

'Delhi cheapest city to live, but not safe'

IAN S, London

A global survey says that the cost of living in New Delhi is low compared to other international capitals but warns expatriates that hiring security guards is essential for safety in offices and homes there.

"It is not recommended that expatriates travel alone at night (in New Delhi)", says the World Wide Cost of Living Survey conducted by the Economist Intelligence Unit.

The survey studied the cost of living in 13 global capitals based on five parameters: monthly rent for a two-bedroom flat, dinner for two, running a car for a year, cost of a litre of milk and baby-sitter for an hour.

The cities are Los Angeles, London, Paris, Moscow, New Delhi, Beijing, Rome, Nairobi, Tokyo, Washington, New York, Johannesburg and Sydney.

On each of the parameters, New Delhi recorded the lowest cost of living. The cost of baby-sitting in New Delhi was 97 pence per hour, whereas it ranged from 11.47

pounds per hour in Tokyo to 6.65 pounds in London.

The survey reveals that Tokyo remains the world's most expensive city. It also says that the euro strengthening against the dollar has increased the cost of living in many European societies.

The survey records a striking variation in prices across cities: a litre of milk costs 22 pence in New Delhi and 84 pence in Rome. The rent of a two-bedroom flat in London is just above 1,000 pounds while the same flat in Tokyo would cost at least three times more.

The survey reveals for the first time that London is no longer the European Union's (EU) most expensive city. It has been overtaken by Paris and Copenhagen while Lisbon is the cheapest city in the EU.

The survey, aimed at the international business community, suggests that Tehran is the world's cheapest city in the world. Its cost of living is less than a quarter of Tokyo's.

15 injured as train derails in Comilla

UNB, Comilla

An express train derailed near Lalmai Rail Station yesterday afternoon, injuring 15 people.

Sources said three bogies of a Chittagong-bound express train from Mymensingh went off the track, snapping train service on the route.

The Upokul Express bound for Dhaka, Mohanagar Purobi bound for Dhaka, Nasirabad Express bound for Mymensingh and Godhuli Express bound for Chittagong were stranded at different stations, causing sufferings to passengers.

Later, two relief trains from Akhaura and Laksam reached the spot at about 8:15pm and started rescue operation.

986 Rohingya refugees returned home in July

BSS, Cox's Bazar

Some 986 Rohingya refugees of 178 families voluntarily returned to Myanmar last month from Ukhiya and Teknaf refugee camps.

According to Refugee Commission sources, the refugees returned home through Teknaf border in 10 groups under the supervision of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

A total of 2,35,585 Rohingyas of 47,073 families have so far returned home under supervision of the UNHCR, while some 19,858 of 3,065 families awaiting repatriation at makeshift camps at Kutupalong of Ukhiya and Nayapara of Teknaf Upazila.

Aftershock

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perched on the earthquake zone, he told reporters at the Deputy Commissioner's Office Thursday after visiting the quake-affected Borkol upazila with meteorologist Mominul Islam of the Chittagong office of the meteorological department.

Experts fear that the Kaptai hydroelectric dam might have developed "hidden cracks" on impact of Sunday's quake and suggested an immediate survey of the dam and other areas.

They fear repeat of tremors and recommended evacuation of people from Aimahora and nearby villages and shifting of BDR and police camps.

At least 91 houses were destroyed, over 170 others suffered cracks and Aimahora Health Complex collapsed into rubble in Rangamati in Sunday's tremor.

Kina Kumar Chakma, 29, who became unconscious from shock in the tremor in an outlying village, died on Tuesday, officials said yesterday.

Deputy Minister of CHT Affairs Moni Swapan Dewan is likely to arrive in Rangamati on August 4 and a team of geologists and meteorologists will visit the quake-affected areas on August 5.

Unocal

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for plaintiffs in the case -- 14 unnamed Myanmar nationals represented by US lawyers -- to seek tougher penalties under California law.

The case centres on the construction of the much-disputed Yadana pipeline, built by Unocal and partners including France's Total to carry natural gas from Myanmar to neighbouring Thailand.

A lawyer for Unocal, which strongly rejects the allegations, said the firm was unhappy with the ruling and was considering whether to appeal it immediately or wait until after the trial, due to start September 22.

