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Enhance water diplomacy to prevent conflict

State minister tells UN Water Conference dialogue

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has urged the international community to enhance partnership on water management and focus more on water diplomacy in preventing conflict and crisis.

State Minister for Water Resources Zaheed Farooque made the call while addressing an interactive dialogue of the UN Water Conference held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, which ended on March 24.

He said Bangladesh has 57 transboundary rivers with neighbouring countries including 54 rivers with India, and Dhaka has been working on water cooperation with the co-riparian countries to manage and share the waters of common rivers.

"Knowledge sharing and technical cooperation are critical elements for sustainable water management," Farooque said.

He said water management cooperation extends crucial support to the achievement of all sustainable development goals -- from addressing water scarcity, building sound economies to global peace and security.

The interactive dialogue was co-chaired by Serigne Mbaye Thiam, minister of water and sanitation of Senegal, and Christian Frutiger, state secretary at the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of the Swiss Confederation.

Ministers from other UN-member countries also spoke at the dialogue.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and President Abdul Hamid paying tribute at the National Martyrs' Monument in Savar on Independence Day yesterday.

PHOTO: BSS

INDEPENDENCE DAY

PM, president-elect attend reception at Bangabhaban

UNB, Dhaka

President Abdul Hamid and his wife Rashida Khanam yesterday hosted a reception marking the country's 53rd Independence and National Day at Bangabhaban.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and President-elect Md Sahabuddin joined the reception. Speaker Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury and Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique also attended.

Around 2,500 guests were invited to the reception after a long gap of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Cabinet members, advisers, state ministers, ambassadors and high commissioners of different countries, Supreme Court judges, chiefs of the three services, members of parliament, senior political leaders, academics, business community

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PHOTO: NAKIB SHAH ALAM

What does driving in Dhaka feel like?

MH HAIDER

"If you can drive in Dhaka, you can drive anywhere in the world" – the statement gets casually thrown about when talking about driving in this city. This special "licence" is earned when you've mastered the unruly roads of Dhaka and its next-to-impossible traffic.

It's one thing if you're stuck in the congestion as a passenger – horrible as it is – but it's quite another if you are the one driving! Those of us who don't have a chauffeur and have chosen to drive our own cars are a breed apart.

Why wouldn't we be? Unlike chauffeurs or professional drivers, driving is not our occupation and yet it is a whole lot of work. Moreover, where else can you attain such a high level of patience? What self-help seminar shall impart you with such rich insights on anger management and how to have steady nerves?

Dhaka is an impatient city. Everybody is in a rush. It is a city that can be cruel, rude, spiteful, and selfish, and so in a way, the traffic condition is a perfect embodiment of Dhaka!

Two buses from both sides shall closely slide past your car, leaving you helpless in between. They will also stop in the middle of the road

whenever they want, to take more passengers. Many vehicles will change lanes abruptly without any warning whatsoever; the concept of using the indicator sign is alien to them. Rickshaws shall take their own sweet time to get out of your way. Jaywalkers will cross roads freely, totally ignoring traffic lights and foot-bridges while commanding you to stop by lifting a finger as if they are giving a speech. Swarms of bikers will snake their way around your car in a rush, with no regard for their lives or your own.

I remember, when my father was teaching me how to drive, he always used to say, "Assume that everyone in the road is mad. As the only sane driver, it is upon you to reach safety, protecting both yourself and others on the way."

And hence sanity I keep. But my car does not betray me. The steering wheel has tolerated extreme turns. The wheels have endured many potholes and bumps. The side-mirrors and bumpers have survived quite a few injuries. And the brakes are ever-ready to put the car to a halt at a moment's notice.

So, with my loyal and proven car, I drive through the city.

Driving is supposed to be fun, even therapeutic. But in Dhaka, it's work, a very demanding chore indeed.

Historic water tank now decaying away

Authorities failing to preserve its glory

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Once upon a time, Dhaka's residents relied on Buriganga river, and the city's numerous ponds and wells for water. In 1878, Dhaka's first safe water tank was constructed, which saved its residents from the disaster of water scarcity.

The 144-year-old water tank, locally known as "Bahadur Shah Park Panir Tanky" on Old Dhaka's Johnson Road, was declared a historical monument in May 2020 by Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk). Despite the recognition, it has been forgotten and neglected.

The significant structure has lost its charms, as Rajuk failed to preserve it even almost two years after recognising it as a historical monument. During a recent visit, this correspondent found that the area has been grabbed and turned into a shrine, with an iron gate at the entrance. Walls are also being constructed around the structure, damaging the tank.

There are small cracks in several spots, with the plaster on the upper part of the tank falling off. Three big banners of the shrine have been put up on that part. However, no banners promoting its historical significance were visible.

This correspondent attempted to enter the tank's premises but was stopped by an occupant.

Tushar Ahmed, a local, said, "This is a shame for us. I can't believe a historical structure like this is being disregarded."

Abdus Salam, a university student, said, "The water tank was a lifesaver for the residents. It's unacceptable that it's being neglected and left to fall apart."

