

MITIGATING WATERLOGGING IN CHATTOGRAM CITY

# Over Tk 3,000cr spent, yet no remedy in sight

Lack of funds, disputes between authorities delay project implementation

MOSTAFA YOUSUF

When the Executive Committee for National Economic Council (Ecne) in August 2017 approved a Tk 7,916 crore project for Chattogram Development Board (CDA) to mitigate the waterlogging crisis, port city dwellers were exhilarated, expecting the perennial woes to end by 2020, as per the project deadline.

Three years down the line, miseries due to waterlogging increased manifold, while CDA could complete only half the total work. CDA sought another two years to complete the work from the ministry concerned.

Apart from this, the Water Development Board (WDB) took up a project worth Tk 1,620 crore to address waterlogging, which it could not start due to opposition from Chattogram Port Authority (CPA).

Meanwhile, Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) could not even start its project work in six years, due to complications in acquiring land required for its Tk 1,256 crore project.

## WARNINGS OF FUND SHORTAGE FOR CDA PROJECT

Although Ecne approved the project in August 2017, work started in mid-2019, as authorities delayed preparing the layout and hiring the consultant firm for the project.

A firm from the Netherlands, which was given work to set up sluice gates, could not start work due to the pandemic, CDA sources said.

CDA extended its project deadline to June 2023. It has so far spent Tk 1,774 crore, finishing 50 percent of total work, as of June 2021.

Bangladesh Army's 34 Engineering Construction Brigade has been

assigned CDA and WDB's projects for implementation.

Lieutenant Colonel Md Shah Ali, project director of CDA project, in a letter sent in May to the Ministry of Housing and Public Works and CDA chairperson cited scarcity of necessary released funds in the last fiscal to accelerate the work.

"Tk 732.69 crore was allocated in fiscal 2020-2021. Tk 308.72 crore was released in three phases, which was given to contractors. It will not be possible to pay any bill until the next release of funds. In the fourth instalment, only Tk 27 crore was promised," the letter said.

If Tk 500 crore is not released in time, the pace of work will not reach the expected level, the letter warned.

CDA evicted 3,179 illegal structures built in 35 canals of the port city, as a part of the waterlogging mitigation project.

Under CDA's project, 54 culverts and bridges were constructed, while construction of sluice is yet to start. Only 58 kilometres of retaining walls have been constructed, whereas 176 kilometres was outlined in the project plan.

CDA began work to construct 15 silt traps (a trap that prevents silt from rolling down and filling up drains) out of 54. Only 1.5 kilometres of road has been constructed along the two banks of 35 canals, whereas 85 kilometres was proposed.

## DISPUTE BETWEEN WDB, CPA

The Tk 1,620 crore project of WDB was approved in 2019, with a plan to build 23 regulators in the estuary of 23 canals along Karnaphuli river to ward off tidal water streaming into the



Residential neighbourhoods, hospitals, government offices -- few areas can escape the wrath of waterlogging during the monsoon. The photos were taken recently from Agrabad and Halishahar areas.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

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## SOLUTION TO ROHINGYA CRISIS Repatriation, not integration: Momen

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen yesterday reiterated the government position against any long-term programme by the World Bank for the integration of Rohingyas into Bangladesh.

He said there might be some adjustments with the WB proposal with Bangladesh, giving priority to Rohingya repatriation.

"We've dropped all ideas (from the WB proposal) that do not match with our own philosophy, which is repatriation," the minister told reporters, adding that there will be an MoU if the WB agrees with the Bangladesh proposal.

The minister said the WB has taken a long-term programme for 16 countries, which are hosting refugees and they will provide money from a Tk 2,000 crore fund.

"Rohingyas are not refugees here. They're persecuted and displaced people... they're taking shelter here on a temporary basis," he said.

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## Covid situation dire in Sylhet

Infection rate continues to rise; hospitals at capacity

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

Eighty-year-old Lal Chan Bibi of Moulvibazar's Barlekha upazila was suffering from Covid-19 symptoms for the last couple of days.

On Friday, her family members rushed her to Sylhet city as her condition deteriorated.

However, they could not find any vacant ICU beds at 10 public and private hospitals in the city. Desperate, the family admitted her to Beanibazar upazila health complex on Saturday afternoon.

She died at 4pm, three hours after admission.

With no ICU bed available and most of the general beds at the Covid units of the division remaining full, the pandemic situation has become dire in the country's north-eastern

division.

Moreover, almost all the patients from the four districts in the division are rushing towards Sylhet city, as the city hospitals are the only ones to offer dedicated and advanced healthcare.

For the last couple of weeks, Sylhet division is seeing new records of Covid-19 infection almost every day.

On Sunday, the single-day infection number touched almost 1,000 mark, breaking the previous record of 802 on Friday. A total of 996 people tested positive for coronavirus while nine died in 24 hours till Sunday morning.

Meanwhile, a total of 853 people tested positive for coronavirus while 14 died in 24 hours till yesterday morning. With this, the total number of Covid cases in the division reached 41,305 while the death toll now stands at 716.

Compared to any other district except Dhaka, Sylhet has more ICU and general beds dedicated for Covid-19 patients.

So far, there are 34 ICU beds available in two public hospitals -- 16 at Sylhet Shahid Shamsuddin Ahmed Hospital and 18 at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital.

Besides, Shamsuddin hospital has 84 general beds while Osmani hospital has 325 general beds, including 70 new beds (added on Sunday) for treating Covid-19 patients.

In addition, there are 120 ICU beds in the city's private hospitals and clinics along with 550 general beds.

But for the last couple of weeks, all the ICU beds and most of the general beds at the public and private hospitals remain occupied.