The villagers are suing Unocal for unspecified damages alleging that the firm benefited from use by the Yangon military regime of forced labour and its soldiers' use of murder and rape, even if it did not agree with the abuses.

'Kala' Jahangir

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Qadr at KDA Avenue and decided to leave Khulna in the wake of the ongoing combing operation by joint forces.

All the three are wanted in several criminal cases filed with different police stations in Dhaka, said Khulna thana Officer-in-Charge Shibli Noman.

PBCP claims

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killing the contractor.

Shahidul Islam, officer-in-charge (OC) of Jessore Kotwali Police Station, quoted Habib as saying that two motorbikes were used by five men of the killing squad.

Jubair Banna Litu fired shots at contractor Rezaul from a running motor cycle. Two others of the killing squad are in possession of arms used for the murder, the OC said

quoting judicial confession of Habib.



PHOTO: STAR

Women members of Bangladesh National Cadet Corps (BNCC) clean litter inside the Rokeya Hall yesterday as part of the cleanliness drive 2003 of Dhaka University.

Rakhines: Persecution

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through forged documents and false lawsuits, forcing many Rakhine families out of their ancestral homes and into destitution. In one way or the other, police and local administration have always sided with the usurpers, alleged Rakhine eviction victims.

The other aspect of this repression has been aimed at making the Rakhines culturally bankrupt by targeting their religious sites, destroying or stealing religious icons and desecrating Rakhine graveyards. On April 10, miscreants broke the tombstone on the grave of Rakhine patriarch Wang Master, but local authorities took no action to arrest the criminals.

Priceless artifacts including images of Lord Buddha revered and worshipped by the devout Rakhine men and women have been destroyed or stolen. There have also been incidents of Rakhine priests being verbally abused or beaten up by miscreants. Police have been utterly indifferent in dealing with these crimes, which are clear acts of minority repression.

Rakhines are probably passing through the worst time of their lives during the last few years or so. During this time, miscreants stole or looted more than 30 images of Lord Buddha from the three temples of Thakurpara, Kuakata. Eight images were stolen from Laxmipara temple on January 14 this year and another two from the Baliatali-Haripara area within the last six months. One image was stolen from Chhatain

Para Mandir in May 2002 and one from the house of Babu Ang Jan Rakhine in June 2002. On August 4, 2002, a three-foot-five-inch image of Buddha weighing nearly 150kg was stolen from another temple.

The same year, two bells weighing 20kg and 15kg were stolen from the central temple of Kalapara municipal area. Another two bells from Keranipara and several stone images from Misripara and Betkata Rakhine Palli Mandir were also stolen. Overall, more than 70 images were stolen from different Rakhine temples of this region in the last 18 months or so. Except for one, none of the other images was recovered, nor was a single criminal case filed, said secretary of the Patuakhal branch of the Rakhine Buddhist Welfare Association Babu Nong Mou Se and Rakhine leader Babu USu.

Officer-in-charge of Kalapara police station acknowledged the incidents of looting and theft but denied allegations of police inaction, saying police had already recovered four of the stolen images and were doing their best to recover the remaining artifacts and arrest the culprits.

Apart from the irreparable loss of these sacred relics from the past, the extremely poor Rakhine community is in no position to bear the cost of repairing their temples most of which are in a state of dilapidation. Homeless, destitute and deprived of their cultural inheritance, Rakhines now only have a heritage of poverty and suffering to

pass on to their posterity.

For the Rakhines, the fight against this repression and injustice has been a losing battle. Evicted from their ancestral homes, systematically dispossessed of nearly all their land and property, and bullied into submission to the tyranny of the oppressor, many Rakhines have already left the country for Myanmar at the height of persecution.

Thus, the once dominant ethnic group has now been reduced to a fragmental minority teetering on the edge of extinction. Today, the few thousand Rakhines of Kuakata and Taltali represent the last vestiges of an ancient culture that once found acceptance, in what was a more hospitable land in the days of yore.

In their struggle for survival as a community, the Rakhines will most likely lose out to the overwhelming power of vested interest groups. But names like Amtali, Taltali, Rangakhali, Tiakhali and the famous Kuakata will always be associated with the smiling Rakhine faces that have greeted travellers here for a long time. And every time these names are mentioned or every time we explain to a traveller how Kuakata got its name, would it not prick our conscience that we were silent spectators of the relentless persecution these Rakhines were subjected to, that our indifference to the plight of these colourful people eventually led to their banishment from these breathtakingly beautiful shores they called their home?

