

Old problems beset tourist season

By Sabir Mustafa

COX'S BAZAR: Less than half a mile away from Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation's (BPC) flagship hotel, Shaibal, the smashed ruins of a coastal police station post lie on the gleaming white sandy beach. Red ceramic bricks and white clay foundation stone bear the name of Maj Gen Abdul Mannan as the man who inaugurated the post back in August, 1982, when he was the region's martial law administrator.

The ruins stand as one of the few visible reminders of the force of the 20ft tidal wave that swept through this tourist town April 29 last. Nine years later the idea of a coastal police station too seems to have been swept away by the tide, as police patrols on the beach are conspicuous only by their absence.

"Lack of adequate security arrangements is a major obstacle to the development of this town as a tourist resort. What's more, there are no life-savers or rescue teams on the beach either", Mohammad Ashrafur Huq, manager of the Hotel Sayaman complained.

Thick forests of jhau or tamark trees at the edge of sand planted as late as 1973 provided security of a different kind last April, blunting the power of the tide and thereby saving BPC's three motels and the hundreds of people taking shelter in them, according to Akhlakur Rahman, information officer at the Parjatan beach-

front complex. The tide, had assistance from government and non-government agencies. But others had to do it by themselves.

"We built the market back from scratch without any help from anyone. Now we need more tourists because they are our passport to solvency", Khokon Kanti Das Gupta, who runs a photo shop on the beach said while snapping another glorious sunset for a local visitor without a camera.

Attracting tourists, particularly foreign ones, is proving to be a major problem, even though Cox's Bazaar offers them the longest, cleanest beach in the world and some of the finest forestry found anywhere. During the last peak season — from December to March — only 353 foreign visitors stayed at BPC's hotels.

Captain Abdul Hye, BPC complex general manager for the past six years, has to contend with such fundamental problems as lack of good transport links, unhygienic town environment, poor medical facilities, low standard of hotels and cuisine, total lack of daytime or evening entertainment for tourists on the beach or in town, in addition to the question of security.

Then there is still that all-important human factor.

"A Swiss lady once told me that she had forgotten how beautiful the beach was because she constantly felt like an animal in a zoo", Capt Hye,

education is also in poor shape.

"We have only 30 teachers for 2,000 students at the Govt College here. During degree exams, we have to borrow tables and benches from a number of schools as we do not have sufficient numbers of them. Our college is the only degree centre in the whole district, but we can't afford to buy more benches", Mohammad Jasmuddin, General Secretary of the College Students Union said.

Proper development of tourism would give the local economy a tremendous boost, Ashrafur Huq said, particularly as most business establishments except fishing depended on the tourist season anyway. He regretted that the government had failed to give any encouragement to the local business community, particularly the hotel owners.

Capt Hye, while acknowledging immediate problems of entertainment, feels more fundamental issues like infrastructure and education need to be tackled first.

"That sort of thing could not be tackled at the local level, it needs political decision at the government level", he said.

A 178-crore taka Master Plan for the development of tourism in a wide area from Maheshkhali to St Martins Island was drawn up last year and approved by the previous regime. Although the document has been published, it is



ESCAP Executive Secretary SAMS Kibria called on Leader of the Opposition and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina at her official residence in city on Friday. —Star photo

Denationalisation contrary to Mujib's dreams: Kader

CHANDPUR, Nov 22: Awami League leader Kader Siddiqui decried the denationalised policy of the government and said it was contrary to the dreams of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, reports UNB.

Addressing as chief guest at a meeting at the local Pura Park here Wednesday he urged the people to materialise the dreams of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Referring to the present price hike of essentials Kader said economic emancipation of the people can only come through the policies of Awami League.

He alleged that the freedom fighters did not receive due facilities during the government of post liberation or governments that succeeded it.

Kader Siddiqui also renewed his call for trial of the killers of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and repeal of the Indemnity Ordinance Bill.

Demanding trial of the killers of Bangabandhu, Kader said he can lay down his life if it quickens the trial.

He strongly demanded repeal of the Indemnity Ordinance Bill and Special Powers Act and reiterated his determination to launch a movement for their withdrawal. He urged the people to be united for the movement.

Kader said he was arrested on January 17 as a victim of international conspiracy and urged the government employees to serve the people neutrally.

Police action

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the Opposition in Parliament, said people expected an end to repression on the struggling masses with the fall of autocracy in the country.

The AL Chief said all concerned must play responsible role in protecting the country's garment factories, which created employment opportunity for over five lakh people and helped earning huge foreign currency. The relevant quarters should avoid the path of repression to help flourishing of garment industries in the country, she added.

Secretary General of Jamaat-e-Islami Maulana Matlur Rahman Nizami in his statement expressed deep concern over the attack on the garment workers by police and musclemen in the city and demanded that the government and the factory owners should stop repression on them.

Nizami, also the leader of his party's Parliamentary Party, termed the attacks as inhuman.

Jatiya Ganatantrik Party (JAGPA) President Shafiqul Alam Prodhan in a statement accused the government and the owners of destroying the country's garment factories by their repressive steps against the workers.