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## 'Neo-JMB highly active online'

Says CTTC; two members of  
banned outfit held over planting  
bomb in N'ganj police box

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Watching videos online, members of the "military wing" of the banned militant outfit "Neo JMB" learnt to prepare improvised explosive devices (IED).

Later, they placed an IED at a traffic police box in Narayanganj on May 16 upon directives of the outfit chief Mahadi Hasan Jon alias Abu Abbas Al Bangali, who is presently abroad.

But due to a flaw in the remote control, they failed to explode it on that day and left the place.

The above incident came to light after counterterrorism officials claimed to have arrested two members of the group involved in the attack from the capital's Jatrabari area on Sunday.

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## Vaccine coproduction deal with Sinopharm ready, now at health ministry

Says foreign minister

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen yesterday said a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on coproduction of Sinopharm vaccine in Bangladesh is ready for signing and it should be done without any delay.

"We've received it, and it's with the health ministry. It should be done at any moment. I think the health ministry should dispose of it very quickly," he told reporters.

Dr Momen said the government of Bangladesh, Sinopharm and a



local company (Incepta Pharmaceuticals Ltd) will sign the agreement.

He said Incepta will bring it in bulk, and bottling, labeling and finishing of the vaccine will be done locally which will make the price relatively cheaper.

Regarding vaccine supply from China, the foreign minister said China has assured Bangladesh of providing smooth vaccine supply as per the agreement.

He said the demand is very high there, and Bangladesh has been requested to

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## No vaccine crisis in country: Quader

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League general secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said the government has enough Covid-19 vaccine in hand now to start a nationwide mass inoculation from next Saturday.

At a briefing at his residence, the AL leader said there is no vaccine crisis in the country and urged all not to pay heed to any propaganda.

"There is no vaccine crisis at present, but a vested quarter is trying to create panic among people saying there is one. They are also trying to break people's morale amid the pandemic," he said.

Quader, also road transport and bridges minister, said the government's plan is to continue vaccination with the doses available as more jabs will come.

"There's no room for doubt about this," he said, adding that vaccines will continue to arrive and the vaccination programme will continue.



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## Negligence toward workers unacceptable: GM Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party Chairperson and Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Parliament GM Quader yesterday said the negligence shown towards workers in the name of lockdown cannot be accepted in the civilised society.

"It seems the government does not consider workers as human beings," he said in a statement.

GM Quader said due to the government's short-sighted decision, the workers had to return to the capital on foot, spending additional amount of money.

"The workers, who keep the wheel of the economy moving for the country's prosperity, have been treated rudely and ruthlessly," he also said.

GM Quader said a planned lockdown



and mass vaccination are urgent to bring the spread of Covid-19 under control. But there is extreme lack of coordination in all cases. Because of that, the number of deadly infections and deaths are not decreasing.

He said public transport was open only for two days before Eid-ul-Azha. Again, public transport was stopped from July 23, due to the strict lockdown.

Hundreds of thousands of people travelled by public transport in a chaotic situation before Eid. At that time, several lakh more were stuck in the crowd, in hopes of celebrating Eid with their families, Quader also said.

Again, in the midst of strict restrictions, a sudden announcement was made on July 30 that the garment industry will

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NARCOTICS, FRAUD CASES

## Ishrat, associate on six-day remand

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed physician Ishrat Rafique and her associate Shohidul Islam Dinar on six-day remand each in two cases filed against them for possessing narcotics and scamming people with forged certificates.

Metropolitan Magistrate Ashke Imam passed the orders after two sub-inspectors of the Shah Ali Police Station -- also the investigation officers of the cases -- produced the two before his court with a five-day remand prayer in each case.

In the remand prayers, the investigators stated the two had narcotics at their Shah Ali residence, cheated people with forged certificates of recognition, and trained physicians to treat Covid-19 without authorisation.

They should be remanded to gather information about others responsible of committing such offences, they added.

On the other hand, the defence lawyers submitted two petitions, seeking bail and cancellation of the remand prayers, saying that their clients were implicated in the cases as part of a conspiracy to harass them.

The magistrate turned down the defence pleas.

On Sunday, Rapid Action Battalion arrested the two from Shah Ali area and seized 300 pieces of yaba tablets, foreign liquor, and forged documents from their possessions.

Later, two cases -- one for possessing narcotics and the other for fraudulent activities -- were filed against them with Shah Ali Police Station.



Fish sellers at the capital's Polashi Bazar have come up with quite a pleasing way to entice potential buyers. Colourful papers surround light bulbs, producing a warm shade of light. And under that glow, the fish displayed might just look a bit more attractive -- and worth buying. With the lockdown in place, supply of fish is low, which has significantly hiked the price. Under the circumstances, these sellers are desperate to make a profit by any means necessary.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## RECRUITING DOCTORS FROM 39TH BCS HC refuses to deliver order on writ petition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday refused to deliver any order on a writ petition seeking its directive on the government to recruit doctors from candidates who qualified in the 39th BCS (special).

"How many doctors will be appointed and from which BCS will they be recruited is the government's policy decision. We cannot interfere in that. The writ petition can be moved, if there is any violation of law," the HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim said.

The HC bench also said another writ petition regarding a similar issue is pending with another bench.

The bench deleted the petition from its cause list.

Yusuf Hossain Humayun and Moshirur Rahman appeared for petitioners; deputy attorney generals Samarendranath Biswas and Bipul Bagmar represented the state.

Some 1,360 candidates, including Rafa Md Nurul Islam, who qualified in the 39th BCS, filed the petition on July 29 for a direction to appoint new doctors from the 6,000 candidates who qualified in the 39th BCS (special).

In the petition, they said the government recently issued a circular for recruiting 4,000 new doctors through holding 42th BCS examination, although 6,000 candidates who qualified in 39th BCS were not recruited, as there was no vacant post at that time.