

Culvert caves in within a month

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A portion of a newly constructed culvert has collapsed within a month in Hosnabad village of the district's Dashmina upazila.

Locals alleged that the contractor of the culvert construction, Al-Amin Sikder, also a joint secretary of Patuakhali district unit Jubo League, used substandard materials in the construction.

The construction of the culvert was completed about a month ago. A part of the culvert collapsed all of a sudden on Sunday.

Sources said the Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) built the two-level box culvert on a canal in the village at a cost of around Tk 8 lakh under its small irrigation project to irrigate agricultural land in the area.

Farmer Abdul Barek alleged that substandard materials were used in the construction work.

Many farmers have expressed their anger over the culvert collapse as it is very useful to their cultivation.

Zafar Hossain, sub-assistant engineer of the BADC, said, "We have heard of the incident, but we cannot take action against the contractor as he is an influential man."

"We have asked the contractor to repair the damaged portion," he said.

Contacted, Al-Amin said he finished the culvert construction as per the agreement with the BADC. He also blamed the soil at the base for the collapse.

"I have already started repairing the damaged part of the culvert," he added.



The rubble left after a portion of a culvert collapsed at Hosnabad of Dashmina upazila in Patuakhali. Locals claimed that the culvert collapsed just a month after its construction because the contractor used sub-standard materials. PHOTO: STAR

DUE SHARE OF TEESTA

BNP's long march April 22

CPB, BSD lead another long march today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP will organise a long march towards the Teesta Barrage in Lalmonirhat on April 22 demanding "fair share" of water of the common river with India.

Meanwhile, Communist Party of Bangladesh and Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal jointly starts a three-day long march towards the barrage from today demanding due share of water from the Teesta and 53 other common rivers with the neighbouring country.

The march will start in front of the Jatiya Press Club around 3:30pm, said a press release yesterday.

Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, acting secretary general of BNP, will lead its long march. The BNP leader was talking to newsmen after a joint meeting of

Violence would have occurred

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occurred, even if I were present," he told reporters at the Media Centre of the Election Commission secretariat yesterday while announcing the sixth phase of upazila elections scheduled for May 19.

The CEC left Dhaka on March 3 for the USA and returned home on April 14. Elections to 245 upazilas in three phases were held during his leave and all these phases were marred by widespread violence, vote rigging, ballot boxes stuffing by the ruling Awami League men.

As a result, the long absence of the CEC during such an important period drew flak from different quarters.

Nevertheless, the EC boss thinks his leave is justified. "I took leave for my personal and official purposes. Elections are being held all around the year. If you [reporters] think that way, I

will not get any leave."

His claim on polls being held around the year, however, is not congruent with what the EC secretariat officials said.

The officials, requesting anonymity, told The Daily Star that large-scale elections like the upazila polls are held once in five years and so are the parliamentary, city corporation, municipality and union parishad elections. Only by-polls are held all the year around.

The CEC also claimed that his absence did not affect the upazila elections. "I monitored all the election activities from abroad. So, distance was not a problem."

He also said the commission would not take the responsibility for the violence occurred during the upazila polls.

"Those who attacked others and engaged in clashes are responsible for

the violence," he said.

About the criticisms of different political parties about his leave, he said, "It is usual that political parties will criticise the commission".

SIXTH PHASE UZ POLLS SCHEDULE Elections to 14 upazilas of 10 districts will be held on May 19 in the sixth phase, the CEC announced yesterday.

According to the polls schedule, the last date for filing nominations is April 24 and the papers will be scrutinised on April 26 while May 3 is the last date for withdrawal of nominations.

Besides, election only to the post of chairman of Tarakanda upazila in Mymensingh will also be held on the same day. The post fell vacant after the incumbent chairman became an MP in January 5 parliamentary elections.

Mujibnagar Day today

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Swadhin Bangla Betar. The contents of the message were patently unmistakable: Bangladesh was engaged in war against Pakistan, a struggle that was now being spearheaded by a government set up by its elected representatives. The tape containing Tajuddin's speech was transported to the clandestine radio station then fitfully broadcasting from the north-eastern Indian border with East Pakistan.

On the evening of April 12, Tajuddin's voice was heard in significant areas of what had by then become a country under Pakistani occupation.

