

Grabbing on

Authorities turn a blind eye despite HC order to reclaim Karnaphuli land

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, Chittagong

The Chittagong district administration, Chittagong City Corporation and Chittagong Development Authority have done nothing to reclaim the land occupied by locals on both banks of the Karnaphuli river two years after the High Court issued orders to do so.

The encroaching, coupled with sewerage and industrial pollution, has instead intensified since the issuance of the order two years ago.

The court directed the authorities concerned to evict all illegal structures from the river banks within three months.

The district administration claimed they could not begin the eviction even two years into the order as they did not get the necessary funding required to do so.

A recent visit to the river revealed that new points around the water body were now being encroached as well.

The capital dredging, which Chittagong Port Authority began in July 2011 and ended in 2013, also came as an advantage for land grabbers as parts of the Karnaphuli, where the dredged earth was kept, were

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



The High Court two years ago ordered authorities concerned to free the Karnaphuli from illegal occupation but nothing has changed. The recent photo taken at Chittagong city's Char Patharghata shows occupiers have walled off a section of the river.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

ANTI-DRUG DRIVE

One killed, two injured in 'shootout'

STAR REPORT

A suspected drug peddler was killed and two others were injured in separate incidents of reported gunfights in Narail, Rajshahi and Lalmonirhat yesterday.

In Narail, Golam Mostafa, 48, an alleged drug peddler, was killed in a "gunfight" with police in Laskarpur-Chandmari area.

Receiving information about a gang of drug peddlers gathering at the area, a team of Detective Branch (DB) of police, along with members of Narail Sadar Police Station, conducted a raid there at around 3:30am, claimed Anwar Hossain, officer-in-charge (OC) of the station.

Sensing the presence of law enforcers, the gang opened fire on the policemen, prompting them to retaliate, ultimately leading to a gunfight, reports our Jhenidah correspondent quoting police.

Later, police recovered the bullet hit body of Mostafa and took him to Narail Hospital, where the on-duty doctors declared him dead. Police also claimed to have recovered a pipe gun, two bullets and 50 yaba pills from the spot.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

Use east Dhaka, decongest west

FROM PAGE 1

rural, so acquiring land and building roads and public transportation systems will be cheaper. If the government takes advantage of this before the area gets packed, then we can see a very different Dhaka.

TDS: How well equipped do you think our city corporations are to take on the challenge of a bigger Dhaka? How do you evaluate the coordination and cooperation between different entities that manage and maintain Dhaka?

Rama: It is not like there is a vacuum of institutions in Dhaka. If anything, there is an excess of institutions with similar mandates that are stepping on each other's toes and are at cross purposes. They are all underfunded. One positive thing about the city corporations is that they have been expanded to include unions in what is called east Dhaka, but they don't have the resources to develop it. I don't get the sense that they have the strategic clarity to develop east Dhaka. They do have projects concerning lighting and sidewalks, but they are relatively minor compared to what is needed.

We need a series of major strategic interventions. One of them, related to water, is the construction of an embankment along the Balu river. Roads and rapid transits are needed to prevent congestion. On the softer side, they must create the impression of a modern business district with good service delivery so that people and firms move there. My impression is that none of the leaders has the vision or the resources to do this. Everybody

is trying to improve the existing Dhaka and they are not thinking of the future.

There are very good examples too like the Hatirjheel Lake rehabilitation project, which was done in the same institutional setting. What was different about it was a very clear leadership all the way from the prime minister. If you just have the political will, you can slice this development into projects which are manageable -- embankments, land administration, transport and so on -- and allocate them to empowered agencies to do it.

TDS: A World Bank report has found that whatever road construction has been happening has not really changed the city's traffic congestion scenario. Why is that?

Rama: The report compares the area of roads built to the increasing population and increasing traffic and the difference is huge. When you reach that point, you don't have enough space for so many people. An innovation like smart traffic lights will not help. Because of the road systems all the traffic in Dhaka flows from north to south and you have a very few ways to go from east to west. We need to think of how to use east Dhaka to decongest west. Dhaka is very strategically located when it comes to corridors, whether you think of connecting Sylhet to Chittagong or South Asia to East Asia. All of that intersects towards the east of Dhaka, so connectivity from east to west is important. We think of Dhaka as a city with many problems, but it is probably one of the best pieces of real estate in Asia because it is located so well.

