

No respite

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in line with the revisional settlement survey.

The administration will put up 8,067 boundary pillars along the 198 kilometre banks of the Turag, Buriganga and Balu rivers with an estimated Tk 15 crore.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authorities (BIWTA) will build five kilometres of walkway on the banks of the Turag river in Gabtoli and Amin Bazar after installation of boundary pillars.

Janendra Nath Sarkar, additional deputy commissioner (revenue), said, "...We need six more months to complete installation of 8,000 pillars." Once the administration finishes installing the pillars, none will be able to trade in sand or brick on the riverbanks, he said.

Sources said the government has installed pillars up to Botanical Garden in the upstream of the Turag but illegal occupation and filling up of the river continues.

Janendra Nath Sarkar told The Daily Star recently that they would send a mobile court to Gabtoli and Amin Bazar area soon to evict the traders from the riverbanks.

Rakibul Islam, superintending engineer of the BIWTA, said, "We will build a 3.8 kilometre walkway at Amin Bazar and a 1.2 kilometre walkway at Gabtoli."

Referring to sand and brick trade on the river banks, he said, "We will designate some places for those businesses. Sand traders will not be allowed to do business outside those areas."

The government is legally obligated to protect the river as the High Court in 2009 asked the deputy commissioners to demarcate four Dhaka rivers by putting up boundary pillars as per the cadastral survey and revisional settlement records.

AL urges

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opposition's rally.

Hanif, also a special assistant to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, said any attempt to create chaos in a bid to topple the democratically-elected government would be thwarted and resisted.

Since the present government assumed office, the BNP-Jamaat evil forces have been indulging in conspiracies against democracy, constitution and public interest, he said.

"They want to hinder democratic and development processes through killings, violence and subversive activities in the country," he claimed.

Hanif said the opposition alliance wants to disrupt the ongoing trials of war criminals, the grenade attack case, and the 10-truck arms haul case.

He mentioned that the Awami League will be carrying out its month-long programme demanding quick trial of the war criminals.

On the formation of a new Election Commission, he said the EC has been reconstituted in a transparent way. "Apart from this one, no Election Commission was ever formed in such a transparent way in the history of Bangladesh," Hanif claimed.

"You [Khaleda] formed an Election Commission with MA Aziz [former chief election commissioner] to engineer the election. You incorporated 1.23 crore fake voters in the voter list then."

He said those whose party was born in an undemocratic manner and who practised vote rigging and farcical elections over the years do not have any confidence in the democratic system.

All elections would be held under the new Election Commission freely, fairly and neutrally, Hanif said and hoped that BNP would take part in all the elections to be conducted by the commission.

5 lakh bags

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"We've covered the heaps with tarpaulin to protect those from rain," he said, adding that 40 security guards have been appointed to watch those.

"The 14 depots can store up to two lakh tonnes of fertiliser. But we've 2.84 lakh tonnes of fertiliser in the region now," said Anis Uddin, general manager of the regional buffer depots.

He added that the excess fertiliser has been kept out in the open.

Of the 2.84 lakh tonnes, 1.5 lakh tonnes were allocated by the government in January. Although the dealers are supposed to clear their stocks within a month, they withdrew only 22,000 tonnes last month, depot sources said.

A section of dealers delay to take their stocks, intending to extract maximum profit by creating an artificial crisis and selling those at a high price afterwards, Anis alleged.

But a number of dealers told The Daily Star that they sometimes hesitate to take delivery since the demand for Chinese fertiliser is low due to its poor quality.

"Some of the urea turn

rock solid in bags. So farmers don't want to use them," said Abul Kalam Azad, regional vice-president of Bangladesh Fertiliser Association.

Rise in fertiliser prices is another reason why there is less demand for fertiliser and why some dealers are reluctant to take their stocks for sale, said Abul Hossain Khan, former director of the association.

"Last year, a bag of urea sold at Tk 545 at depots. It has jumped to Tk 945 this year," he said.

Anis Uddin, however, says all these are "lame excuses".

"During crisis, dealers sell it [fertiliser] at high prices. Now that fertiliser is available, they are coming up with such lame excuses," he said.

Dealers and port officials, however, said the government should set up more buffer depots in the region.

