

KILOMETRES OF CHAOS



City dwellers had a bad start to the week yesterday with tailbacks on many streets. The situation during the weekend was not rosy either as VIP movements caused traffic jams. The photo was taken at Shahbagh in the afternoon.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Situation getting better, slowly

FROM PAGE 1
the water had improved. At least the stench was not as horrible as it was a few years ago.

Md Jasim Uddin, of Kamrangirchar, said usually the bad smell of the river water reduces every year after the monsoon sets in. But this year, he believed the water quality started improving when discharging of tannery waste stopped in April.

The Department of Environment (DoE) tests found that the level of average dissolved oxygen (DO) in the Buriganga was 0.1 in the first two months of this year. It was 0.00 in the first two months of 2016.

The department also found that the level of BOD (biochemical oxygen demand) had come down to 10.4mg per litre in January and 24.4mg per litre in February this year. It was 11.5mg and 29.1mg in January and February of last year.

In Bangladesh, the level of DO should be above five and BOD below six during the dry season for any aquatic species to survive.

However, the fishermen community living on the Buriganga in Basila is not so hopeful about the revival of the river. Industrial pollution and encroachments are still on, they

said.

Hundreds of industries were upstream and dumping waste into the Buriganga.

Environmentalists echoed the same.

Prof Emeritus Ainun Nishat of Brac University, who is a water resource and climate change specialist, said the quality of water of the Buriganga was a lot better than before largely due to the halting of pollution by Hazaribagh tanneries and water flowing into the river from the Brahmaputra.

He said come October or November the water quality would drop significantly as there would be very little water flowing in from the Brahmaputra.

The expert said Hazaribagh tanneries had contributed to about 30 percent of the pollution of the river and upstream factories and Dhaka Wasa were responsible for the rest, with Wasa's contribution being the largest.

POLLUTION

The rivers surrounding Dhaka have become dumping grounds for all kinds of solid, liquid and industrial waste.

"If those industries upstream did

not discharge liquid waste into the river, possibly the river could be revived," said Ratan Kumar Das, a fisherman of Jaula Para in Basila.

The Buriganga is connected to the Turag. The Turag is polluted by dyeing and other industries upstream in Gazipur.

A World Bank study in 2006 showed that the number of industries dumping waste in and around the city was not fewer than 7,000. Only a few hundred industries have set up Effluent Treatment Plants (ETP), but most of them have been left unused.

In 2011, the government took up a project to bring in fresh water from the Jamuna to the Buriganga. The government spent over Tk 100 crore for the project but no progress was visible.

Due to the pollution, fish resources in the river were disappearing, affecting the livelihoods of local fishermen. They could fish in the Buriganga and the Turag only one or two months a year during the monsoon.

During the monsoon, some fish that have been washed away from ponds and wetlands are found in the rivers.

Only 30 fishermen families live in Jaula Para in Basila and most of them are unable to fish round the year. They have to do other work for their livelihood. Some cannot even get work.

ENCROACHMENTS

This correspondent visited the banks of the Buriganga last month and saw some real estate companies filling up the river in Keraniganj.

Just across the Dhaka Udyan, a few housing companies, including Akashleena, Gram Bangla, Western city, and Silicon city, were seen filling up the river in Boro Bardeshi village of Keraniganj.

Hazir Ali, owner of Alif Enterprise which trades sand, said land development companies have started filling up the river over the last two-three months.

"As the tannery industries are being moved, now the demand for river-view land project will increase here. So, housing companies have become very active," he said.

In Basila area, factories and warehouses have been built virtually on the Buriganga. Signs of fresh encroachments were also seen at the confluence of Hazaribagh canal and the Buriganga at Basila.

JU asks students to call off their demonstration

2 more students join hunger strike

JU CORRESPONDENT

Jahangirnagar University yesterday urged the agitating students to end their hunger strike demanding withdrawal of the case filed against 56 students in connection with vandalism of the vice-chancellor's house on May 27.

The students had also been asked not to be involved in any activities that could hamper academic and administrative activities of the university, said a JU press release.

The decision was made at an emergency syndicate meeting held yesterday with JU VC Prof Farzana Islam in the chair.

JU Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof Amir Hussain said, "It is impossible for us to withdraw the case, as the university does not have any authority to do that. It is the police who deal with the matter."