TDS: Your report finds that 80 percent of all the export-oriented industries are in greater Dhaka, and the residential neighbourhoods there belong to lower income classes like factory workers. If we develop, will we be creating an inclusive city or will we be gentrifying the area?

Rama: The social risk is the most important thing to consider. You have people with skills and people with no skills. Our simulations assure us that because prosperity spreads out, most wages will go up in a similar way. So that is not our main concern. Our main concern has to do with land and its price. The risk is on the eastern side because it is mostly rural. If east Dhaka becomes like Gulshan, then who will appropriate that gain is our major question. We are not sure that all the land acquisition by private developers is fully compensating the people that live there. We are not sure what will happen if 5 or 6 million move to east Dhaka -- who will they be buying from? An analysis we did of a mauza makes us believe that there are much fewer property titles than there are households. So there are many households that do not have a way to protect themselves during acquisition. The question is how to use the value of the properties and the holding tax to contain the unfairness.

TDS: What will development of east Dhaka look like? Will it have more financial zones or will it be a manufacturing district?

Rama: If development continues as it is now, it will probably be a manufacturing area. Manufacturing is land-intensive and if you make available a lot

of land that no longer gets flooded, then factories will grow. On the other hand, good jobs are the ones in universities, hospitals, banks. So one intervention we suggest is laying the foundation of a modern business district that can attract these high value-added services. If that happens, Dhaka will cease to be a city of manufacturing. This is something we have seen before -- as the city develops, the manufacturing moves out of the city.

TDS: There is no alternative to Dhaka as mentioned in the World Bank report, because even Chittagong cannot assume the position of the second-biggest city. Is that going to be a problem?

Rama: We do not analyse this explicitly in the report. In Bangladesh, the first city is way bigger than the other cities. But if you take New Delhi for example, you can see that a big dynamic city can spread a lot of prosperity. Around a city that is well connected, you see places transforming to become more urban. Delhi spreads its prosperity to almost 80 million people. Our impression is that if Dhaka succeeds in becoming a richer city, it will become a hub of the corridors of this part of the world and that will help everyone. It is not an either-or scenario -- we will not be developing Dhaka at the expense of other cities, it is developing Dhaka as a locomotive for other cities.

Martin Rama is a co-author of a new World Bank report titled "Toward Great Dhaka: A New Urban Development Paradigm Eastward" that explores the possibilities and challenges of the capital's expansion.

Unexplained murders

FROM PAGE 1

Arifullah's death preceded the chill that currently grips the camps. The spate of murders has left the Rohingyas insecure in their own refuge.

"As violence seems to be on the rise over internal feuds among the Rohingyas, we are sending two platoons of police soon," Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan told The Daily Star on Friday, adding the government will do everything to maintain law and order in the camps.

Bangladesh authorities have planned to deploy around 2,000 policemen to guard the refugees. This will be in addition to the 700 policemen currently working in the camps.

A resident of Balukhali, asking not to be named, said, "The scenario totally changes when night falls. As everyone else leaves, we are left alone and then things happen."

Police officials said the internal conflicts between Rohingyas stem from establishing supremacy and previous enmity. The enmity is said to have developed back in Myanmar.

Others claim that being provided their necessities and having nothing to do are reasons behind the rise in crime. Many also point to the believe that the ghettoisation of the camps.

A total of 231 cases were filed against the Rohingya people and 451 were arrested.

The other crimes committed in the camps include rape, abduction, smuggling, drug peddling, and attempted robbery.

Arifullah's death though still remains hard to explain.

The 40-year old, called Majhi, or community leader, was liked by all in

the community. He liaised with Bangladeshi officials and represented the Rohingyas to the visiting foreign dignitaries. He also worked for international agencies in Myanmar.

He was attacked once before back in January 19, but he was lucky at the time.

So far, police have arrested three suspected Rohingya men over the killing, but are yet to ascertain the motive.

"The investigation into the killings is on. We suspect internal conflicts over supremacy led to the killings," said Cox's Bazar Superintendent of Police AKM Iqbal Hossain.

"Rohingyas have locked into clashes over silly matters most of the time," Afrujul Haque Tutul, assistant superintendent of Cox's Bazar Police, told The Daily Star.

