

Roads across Tangail river

FROM PAGE 1

had already wound up his sand business there.

Originating from the Jamuna at Gohaliabari union, the 63km long New Dhaleshwari channels water into the Bangshi and Pungli rivers, eventually feeding the Turag, Buriganga, Balu and Shitalakkhya, said officials of the Water Development Board (WDB).

The roads on the river were built last winter when the New Dhaleshwari becomes almost dry due to siltation from the river Jamuna. Sand-laden trucks now keep shuttling through the roads day and night, carrying the illegally extracted sand from near the Jamuna Bridge.

Locals said the roads would cause environmental disaster for the river systems of the region.

Although restraining river flows is a punishable offence, the sand traders' activities continue unabated.

Traders have illegally engaged dredgers in the Jamuna, just 1.5km from the Jamuna Bridge, endangering the bridge.

An inquiry team from the Bangladesh Bridge Authority (BBA) visited the area one and a half months ago and sent a letter last week to the Tangail deputy commissioner expressing concern, said site office engineers at the bridge.

Anisur Rahman Miah, the DC, claimed not to have received any letter, but said he had already launched a drive to seize the dredgers.

On a visit to the area two days ago, your correspondent saw the dykes, constructed with the mined sand, make the movement of hundreds of sand-laden trucks convenient. The dykes at Beltia and Shamshoil villages have obstructed the New Dhaleshwari and turned it dry.

The dykes have affected the area's biodiversity and have been causing erosion

in several riverside villages, said Motiul Alam Talukder, the Gohaliabari union chairman.

Besides, the dykes have left hundreds of fishermen jobless, he added.

The chairman of the nearby Salla union, Shamim Mamun Pramanik, said the dykes had likewise affected the people of his area.

Both the chairmen said they had raised the matter at upazila coordination meetings on several occasions.

Rafiqul Islam, Kalihati upazila nirbahi officer, said the issue was being taken seriously with a mobile court drive launched to evict the illegal sand traders.

"We have requested the local Water Development Board to cut the dykes immediately," he said.

Mohammad Ali, executive engineer of WDB in Tangail and also in-charge of the river dredging project, said he would take immediate steps to demolish the dykes.

30 AL MPs in Gazipur

Hectic campaign for Ajmat in city polls

HASAN JAHD TUSHER

A good number of ruling Awami League lawmakers and leaders have poured into Gazipur for electioneering in favour of mayoral candidate Ajmat Ullah Khan in the Gazipur City Corporation polls.

The AL high command has taken the July 6 elections with utmost importance and decided to deploy more than 60 lawmakers and several central leaders to work for the party-backed candidate to ensure his victory.

More than 30 lawmakers have already been in Gazipur to campaign for him, AL Organising Secretary Ahmed Hossain told The Daily Star. Ahmed is the coordinator of the party's four leaders, who have been given separate tasks to look after the law-

makers' activities by splitting the city into four sections.

He said more lawmakers and party leaders would join the campaign today and tomorrow.

The lawmakers who campaigned at different city wards yesterday included Tofail Ahmed, Abdul Mannan, Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Rahmat Ali, BM Mojammel Haque, Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, Aslamul Haque Aslam, Biren Sikder, Sadhon Majumder, Rabiul Muktar Chowdhury, Zahid Ahsan Russell, Junaid Ahmed Palok, Nahim Razzak, Benzir Ahmed, Mokbul Hossain, Prof Abdul Kuddus and Shahe Alam.

Besides, a number of AL's female lawmakers including Tarana Halim, Simeen Hossain Rimi, Nazma Akhter and Apu Ukil also

campaigning among the women voters.

"We are campaigning door to door, holding street rallies, talking to people to woo them in favour of advocate Ajmat Ullah. We will do so until the campaign ends formally," BM Mojammel Haque, another AL organising secretary, told The Daily Star.

Mojammel is in charge of coordinating the lawmakers and party leaders' campaign in Tongi where there are 15 wards with 134 polling stations for 3.13 lakh voters.

Apart from Mojammel, party leader Abdul Mannan has been working in Chowrasta area, Organising Secretary Abu Sayeed Al Mahmud Swapan in Gazipur-Joydebpur and central leader Sujit Roy Nandi in Konabari-Kashimpur area where there are 12 wards with around 3

lakh voters.

