

CHINA 'DESTABILISING' PACIFIC

Says US Defense Secretary Mark Esper as military tensions boil between the world's two largest economies

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WATERLOGGING IN DHAKA

Collective failure made it perennial

Experts say only city corporations taking over drainage management won't solve it



HELEMUL ALAM

The desire expressed by the two Dhaka city mayors to take over the responsibility of drainage management from Dhaka Wasa in a bid to end the capital's perennial waterlogging problem has widely been regarded as a popular idea.

But experts said just changing the custodian without addressing the core issues that have failed Wasa -- such as the absence of total authority of one particular body and lack of coordination with six other organisations -- might also fail the two city corporations.

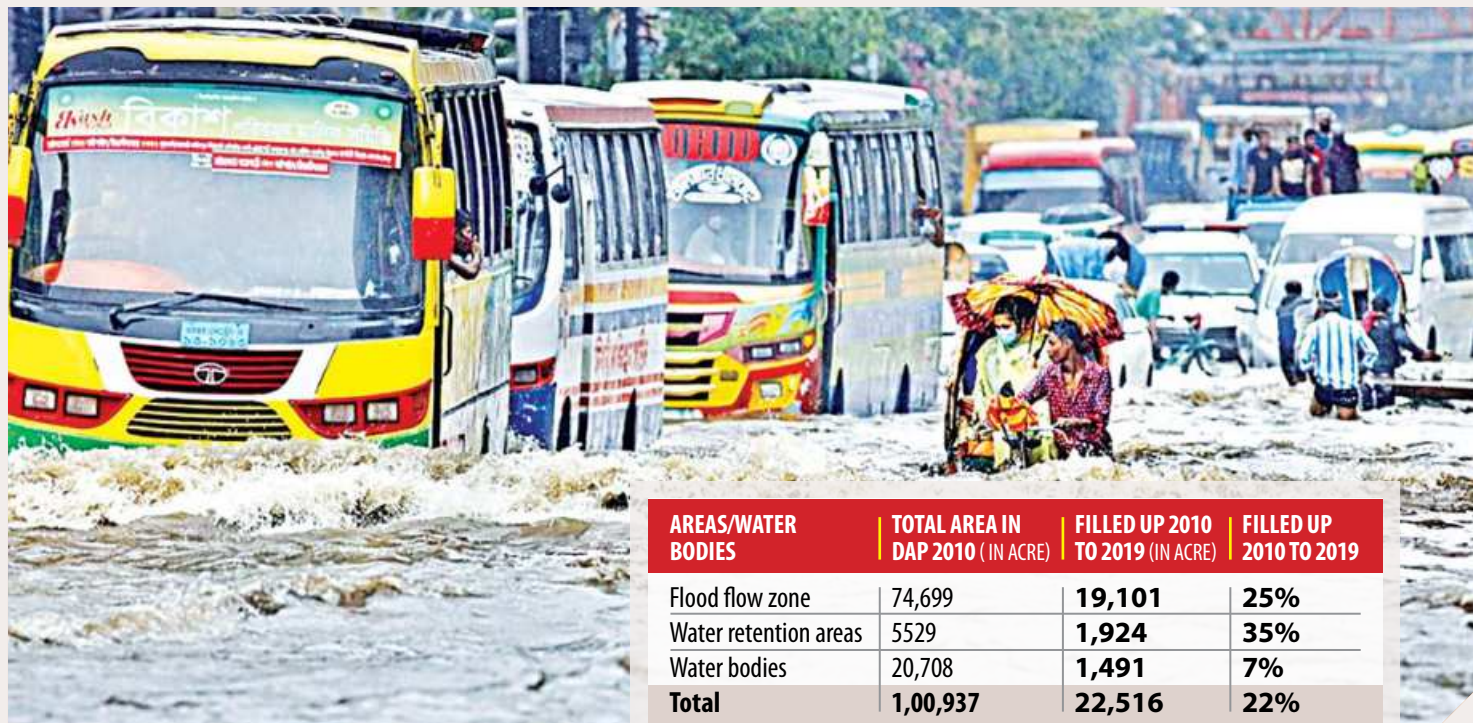
The idea of handing over the drainage management to city corporations came to

light last month when the two mayors -- Dhaka South's Shekih Fazole Noor Taposh and Dhaka North's Atiqul Islam -- said they wished to take over the job.