Tutul said five police camps were set up in various points inside the Rohingya camp four months ago to maintain law and order.

"It is nearly impossible to maintain a million people by such a small force," he said, adding that they have already requested for two armed police battalions for the Rohingyas camps.

During his recent visit to the Rohingya camps, Peter Maurer, president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, said, "What I hear from my colleagues is obviously a big concern. It is obvious that it is a big challenge when you have big numbers [of people], poor conditions and cramped situations."

More than 700,000 Rohingyas, escaping the Myanmar Army crackdown that began in August 25 last year, have been given shelter in squalid, cramped camps in Cox's Bazar.

Lady Luck

FROM PAGE 1

accuracy) against the winning side's 374 passes (with 80 percent accuracy).

The losers won 8 corners and the winners 3.

Brazil dominated the match from the word go, yet they ended up losers. Belgium could convert only one chance into a goal and Brazil squandered plenty of chances. Brazil looked a little wobbly in the absence of midfielder stalwart Casemiro (suspended due to picking up two yellow cards), and Fernandinho's own goal in 13th minute was a result of this.

However, Kevin De Bruyne's second strike was a gem of a goal that scripted Brazil's exit. Kazan Arena, the pictur-

esque stadium in Russia's autonomous republic of Tatarstan, turned out not to be a lucky ground for the top favourites. Defending champions Germany and favourites Argentina were the two teams dumped out of the tournament from this ground before Brazil.

The Selecao did all the big things so well across the field but failed to do a few small things in and around the opponents' box. Their dribbling, dodging, passing and tackling were excellent. But, while inside the box, one strange thing or another happened. Either Thiago Silva's instinctive shot with his thigh hit the post, Neymar's curling last-minute kick was saved by the 6-foot-6-inch Thibaut Courtois, Renato Augusto's nimble

feet missed a sitter, Philippe Coutinho's dipping, swerving effort somehow found the outstretched fingers of Courtois or Douglas Costa's goal-bound boomer was deflected by the upturned leg of a defender.

Coach Tite, who pieced together a Brazil shattered by a 7-1 humiliation at hands of Germany four years back, is not a man who likes to talk about luck. "When it is on our side it is a polite way of putting down the opponent. So, I don't believe in luck. Was Courtois lucky? No, he was great. It hit the woodwork, what can you do. Belgium were competent and effective," Tite said after the match.

Tite is understandably in a lot of

Teesta deal

FROM PAGE 12

an issue of it in the upcoming national polls likely in December.

"An agreement on the Teesta water will be signed today or tomorrow. Let us be patient. It's no longer a problem between the two neighbours. This has happened because of the goodwill shared by the two governments. This is what Sheikh Hasina has also said," he said.

"Problems can be sorted out only through discussions and mutual help ... we are taking the problems one by one and trying to solve them."

Imam was replying to queries from journalists after delivering a speech on "Indo-Bangladesh: Historical And Contemporary Perspective" at Observer Research Foundation (ORF), a leading think-tank in India.

He said it was true that the Teesta issue has remained unsolved but cooperation between Bangladesh and India in other areas has expanded remarkably. He claimed that the killings at the border and smuggling of phensedyl into Bangladesh have stopped.

Asked about a BNP team's recent visit to India, Imam termed the party "pro-Pakistan and pro-China". He accused the party of working against India's interests and requested New Delhi not to give it any scope.

A three-member BNP delegation, led by the party's standing committee member Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, interacted with ORF and some other think-tanks in Delhi last month.

Imam said some of the BNP leaders, who have visited India, were "pro-Pakistan and pro-China".

"The BNP is pro-Pakistan, pro-Jamaat-e-Islami. I don't think any sensible government here or in

Bangladesh will ever tolerate them. Both the countries have to deal with this problem together."

He said the BNP would take part in the coming elections. Otherwise, it would "lose its registration as a political party". According to Imam, "pro-Pakistan elements" would try to instigate violence during the election but the government in Bangladesh was ready to counter them.

Promising full cooperation to India in its fight against terrorism, Imam said the Hasina-led government would not allow Zakir Naik access to the country as it was committed to showing zero tolerance towards terrorism.

"The soil of Bangladesh will never be allowed to be used by elements who are hostile to our neighbours," he said.