"The existing ones are not enough to hold the huge quantity of fertiliser for the northern districts," said Abdur Razzak, an officer at Baghabariport.

The government will provide 11.95 lakh tonnes of fertiliser throughout the year for the region.

Pak court rejects

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suspected of using Swiss bank accounts to launder about \$12 million in alleged bribes paid by companies seeking customs inspection contracts in Pakistan in the 1990s.

Chaudhry had said the court would only drop the summons if Gilani obeyed its order of writing to the Swiss authorities, asking them to re-open the cases.

The judge yesterday wanted a clear answer on whether the prime minister would write the letter, telling his lawyer: "We are ready to give you 10 minutes to talk to the prime minister on the phone and let us know."

"I have no mandate to do that," replied Gilani's lawyer, Aitzaz Ahsan.

Speaking to reporters outside the court, Ahsan confirmed that the prime minister would now appear in court on Monday.

Legal experts say that Gilani can only avoid being charged by lodging a successful appeal, apologising or promising to write to the Swiss.

But a senior leader of the ruling Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) later told IANS that the prime minister "will

never" write to Swiss authorities to reopen money laundering cases against President Asif Ali Zardari as long he is in the office.

The Swiss shelved the cases in 2008, when Zardari became head of state, and a prosecutor in Switzerland has said it will be impossible to re-open them as long as he remains head of state and is immune from prosecution.

The Pakistani court overturned in December 2009 a two-year political amnesty that had frozen the allegations against Zardari and other politicians.

However, Gilani insists that Zardari has full immunity.

He himself appeared before the Supreme Court on January 19, citing Zardari's immunity as explanation for his refusal to obey the court's order.

The president, so tainted by corruption allegations that his nickname is "Mr 10 Percent", has already spent 11 years in jail on charges ranging from corruption to murder.

He was never convicted and his supporters say that the charges were politically motivated.

BNP to go tough

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League-led government to restore it.

The party is also planning to form a search committee that will find quality leadership for different bodies of the party ahead of its upcoming anti-government programmes.

"Given the government's attitude, it is only normal that there will be moves to foil our rally. We're devising strategies to make our programme successful through all possible obstructions," Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman, a member of the party's standing committee, told The Daily Star yesterday.

On Thursday, Khaleda warned the government against any attempt to target the rally and said any such effort to that end will be a "grave mistake".

Earlier on Wednesday night, she held a meeting with the coordination committee formed to organise people across the country for joining the rally, party sources said.

Emerging from the meeting, standing committee member Goyeshwar Chandra Roy said people will take position on the street if they are obstructed on their way to the capital.

Khaleda directed her party leaders to ensure participation of people from all the districts and asked them to exercise highest restraint for a peaceful programme.

The meeting had decided that chiefs of 45 sub-committees would visit their assigned areas and hold meetings, rallies and processions to drum up support for the rally.

A senior BNP leader said the party believes that the government will not let the rally happen smoothly. "But we won't leave it unchal-

lenged. The government will face tough resistance," he said, asking not to be named.

Referring to the killing of four opposition activists in Laxmipur and Chandpur on January 29, Mahbubur Rahman said the government could not tolerate a procession even in the district level. It shows how badly the government would try to foil the Dhaka rally, he added.

Dhaka urges

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be internal affairs of the Maldives, it hopes that these would be resolved in accordance with the constitutional process of the country," said a press release of the foreign ministry yesterday.

Bangladesh would like to urge restraint, avoidance of violence to uphold the rule of law in the island nation, the release said.

It further hopes that the Maldives, a close neighbour and fellow member of Saarc and the Commonwealth, will be able to achieve an early and full resolution of the situation peacefully, upholding the spirit of the Saarc Charter of Democracy and the fundamental values of the Commonwealth.

Bangladesh is confident that the safety and security of all residents in the Maldives, including Bangladeshis working there, will be protected by the Maldivian government.

It is also confident that the Maldives will continue to move forward and grow in democracy and development, reflecting the will and aspirations of its people, the foreign ministry release said.

Section 144

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until yesterday afternoon.

Locals in their thousands put barricade at Fatehabad on Chittagong-Hathazari road yesterday morning. Police rushed there and tried to control the situation. They had to fire rubber bullets and use teargas to calm the locals down and to prevent them from attacking the law enforcers.