A syndicate member wishing not to be named said, "If the students and the university authorities can reach an understanding over the issue, the court will decide about the case withdrawal after getting the investigation report from police. Now, we can only request police to withdraw the case."

Around 2:00pm on Saturday, Sarder

Zahid, a master's student of English department, began the hunger strike unto death at the Central Shaheed Minar on campus. Later, Puja Biswas, another master's student of international relations, joined him.

Zahid and Puja, who are among the 56 accused, have become sick.

Two more students have also joined Zahid and Puja. Besides, a good number of university students have expressed solidarity with them.

On May 26, marketing student Nazmul Hasan Rana, 24, and microbiology student Arafat, 24, were killed as a bus hit a human haulier carrying them on Dhaka-Aricha highway in Savar's C&B bus stand area.

Afterwards, agitating students blocked the highway demanding speed breakers there. But police fired rubber bullets and teargas canisters to disperse them. At least 10 people, including students, a JU official and two journalists, were injured.

Later, they besieged the VC's residence. During the demonstration, 42 JU students were held and later shown arrested in the vandalism case filed by Registrar Abu Bakr Siddique.

The next day, all the 42 were released on bail.



A doctor attends to two children at Chittagong Medical College Hospital yesterday. Parents are getting increasingly worried with at least 87 kids from the same Sitakunda village are being treated in two hospitals in the port city for similar symptoms.

PHOTO: STAR

UNKNOWN DISEASE

Another child sick in Sitakunda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A seven-year-old indigenous boy was sent to a hospital with fever yesterday, taking the number of children suffering from one unknown disease to 87 in Sitakunda upazila of Chittagong.

Earlier, nine children suspected of having been infected by the same disease died at Sonachori union's Tripura Para last week. On Saturday, a dozen children, of another village in Bogulabazar area, were admitted to hospital with similar symptoms.

Upazila Health Officer Nurul Karim said staff of the local administration were visiting the villages of Sitakunda and sending the children with similar symptoms to hospitals.

"The seven-year-old boy, who was admitted to the hospital today, has relatives in Sonachori. He visited the area recently. That's why we sent him to hospital, since he was suffering from

fever."

With the boy, as many as 87 children from three villages, where mostly people of the indigenous Tripura community live, have been hospitalised.

Chittagong civil surgeon Azizur Rahman Siddique said the condition of the admitted children was good now.

Of the hospitalised children, around 50 are receiving treatment at Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH). The rest are at Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Disease (BITID) in Sitakunda's Fouldarhat.

Five children were shifted from the BITID to the CMCH yesterday afternoon.

Mala Rani Tripura, mother of six-year-old Rumi Tripura, said her daughter's condition had not improved in the BITID, which was why doctors referred her to the CMCH.

India set

FROM PAGE 16
president, either of the candidates needs to secure at least one vote more than 50 percent of the total votes cast.

The results of the poll would be announced on Thursday, five days before Mukherjee's term expires.

While the presidential poll is being seen as a contest between two Dalit leaders, Kumar had, at a conference earlier this month, described it as a "battle of ideologies."

On the other hand, Kovind, nurtured in the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), had said the president's post was above party politics. "A president never belongs to any party. All people irrespective of caste, creed, religion and state are equal. Vote bank is not important for me but development matters."

The arithmetic in the electoral college favours 72-year-old Kovind, who has received support from several key regional parties outside NDA-fold including Telugu Desam Party, Biju Janata Dal, Telangana Rashtra Samiti, and Janata Dal (U).

The number is clearly tilted towards BJP in Lok Sabha and the party is in power in more states than the opposition parties supporting Kumar.

Meira Kumar, the 71-year-old former diplomat and daughter of India's late defence minister Jagjivan Ram, will be backed by parties like Congress, Trinamool Congress, the Left parties, Rashtriya Janata Dal, Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samaj Party.

If elected, Kovind's rise to the post of president would make him the first for a leader reared in RSS, BJP's spiritual fountainhead.

The possibility of cross-voting by parties is not ruled out as under the constitution, parties cannot issue any whip to its lawmakers to vote for a particular candidate.

AL following in JP footsteps?

FROM PAGE 1
understand the situation.

The fourth Parliament was formed following an election in March 1988 amid a boycott by Awami League, BNP and other parties. The then ruling JP won an easy landslide victory.