They also criticised the Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) and Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) for their failure to solve the long-standing problem.

The two mayors blamed Wasa for failing to properly clean the canals, drains and box culverts under its jurisdiction, causing waterlogging in the city last month due to heavy rain. They also slammed BWDB for failing to pump out storm water in time after rain.

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AREAS/WATER BODIES	TOTAL AREA IN DAP 2010 (IN ACRE)	FILLED UP 2010 TO 2019 (IN ACRE)	FILLED UP 2010 TO 2019
Flood flow zone	74,699	19,101	25%
Water retention areas	5529	1,924	35%
Water bodies	20,708	1,491	7%
Total	1,00,937	22,516	22%

"Several organisations are tasked with managing drainage in the city. That said, there is a culture of lack of coordination, unhealthy competition, and shifting blame, which compounds the waterlogging problem."

TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL BANGLADESH (TIB)

"Although it is the duty of Wasa and the water development board to solve waterlogging, both the organisations have totally failed. Give us the duty to solve the problem through long-term planning."

DSCC MAYOR FAZLE NOOR TAPOSH

"We have requested the ministry to hand us over the charge of Wasa regarding drainage system along with all manpower and equipment; otherwise, it will not be possible for us to play our role properly."

DNCC MAYOR ATIQUUL ISLAM

TRAFFICKING TO KUWAIT
Investigators looking for MP Shahid's brother

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

They used to charge each people Tk 5 lakh to Tk 7 lakh to send them to Kuwait.

After contacting people from across the country through brokers, they used to send the fortune seekers to Kuwait through the travel agency of Kazi Mohammed Badrul Alam alias Liton Chowdhury, younger brother of Lakshimpur-2 lawmaker Kazi Md Shahid Islam alias Kazi Papul.

The collected money, gathered through sending people to Kuwait, was later deposited into different bank accounts of the two siblings.

The Criminal Investigation Department, now probing human trafficking charges against the lawmaker, has claimed to have gleaned the information from a staff of the recruiting agency named Job Bank International.

Md Golam Mostafa, accountant of the recruiting agency, was arrested on August 20 in a case filed by several trafficking victims with Motijheel Police Station on July 7.

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Covid danger far from over

Experts warn, suggest proper intervention to check further transmission

SADI MUHAMMAD ALOK and MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

There is no chance the coronavirus outbreak will come to an end without proper measures to curb its transmission, leading experts said.

The transmission might become even more dangerous because people do not abide by the virus restrictions, they warned.

Besides, the actual level of transmission remains unknown until a countrywide survey is done.

"Those who are dying with Covid-19 symptoms are not counted in the [government] list. I have talked to different hospitals across the country. The number of patients with breathing problems have increased compared with the number 10 days earlier," Dr M Iqbal Arslan, president of Swadhinata Chikitsash Parishad told The Daily Star.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Zahid Maleque drew flak from experts two weeks ago after saying, "Whether the vaccine comes or not, coronavirus will leave the country."

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), the number of confirmed Covid-19 cases surpassed the three-lakh mark on August 26.

The death toll had also crossed the 4000-mark the same day, and on an average around 40 patients have been dying every day over the last month.

On Wednesday, acting director general of the DGHS Prof ABM Khurshid Alam told journalists at an event that the transmission was on the rise near the country's borders.

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Weekly count shows drop in Covid cases

47 die, 2,211 test positive in a day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Though the number of tests has increased in the last three weeks, the weekly total number of cases has dropped in the country, data shows.

Last week, a total of 16,434 new Covid-19 cases were confirmed out of 90,934 tests while 19,379 cases were reported in the third week when 91,692 tests were conducted.

