

TANGAIL MUNICIPALITY

Drainage system on verge of collapse

MIRZA SHAKIL, *Tangail*

The drainage system in Tangail municipality is on the verge of collapse due to lack of proper maintenance work, causing untold sufferings for its taxpayers.

The problem has worsened in the absence of required number of drains as well.

Housewife Mira Saha, a resident of Sahapara, said the area had remained under dirty water for about six months, as the sewerage system did not function properly.

The stinky water on the streets had been causing problems for the school-going kids, she said.

The people of Sahapara, Adalatpara and Thanapara areas under the ward no. 13 and 14 said the public representatives had been indifferent to their sufferings despite repeated appeals.

Tulip Saha, another resident of Sahapara, said they could not walk down the streets smoothly, as the streets remained inundated with dirty water.

People had been suffering from different skin-related diseases after coming into contact with the toxic water, he added.

The inhabitants of other wards also made

the same complaints.

The municipal authorities said they could not improve the drainage facilities due to shortage of funds.

But the townspeople blamed the lack of sincerity, seriousness and proper planning on the part of the public representatives.

While talking to The Daily Star, the sufferers said the drainage system woes had started over a decade ago when the municipality constructed several markets on Victoria canal.

Moreover, influential encroachers had grabbed significant portions of Louhajang River that flows through the middle of the town, turning it into a dead river.

The townspeople, professionals and environmentalists then protested the construction of markets on the canal, and demanded that the river be freed from the encroachers. But the authorities concerned paid no heed to them.

Mohammad Hazrat Khan and Sujaul Karim Manik, councillors of ward no. 13 and 14, said they were aware of the people's sufferings.

They would talk to the higher authority

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People get on a truck to get past the stagnant water on Bazitpur Road in Sahapara of Tangail town yesterday. The apparently clogged drainage system keeps the street waterlogged even in the dry season.

PHOTO: STAR

AL, BNP fail to get rid of rebels

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Commission officials last night.

Meanwhile, two women vice-chairmen of Dupchahia upazila in Bogra and Jajira upazila of Shariatpur and one vice chairman in Kazipur of Sirajganj were elected unopposed.

Still, in many of the 97 upazila parishads, the candidates backed by ruling AL and the BNP will have to fight it out with their party dissidents alongside those from the rival parties.

The highest number of chairman aspirants, 19 altogether, are contesting in Belabo upazila of Narsingdi district.

The district- and upazila-level leaders of AL and BNP had held series of meetings with their party rebels to have them quit the race and ensure one contestant against each post as per party instructions.

But due mainly to intra-party conflicts, local AL and BNP men have failed to choose single candidate for each posts, especially that for the chairman.

More than 250 AL- and 200 BNP-backed candidates are taking part in the ballot race for 97 upazila chairman posts.

Even in the cabinet meeting yesterday, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, also AL president, once again instructed her party leaders to pick through discussion one candidate for each post, said meeting sources.

But in reality, almost everything at the grassroots level went against her instructions.

In Bheramara upazila of Kusthia, none of the three candidates from AL withdrew their candidacies for the chairman post, while BNP will have to go on with two of its own.

In Kusthia sadar upazila, AL has one party man contesting for the chairman post after another stepped aside.

Meanwhile, the BNP managed to keep three of its five party aspirants away from the polls.

In Kalia upazila in Narail, five of eight AL men withdrew their candidacies for chairmanship. The remaining three will have to compete with each other alongside two candidates from BNP. None of the six AL men withdrew their candidacies for the vice-chairman post here.

In Hathazari upazila of Chittagong, AL managed to bring the number of candidates from the party down to four from seven. On the other hand, the BNP could keep one of its three party men away from the race for the chairman post.

In Mirersarai upazila of the same district, none of the two AL candidates withdrew candidacy for the chairman post. BNP, however, successfully managed to pull off three candidates out of four.

Two of the five AL men contesting to become chairman stepped aside in Abhaynagar upazila of Jessore, while BNP convinced four of its five party aspirants to leave the race.