Meanwhile, four shops have been illegally set up near the tank by the

general secretary of Bangladesh Chhatra League's Kabi Nazrul Govt College unit. Shopkeepers said he collects Tk 200 every day from each shop.

Contacted, Faruq Hossain, the general secretary, denied the allegations.

Mohammad Selim, councillor of ward 42 under DSCC, said, "I'm afraid that these illegal shops cannot be removed so easily."

Meanwhile, officials of Rajuk and the Department of Archaeology (DoA), have been unaware of the developments.

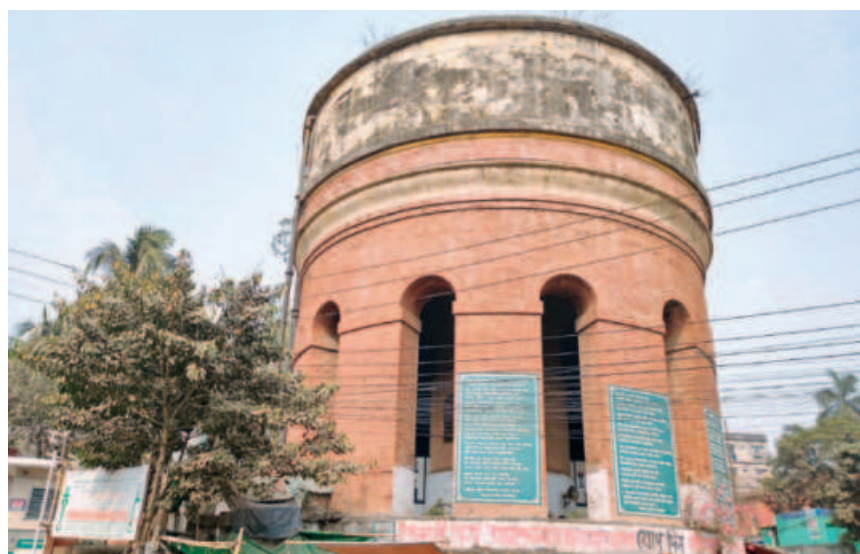
Rajuk Town Planner Ashraful Islam said, "Our team is looking into the issue and will visit the spot soon."

The significant structure has lost its charms, as Rajuk failed to preserve it even almost two years after recognising it as a historical monument.

Afroza Khan Mita, regional director of DoA, said she was unaware of the historical significance of the water tank as it has not been listed. "If it is not listed, then it is not our responsibility."

Historian Prof Muntassir Mamoon has expressed concern over the lack of effort by the authorities concerned to protect the tank. "We keep talking about it, but government officials are not doing anything."

Architect Taimur Islam, chief executive of Urban Study Group, said, "Rajuk listed the tank as a historical monument but DoA did not. Rajuk did nothing to preserve it after the recognition. Both bodies should look into the issue and take steps."



Almost 144 years old, the "Bahadur Shah Park Panir Tanky" on Old Dhaka's Johnson Road was declared a historical monument. Despite recognition, the structure has lost all its charms as Rajuk failed to preserve the tank. There are small cracks on several spots, and banners have been put up in front of the structure, further deteriorating its state.

PHOTO: STAR

Bangabandhu conferred 'FOSWAL Literature Award'

BSS, New Delhi

The Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature (FOSWAL) yesterday conferred "Special Literary Award" to Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for his trilogy -- The Unfinished Memoirs, The Prison Diaries, and New China 1952.

"Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature is honoured to present SAARC Literature Award 2023 in its 63rd Literature Festival to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for outstanding literary excellence for his trilogy," said a citation before handing over the award.

Eminent Punjabi novelist and FOSWAL Founder President Ajeet Cour formally handed over the award to the visiting Bangladeshi writers and researchers Ramendu Majumder and Mofidul Haque at the festival.

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Anti-liberation 'evil force' still active: Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Urging all to defeat the anti-liberation "evil force", Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said the defeated enemies of 1971 are still posing challenges to the country's independence.

Quader made the comment while talking to journalists after paying tribute at Savar National Memorial marking Independence Day.

"The anti-liberation forces, sometimes disguised as communalists and militants, are still posing challenges to the independence of the country. This evil must be defeated," he said.

He said, "BNP is saying what Pakistan is saying. It is because BNP is inspired by Pakistani ideology. Pakistan is still in its heart, Pakistan is still in the members' mind."

Meanwhile, President Abdul Hamid and

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Still fighting for democracy even after 52yrs: Fakhru

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir yesterday said fighting for democracy even after 52 years of independence is unfortunate.

"It is our misfortune that we haven't achieved the goal for which we fought [the Liberation War]. Even after 52 years of independence, we have to give our lives for democracy. We have to fight for it. We have lost our right to vote. We have lost our right to speak freely," said the BNP leader.

He made the remarks after paying tribute to the war martyrs by placing wreaths at the National Memorial in Savar marking Independence and National Day.

"In line with the spirit of independence, it was

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