Chittagong Superintendent of Police ZA Morshed said in clashes with the unruly mob, five policemen, including two assistant police superintendents, were injured and they took treatment at a local hospital.

The feuding groups vandalised several structures and torched a few as well.

An official at the Chittagong Fire Service Control Room said two fire engines were dispatched and they managed to douse the fires after an hour-long effort.

Primary and Mass Education Minister Afsarul Amin, Deputy Commissioner of Chittagong Fayez Ahmed, and former Chittagong City Corporation mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury rushed to the upazila and called for calm.

There was an attempt to negotiate for calm among the groups concerned but talks broke down. The groups were still furious and showed little signs of backing down. They held each other responsible for the violence, clash, vandalism and torching of structures.

To avoid further violence, the upazila administration imposed the Section 144 around 5:00pm.

Sub-Inspector Sentu Miah of Hathazari Police Station said additional force was deployed in the area.

Metro rail

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Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Shiro Sadoshima in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star.

"The construction is not the purpose -- it is the public service," he pointed out.

He stressed preparing a transportation master plan for Dhaka incorporating a sustainable mass transport system.

Bangladesh has to consider many other factors simultaneously and must have to look at the whole city, added the envoy. "What is going to happen to the rickshaws, CNG-run three-wheelers and buses? You also have to think about the future development of the city."

Contacted, Executive Director of Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB) Dr Salehuddin said the government expects to start the loan negotiations with Jica in next month.

"Once the negotiations are complete, we will appoint consultants and start other necessary works. The construction of the project is likely to commence in the middle of next year," he mentioned.

The ambassador reiterated his country's commitment for funding the \$2.9 billion Padma Bridge project. But he noted that Jica's \$400 million fund is earmarked for the scheme's construction part and it cannot be released until the beginning of the construction of the 6.15 kilometre-long bridge.

In September last year, the lead financier World Bank had suspended its \$1.2 billion funding in the project making corruption allegations against former communications minister Abul Hossain.

"Our commitment is still there. The World Bank has committed the largest portion. So we are waiting to see the allegations are cleared up and the bidding process is underway. Unless those are settled, we cannot go further," he maintained.

METRO RAIL PROJECT

The 20.1-kilometre metro rail route will stretch from Uttara third phase to Bangladesh Bank in Motijheel.

It will transport around 60,000 passengers in an hour during peak time from one end of the capital to the other.

Jica has pledged to provide a major portion of the \$2.7 billion project.

But problems arose when Bangladesh Air Force objected to the Bijoy Sarani section of the route on the grounds that the 19-metre-high metro rail would hinder operations at Tejgaon airfield.

It pressed for diversion of the route along Sangsad Avenue through Khamarbari. The government later agreed to modify the route.

Reform initiative

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delayed as we want to incorporate suggestions of some more professionals."

He said the law will be enacted within the tenure of the incumbent government to begin the reform.

The Daily Star in the last one month talked to a number of officials, and the majority of them said they want a reform where only performance and merit, not political favouritism, will be the basis for promotions and postings.

"There are some officers who are least bothered about performing, but get benefits through lobbying with their seniors and political gurus. This section is opposing the reform idea," said a deputy secretary of the cabinet division.

Former cabinet secretary Akbar Ali Khan said he was not aware of any reform initiative. "No significant move has been initiated in reforming the civil administration," he said.

About the proposed act, Akbar, also a former adviser to a caretaker government, said, "We don't know what types of reform proposals are there. I think this is just a ritual."

Explaining the cause of delay, Cabinet Secretary Muhammad Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan said, "Any reform is challenging and has a far-reaching impact. We have to ensure that the reform benefits all. Also the reform initiative has to be practical."

As part of its reform initiatives, the government extended the service age of the civil servants by two years, changed the name of the establishment ministry, created eight senior secretary posts, and authorised the divisional commissioners to transfer upazila nirbahi officers (UNO). None of these steps, however, measures up to any

qualitative reform, said an official of the public administration ministry.

