

Padma bridge

FROM PAGE 1
the Padma. As the river is meandering at this point, the erosion is happening at its left bank near Mawa and also on the right bank on the up.

The erosion is not alarming yet but it might take a serious turn as the river is around 50 metres deep at the point, he noted.

Historically, erosion of the Padma takes place at this point of Mawa every 25 to 30 years and it continues for four to five years before it stops.

But this year's erosion is puzzling the engineers of Bangladesh Bridge Authorities who did not foresee this.

"The river was stable and there was no sign of erosion when the design was made. Now it seems we need to increase the length of the guide bund for the Padma bridge," Sharful Islam told The Daily Star over the phone yesterday while he was visiting the eroded area.

Guide bunds are meant to protect the river banks from erosion. Under the

original design of the bridge, its guide bund was to be 1.3km long.

More river areas would have to be trained as well because of the erosion. In this, the bridge authorities will need help from the Bangladesh Water Development Board.

"We cannot go beyond the acquired area. But maybe we will give fund to the Water Development Board for the extended river training," he said.

The bridge authority has acquired 1,100 hectares of land, relocating around 13,000 homes and over 70,000 people.

Three terminals of the Mawa-Keorakanda ferry service were relocated 500 meters downstream last year after the erosion started.

The erosion is moving downstream now, said Hazi Mustam Uddin, a trader at Mawa bazar.

Last year, a big banyan tree and a mosque near terminal-1 were swallowed by the river.

This year, more than 100 homes have so far



A red flag warning people that the area is at risk to river bank erosion at Mawa ferry terminal as the mighty Padma continues to devour the terminal area, top right, and people evacuate the area dismantling their homes, bottom right. The photos were taken on Wednesday.



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

been relocated since the erosion returned last Saturday.

During a visit yesterday, Badsha Mia of South Medini Mandal village was

seen shifting his house from the river bank to Mawa Chourasta.

"I was born and raised here. I have never seen river erosion in my life

before this year and last year," said the 30-year-old.

The much-talked about Padma bridge will connect the south-western region of the country with the

capital. The 6.15km long bridge is to cost about \$2.3 billion and its construction may start this year. The money is to come for the government fund.

The project was to be originally funded by the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, Jica and the Islamic Development Bank. But

the donors backtracked from funding the project on the ground that corruption had taken place in selecting the project's supervising consultant.

Coconut detained Defeating internet privacy of millions

FROM PAGE 16
school that will be used as a polling station today on the remote Kaafu atoll, one of the hundreds of islands.

Though the population of the Maldives is Sunni Muslim, continuing belief in magic is widespread in rural areas. Coconuts are often used in rituals and inscribed with spells.

The local Minivan news website reported that police "took the coconut into their possession" around 7:05am on Tuesday, after they received a complaint about the suspicious fruit near the school on the Guraidhoo Island.

"The 4in coconut had a [Koranic verse] written in Arabic [on it] and was lying on the ground near the school, easy for the public to see. It seems like it was a joke, just a prank, so that people will become aware," Minivan quoted a source on Guraidhoo saying.

Minivan said its source had suggested the coconut "was a lesson for islanders

not to practise black magic in an attempt to influence voting, and that the polling area would be closely monitored to prevent such activities from occurring".

Earlier this year, school authorities on Guraidhoo resisted using their buildings as a polling station, citing previous instances when problems had been caused by magic.

Their fears were only partly allayed when the national election commission said it would accept responsibility "if anyone falls under a spell or comes down ill".

The election has been bitterly contested, with Mohammed Nasheed, the former president, taking on outgoing president and the half-brother of former dictator, Mamoun Abdul Gayoom.

A magician summoned by police established that the coconut was innocent, local officials have said. No arrests have been made.

FROM PAGE 16
But security experts accused them of attacking the internet itself and the privacy of all users. "Cryptography forms the basis for trust online," said Bruce Schneier, an encryption specialist and fellow at Harvard's Berkman Center for Internet and Society. "By deliberately undermining online security in a short-sighted effort to eavesdrop, the NSA is undermining the very fabric of the internet." Classified briefings between the agencies celebrate their success at "defeating network security and privacy".

"For the past decade, NSA has lead [sic] an aggressive, multi-pronged effort to break widely used internet encryption technologies," stated a 2010 GCHQ document. "Vast amounts of encrypted internet data which have up till now been discarded are now exploitable."

An internal agency memo noted that among British analysts shown a presentation on the NSA's progress: "Those not already briefed were gobsmacked!"

The breakthrough, which was not described in detail in the documents, meant the intelligence agencies were able to monitor "large amounts" of data flowing through the world's fibre-optic cables and break its encryption, despite assurances from internet companies executives that this data was beyond the reach of government.

The key component of the NSA's battle against encryption, its collaboration with technology companies, is detailed in the US intelligence community's top-secret 2013 budget request under the heading "Sigint [signals intelligence] enabling".

Funding for the programme - \$254.9m

for this year - dwarfs that of the Prism program, which operates at a cost of \$20m a year, according to previous NSA documents.

