



Almost all the roads in Mymensingh City get flooded even after a little rain. The photos were taken from in front of Government Ananda Mohan College and Dhopakhola-Charpara road.

PHOTO: STAR

## MCC PROJECTS TO PREVENT WATERLOGGING

# Tk 36 crore goes DOWN THE DRAIN

MD AMINUL ISLAM

The recent heavy rainfall reveals the poor and unplanned drainage system of Mymensingh city, one of the oldest cities in the country.

Local residents alleged that though it took several days for the water to recede from some areas, the wait extends up to two to three weeks in the low-lying areas of the municipality.

While talking to this correspondent, a number of townspeople said waterlogging has become a never-ending menace for people living in some low-lying areas of the city like Balashpur Madhyapara, Charpara Nayapara, Shankipara, Mashkanda Shantinagor, Akua and Purahitpara due to poor waste management system.

According to Bangladesh Meteorological Department Office, Mymensingh experienced 378 millimeters of rainfall in October, which was second highest in the country since the independence.

Nazrul Islam, a retired government official, said after the recent heavy rainfall it took nearly three weeks for the water to recede from Balashpur Madhyapara area.

As a result, many families lost their necessary goods and other valuables.

Locals said usually over 2,000 families living in Balashpur Madhyapara area have to face serious waterlogging for more than five months a year.

But the situation started deteriorating since construction of the underground drains in since 2013.

This year they have been suffering from severe waterlogging for nearly seven months, some local residents said.

They said though waterlogging has been



prevailing in some areas of the city for about 20 years or so, it has gone beyond description for the last 10 years.

Some areas get flooded even after a little rainfall, but if it rains heavily the suffering continues for at least 15 to 20 days.

Ataur Rahman, principal of a local madrasa in Charpara area, said he has to face serious waterlogging for two to three days even after a light rain.

Alongside severe traffic congestions, waterlogging has become an intolerable menace for the city dwellers due to unplanned drainage system, said Advocate Nazrul Islam Chunnu, convener of Jonoudyag Mymensingh, a citizens' forum.

Even the large canals, including Makarjani Khal, are clogged with household waste as the city drains are not cleaned on a regular basis, leading to waterlogging in the nearby areas.

Urging the authorities concerned to free all the canals under the municipality, he said a huge amount of government money has been spent to improve the drainage system, but local residents are not getting the desired benefit.

Local people want the waterlogging issue to be solved before the next monsoon, said Nurul Amin, secretary of Mymensingh Nagorik Andolon.

Mohabbat Ali, conservation inspector at Mymensingh City Corporation (MCC), claimed that though they continue the cleanness drives to tackle waterlogging all the year round, shortage of manpower is the main reason behind the menace during the monsoon.

MCC Executive Engineer Mohammad Azharul Haque said since 2009 a total of over 183-kilometre new drains, spending over Tk 36 crore, have been constructed to upgrade the drainage system of the municipality.

Meanwhile, claiming the present drainage system much better than the past, MCC Mayor Ekramul Haque Titu said if construction of new drains is not done immediately rainwater will take several days to recede from the city.

They have been continuing eviction drives to free all the drains and canals of the city in a bid to ease the waterlogging problem, the mayor added.

## Tough times for musical instrument makers

S DILIP ROY

"I'm earning less than half what I used to earn 10 years ago. People now are not intending to invest in cultural practice, so the need for musical instruments is that minimal," said Parimal Chandra Monidas.

The 55-year-old musical instrument artisan from Towerpara village in Aditmari upazila also lamented that he has not been able to make a living from the ancestral profession of his family for the past 10 years.

Like Parimal, many musical instrument artisans in Lalmonirhat and Kurigram are now worried about the survival of their ancestral profession.



PHOTO: STAR

"There are about 150 families of the Monidas community, while as many as 30 families are involved in the ancestral profession," said Parimal.

Dhak, dhol, khol, dugdugi, nal, kankan, screw drum, ektara, dotara, sarinda and Bengali dhol are among the indigenous musical instruments the artisans make and repair.

These instruments are usually used during the Jatra song, Kushan song, Pala song, Bhawaiya song and Palligeeti.

Craftsmen, including Sushil Chandra Monidas, are witnessing a drastic fall in their business over the past decade.

Sushil said, "Nowadays, people mostly from the Hindu community sometimes come to us to make and repair Khol."

Elderly Nagendra Nath Monidas reflects on the disappearing tradition, lamenting that even his own sons have abandoned the craft.

"People won't be able to find musical instrument craftsmen in a few years," he said.

Jatra song artist Paresh Chandra Das said the artists themselves are also having a hard time, attributing their struggles due to lack of funding and support for cultural practices.

"Like musical instrument craftsmen, we the artists are living subhuman lives," he added.

Amulya Chandra Barman, a Kushan song artist, said the Kushan song has already been extinct while the Pala and Jatra songs are also on the verge of extinction.

"I cry while thinking about the past," he said.

Deputy Director at Lalmonirhat Social Welfare Department Abdul Matin admits that musical instrument craftsmen are marginalized.

Usually, financial assistance is being provided to the marginalized people if they apply to the social welfare office.

## Fakhrul's bail hearing at HC on January 3

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and he has been suffering from different diseases including heart problems, he said.

Fakhrul landed in jail on October 29 in connection with the case filed with Ramna Police Station. Since then, the BNP leader has been languishing in jail.

A Dhaka court on November 22 refused to grant him bail in the case.

The chief justice's residence was vandalised during the violence centring the BNP rally in the capital on October 28. BNP was demanding the resignation of the Awami League government and the holding of polls under a non-party caretaker government.

The ruling AL stood firm on holding the polls under the current government as per the constitution.

The 12th parliamentary polls are scheduled for January 7.