Under successive regimes the civil administration has been run by some senior bureaucrats closely associated with influential figures of ruling parties. Thus, political and personal favouritism, not performance and merit, has been the primary consideration for promotions and postings, observed many officials in Bangladesh Secretariat.

There has also been no significant progress in replacing the controversial ACR system with a performance-based system to evaluate the civil servants.

An ACR of an officer is written by his or her immediate superior. A good ACR helps one to get promotion easily.

Many officials said this system should be changed because officers are quite often too busy to please their superiors for good ACRs. The superiors can easily victimise their subordinates by misusing the system, they added.

"A performance-based evaluation system will not only stop the malpractice, but also establish a fair mechanism in this regard," said a senior assistant secretary of the communications ministry.

He said the AL-led government reinstated and promoted some officers in the service who had been sent to forced retirement by the immediate past BNP-Jamaat government.

"The same way the officers who had been in the good book of the BNP-Jamaat government and got promotions easily are now in trouble. Many of them are not getting promotions while some were sent to forced retirement," he added.

According to the draft law, no civil servant can be

forced into retirement as punishment without adequate departmental proceedings including an opportunity for self-defence. It also stipulates that civil servants, for the sake of neutrality, will not do any person, group or political party any favour, and will not cause any disparity in services delivered to the public.

Currently the Superior Selection Board, a seven-member body headed by the cabinet secretary, evaluates the officials' performance based on ACRs and their educational qualifications to recommend promotions.

Officials involved in the reform initiative said the draft law proposes holding of examinations for promotions at all levels of the civil administration. It outlines a three-tier civil administration -- superior, senior, and junior.

A section of senior officials however strongly oppose the idea of exams. Some of them said the exams will be misused. They argued that officers seeking promotions will remain too busy preparing themselves for the exams, adversely affecting their routine work.

But many others ruled out that argument. "Inefficient officers are opposing the idea of exams fearing that they will not pass, and their scope for getting promotions will be shut down," said a joint secretary of the public administration ministry.

HT Imam said all officials have to take exams for promotions once the proposed law is enacted.

According to the proposed law, if an official fails in exams three times in a row for a promotion, he or she will be able to retire voluntarily, and if he or she fails for the fourth time the government will force that official to retire.

Teesta deal

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Teesta, said the sources.

However, this is the first time the data on Teesta was exchanged formally since the efforts for an interim 15-year accord on sharing of Teesta water had fallen through last September during Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Dhaka following Paschimanga Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's reservations.

The sources said fresh efforts on Teesta accord would start gaining momentum following the exchange.

The Mamata Banerjee government has been taken on board this time. The data prepared by India contains inputs of the Paschimanga government.

The involvement of the Paschimanga government is of prime importance as far as the government of India is concerned, said the sources.

In fact, in case of Teesta, both sides are also thinking of involving Sikkim, the uppermost riparian state where Teesta originates.

The sources said as further move on Teesta may take some time, New Delhi is hopeful that it would clinch the deal once consent of all parties concerned is available to avoid last-minute hitch.

This is in line with Singh's remarks to the Indian media on his return from Dhaka last September that the states would be consulted and taken into confidence before arriving at any agreement on common river water-sharing, on land boundary and on exchange of enclaves, said the sources.

Besides Teesta and the Ganges, the two countries are also in talks for signing of similar agreements on 52 other common rivers including Feni, Dudh Kumar, Manu, Khowai, Gomti and Muhuri.

The sources said Paschimanga and any of the other Indian state, through which the 54 rivers flow into Bangladesh, will be kept onboard while signing water sharing agreements.

The Indian government had gone along with Paschimanga government's desire to use Sui River for demarcation of South Berubari sector, a local media report said.

2 killed

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Shukur Ali, 22, Kamalganj Police Station Officer-in-Charge Amulya Kumar Chowdhury confirmed. Identification of the injured could not be known.

Locals, however, claimed that another person was also killed in the deadly clash.

They said officials and staff of South Asian International Limited, owner of the tea estate, fled the area after police came in.

Two houses and two vehicles were vandalised during the clash. Police have been deployed at the tea estate. Journalists and locals yesterday were barred from entering the place.

Zohir Ahmed Choudhury, general manager of the firm, said that one Nirmal Chowdhury of Sylhet was the owner of the tea garden. His wife Shukla Chowdhury leased it to the company around 14 years ago.