New Saddam tape

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thought to be Qusay's son and one other man.

The message, broadcast by the Qatar-based Al-Jazeera satellite television station, was a rambling speech apparently intended to encourage and instruct his supporters in the guerrilla war against the US occupation. Saddam has been on the run for three and a half months since the Americans captured Baghdad.

"The feeling of defeat and bitterness might lead some people to commit treason... instead of being a gun pointed at the enemy," said the voice, which sounded like Saddam, "I ask people to keep the properties of the country and the party until the situation changes or to donate their value to the glorious resistance," the voice said.

An earlier message purportedly from Saddam was broadcast Tuesday by al-Arabiya, another Arab satellite broadcaster. That tape acknowledged the death of his two sons, Oday and Qusay, which were gunned down in firefight with American forces in Mosul. The CIA said that tape most likely was authentic.

In it, Saddam said he was glad of his sons' deaths because they had become martyrs.

But in yesterday's tape, which was impossible to authenticate immediately, the voice had clearly moved beyond mourning for the once-feared and brutal sons, and issued a call to battle.

"Our faith is great that God will

UPDF men

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The journalists contacted the commander of Rangamati region who assured them of looking into the matter.

AKM Maksud Ahmed, president of Rangamati Press Club, and Mohammed Ali, its general secretary, protested the role of the army.

Asked about the UPDF allegation, Chandra Shekhar Chakma, PCJSS secretary general, denied the allegation. He told The Daily Star that some other supporters of the peace accord might have engaged in those activities to save themselves from the UPDF.

"We have surrendered all our firearms to the government, signing the accord. None of our activists is involved in it," he said.

support us, and that one day the occupation army will falter and that victory is possible at any moment. We must not let things slip away and our situation become desperate," the voice said.

"The balance has shifted, after the military confrontations (with insurgents) and this has not changed. They (Americans) will not be able to stop this."

"I say that this shift in balance has happened because of the great mujahideen and faithful fighters who have worked and struggled to confront the occupation and throw the invaders outside Iraq so that Iraq can return to its normal state after that."

US officials have reported in the past several days that American forces were twice close to capturing Saddam, once in the raid in which his sons were killed, and again in a raid on a farm house near Tikrit where the military was seeking Saddam's new chief of security.

But on Thursday, the American military in Baghdad seemed to back away from optimistic reports that Saddam's capture was imminent, saying instead that it was inevitable.

It was the fourth recording from Saddam to be broadcast over the Arab satellite channels since July 14.

Food yield

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The annual wheat production ranges from 15 lakh to 18 lakh tonnes against the requirement of around 30 lakh tonnes, officials said.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman told journalists earlier that grain imports proved a drag on the foreign exchange reserve, as the imports gobble up \$300-400 million a year.

Importers, however, cast doubt on the government data on grain yields and requirements. "Certainly there is a gap between production and requirement, otherwise such a huge amount of grain imports cannot take place," one of them said.

Government officials, however, attributed private sector grain imports in the last fiscal year to high profit margins.

The price difference between Bangladesh and India is a major factor in grain imports, they added.

US warships to reach Liberia coast today

REUTERS, Washington

The lead ships in a US Navy Amphibious Ready Group are expected to arrive off the coast of Liberia by Saturday, but no decision has been made on whether to put any of the 2,300 Marines aboard on the ground in the West African country, US officials said on Thursday.

A senior defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the United States will have "forces closer to Liberia available for whatever purpose the president may decide may be necessary."

The official added that "at the moment, there's still some assessments going on" by US teams in the region.

West African leaders approved on Thursday a peacekeeping mission to Liberia, calling for troops to enter the country by Monday. The Economic Community of West African States said it had agreed that President Charles Taylor, indicted for war crimes in Sierra Leone by a UN-backed court, would depart Liberia within three days of the peacekeepers' arrival.

President George W Bush said on Wednesday that the United States "will be there to help ECOWAS" if Taylor is gone and a cease-fire is in place, but Bush administration officials have provided few concrete details about the nature of the US involvement.

Defence officials said the helicopter carrier USS two Jima, leading the Amphibious Ready Group, and the USS Carter Hall were sailing in the eastern Atlantic and were expected to arrive by Saturday. The third ship in the group, the USS Nashville, was expected to arrive in the middle of next week, the officials said.