Insiders say this is the first time such a huge number of lawmakers are involved in a single local body election. They add following the debacle in the four city polls, AL President Sheikh Hasina directed the lawmakers to go and work for Ajmat Ullah sincerely.

A number of leaders of AL and its different associated and likeminded bodies are now in Gazipur to campaign for Ajmat. AL presidium member Kazi Zafarullah, Jubo League Chairman Omar Faroque Chowdhury, President of Bangladesh Chhatra League HM Badiuzzaman Shohag also took part in the campaign.

"I have also sent 10 central teams of Jubo League and a few female teams to campaign for our candidate," said the Jubo League chairman.

Khaleda wants army for Gazipur polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday demanded that the army be deployed during the upcoming Gazipur City Corporation election.

Talking to the party leaders and activists during Sylhet City Corporation mayor-elect Ariful Haque Chowdhury's visit to Khaleda's Gulshan office last night, she said the elections to four city corporations held earlier were not fair and transparent.

If the elections were held fairly and neutrally, the ruling Awami League backed candidates in the four city corporations would have had lost their deposits, Khaleda claimed.

She urged the government to make arrangements for holding the next parliamentary elections under the caretaker government system.

Meanwhile, BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam yesterday said the opposition would go for tougher programmes to oust the government if it resorted to "election engineering" in the Gazipur election.

He alleged that the ruling party activists were violating the electoral code of conduct.

Speaking as the chief guest of a discussion programme at the Jatiya Press Club, he said Gazipur election was a local government polls and as per rule, ministers could not take part in the campaign. He said a lot of ministers had been taking part in the campaign violating the rules.

He accused the ruling party leaders of mounting pressure on government officers.

In the programme, Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, BNP standing committee member, said the government had been trying to make the parliament inactive as per the suggestions of its "foreign friends".

RMG workers hold the key

FROM PAGE 1

the biggest industrial zones of the country.

Of them, 2.5 lakh workers have been registered as voters. The GCC has a total of 10 lakh voters.

This particular section of workers has now become the centre of attention and is being treated as VIPs by the ruling and opposition alliances-backed mayoral aspirants.

Pro-Awami League labour organisation while campaigning for its candidate has been projecting the facilities the government provided for garment workers.

"We have been highlighting facilities like increased minimum wages and implementation of maternity leave to win over the workers," said Anisur Rahman, president of Gazipur unit Sramik League. He hopes their favourite

would be able to secure eighty percent votes of this section.

Workers of the pro-ruling alliance camp have also been reminding the workers of BNP-led alliance's "misdeeds" like hartals, and grenade and bomb attacks that disrupted the garment industry badly.

The female workers, who are the majority in number, are being warned of the Hefajat-e-Islam factor. They are told that female workers would not be able to work in factories if they vote for the opposition-backed candidate, for whom Hefajat has been campaigning.

On the other hand, pro-BNP labour organisations are using the Rana Plaza tragedy and the government's inaction towards it while electioneering for their favourite.

They are reminding the workers of police actions

and harassment on the workers who staged demonstrations to ensure their rights during the incumbent government's tenure.

"If our candidate wins, we will arrange pure drinking water, food and accommodation for all workers," said Billal Hossain Bepari, organising secretary of Gazipur district unit Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal.

He also expressed the hope to get maximum votes from the workers.

The workers, however, know better who to vote.

"We have seen who did what for us, and this will be the determining factor in the polls," said garment worker Shafigul Islam.

Meanwhile, campaigners of both the camps fear that many voters may go to their villages, as it will be weekend on June 5 while the next day a holiday for the polls.

Mandela on life support

FROM PAGE 16

support in the Pretoria Heart Clinic where he has been fighting a recurrent lung infection since June 8," PTI quoted The Citizen newspaper of South Africa.

According to the paper, five highly-placed sources close to the family, including two who had recently visited him in hospital, said that the iconic leader's health has deteriorated to the point where he is breathing with the assistance of a life support ventilator.

Another source told the daily that Mandela is suffering from kidney failure and is undergoing renal dialysis for three hours every second day.

The revelation came as a group of elders of the AbaThembu clan, to which critically ill Mandela belongs, was to assess his condition during a visit to

his hospital yesterday to decide on a course of action, according to the daily The Times here.