## Jailed BNP men offered freedom if party agreed to contest polls

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"The proposal was not only about deferral but also about releasing them [BNP leader] from jail."

The BNP said more than 20,000 party leaders and activists have been arrested across the country since its October 28 grand rally in Dhaka.

Many of the party's central leaders, including Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, are now behind bars.

The BNP, its like-minded parties, and Islami Andolon Bangladesh are boycotting the January 7 national election saying that a free and fair election is not possible under the incumbent government.

## BB explains warning

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them but has yet to take any decision to bar them from all or any specific clearing platforms," said Md Mezbaul Haque, executive director and spokesperson of the BB, in a media briefing at the central bank headquarters yesterday.

He said the central bank's Motijheel office issues the letters as part of its regular work.

Banks maintain a current account with the central bank to settle payments. They have to ensure a hefty balance in the accounts.

But the current accounts of the five banks have been in the deficit for the past year, according to the letter seen by The Daily Star.

"A review of your current account balance shows that it has been in the deficit for a long time and that is not consistent with normal banking activities. Although you have been repeatedly warned about the matter, no significant action has been taken by you until now," it said.

Haque said that providing liquidity

support to the five banks has been part of the regular activity of the central bank.

"It is the responsibility of the central bank to support banks when they are in trouble."

He said the central bank has extended liquidity support to the banks without taking securities because they are holding a lower volume of government instruments than conventional banks.

While speaking about the reasons behind the liquidity shortfall, the spokesperson said there was a structural deficiency in Islamic banks and the BB would work on them in the future.

"In the past, we provided such liquidity facilities to other banks, including ICB Islamic Bank when they faced difficulties."

Haque said controlling inflation is now the top priority of the central bank and there is also external pressure.

"After tackling them, we will work on the good governance of troubled banks."

## Dhaka may face more pressure

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people's will, there might be attempts to further destabilise the situation in Bangladesh, along the lines of the Arab Spring, she added.

"Unfortunately, there is little chance that Washington will come to its senses and refrain from another gross interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state."

She added that they are, however, sure that despite all the intrigues of external forces, the issue of power in Bangladesh will ultimately be resolved by the friendly people of the country and no one else.

Russia, which is facing a flurry of sanctions from the US and other Western countries, made several statements accusing the US of interfering in Bangladesh's internal affairs, which also drew statements from the US.

Asked, Foreign Minister AK Abdul

Momen said Bangladesh does not want to be dragged into any tension that exists between the superpowers.

He told this to journalists when asked about Russia's statements on the US stance in Bangladesh after a seminar on the achievements of Bangladesh at the Foreign Service Academy in the city yesterday.

On Maria Zakharova's statement that there may be a situation like the Arab Spring in Bangladesh, Momen said he doesn't think there is any chance of that happening, adding that what Russia says is not Bangladesh's issue.

"We are a sovereign country, and we have a balanced foreign policy -- friendship to all and malice to none."

"We are a democratic country. Democracy is upheld because of Sheikh Hasina. There will be an election on January 7, following a democratic process. Things are going fine."

## PM reiterates call for resisting arsonists

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people of this country.

"This party has grown up through fighting against all odds. So, the party's politics is deeply rooted [in the soil of the country]. They [BNP] can't unseat the Awami League government in this way."

She urged all to put up resistance against the arsonists and those who removed railway tracks to kill people.

Hasina said blockade and strike are the only programmes of BNP.

She said the BNP and its allies are carrying out arson attacks and enforcing hartals and blockades at a time when Bangladesh is advancing

defying the problems rendered by Covid-19 pandemic and Ukraine-Russia war.

The PM said the AL has carried out electoral reforms and given back the voting rights to the people.

"People will decide whom they will elect and who will form the next government. People of Bangladesh know what is good for them and what is bad. And they know when they get benefit."

AL General Secretary and Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader and presidium member Abdur Razzaque, among others, also spoke.

## Superpowers want puppets

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Bangladesh between radicals and less radical alternatives."

However, the Indian politician said, Bangladesh has to deal with all kinds of nations -- friends, foes and those in between -- and suggested not to lose friends in efforts to placate enemies.

Stressing on the importance of democracy, Akbar said democracy never submits, dictatorship does.

"Those who don't protect

democracy are condemned to lose it. It needs nurturing and safety."

The foreign policy expert also said one of the challenges for Bangladesh is internal strife unleashed by those who want to destroy the country's stability.

Democracy has four dimensions -- modernity, freedom of conscience and faiths, gender emancipation and poverty elimination, he said, adding that Prime Minister Hasina has made significant contribution to the

## Israeli strikes kill dozens more in Gaza

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The son of Dawoud Shehab, spokesman of Hamas-ally Islamic Jihad, was among the dead, an official from the group told Reuters.

A medic said dozens people had been killed or wounded in the Shebab family home and others nearby that were also hit.

"We believe the number of dead people under the rubble is huge but there is no way to remove the rubble and recover them because of the intensity of Israeli fire," he said by telephone, using an e-sim that can connect to outside networks and declining to give a name fearing Israeli reprisal.

promotion of all of these dimensions.

He lauded Hasina, saying she is the second liberator of Bangladesh as she liberated democracy from dictatorship.

The noted journalist also said, "I believe Bangladesh will be able to face its own problems and challenges through its own efforts."

He put emphasis on home-grown solutions instead of external intervention.

adviser to a caretaker government; Md Abdul Motin, retired justice of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court; Salehuddin Ahmed, former governor of Bangladesh Bank; M Sakhawat Hossain, former election commissioner; Anu Muhammad, former professor of Jahangirnagar University; Hameeda Hossain, human rights activist; and Asif Nazrul, professor of Dhaka University.