But, Shubhrota Ahmed Chowdhury Anika, her daughter, in October last year leased the garden to another party on a basis of 'power of attorney'. Both her parents had died years ago.

Zohir Ahmed said he had filed a general diary with Kamalganj Police Station on February 9 seeking security at the garden.

However, on Friday afternoon, hundreds of people of the new owner went to the garden to take over. The violent clash took place as the existing authority tried to prevent the move.

Fakhrul, the firm's secretary, and Shukur, a cook of the garden manager's bungalow, were bullet hit and died on the spot, he added.

The Kamalganj OC said they had no information about the death of another person (3rd one). "Till now at least 10 injured have been admitted to different hospitals. We do not have any information whether any injured person died in hospital," he added.

Nurul Islam, additional police superintendent of Moulvibazar, told local journalists that the tea garden is situated in a remote hilly area. So they could not confirm the number of injured people.

The situation is now under control, he added.

Nine jailed

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Britons to attend.

The nine come from Stoke-on-Trent, Cardiff and London.

In sentencing, the judge described all the men as Islamic fundamentalists.

The three to receive indeterminate sentences for the terror camp plan included Mohammed Shahjahan 27, of Stoke-on-Trent, who was jailed for a minimum term of eight years and 10 months.

Usman Khan, 20, and Nazam Hussain, 26, also from Stoke-on-Trent, were ordered to serve at least eight years.

Judge Justice Wilkie said these three were "the more serious jihadists" and said they should not be released till they were no longer a threat to the public.

The court heard they planned to establish the terrorist camp on land in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir owned by Khan's family and encouraged a "significant" number of British Muslims to undergo training there.

Khan and Hussain planned to travel to the camp and receive military instruction themselves before "obtaining first-hand terrorist experience in Kashmir", the hearing was told.

Passing sentence, Justice Wilkie said this was a "serious, long-term venture in terrorism" that could also have resulted in atrocities in the UK.

"It was envisaged by them all that ultimately they and the other recruits may return to the UK as trained and experienced terrorists available to perform terrorist attacks in this country, on one possibility contemplated in the context of the return of British troops from Afghanistan."

Four others, who all pleaded guilty to engaging in conduct in preparation for acts of terrorism by planning to plant a bomb in the toilets of the London Stock Exchange, were: Gurukanth Desai, 30, from Cardiff (12 years), Abdul Miah, 25, from Cardiff (16 years and 10 months), Mohammed Chowdhury, 22, from London (13 years and 8 months) and Shah Rahman, 28, from London (12 years).

Omar Latif, 28, from

Cardiff, admitted attending meetings with the intention of assisting others to prepare or commit acts of terrorism. He was given a sentence of 10 years and 4 months.

Mohibur Rahman, 28, from London, was given a five-year sentence after he admitted to possessing two editions of an al-Qaeda magazine for terrorist purposes.

All the nine men were arrested in December 2010. Each pleaded guilty to terrorism charges on the eve of their trial at Woolwich Crown Court.

Andrew Edis QC, prosecuting, said between them the nine men possessed "almost every famous jihadi publication" including copies of an online al-Qaeda magazine called Inspire which carries features such as how to "Make a bomb in the kitchen of your mom".

He told the court the nine had decided to form a group in October 2010 to "support and commit acts of terrorism in furtherance of their religious belief".

Piers Arnold, a lawyer for the Crown Prosecution Service, said the men were motivated by extreme Jihadist propaganda circulated on the internet by organisations like al-Qaeda.

"These nine men were not members of al-Qaeda but they were clearly influenced by the message of that organisation and in particular by the teachings of the American-born ideologue, Anwar al-Awlaki, who died in a drone attack in Yemen last year."

He said al-Awlaki was a key contributor to Inspire magazine which urged readers to attack Western countries by any means possible to cause death, fear and economic damage.

Metropolitan Police Deputy Assistant Commissioner Stuart Osborne said the counter terrorism operation was "one of the most significant and complex" of recent years, and involved 1,000 police officers and staff at its height.

"We had a network of highly dangerous men based in three cities who were working together to plan terrorist attacks in the UK."

"Had we not taken action