Replying to a question about the Awami League's links with Hefajat-e-Islam, Imam said, "You cannot use force against thousands of madrasa students. Many in the Hefajat have turned into supporters of the AL. That is the reason why the AL has changed its strategy towards Hefajat."

National polls

FROM PAGE 12

harder than ever," she said.

The AL chief asked her party men to unite for Boat, electoral symbol of the AL, saying, "You'll have to work together for whoever gets the boat symbol so that it doesn't suffer defeat in the elections."

Hasina said the AL would take part in the election under the banner of its alliance along with other "friendly" political parties. "So, Awami League leaders should be ready to make sacrifices."

Save topsoil

FROM PAGE 12

made of them is 20 to 30 percent less expensive compared to a reinforced concrete structure, he said.

Chief guest of the seminar Housing and Public Works Minister Mosharraf Hossain said the government was going to ensure that there was no conventional brickkilns by 2020 with a view to conserve topsoil and forests, and to encourage the use of alternative building blocks.

He said the government has incorporated the provision for use of alternative materials in the Bangladesh National Building Code and it was a government decision that alternatives would be used in all public constructions.

Seven organisations -- Buet, HBRI, Oxfam Bangladesh, Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela), Green Architecture Cell of Buet, The Structural Engineers Ltd, and Jagoroni Chakra Foundation -- jointly organised the seminar on Buet campus.

Bela Chief Executive Syeda Rizwana Hasan said as per official records, there were around 7,000 conventional brickkilns across the country, which were not only responsible for the

destruction of topsoil but also the highest emitter of greenhouse gases.

There are 2,441 conventional brickkilns in and around Dhaka city and they contribute 58 percent of the city's air pollution, she said.

Speaking for uniformity, she said there were some legal provisions that go against a January 2018 directive from the Prime Minister's Office and the seventh five-year plan.

Ashikur Rahman Joarder, coordinator of Green Architecture Cell, said energy efficiency of a building depended on the kind of materials used and among other factors, popularity of alternative bricks depended on publicising its aesthetic beauty and durability.

Programme Director MB Akhter of Oxfam in Bangladesh said massive public awareness and training of construction professionals were vital for making alternative bricks a success.

Noted civil engineering educator and national professor Jamilar Reza Choudhury, who chaired the seminar, said the use of alternative bricks was vital for promoting sustainable building and to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Committee holds

FROM PAGE 1

Commission, along with acting secretary to the Prime Minister's Office.


Earlier in February, students of different public universities and jobseekers, under the banner of "Bangladesh Sadharan Chhatra Adhikar Sangrakkhan Parishad", started a movement demanding reforms in the quota.

Amid countrywide agitation, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, on April 11, announced the abolition all types of quotas in public jobs.

But as no gazette notification was

issued in this regard, the protesters began boycotting classes and examinations in all universities and colleges on May 14 for an indefinite period.


At present, 56 percent of government jobs are reserved for candidates under various quotas. Of the 56 percent, 30 percent are kept for freedom fighters' children and grandchildren, 10 percent for women, 10 percent for people of underdeveloped districts, five percent for members of indigenous communities and one percent for the physically challenged.



ISPAHANI

Premium Black Tea

A blend of the best Bangladeshi and African teas



esque stadium in Russia's autonomous republic of Tatarstan, turned out not to be a lucky ground for the top favourites. Defending champions Germany and favourites Argentina were the two teams dumped out of the tournament from this ground before Brazil.

The Selecao did all the big things so well across the field but failed to do a few small things in and around the opponents' box. Their dribbling, dodging, passing and tackling were excellent. But, while inside the box, one strange thing or another happened. Either Thiago Silva's instinctive shot with his thigh hit the post, Neymar's curling last-minute kick was saved by the 6-foot-6-inch Thibaut Courtois, Renato Augusto's nimble

pain, but he should be proud to see the hard work his charges put in. Argentina, Spain and Germany went home through humiliating defeats. In my opinion, it has been a wonderful recovery for Brazil in two years under Tite since the 2014 tragedy.

With the exit of the last Latin giants, the World Cup has become a contest of European countries for the ultimate glory in football. This fabulous victory should give Belgium a great boost to go all out against France in the semifinals on July 11.

The Golden Generation of Red Devils is now in a great hunting mood. And France should beware of Belgium.

The writer is former Sports Editor of The Daily Star