In Bakerganj upazila of Barisal, one of three AL chairman aspirants withdrew candidacy. The BNP too will have to contest here with two men, as it could not make either of them quit.

In Phulbaria upazila in Kurigram, only one of four AL men withdrew candidacies for the chairman post. Here, BNP has one candidate.

In Bhurungamari upazila in Kurigram district, none of the two AL men contesting for the chairman post quit the race, while one of the two BNP men withdrew the candidacy.

Two of five AL men quit the polls in Ulipur upazila in Kurigram. Here too,

the BNP has one candidate.

"We tried to choose single candidate, but could not do so for many reasons. Actions will be taken against those who have defied party directives and are taking part in the elections," Sheikh Babul, joint general secretary of Kurigram district unit AL, told The Daily Star yesterday.

In Dhunat upazila in Bogra, two out of four AL men quit the race for the chairman post. From BNP, two out of five aspirants withdrew their candidacies.

A rebel AL chairman aspirant of the upazila Kudrat-e-Khoda alleged that the leaders of the district unit had chosen their favourite ignoring opinion of the grassroots leaders and activists.

"I did not withdraw from the polls as a protest to the act," he added.

None of the five AL men withdrew their candidacies for the chairman post in Shaghata upazila of Gaibandha district. The BNP is lucky as it has one candidate there.

None of the seven AL men quit the race for the vice-chairman post in Lalmohon upazila in Bhola district. BNP has one candidate there too.

AL lawmaker from Bhola-3 constituency Nurunnabi Chowdhury told The Daily Star that the district- and upazila-level leaders had made efforts to pick one candidate, but in some cases, it had not succeeded. He too said that organisational actions would be taken against the rebel candidates.

The non-partisan elections to this crucial local government body are being seen as a matter of pride for the two camps. They want to prove their popularity winning the polls, which come after the January 5 one-sided general election that was boycotted by the BNP-led alliance.

out the province.

It is revealing that the strike, called barely seven months after the establishment of Pakistan, was seen as the earliest manifestation of a revival of the essential secularist nature of the people of East Bengal. It certainly took the political classes based in West Pakistan by surprise. The feeling, though, among them was that it was a deep-rooted conspiracy by the Hindu politicians of East Bengal, men who were fomenting rebellion among Bengalis with the ulterior motive of undoing the new state of Pakistan. The writing on the wall clearly was not being read by the authorities in Karachi, the national capital.

A day after the general strike, on March 12, Shere Bangla A.K. Fazlul Huq issued a statement condemning the police action on the students of Dhaka University.

said, "Criminals, backed by Jamaat-Shibir, got mingled with the general students."

But campus sources said Mizanur Rahman Rana, BCL RU unit president, was present during the attacks. BCL activists from Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology, Agrani School and College and other BCL units of the city also joined the RU BCL men.

The sources added that at least six BCL men, including Setu and Emon, brandished firearms during the violence. The four others are RU BCL organising secretaries Foysal Ahmed, Ashif Hossain and Mostakim Billah and ex-joint secretary Sudipta Salam.

The infiltration theory was first

HC grants bail

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The HC bench of Justice Naima Haider and Justice Zafar Ahmed granted ad interim bail to Moudud, a BNP standing committee member, in a corruption case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission.

The ACC lodged the case on December 17 last year on charges of grabbing an abandoned public property at Gulshan in the capital.

On the other hand, Khandker Mahbub, an adviser of the BNP chairperson, was granted ad interim bail in a case filed with Ramna Police Station on March 2 last year in connection with blasting bombs, arson attacks and preventing police from discharging their duties during an anti-government demonstration of the BNP-led 18-party alliance.

So far, Moudud has been shown arrested in six cases while Mahbub in two cases.

Following separate bail petitions, the same HC bench yesterday granted bail to Khoka and Hafiz for six months in different arson attack and vandalism cases.