The first few days after Tajuddin's broadcast proved to be exciting, with news of the sightings of other senior figures of the Awami League in various parts of the country and across the border.

Once all the senior colleagues of Bangabandhu had come together in Calcutta, it was felt that a formal

inauguration of the Bangladesh provisional government would need to be organised on Bangladesh territory. The spot chosen for the inauguration was a mangrove forest in Meherpur, a rural backwater in the larger Chuadanga region in the south-east of Bangladesh. Tajuddin and his colleagues quickly renamed the place as Mujibnagar in honour of the jailed leader of the nationalist struggle.

The day was April 17, 1971.

As acting president of Bangladesh (the incarcerated Bangabandhu having been chosen president of the republic), Syed Nazrul Islam swore in Tajuddin as prime minister along with Khondokar Moshtaq Ahmed, AHM Quamruzzaman and M Mansoor Ali as ministers in the very first Banglee government in history. Colonel MAG Osmany was given charge as commander-in-chief of the liberation army, now known as the Mukti Bahini, to forge battlefield strategy for the

armed struggle. The formal proclamation of independence, detailing the backdrop to the war, was read out by Prof Yusuf Ali, an academic-turned-politician elected to the national assembly in the December 1970 elections.

The acting president and the prime minister delivered brief speeches explaining the background to the formation of the government. There was no question, they told the assembled Bangalee villagers as well as newsmen from around the world, of Bangladesh reverting to the position which existed in pre-March 25 Pakistan. No political solution other than the acceptance of an independent Bangladesh as a historical reality could be arrived at. The brief ceremony came to an end to shouts of *Joi Bangla* from the crowd gathered there.

The die had been cast. The spirit of freedom was in the air.

Modi comes under fire

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that individual."

The Congress chief said "sacrifice" of leaders like Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi should "not go in vain".

She said the two leaders had "sacrificed their lives to safeguard the idea of India, the idea of secularism and diversity and equal opportunities to all sections of the society."

Dwelling on the performance of UPA during the last ten years, Sonia said the country made "a tremendous progress" and the economy grew by 7.5 per cent despite difficult economic situation in other countries during the period.

The UPA Chairperson also said huge investments had been made in education, health care, road, power and ports.

Away in eastern state of Bihar, Rahul asked Modi to stop "fooling" the people as he mounted a fresh broadside against Modi, dubbing his Gujarat

model of development in Gujarat as nothing but "loot of public money".

"Hindustan ko ullu banana bandh karo," (stop fooling the people of the country)," he told an election rally in minority-dominated Kisanjanj, contending one model of development cannot be applicable everywhere.

Rahul cited many instances to "expose" the Gujarat model of development and blamed BJP for selling the idea across the country with the aim of making Modi the next prime minister.

Priyanka charged that BJP's prime ministerial candidate and his party for practising an "ideology rooted in communalism".

Priyanka yesterday joined the poll campaign in Sonia Gandhi's constituency Rae Bareilly projecting the Lok Sabha polls as a battle between two ideologies.

"You are seeing two opposite kinds of politics in this election. On the one hand, there is an ideology of Congress

which believes in unity...which is of the view that everybody should come together.

"On the other hand, there is an ideology to the contrary, which is rooted in communalism. They might say anything but the internal truth is that their purpose is to propagate communalism and divide," Priyanka said addressing a public meeting at Raahi village.

Taking a dig at Modi without naming him, she said the other ideology believes that power has to be centred among a few selected persons.

Priyanka said those who believe in such an ideology say, "Listen to me, I will take all decisions. All capacities are within me and you should vote seeing this. You have to think whether power has to come to people or should it be centred in the hands of one person. Whether unity should be promoted in the nation or communalism."

SC judgment any day

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filed by the prosecution.

The closing arguments on the appeals ended on Tuesday.

The Tribunal-1 on February 28 last year sentenced Sayedee to death for killing Ibrahim Kuti and one Bisa Bali in Pirojpur in 1971, even though it had found him guilty on eight charges filed against him.

Protesting the Tribunal-1 verdict, the activists of Jamaat and pro-Jamaat student body Islami Chhatra Shibir last year went on the rampage in many places across the country that left more than 60 people dead.