A meeting was called on Tuesday by Mandela's eldest daughter Makaziwe at his ancestral home in Qunu in the Eastern Cape province during which it was decided that the elders and Mandela's confidantes would visit Mandela at the hospital.

The Afrikaans daily Beeld reported that two hours after the Mandela family meeting, a grave-digging machine was parked near the proposed graveyard where Mandela is likely to be buried.

However, reports from the presidency only confirmed that Mandela remains in a critical condition.

Singing supporters amassed outside the Pretoria hospital where the

94-year-old anti-apartheid hero was fighting for his life, said AFP.

A candlelight vigil was held late Tuesday and a prayer read out by a South African archbishop to wish the anti-apartheid icon a "peaceful, perfect, end".

"We have been so united - blacks and whites together. That's the thought of Mandela in us," said Lerato Boulares, 35, who was singing hymns at the entrance of the Mediclinic Heart Hospital.

The former political prisoner is hailed as the architect of South Africa's incredible journey from white minority rule to landmark multiracial elections in 1994.

He was hospitalised on June 8 with a stubborn lung infection dating from his 27 years locked up on the notorious Robben Island and in other apartheid

prisons.

The archbishop's prayer seemed to echo a growing feeling of inevitability about Mandela's condition that is increasingly voiced by South Africans, to whom he remains a beacon of moral authority, even though he stepped back from public life a decade ago.

Meanwhile messages of goodwill flooded in from overseas.

In only her fifth ever tweet, Hillary Clinton offered "love and prayers to our great friend, Madiba, his family and his nation during this difficult time."

The White House has also sent its wishes but could not yet say whether his ill health would affect a planned visit by US President Barack Obama to South Africa this weekend as part of a tour of Africa.

Arrogance, whims and vengeance

FROM PAGE 1

Well, people voted it to power, but the AL did not keep its promise. Instead of "Politics of Change" it reinforced "old politics" with arrogance, whims and vengeance.

Nothing exemplifies these three traits more than the arrogant manner in which the Padma Bridge loan was cancelled, the whimsical way in which the caretaker government system was abolished and the vengeful manner in which Prof. Yunus has been treated for the last four and half years and the way Grameen Bank (GB) is being proposed to be dismantled.

As we have repeatedly written, only one man stood between the World Bank (WB) loan and the Padma bridge. At the end, it was supreme arrogance that made Sheikh Hasina side with that "one man" (in spite of pleading by most of her cabinet colleagues and senior leaders) in total disregard of a "public good" that would have directly benefited millions of people, given additional GDP growth and impacted positively on the overall economy. Arrogance overtook everything, including and ironically, self-interest.

The chest-thumping and crowd-churning talk of "self-financing" is a cheap play on national pride and can be termed as the biggest defrauding of public sentiment after the Share Market and Hall Mark scams. As our Finance Minister very well knows, the only "real" measure of public wealth is "opportunity cost". Of course, Bangladesh with nearly 40 billion dollar annual income from just RMG and remittance can "self-finance" not one but several Padma Bridges. But should it, given the need for resources in many crucial fields like rural infrastructure, roads, railways, waterways, telecommunication, energy, industrialisation? These are but just a few areas where an absence of crucial funding is holding growth back. Only the proverbial ostrich with its head in the sand can say that we did not

need those billions of dollars of nearly zero-interest money.

As for national pride, far more insult, humiliation and bad name for the country resulted from the loan fiasco than can ever be gained from "self-financing", which is a bad financial decision to say the least. Some day this government will be held accountable for such neglect and downright "dishonouring" of the public interest. And for what? To save one man?

It took our PM to order her parliamentary party to abolish the caretaker system and it was delivered within about two weeks. Such a fundamental constitutional amendment passed with no questions asked? Something that was literally pushed down the throat of the people with nearly three years of street agitation and debilitating hartals from 1994 to 1996, was changed by the "whim" of the leader. There was no debate, no discussion and no questions asked. The "sovereign" had asked and the pliant House delivered.

The foolish opposition by its stubborn, unthinking, nonsensical and self-defeating boycott made the task that much more easier.