To give the Parliament a façade of legitimacy, the Ershad-led regime handpicked a so-called combined opposition party-led by ASM Abdur Rab. This act was widely ridiculed. All major pro-democratic parties termed that Rab-led alliance a 'pet opposition' of the then ruling JP.

A few months after the inauguration of the new Parliament, the eighth amendment to the constitution was brought by the Ershad government to consolidate its power.

The amendment introduced the provision for setting up some benches of the High Court outside of the capital and made Islam state religion.

The apex court in 1990 scrapped the provision for introduction of the circuit benches of the HC outside of the capital as it found the amendment against the independence of the judiciary.

Years later, long after the restoration of parliamentary democracy in the country, the 10th Parliament was formed following a one-sided parliamentary election held on January 5, 2014 amid a boycott by the BNP-led alliance and other parties.

The ruling AL easily won more than a three-fourth majority in the election by bagging 153 out of 300 seats uncontested. Only 18 candidates nominated by JP were elected uncontested in 1988 elections.

This time Ershad's JP was made a handpicked main opposition by the AL in Parliament. And after a few months of the inauguration of the new Parliament, the AL government

brought the 16th amendment to restore the Parliament's power to remove the SC judges.

The SC declared the 16th amendment unconstitutional and void terming the constitutional changes illegal and unconstitutional. It found the changes went against the principles of the separation of powers and the independence of the judiciary.

But the present government policymakers were none too pleased. They discussed the issue in the Parliament. Honourable MPs toed the line of the ruling AL to castigate the SC in unison that had recently upheld a High Court verdict nullifying the amendment.

They did the same in May last year when the High Court declared the verdict.

The Speakers in the fourth and tenth Parliament played similar roles as well. Being the head of the legislature, one of the three organs of the state, they allowed MPs to make free style speeches against the judiciary, one other organ of the state.

The way they castigated the HC is not healthy for the proper functioning of the three organs of the state--legislative, executive and the judiciary.

In both cases, the executive branch of the government joined hands with the legislature to castigate the judiciary. This is no way healthy for the proper functioning of the three organs.

Considering the sensitivity and importance of the judiciary, the constitution guarantees its independence as the article 94 (4) clearly states judges will be independent to discharge their functions.

Judicial independence allows judges to make decisions based on what is right under the law, without facing political and personal consequences for the decisions they make.

Compositions

FROM PAGE 16
this work. He inspired me to do this professionally," Nazrul said.

Nazrul has sculpted different things, from animals, humans to figures of divinity. His most notable work includes sculptures of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Fakir Laloni Sai, world renowned poet Rabindranath Tagore and national poet Kazi Nazrul Islam. Apart from these, he has also created replicas of the National Mosque Baitul Mukarram, Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, Central Shaheed Minar, Memorial monument, and naval vessels, such as newly added submarines-Somudrajoy, Somudra Ovijan, Bijiy, Dholesawry, and Osman. He has also created models of different ships, the Taj Mahal, and of many mosques located in different parts of the country. The ships he designed were commissioned works and he sold each ship for Tk 70,000 to Tk 80,000 for the Navy's museum.

Nazrul Islam's work helps to support his family financially. However, the lion share of his earning come from commissioned work. He recalls a time when there were no orders for around six months. That is when he decided that he needed to do something for earning extra. He soon opened a chotpoti shop which now nets him around Tk 200 profit a day.

Nazrul's craftsmanship has won him many admirers. Many Bangladeshis residing in different countries have purchased his work to sell them on in various showrooms. Nazrul's future plan is to immortalise the many monuments and significant locations of the country in wood. He wishes to leave these behind as pieces of memories for his children and grandchildren.

For Nazrul, age is just a number and the inevitability of death only spurs him to work harder. As long as can, he will continue to capture everything in his art and because his art will outlive him. He wishes to leave behind awe-inspiring pieces of work to be remembered by.

ATM spits out

FROM PAGE 16
Unable to contact the outside world, the desperate contractor had started writing pleas for help on pieces of paper and pushing them through the dispenser to customers expecting to receive cash, not supplications.

One of the notes read, "Please help. I'm stuck in here, and I don't have my phone. Please call my boss" -- with a phone number included.

Police freed the worker, without releasing his name or the company he worked for.