The Jamaat-Shibir men in Bogra even tried to coax people into joining in by a propaganda that Sayedee's face was seen on the moon and that it was people's holy duty to save the Jamaat nayeb-e-ameer.

The other charges Sayedee was

convicted to include his association with Pakistani soldiers to abduct three women and rape them, torturing people, looting and setting fire to the houses of Hindus, forcing them convert to Islam in Pirojpur, and forcing them to leave the country in 1971.

On March 28 last year, Sayedee filed an appeal with the Supreme Court seeking acquittal on all charges. The same day, the government submitted a separate appeal seeking Sayedee's punishment on all eight charges.

A five-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Md Muzammel Hossain started hearing the appeals in September last year. Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha, Justice Md Abdul Wahhab Miah, Justice Hasan Foez Siddique and Justice AHM Shamsuddin Choudhury Manik are the other members of the bench.

The hearing went on for 48 days.

During the hearing, defence counsels - Khandker Mahbub Hossain and SM Shahjahan -- told the bench that Tribunal-1 had convicted and sentenced Sayedee on false and baseless documents and evidence and that Sayedee should be acquitted of all charges.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam prayed to the Appellate Division to affirm the Tribunal-1 verdict that sentenced Sayedee to death, saying all the charges against Sayedee were proved beyond reasonable doubt.

This is the second crimes against humanity case appeal on which the Appellate Division is set to announce a judgment.

On September 17 last year, this court had handed down the death penalty to another Jamaat leader Abdul Quader Mollah for his wartime atrocities in 1971. Mollah was executed on December 12 last year.

Patients suffer for second day

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Farhana Nasreen, daughter of the deceased, however, alleged that the doctors' negligence had caused the death. She also claimed they only had an argument with the doctors but did not assault anyone.

Like Tuesday, the agitating doctors formed a human chain at Shahbagh intersection yesterday too, halting traffic movement on all the roads around for about 20 minutes.

"We had demanded at least a visible action by the government. As police officer Masud is withdrawn, we have decided to call off the work abstention," said Dr Tanzina.

Meanwhile, relatives of the deceased told The Daily Star that they had gone to Ramna Model Police Station on Tuesday night to file a case against the doctors for their negligence, but the duty officer did not accept it.

"We are totally frustrated. We want justice," said the deceased's daughter Nasreen.

PATIENTS' SUFFERINGS CONTINUE Meanwhile, doctors did not attend the outdoor services and no new patients could be admitted for the second consecutive day yesterday, adding to the sufferings of those needing emergency medical care.

"There is no doctor... None wanted to see him. Employees asked us to go elsewhere," said a frustrated Farida Begum as she was leaving the hospital around 11:30am yesterday after her 50-year-old husband Abdul Malek, who had asthma and diabetes, had been denied healthcare.

They had come to the hospital on Tuesday too but found no doctor to see them.

She said it costs more than Tk 300 to travel from their home in Tongi to the hospital. The cost was too much for them to bear as Malek, a small fruit

seller, had been suffering from the diseases for the last three years.

Contacted, Professor Nazmunahar, director general of the hospital, said she heard some doctors were preventing others from serving at the emergency section.

"As ASP Masud has been withdrawn and the health minister and the ministry officials assured us of looking into the issue, doctors are going to see patients at the outdoor from tomorrow morning. We hope the situation to be normal," she told The Daily Star.

7 'Rohingyas'

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Station after seizing their passports.

Officer-in-Charge of the station, Kaji Shahabuddin Ahmed, after primary interrogation it seemed to them the seven had used fake addresses. A case was filed in this regard.

Witness testifies on atrocities

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involvement in crimes against humanity and genocide in Brahmanbaria and Habiganj during the Liberation War.

He, however, denied the charges.

During his 48-minute testimony, the 62-year-old witness said the Peace Committee, an anti-liberation organisation, was formed in Madhabpur under Qaisar's directive.

He also formed "Qaisar Bahini" to assist the Pakistani army during the war, Yakub said.

After hearing gunshots on April 27, he took refuge at Madhabpur Bazar and from a secret place, witnessed shops being looted and torched by Qaisar Bahini and Pakistani army.