Nothing illustrates better the vengeful nature of the PM and the government she leads than the way Prof. Yunus has been treated for the last four and a half years and by the plans being floated to dismantle Grameen Bank (GB). Ironically, both the present Finance Minister and the Governor of Bangladesh Bank, who must play pivotal roles in this process, know GB well. Deep within their hearts they must know that what they are doing is unjustified, unjust and downright wrong. Yet they are part of the destruction of the most famous body created by this "much maligned" country, an institution that was given the highest honour the present world can possibly give --- the Nobel Prize.

It is public knowledge that the Finance Minister is angry

with Prof. Yunus. But anger cannot be the basis of action against an institution that brought unmatched glory and honour for our people at the global level. As for the Governor, that just an extension of service can muffle his conscience is very hard to believe. Both are honourable men. But their failure to raise their voices at such a crucial moment reserves history's judgement on them which, in my view, will be harsh.

The simple question that has not been answered is: WHY is GB being so mutilated? What is the need for changing the way GB functions? Have its directors, shareholders or its beneficiaries complained? Who has diagnosed, and on what evidence, that GB needs to be reformed? Just for the sake of argument, if we accept that since Prof. Yunus had crossed the mandatory retirement age specified for a bank's Managing Director, the government had some "justification" (though we do not accept it to be cause enough) to remove him.

But what is the reason for such a destructive move against the bank that has served the needs of 8 million poor, 95 per cent of whom are women, and being eulogised the world over? The present Commission (in our view not even remotely qualified to judge and opine on such a unique and globally emulated institution) has not found anything of any substance to call for such a drastic step as to suggest breaking GB down into 19 components. GB's own board (the real and legal decision makers), its shareholders (the real and legal owners of the bank) and its beneficiaries (8 million women of our villages) have had no say in this matter. They were never asked because the government knew they would oppose it. If this is not vengeance, what is?

We conclude by repeating that we have lost the fund for Padma Bridge out of arrogance. We lost the caretaker

government on a whim. But there is still time to move away from the vengeful act of decimating GB.

There is no denying the fact that the government, enjoying a two-thirds majority (four-fifths along with its allies) can do practically anything, however unjustified and self-defeating. Many such governments in different parts of the world undertook many unjustifiable, anti-people, anti-democratic, anti-freedom actions in the past. These governments, in the arrogance of their electoral might, thought very little of the simmering discontent all around and critical voices that tried to warn them against adopting policies and projects that severely went against the public interest. These governments generally fall prey to what is commonly called "The curse of Two Thirds majority".

Whatever face-saving whitewash is painted on the ruling party's debacle at the recent city corporation elections, the fact should not be lost on the AL that there is tremendous public discontent against it at the voters' level. Dismantling of GB, with its 8 million direct beneficiaries, each with at least 5 direct and indirect dependent family members, will add to that discontent. Ignoring their feelings, and feelings of those near and dear to them does not make for sound electoral politics at this juncture of events.

We are quite certain that our plea and our warning will have very little impact on the action of the leader of our government. We still write in the faint hope that some sober mind at some level of the higher echelons of power, driven not by a sense of justice or fair play but purely by self-interest, may be motivated to make a last minute attempt to move away from the precipice. We also write simply to put on record that there were warnings and some voices that cried out against such a anti-national move.

2 die in century old temple collapse

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two brothers died when a 300-year-old temple in Jessore town collapsed on their last night.

The victims were identified as Nipodo Kumar Ghosh, 60, and Sreebopod Ghosh, 55. They lived in Chachrar area in the town.

Senior Station Office Abdullah Al Arefin of Jessore Fire Service told The Daily Star that the two brothers were staying in a room of the temple and were trapped under the rubble when it collapsed around 9:30pm.

Doctors of Jessore Medical College Hospital declared them dead when they were rescued and rushed there.

Officer-in-Charge Emdadul Haque Sheikh of Jessore Kotwali Police Station said the temple had been abandoned and many believed it was at least 300 years old.

Badiuzzaman

FROM PAGE 16

government official, last served the National Board of Revenue as its chairman.

Their appointments come two days after Ghulam Rahman retired as the ACC boss on Sunday.

Strike shuts Eiffel Tower for second day

AFP, Paris

The Eiffel Tower was closed for a second day yesterday at the height of the Paris tourist season due to a strike by workers for better work conditions and more pay.