The ships are carrying about 2,300 US Marines.

But asked whether the administration had decided to put US Marines on the ground in Liberia, the senior defense official said, "There is no decision yet."

At the State Department, spokesman Richard Boucher said, "The president has indicated we will support the effort that the West Africans are making," Boucher added that "the United States will decide during the course of this process... how we can support them, and whether we need to do that with military forces."

Gram Sarkar

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will help expedite the development process and the rural people will be able to express their opinions and identify their needs through this body."

The Gram Sarkar Act was passed in the light of the abolished Swanirbhar Gram Sarkar Provision of 1980, the Gram Parishad Act of 1997 and the recommendations of a local government commission formed in 1992.

Former president Ziaur Rahman initiated the formation of Swanirbhar Gram Sarkar in 1980.

The Gram Sarkar units will assist the UP by implementing various development and social projects, like growing more food, reducing illiteracy, arranging sports and cultural functions and facilitating family planning.

The units will also help the UPs ensure safe drinking water, sanitation, primary health care; plant trees, preserve the environment and cleanliness, form cooperatives and lend support to pisciculture and poultry farming.

The units will also gather information on birth, death, marriage

First one-dayer

FROM PAGE 1
whether the match umpires would be prepared to call him for throwing during the first match.

Australia has been one of the hotbeds of action against suspect bowlers in recent times, with the memorable calling of Sri Lankan spinner Muttiah Muralitharan generating considerable controversy in 1996. David Shepherd and Simon Taufel will be the men in the hot seats.

Bangladesh are not expected to greatly trouble the home side. Even the absence of one of their key performers, fast bowler Glenn McGrath, who returned home with an ankle injury, should not detract from the immensely lopsided odds.

West Australian Brad Williams has taken McGrath's place, and there is concern that all-rounder Andrew Symonds may not be able to play due to an attack of influenza.

Gram Sarkar: Opposition

FROM PAGE 1
body, the ruling alliance wants to use the local administrations to serve its interests, he said.

"Elected Union Parishad and nominated Gram Sarkar will certainly be in conflict with each other," Jalli said.

This will add to the unrest, hampering development work in the rural areas, he added.

Golam Mohammad Kader MP, president member of Jatiya Party (Ershad), said Gram Sarkar will destroy the basic structure of local government.

"The ruling alliance activists will be nominated to this body. They will get legal powers to collect toll," he said. Thus a chaotic situation will be created in the villages, he added.

Mujahidul Islam Selim, general secretary of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, said, "We can term Gram Sarkar an extension of

Oil pipeline

FROM PAGE 12
ambushed the Americans as they patrolled Fallujah's outskirts on reconnaissance.

Witnesses at the scene, in the village of Abu Alwan seven kilometres west of Fallujah, earlier said two Iraqis had been killed while an undetermined number of US soldiers were wounded during the attack and a subsequent gunbattle.

"I was arrested for two hours by American forces and I saw 12 (US) soldiers on the ground," said Majid Ibrahim Alawi, adding that the gunbattle lasted 90 minutes.

"They were driven in the direction of camp al-Habaniya," a former base of the Iraqi army now used by US forces.

O'Donnell said the clash was the latest in a growing number of attacks in the region considered a stronghold of resistance to the US-led occupation.

"It was one of eight attacks in the last 24 hours west of Baghdad, the most extensive attacks in a while," O'Donnell said.

In a separate incident, three US soldiers were lightly wounded when their vehicle was struck by a mine blast near the Habaniya base.

"Three Americans were slightly injured by a mine at 9:45 this morning near al-Habaniya," O'Donnell said. The extent of their injuries was not immediately known.

And at 10:30 am, an AFP correspondent witnessed an explosion on the road in Abu Alwan which occurred 15 metres from a US patrol, but there were no casualties.

Anit-US sentiment has run high in Fallujah, a Sunni Muslim bastion 50 kilometres west of Baghdad, ever since US troops shot dead at least 16 demonstrators in April.

AUS special task force has been operating in the region hunting for Saddam, whose ability to elude capture since his regime was toppled April 9 has been seen as a spur for continued attacks on the US-led coalition.

and divorce.

The Gram Sarkar units will have a five-year tenure.