The weekly death toll, however, was on the rise in August. According to Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) data, 313 people died of Covid-19 last week.

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COVID-19 VACCINE PRODUCTION

Beximco Pharma ties up with Indian firm

To invest in venture with Serum Institute of India

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Beximco Pharmaceuticals, one of the leading drugmakers of the country, announced yesterday it will invest with the Serum Institute of India (SII) to ensure Bangladesh receives Covid-19 vaccine on a priority basis, once approved by the regulator.

The announcement came more than a week after Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla's visit to Dhaka and a day after the Bangladesh government announced approval of the stage three trial of a vaccine of Chinese company -- Sinovac Research and Development Co Ltd.

During Shringla's visit, Dhaka had sought to collaborate with Indian vaccine developers for trial in Bangladesh. The secretary did not speak of any collaboration for the trial, but said Bangladesh would be a priority country in terms of getting

Covid-19 vaccines once developed and approved.

In a press statement, Beximco Pharmaceuticals said it will make a financial contribution to advance the development of the vaccine, which will be adjusted based on the vaccine price under the terms of the planned arrangement.

The number of doses are to be provided to Bangladesh on a priority basis and Beximco Pharmaceuticals investment amount will depend on regulatory approvals, SII's production capacity and earlier commitments to other countries, it said.

The SII, the world's largest vaccine producer, has partnered with AstraZeneca of UK, the Gates Foundation and Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI) to produce more than a billion doses of vaccine for global supply.

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BANGLADESH UPDATE



2,211

New cases in 24hrs



3,06,794

Total cases



4,174

Deaths



1,96,836

Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE



837,741

Deaths



24,741,132

Total cases

SINHA MURDER
OC Pradeep, 2 other cops placed on remand

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A Cox's Bazar court yesterday placed suspended Teknaf OC Pradeep Kumar Das and two other police officers on a three-day remand each in a case filed over the killing of Major (ret'd) Sinha Md Rashed Khan.

The other two are former inspector and in-charge of Baharchhara Police Investigation Centre Liaqat Ali and former sub-inspector of Teknaf Police Station Nandadulal Rakhsit.

Judge Tamanna Farah of Senior Judicial Magistrate Court-4 in Cox's Bazar passed the order after the accused were produced before her court upon completion of their four-day remand.

The court also rejected bail petitions filed by the accused, defence lawyer Ahsanul Haque Sena told The Daily Star.

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Van driver Zia does not know what the future holds for him in the capital. He used to make up to Tk 1,000 a day before the novel coronavirus hit the country in March. But his income has now gone down to as low as Tk 300 a day and he cannot run his family of two with a room rent of Tk 3,000 a month any more. He, along with his wife, heads for Keraniganj on way to Faridpur from where they came to this city around six years ago. The photo was taken in the city's Mugda area yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Ailing Abe quits as Japan PM

Leadership race begins to replace the country's longest-serving PM

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe yesterday announced he will resign, ending his record-breaking tenure in a bombshell development that kicks off a leadership race in the world's third-largest economy.

Abe said he is suffering a recurrence of the ulcerative colitis that forced him to cut short a first term in office, and that he no longer felt able to continue as prime minister.

"Now that I am not able to fulfil the mandate from the people with confidence, I have decided that I should no longer occupy the position of the prime minister," he said.

While speculation about Abe's political future has grown in recent weeks, after two hospital visits for unspecified health checks, the resignation nonetheless came as a surprise.

Even as recently as yesterday morning, the government spokesman had appeared to dismiss concerns about Abe's health and suggested he would stay on.

But Abe made clear that would not be possible, apologising for once again cutting short his tenure.

"I would like to sincerely apologise to the people of Japan for leaving my post with one year left in my term of office, and amid the coronavirus woes," he said, bowing deeply.

Abe said he would "firmly execute my duty to the end", and until the next prime minister is appointed, possibly through a leadership election involving ruling party lawmakers and members.

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