Since 2011, the total spending on Sigint enabling has topped \$800m.

The programme "actively engages US and foreign IT industries to covertly influence and/or overtly leverage their commercial products' designs", the document states. None of the companies involved in such partnerships are named; these details are guarded by still higher levels of classification.

The document sets out in clear terms the programme's broad aims, including making commercial encryption software "more tractable" to NSA attacks by "shaping" the worldwide marketplace and continuing efforts to break into the encryption used by the next

generation of 4G phones.

Among the specific accomplishments for 2013, the NSA expects the program to obtain access to "data flowing through a hub for a major communications provider" and to a "major internet peer-to-peer voice and text communications system".

Technology companies maintain that they work with the intelligence agencies only when legally compelled to do so. The Guardian has previously reported that Microsoft cooperated with the NSA to circumvent encryption on the Outlook.com email and chat services. The company insisted that it was obliged to comply with "existing or future lawful demands" when designing its products.

The documents show that the agency has already achieved another of the goals laid out in the budget request: to influence

the international standards upon which encryption systems rely.

Independent security experts have long suspected that the NSA has been introducing weaknesses into security standards, a fact confirmed for the first time by another secret document. It shows the agency worked covertly to get its own version of a draft security standard issued by the US National Institute of Standards and Technology approved for worldwide use in 2006.

"Eventually, NSA became the sole editor," the document states.

The NSA's codeword for its decryption program, Bullrun, is taken from a major battle of the American civil war. Its British counterpart, Edgell, is named after the first major engagement of the English civil war, more than 200 years earlier.

Accused

FROM PAGE 16
Russell, a second-year management student of the same university, knifed Saoda, 18, a first-year accounting student, on the university campus on Thursday morning.

Saoda was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital by air ambulance, but she died there late in the afternoon.

Russell, 20, fled the scene immediately after the attack and has been missing since.

He and Saoda are from neighbouring villages in Patharghata upazila of Barguna district. They had a relationship for at least a year. But things turned sour about a month ago when Russell proposed to the girl for which her parents rebuked him, said campus sources.

Shahida Begum, mother of Saoda, has lodged a murder case with the city's Kotwali Police Station, accusing Russell and two to three unnamed persons. In the case statement, she blamed Russell for stalking her daughter but did not mention if there had been any relationship between the two.

Meanwhile, police yesterday detained Bipul Baroi, a close friend of Russell and his classmate, for interrogation, said Shakhawat Hossain, investigation officer of the case. Bipul denied any involvement in the killing.

In the letters addressed to Saoda's parents, Russell also said he would kill himself with a hope of getting reunited with Saoda in the after-life. After an autopsy at DMCH, Saoda's body was handed over to her guardians last night. Her namaz-e-janaza would be held at the university campus mosque today, said campus sources.

Later, the body would be taken to her home at Hatempur village in Patharghata upazila for burial, family sources said.

Clock ticking on 2015 climate talks deal: EU

AFP, Manila

Countries around the world need to act with a sense of urgency if the 2015 UN climate change talks on cutting emissions are to have a credible outcome, a top EU official warned yesterday.

EU climate commissioner Connie Hedegaard said rich and poor nations alike should be prepared to commit to legally binding commitments limiting planetary warming to 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit) over pre-industrial levels.

Negotiators have set a 2015 deadline for signing in Paris the UN's most ambi-

tious environmental deal that for the first time would bind all the world's nations to measurable targets for curbing Earth-warming greenhouse-gas emissions by 2020.

"This 2015 deadline should be taken seriously and it should come up with some substantial outcome," Hedegaard told reporters during a one-day visit to the Philippines.

She noted that there had been less urgency in dealing with climate change going into the talks as economic crises in Europe and the West had distracted many economies.

"Although many of us share some sense of frustra-

tion (about) how things are moving forward too slowly, frustration does not reduce emissions, concrete actions do," she said.

Asked whether she was optimistic about the prospects of legally binding commitments by 2015, Hedegaard said governments must put faith in the process.

"If there is to be credibility around the multilateral process, then it must also deliver on its 2015 deadline," she said.

She said all countries must be "equally legally obliged to do the best we can, according to our capabilities."

Agitation

FROM PAGE 1
"At the Narsingdi rally, Khaleda Zia will give an important speech about the movement. I hope the government will realise the political situation and consider the demand after that."

Meanwhile, Dhaka city unit BNP organised a meeting at Nayapaltan's Bhasani Hall to discuss the rally. The meeting was presided over by Sadeque Hossain Khoka, convener of the unit.

He observed that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina wants to hold the general election with the help of the police officials of Gopalganj, home district of the prime minister, but people would resist it.

Dhaka city unit BNP would give Khaleda a reception on her way to Narsingdi, from her Gulshan residence to Kanchpur Bridge, said the BNP leader.

New law to stop cheats

FROM PAGE 16
overseas employment without prior permission either from the ministry or the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET).

Under the proposed law, the offenders will be tried either at first class judicial magistrate courts or metropolitan magistrate courts for disposal of cases within six months of filing.

