the shortest period of time. The companies then asked the land owners to come with their deeds to sell the land to "the power projects bearing national interest". The MP's name played the key role in "acquiring" land for the two private companies owned and managed by the law-maker himself.

Government's valuation of land in an area is always much lower than the market price. Hence, many land owners who lost their land to the power projects feel grossly deprived of a fair price.

The management of the company is now trying to buy the khas water body next to their project.

The companies have not obtained the environmental clearance from the Department of Environment (DoE). In February this year when the DoE filed a case against Aslamul Haq with the Keraniganj Police Station, only then did the companies move to take a clearance certificate from the BIWTA. We stand by our report.

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