Khoka got bail in six cases and Hafiz obtained bail in three cases, Deputy Attorney General Khondker Diliruzzaman told The Daily Star.

In the last three months, at least 28 central BNP leaders, including standing committee members, were arrested by the law enforcers.

Seven of them have so far been freed. Of the arrestees, there are six cases against BNP standing committee member Moudud

Ahmed and five cases each against its two other standing committee members MK Anwar and Rafiqul Islam Mia.

CHARGE SHEET AGAINST FAKHRUL

Detectives yesterday pressed charges against BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and 62 others in connection with a case filed with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station in the capital for torching vehicles and throwing cocktails at police on December 9, 2012.

The charge sheet of the case was submitted to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka.

Meanwhile, the High Court yesterday granted anticipatory bail to Fakhrul for eight weeks in three arson attack cases.

An HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Mohammad Ullah came up with the orders after Fakhrul appeared before the court and sought bail in the cases.

He was made accused as an instigator in the three arson attack cases filed with Ramna and Shahbagh police stations on different dates in November and December last year.

On December 25, Fakhrul was sued for murdering a police constable at Bangla Motor. The policeman was killed as arsonists set fire to a requisitioned police bus.

Of the two other cases, one was filed against the BNP leader for killing four people in a petrol bomb attack at Shahbagh on November 29 and another for killing a man in an arson attack at Malibagh the following day.

The ignored now ignoring

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against rebel candidates have largely been ignored. The grassroots leaders joined the electoral fray en masse for the local government body posts, considered a lucrative office.

They created a situation in which their high commands may not even be able to take disciplinary actions against them due to their high number.

More than 250 Awami League men have become valid candidates for 97 chairman posts in the first phase of the upazila polls scheduled for February 19. At least 200 BNP men are also vying for the chairmen posts.

In the second phase, scheduled for February 27, at least 117 upazilas are going to polls and the situation is almost the same as in the first phase. The last date for withdrawal of candidature in the phase would end on February 11.

The way the grassroots are hankering for the posts in the upazila tells the story of the political culture at national level. Many of them are actually backed by senior party leaders.

Many central and district-level senior leaders have been patronising party factions in their own home districts. Some Awami League lawmakers were also reportedly backing rebel candidates in their areas to consolidate their positions and factions they back.

Over the years both the parties' high commands have not maintained good relations with their grassroots. They practically ignored the grassroots in determining the activities of the parties or running the party. Everything is decided at the tops.

When the top tiers of Awami League and BNP are seeing victory in the upazila elections as a matter of prestige, despite the polls being officially non-partisan in nature, it is the grassroots now ignoring the high commands.

The elections have already lost its non-partisan character.

However, the upazila parishad polls are a win-win for both the Awami League and the BNP.

Holding the upazila elections helped the Awami League stop the BNP from waging any anti-government agitations at least for now and a victory for Awami League-backed candidates in the polls would give the party the ground to say that it is popular.

The BNP is using the polls to boost and better organise its grassroots. Solid victories would inspire the party's leaders and activists who are frustrated at the failure to resist the January 5 one-sided general election.

The upazila elections are looking to deliver a very crucial verdict that would largely contribute to determining which way the country's political course goes next.

Jamaat leader

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Kalshi in Pallabi around 8:30am, said Syed Ziauzzaman, officer-in-charge of Pallabi Police Station.

Soon, the Jamaat men started vandalising vehicles and hurling brick chips at the law enforcers. At that, police fired rubber bullets and chased the pickets, the OC said.

Belal was knocked down by a pickup as he was fleeing the scene being chased by the police, he added.

He was taken to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital around 10:00am, but on-duty doctors declared him dead.

Belal received injuries in the head, chest, hands and legs, morgue sources said.

He hails from Shariatpur.

The Jamaat men brought out the procession to protest the awarding of death penalty to 14 people, including Jamaat Ameer Motiur Rahman Nizami, in the 10-truck arms haul cases.