The Jatiya Sangsad goes into session on September 12.

The bill incorporates some significant provisions with the intent of creating more overseas employment opportunities and introducing safe migration mechanism.

Private recruitment agencies can send jobseekers abroad by charging them

migration costs as fixed by the government. They cannot appoint middlemen in the country, but would be allowed to appoint representatives abroad with prior permission, says the draft.

Migration experts have welcomed the government move saying it would help ensure the rights of migrant workers. They, however, observed that the draft still lacked provisions to bring the middlemen under the purview of the law and protect the rights of female migrants.

"Migrant workers are mainly cheated by the middlemen, but they remain beyond legal reach. So it is urgent to bring them under the purview of the proposed law," said Tasneem Siddique, chairperson of

Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit, an NGO.

Expatriates' Welfare Secretary Zafar Ahmed Khan said the proposed law would ensure transparency and accountability of the manpower exporters.

"The incidents of cheating migrant workers have increased, but the victims hardly get justice. We hope the proposed law will protect the jobseekers and punish the fraudulent agencies and middlemen," he added.

If ratified, the new law will repeal Emigration Ordinance, 1982, under which only the BMET could file cases on behalf of the victims. But the new law will enable the victims seek legal redress.

Dr Kamal

FROM PAGE 1
If the political parties agree, he noted, it is a matter of two minutes to decide about the amendment for holding the election in 90 days after forming the polls-time government.

President Abdul Hamid, a veteran politician who was a competent Speaker in parliament, can play an important role in having the parties reach a consensus in this regard, he said, adding that there is still time to do this.

Dr Kamal, president of Gono Forum, said the administration will have no neutrality if a partisan government remains in power during the election.

The present Election Commission waits for the government's instructions

to take any decision.

In its verdict on the case regarding the 13th amendment to the constitution, the Supreme Court has allowed general elections under a caretaker government for the next two terms although it declared the system unconstitutional, said the jurist.

He also mentioned that he, along with civil society members and ordinary citizens, will organise a convention in a month on the demand for a credible election, one that would pick honest and dedicated candidates.

Mahmudur Rahman Manna, convener of Nagorik Oikko, spoke among others on the occasion yesterday.

Do not harm Islam

FROM PAGE 1
private sector management, reports our staff correspondent.

Hasina, at the Hajj camp, said Bangladesh has been recognised as a model of communal harmony across the globe. "We have to maintain this tradition."

The Awami League is always devoted to the welfare of Islam. "My government has been working tirelessly for preaching and expansion of Islam," she said.

The government, for the first time, has made arrangement for preaching and expansion of Islam in Arabic, Bangla and English languages through digitisation.

It has been providing training to religious leaders

including Imams through the religious affairs ministry.

"They [religious leaders] have been involved with the development of human resources to create awareness about terrorism, militancy and drugs" she told her audience.

Hasina said the number of pilgrims has increased many times in the last four years as the government restored discipline in Hajj management.

In this context, she mentioned that the present government has framed the five-year (2010-2014) National Hajj Policy to ensure smooth Hajj management.

"The Saudi Hajj Ministry has recognised Bangladesh as the best South Asian

country in developing Hajj management for the consecutive four years."

Special attention has been given while renting the houses in Makkah and Madinah to ensure better housing arrangements for the pilgrims, Hasina said.

"As many as 47,983 Hajj pilgrims performed Hajj in 2006, the last year of the BNP-Jamaat alliance government.

"While the number was 1,05,617 in 2011 and 1,09,952 in 2012," she said, hoping that the success in Hajj management would continue in future.

Hajj in the last five years could not go to Hajj.

Besides, she said, the Saudi government has curtailed the quota of pilgrims by 20 percent which would be applicable for all the countries.

A prayer was offered at the camp seeking continued peace, prosperity and development of the nation as well as peaceful performing of Hajj by the Bangladeshi pilgrims.

With State Minister for Religious Affairs Shahjahan Mian in the chair, the function was addressed, among others, by Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Faruq Khan and Saudi Ambassador Abdullah Al Bushairi.

US evacuates staff from Beirut mission

AFP, Washington

The United States evacuated non-essential staff from its Beirut embassy Friday and urged Americans not to travel to Lebanon or southern Turkey, as Washington considers strikes against neighboring Syria.

"The Department of State has ordered a drawdown of non-emergency US government personnel and family members in Beirut, Lebanon and approved the drawdown of non-emergency personnel and family members who wish to leave Adana, Turkey," deputy State Department spokeswoman Marie Harf said.

The evacuations came as the United States has been trying to build support for US military strikes on the

Syrian regime in retaliation for its alleged use of chemical weapons in an August 21 attack on Damascus suburbs.

The decision had been made due to "current tensions in the region, as well as potential threats to US government facilities and personnel," Harf said in a statement.

But she stressed the State Department was acting out of "an abundance of caution."

US President Barack Obama and his administration are pressuring US lawmakers to approve limited military strikes on Syria, while at the same time seeking to build an international coalition in support of action.