The elected UP member will head the unit in their respective ward. One female elected UP member will be adviser to three Gram Sarkar units.

The 15-member body will have Gram Sarkar proddan (chief) and an adviser and the remaining 13 members will be drawn from representatives of women, farmers, VDP men, workers, farm workers, freedom fighters, teachers and businessmen.

Brick kilns

FROM PAGE 12
To meet the relentless demand for soil, more and more brick fields are cropping up all over the place. Consequently, more and more land is coming under the assault of backhoes digging up enormous amounts of soil from it. Apart from affecting things like agriculture, this phenomenon bodes ill for any future plans for expansion of Dhaka City, which is an inevitability because of the ever-increasing city population due to births as well as migration of people from all over the country in search of work. As the soil level continues to go down, particularly on the other side of the river, the land becomes unfit for construction. Moreover, according to studies, the land gets parched even further away, and nothing grows on it. Trees become barren and die off. People within a five-kilometre radius are exposed to extremely high air pollution. Children are particularly vulnerable to the pollution generated by the kilns and develop respiratory problems.

It is a sad aspect of our city planning that brick kilns using harmful materials are allowed to operate near city areas without let or hindrance and with impunity. It is imperative that the Department of Environment play an effective role in prohibiting such brick fields in and around the city. The sooner these are shifted to areas outside the city limits, the better it will be for public health and environment.

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the local government ministry." The way it is going to be formed will not bring any good to the rural masses, he said.

Hasanul Haq Inu, president of Jatiya Samaitantrik Dal, thought Gram Sarkar will be another wing of the ruling BNP. Upazila nirbahi officers are being involved in grouping in the name of this local body, he alleged.

"The government must not go for the formation of Gram Sarkar if it wants a peaceful atmosphere in the rural areas," Inu said.

Hayder Akber Khan Rano, central committee member of Workers Party, said Gram Sarkar is going to be constituted in an improper way and this will politicise local administration.

Sadek Siddiqui, acting secretary general of Jatiya Party (Anwar Hossain) said as Gram Sarkar will be nominated, ruling alliance activists will get the opportunity to be members of this body. "I think its result will not be good," he said.

Saddam daughters

FROM PAGE 12
They benefit from Jordanian protection as long as they are in the country," he added.

Raghad and Rana were married respectively to Hussein Kamel Hassan and his brother Saddam Kamel Hassan, who both defected to Jordan in 1995 with their wives and a total of seven children.

The families returned to Iraq in February 1996, but the two men, their brother and a sister, as well as other family members, were assassinated by Saddam's regime after being accused of treason.

Raghad and Rana had since been living out of the public eye with their mother, Sajida, in Iraq, apparently under close watch.

Saddam, who is being hunted by coalition forces, has a third daughter Hala, whose husband was arrested by US forces following the fall of Baghdad on April 9.

A close relative who requested anonymity Thursday told AFP in Amman that Raghad and Rana and their nine children arrived on board a Jordanian plane from Syria.

"The two daughters of Saddam Hussein were in Syria where they had fled two weeks after the fall of Baghdad, or around the end of April," he said. Asked about the fate of their mother, Sajida, the relative said: "We have no news about her."

Sheikh Jamal Kamel, identified as a brother of Hussein and Saddam Kamel Hassan, also told Al-Arabiya news channel Thursday night that Raghad and Rana had come to Jordan after King Abdullah II approved a request he made to Jordanian authorities, presumably with US blessing.

Kamel, who profusely thanked the Jordanian monarch for hosting the two women, said he did not think they would be interrogated about the whereabouts of Saddam, whose fate has been a mystery since his ouster by US-led forces.

WEATHER TODAY

Moderate rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at many places over the country during the next 12 hours till 6.0pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 33.6 degree Celsius was recorded at Rangamati and the lowest of 24.5 degree at Srimongal.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:41pm today and rises at 5:28am tomorrow.

The highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature		Humidity in percentage	
	in Celsius		Morning	Evening
Dhaka	30.3	25.6	82	80
Chittagong	31.6	25.0	87	77
Rajshahi	30.8	25.8	83	87
Khulna	32.1	26.2	98	75
Barisal	30.8	26.2	78	80
Sylhet	32.7	26.2	69	81
Cox's Bazar	31.3	25.0	72	85