5 accused

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Himu's uncle lodged a murder case with Panchlaish Police Station on May 24, 2012 accusing the five.

Of the accused, Tipu and Shaju are on High Court bail while the others have been absconding.

Three investigation officers probed the murder case. Police filed charge sheet in the case on October 04, 2012. The prosecution will call 20 witnesses to prove the charges against the accused.

Talking to The Daily Star, Himu's father Prabir Kanti Majumder yesterday said although the trial had already been delayed, he wanted the court meted out exemplary punishment to the accused.

HIMU NARRATED THE ATTACK

Lying on the hospital bed, injured Himu himself had described the torture on him by the accused. His words were recorded by his friends.

As an active member of Shikor, Himu became a target of Tipu and his cohorts, complained Jawed Ali Chowdhury.

During an altercation with Shikor members, Tipu had threatened them with dire consequences. None but Himu had protested Tipu then, added Jawed.

AL blames 'intruders', BCL expels 2 leaders

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readily put the blame on other student bodies such as Shibir, a pro-Jamaat organisation.

AL sources said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, also the party president, had called top BCL leaders to the Gono Bhaban after the January 5 polls and asked them not to create chaos on any campus. The party has also promised in its election manifesto to go tough on campus violence.

But all these orders and pledges appear to have gone unheeded.

Within weeks of Hasina's instructions, the BCL men backed by police attacked RU students protesting fee hikes and evening shift master's courses. Following the incident, the

authorities suspended all academic activities and ordered the resident students to vacate their dormitories.

Talking about the violence, Communications Minister and AL Presidium Member Obaidul Quader yesterday said it was an act of the criminals who had infiltrated the BCL.

"The government is making a list of criminals, extortionists and cadres who have managed their way into the party. A cleansing operation will soon be launched in the Awami League," he told reporters in Sylhet.

Hasan Mahmud, AL publicity secretary, said the BCL was a big organisation and many people had infiltrated it.

Referring to the RU incident, he

said, "Criminals, backed by Jamaat-Shibir, got mingled with the general students."

But campus sources said Mizanur Rahman Rana, BCL RU unit president, was present during the attacks. BCL activists from Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology, Agrani School and College and other BCL units of the city also joined the RU BCL men.

The sources added that at least six BCL men, including Setu and Emon, brandished firearms during the violence. The four others are RU BCL organising secretaries Foysal Ahmed, Ashif Hossain and Mostakim Billah and ex-joint secretary Sudipta Salam.

The infiltration theory was first

offered by LGRD Minister and AL General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam following violence in Dhaka and Rajshahi universities in 2010. On February 9 that year, he said Shibir men infiltrated the BCL.

"Some identified pro-Shibir men has been given important positions in the Dhaka University hall committees," he said.

The same day, Hasina said her government would not spare anyone involved in campus violence no matter what their political identities were.

Two days later, Hasina held a meeting with the then home minister Shahara Khatun, state minister for home Shamsul Haque Tuku and state minister for LGRD Jahangir Kabir

Nanak. She asked them to identify the Shibir men within the BCL and take stern action against them. But nothing was done.

Talking to reporters yesterday, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said, "I'm sorry for what happened in Rajshahi. I'm worried and angry at the same time."

But he, too, tried to shift the blame on Shibir, saying the Islamist party men created chaos by joining the demonstrations of the general students.

"Whoever is responsible will be punished," Nahid said when his attention was drawn to the armed BCL activists who attacked the demonstrators.

Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, state

minister for home, also warned of tougher action against those involved in the violence.

"Those who are seen with firearms are not students. They are criminals and the government will take action against them no matter which party they belong to," he told reporters at the secretariat.

Meanwhile, the BCL yesterday formed a five-member committee to probe the incident. Headed by BCL Vice-president Joydev Nondee, the committee is to submit its report to its president or secretary within five work-days.

Talking to The Daily Star, BCL General Secretary Siddiqui Nazmul Alam said, "Those responsible will face tough organisational action."