



WITH TODAY'S ISSUE

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CHILD MORTALITY

Malnutrition accounts for fifty percent of the fatalities

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GURUNG GUIDES NEPAL

Anil Gurung hits the opener in the hosts' 2-0 SAFF football win over Bangladesh

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Grabbing 'legalised'

4 Dhaka rivers lose 2,500 acres of land thru' dubious demarcation

TAWFIQUE ALI

River-saving efforts of the government are backfiring to some extent as around 2,500 acres of foreshores and existing waterways in four rivers in greater Dhaka has been given to "land owners" in the process.

According to related laws, no-one can 'own' foreshores or waterways of rivers within the declared port limit. Any authority like the district administration cannot lease out such land either.

The Shitalakkhya river alone has lost 1,860 acres of land including 595 acres of foreshores due to faulty demarcation, according to official estimate of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA).

Insiders say at least 500 acres more of foreshores and river areas was lost in the Buriganga, the Balu and the Turag, as these rivers were demarcated ignoring the Cadastral Survey (CS) records.

Foreshore is the soil lying between low-water mark of dry season and high-water mark of monsoon during normal tide and is vital for a river for navigability and port activities.

The High Court in 2009 ordered the deputy commissioners (DC) of Dhaka, Narayanganj, Gazipur and Munshiganj to demarcate the Buriganga, Shitalakkhya, Turag, Balu and Dhaleshwari as per the CS and Revised Survey (RS) records.

The court ordered the DCs to retain the eroded areas and formed land [shoals] as part of these rivers, set up boundary pillars, build walkways and plant trees on the banks.

The government launched a Tk 99-crore project to install

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The shockingly small amount of space between the two red lines is all the width the Turag river has at Birulia on the outskirts of the capital. Faulty river area and foreshore markings by the authorities concerned lead to a filling up of the river as seen in Ashulia, inset. The photos were taken a month ago.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ



MAY 6: AFTER CRACKDOWN



Law enforcers at Shapla Chattar in the wee hours of May 6 after they had flushed out the Hefajat men who had been occupying downtown Dhaka for almost a day.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

A list riddled with holes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nineteen are traceless, five named twice, three alive. Six died in Narayanganj violence and one of heart attack. Slot number 10 is left vacant.

These are the holes a police investigation has found in the rights body "Odhikar's list of 61 people killed in the crackdown on Hefajat at Motijheel Shapla Chattar in the early hours of May 6."

The remaining 26 were not killed in the operation either.

Police say they got the list in the documents seized from the Odhikar office and later released it to the media.

The Daily Star has conducted a quick investigation into some police claims and about 25 persons listed as dead.

According to police, Zahidul Islam Saurav of Nimai Kachari under Bagmara upazila of Rajshahi, Jasim Uddin of Comilla and Sohel, a student of Ujani Madrassa in Chandpur, are alive.

But our correspondents found no trace of Saurav and Jasim. There is no village called Nimai Kachari in Bagmara and neither law enforcers nor Hefajat leaders in Comilla could say anything about Jasim.

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NEWS ANALYSIS

ODHIKAR REPORT ON HEFAJAT DEATHS Questions aplenty

M ABUL KALAM AZAD

Odhikar's fact-finding report, "Assembly of Hefajat-e Islam Bangladesh and Human Rights Violation", is a composition of half-truths, biased and one-sided presentation of what happened on May 5 and in the early hours of May 6 in the capital, according to an analysis by The Daily Star.

The June 10 report says nothing about the destructive activities by Hefajat men, the involvement of Jamaat-Shibir activists and their instigation of acts of violence. But it has elaborately described the role of law enforcers and pro-ruling party men.

Hundreds of unruly Hefajat men were involved in widespread violence, including arson and even torching of bookshops that sold copies of the holy Quran. Though many TV channels broadcast the incidents live, Odhikar is completely silent about it. It has depicted Hefajat-e-Islam as a very peaceful organisation and its leaders and activists as innocent individuals.

While being flushed out of Shapla Chattar, Hefajat men attacked a policeman with bricks near the Alico building in Motijheel, leaving him dead on the spot. A correspondent of The Daily Star covering the event on that night witnessed it, but the Odhikar report made no mention of it.

The 28-page report starts with an introduction of Hefajat and its objectives. It termed Hefajat a people's platform, a non-political and socio-cultural organisation, and mentioned its objectives were to promote "social dialogue to dispel prejudices that affect community harmony and relations".

In reality, Hefajat's character is completely the opposite of what the Odhikar report states. The organisation's recent activities, provocative

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Dhaka for a quick wayout

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has called for an immediate resolution of the crisis in war-torn Syria to end the sufferings of the civilians.

"Bangladesh believes in amicable solution to all international conflicts through diplomatic and peaceful means," the foreign ministry said in a statement yesterday explaining its position on the Syria crisis.

Bangladesh had been closely monitoring the situation in Syria and had already advised its nationals to leave the country, said the statement.

It would like to emphasise the centrality of the United Nations for immediate cessation of hostilities to end the

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Obama to seek Congress vote on Syria action

UN experts leave tense Syria; Russia rejects US chemical report, demands proof

AGENCIES

President Barack Obama yesterday said the US should take military action against Syria but he would seek congressional authorisation for intervention lifting the threat of immediate punitive air strikes on Syria.

The decision represents a significant gamble for Obama, who has an estranged relationship with lawmakers, especially Republicans.

He risks suffering the same fate as British Prime Minister David Cameron, who on Friday lost his own vote on authorising military action in parliament.

As commander-in-chief, Obama has the constitutional authority to order military action without the backing of Congress.

However, he said it was important to have the debate.

Congress is to debate Obama's decision to attack Syria during the week starting on September 9 when they return to work, its speakers said.

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Democracy not within BNP yet

Party turns 35 today

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The BNP celebrates today its 35th founding anniversary amid severe organisational weaknesses stemming mainly from a lack of democratic practices within the party.

Over the years, the BNP has not called its national and grassroots-level sessions on a regular basis, thereby deterring the growth of new leadership. Its failure to hold meetings of different forums of the party and thus promote debate and discussions on policy-making in line with democratic norms has also been a stumbling block.

The unbridled corruption and misuse of power by many of its leaders when the party was last in power between 2001 and 2006 are also blamed for the party's present state. For this, it paid heavily in the December 2008 general elections when it faced a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Awami League.

Yet the party is now dreaming of returning to state power at the next general election. This is because of the lack of a credible and strong alternative to the BNP and the Awami League as well.

Though there were many national issues, the party could not wage a strong agitation over the last four and a half years due to its organisational weaknesses. As a result, the party

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