"Qaisar and members of his force torched shops and houses of Shachindra Babu, Binod Bihari Modak, Kamini Roy, Hirendra Lal Roy and many others," Yakub told the tribunal.

He also heard that members of Qaisar Bahini and Pakistani army looted and burnt down the houses of Katiara village near Madhabpur Bazar, where most of the villagers were fishermen, said the witness.

After that they entered Krishnanagar village, burnt down several houses and started indiscriminate firing that killed at least four people, Yakub said.

"I heard about the incidents (in Katiara and Krishnanagar) from our guardians after 7:00 pm on April 27," he said.

On the following day, members of Qaisar Bahini and Pakistani army once again attacked the bazar and burnt down around 200 shops, Yakub said, adding that they later attacked his village, Madhabpur, and he went into hiding.

Yakub said the attackers burnt down their houses and those of others in the village and killed 10 to 15

people. He left for India on April 29.

Qaisar's lawyer Abdus Sobhan Tarafder had asked Yakub only five questions before the three-member tribunal led by Justice Obaidul Hassan adjourned the case proceeding until today, when he is set to face further cross-examination.

Meanwhile, the court recorded the cross-examination of Nurul Islam, the investigation officer and last prosecution witness in the case against Jamaat-e-Islami leader Mir Quasem Ali.

During cross-examination for the second day yesterday, Quasem's lawyer Mizanul Islam asked Nurul Islam about Dalim Hotel, an Al-Badr torture centre allegedly controlled by Quasem.

The court also completed recording the cross-examination of Tahurul Islam, the second prosecution witness in the case against another Jamaat leader Abdus Subhan.

No trace yet

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since April 17, 2012.

Soon after their disappearance, Ilias' wife Tahsina Rushdir filed a general diary with Banani Police Station. Three investigators were appointed to probe the incident, but no progress has so far been made.

The police recovered his abandoned car from near his Banani house and found Ansar's cellphone on the passenger seat on the day of their disappearance.

Inspector (investigation) of Banani police Kazi Mainul Islam started the probe into the incident. After his

transfer, his successors Nasir Uddin and Ashrafur Islam carried out the investigation but could not come up with any clue, insiders say.

Speaking anonymously, a police official of the station said they had found any clue to the disappearance of the BNP leader and could not say if he was still alive.

Talking to The Daily Star, Officer-in-Charge of Banani Police Station Bhuiyan Mahbub Hasan admitted that there was no notable headway in the incident.

They were continuing with the investigation and had set a number of

informers, he said, adding, they submitted reports to the court every month.

After the incident, the Rapid Action Battalion and police conducted joint operations in different areas to trace the missing BNP leader.

Rab Director General Mokhesur Rahman also said there was no development and added they were trying their best to trace him.

Ilias' wife could not be contacted despite repeated attempts for her comment.

Earlier, BNP chief Khaleda Zia alleged a government agency and Rab

had picked up Ilias from his car.

Both the government high-ups and Rab rejected her claim outright.

Born on January 1, 1961 at Ramdhana village in Bishwanath, Sylhet, Ilias came in the spotlight when he was a student of Dhaka University during the regime of military dictator HM Ershad.

He was elected the general secretary of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, student wing of BNP, during the party's first tenure after the fall of Ershad.

But the committee was dissolved in a few months after pro-Ilias group had evicted their fellow party men belong-

ing to Ovee-Niru group from DU campus when several murders rocked the university.

Ilias was also taken to jail after the dissolution of the committee.

HOMETOWN PROGRAMMES

The Bishwanath upazila unit BNP would take out a procession and hold a rally today demanding official statement on Ilias' whereabouts, reports our Sylhet correspondent.

Special prayers would be offered at the mosques and temples for the missing leader, said upazila BNP chief Jalal Uddin, also chairman of Bishwanath Union Parishad.

Besides, a platform for his 'release' Ilias Mukti Sangram Parishad, Sylhet will bring out a procession today at Zindabazar and offer prayers at the mosque of the shrine of Hajrat Shahjalal after Asr prayers tomorrow.

Eight people, including three at his hometown, died and scores were injured during a countrywide hartal enforced by BNP in protest of his disappearance on April 23.

More than 18,000 opposition men were accused in six cases filed by police after clashes and vandalism at Bishwanath upazila on April 22-23 in 2012.