The influential CGT union called the strike after failed last-minute talks on Monday which lasted for seven hours.

Negotiations resumed Tuesday but some points remained unresolved, union officials said, adding that the structure could re-open for tourists later Wednesday.

3 petitions of SQ Chy

FROM PAGE 16

adjoining proceedings until the matter on tenability of the government's appeal seeking death penalty for Jamaat-e-Islami leader Abdul Quader Mollah's life sentence was disposed of, and declaring exhibited documents by a seizure-list witness illegal.

Justice ATM Fazle Kabir, chairman of the tribunal, said the court had found no ground to consider increasing the number of defence witnesses. The tribunal said the cause of limiting the number of defence witnesses at five had already been explained in the June 13 order.

On that day, the tribunal-1 said it was responsibility of the prosecution, not of the defence, to prove the charges, so the number of defence witnesses was reasonable.

The tribunal on June 13 also asked the defence to submit their witnesses' names and particulars, but they did not follow the order.

Justice Kabir directed the defence to submit the list and particulars by 4:00pm today and said otherwise they would be barred from producing their witnesses.

Rejecting the adjourn-

ment petition, the tribunal said defence counsel Fakhrul Islam had placed hypothetical submission for an adjournment.

On the third petition, the tribunal said it was up to the court to decide whether the documents exhibited by the 31st witness had any probative value and therefore the petition was summarily rejected.

Salauddin was produced before the tribunal on a rest chair yesterday.

Upon query from the tribunal, pharmacist of Kashimpur Central Jail-1 Atikur Rahman said he had all the way attended the accused, who fell ill after reaching the court.

Salauddin has already given deposition for six days in the case.

Earlier, the defence of war crimes accused Motiur Rahman Nizami cross-examined 11th prosecution witness Shamsul Haque, who gave deposition on June 20.

The proceeding of the case was adjourned until today.

ALIM'S CASE

The International Crimes Tribunal-2 yesterday completed recording testimony and cross-examination of

Rabiul Alam Khan, 27th prosecution witness in the case against war crimes accused Abdul Alim.

Rabiul, a cataloguer of Bangladesh Press Institute (PIB), also the first seizure-list witness in the case, exhibited 24 issues of daily Janakantha, Bhorer Kagoj and Sangbad in between 2000 and 2010, which were seized by the investigation officer from PIB during investigation.

He exhibited 10 issues of Janakantha containing series reports titled "Sei Razakar" published in between December 14 and December 26, 2000 and 10 issues of Bhorer Kagoj containing series reports titled "Razakar Ekattarmama" published in between November 8 and November 19, 2007.

After his testimony, Alim's lawyer Ahsanul Huq Hena completed his cross-examination before the three-member tribunal led by Justice Obaidul Hassan adjourned the proceeding until June 30.

Alim, a former member of late president Ziaur Rahman's cabinet, was indicted on 17 charges including murders and genocide committed during the Liberation War in 1971.

FDI rises despite

FROM PAGE 16

about fragility and policy uncertainty in some major economies, said M Ismail Hossain, a professor of Economics at Jahangirnagar University, making a presentation on the UNCTAD report at the BoI office in Dhaka.

In Bangladesh, FDI growth rate slowed to 13.75 percent last year from 24.42 percent the previous year.

BoI Executive Chairman SA Samad said, "It is really a good sign that we have received increased FDI despite sluggish global economy".

He, however, said there was no room for complacency, as the amount of FDI inflows was less than what had been expected, considering the potentials of Bangladesh's economy.

Telecommunication sector received the highest amount of FDI followed by textiles, banking, power, gas and petroleum.

Telecommunication and textiles together accounted for more than half of the total FDI in 2012, according to UNCTAD.

Of the total FDI in 2012, \$497 million was equity

investment, and \$587 million was reinvested earnings, which grew 20 percent over the previous year.

Increased reinvested earnings signified the investors' confidence in Bangladesh's investment climate despite some think tanks' apprehension about the performance of the economy, said BoI.

Investors from Malaysia, the United Kingdom, Egypt, South Korea, Netherlands, Thailand and Hong Kong made higher investments in 2012, according to UNCTAD.