Garments workers and employees' Unity Council Chairman Mohammad Khurshid Alam and Secretary General Amirul Huq Amin protested the statement by the garment factories' owners and called it as part of the conspiracy against the factories.

He viewed that the present crisis could be solved through a tripartite talks of the government, owners and workers.

The National Garments Workers' Federation in its statement demanded immediate release of the arrested garment workers and withdrawal of cases against them. Bangladesh Bastuhara Janakalyan Samity condemning the police action said these actions proved the absence of any democratic government in the country.

Besides, the Federation of the Workers and Employees of government, semi-government and non-government bodies and Bangladesh Garib Dal also issued separate statements strongly condemning the police actions and demanding acceptance of the garment workers' demands.

1200 killed as troops clash with Karens

BANGKOK, Nov 22: About 1,200 civilians, soldiers and guerrillas have been killed in six weeks of heavy clashes between Burmese troops and Karen-led ethnic guerrillas in the lower central Irrawaddy delta, a rebel group said today, reports Reuters.

A Karen National Union (KNU) statement said Rangoon had launched concerted ground, air and sea attacks against rebel forces in the Irrawaddy region west of the capital since last month causing heavy casualties to civilians.

The KNU estimated that over 800 civilians died during the latest government campaign in the region where, it said, the Karens had trained and arrived about 3,000 men and students to fight government troops.

It said Rangoon had forcibly evacuated more than 30 Karen villages in the delta and destroyed schools, hospitals and houses suspected of harbouring the rebels.

The group said 375 government troops and 27 Karen rebels had been killed in battles since early October. Independent confirmation of the figures was not immediately available.

A Rangoon radio report monitored in Bangkok earlier

this month said more than 350 Karen rebels were killed and 15 captured in more than a month of fighting in the Irrawaddy.

Burmese television quoted army Commander-in-Chief General Than Shwe on Tuesday as warning villagers in the delta that the government was prepared to use heavy weapons against people joining rebel forces.

I want to ask the local people this. Are you going to live peacefully.... and cooperate with us for the development of the nation.... or are you going to cause problems, caring nothing about the whole village being set ablaze?

You must not be led astray when the insurgents come to summon you, the general told villagers at Ngaputaw township.

The KNU statement said: All Karen nationals who had at one time or another been involved in their nationalist activities, whether legally or armed rebellion.... were arrested, tortured and imprisoned.

Many were killed without trial.... the killing of the suspected rebel continues today with the average of three persons being executed daily.

APSU calls for indefinite strike at CU

CHITTAGONG, Nov 22: All Party Student Unity (APSU) called for an indefinite strike from tomorrow (Saturday) at the Chittagong University protesting the alleged attack by Islami Chhatra Shibir on the VC's residence recently, reports UNB.

But the strike call evoked a sense of uncertainty among the candidates of honours final year examination scheduled to begin November 24 (Sunday) as per fresh programme announced by the authorities.

The examination was earlier scheduled to begin Thursday (Nov 21) but postponed Wednesday midnight due to a two-day strike enforced by the APSU, also protesting the Shibir attack Monday on VC's residence.

The Shibir activists have been agitating for a long time demanding resignation of Vice-Chancellor Prof Alamgir Mohammad Sirajuddin.

SAARC ties with UN

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UN-ESCAP SAMS Kibria when asked had told this correspondent that the SAARC Secretariat declined to attend programme of ESCAP as SAARC was restrained to set up relation with any UN body, by a decision taken by the member countries.

On the other hand the regional institutions like European Economic Community (EEC), and Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) also cold-shouldered the SAARC because of the later's 'shyness' to go for any organisational cooperation with the United Nations.

According to a source in Dhaka last year, the SAARC secretariat with the clearance from its member-states wrote letters to EEC and ASEAN secretariats, seeking institutional cooperation with SAARC but the two institutions did not respond to the letters.

The diplomatic sources told this correspondent that the attitude of EEC or ASEAN was not known. The sources said, either they were annoyed with the attitude of SAARC as it imposed restraint to maintain any link with the UN-bodies or they were more interested to develop bilateral relations with the South Asian countries separately than developing any institutional relations with SAARC.

The Foreign Office sources however said that this time the SAARC would have to take decision on this issue of developing relation with other regional and international organisations.

During his brief stay in Dhaka, the Maldives Foreign Minister is expected to call on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia besides meeting other officials.

Maldives FM

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Gayoom of the Maldives, the current Chairman of SAARC, to fix a fresh date for the summit through consultation with the other three countries.

The forum, launched in 1985, groups Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives.

Israel

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motion to 'recognise Palestinian national rights' for the first time rather than 'self determination' was an attempt to avoid facing the real issues, Abderrahman said.

"This attitude helps in no way to advance the peace process... (but it could) spur (Israeli Prime Minister) Yitzhak Shamir and his Likud Bloc to pursue maneuvers aimed at slowing down this process," warned Abderrahman.

He urged the Labour Party and its leader Shimon Peres to be "more audacious and speak out in favour of an (Israeli) withdrawal from the Arab and Palestinian occupied territories."

Members of the Palestinian delegation to Middle East peace talks flew to Moscow on Friday to discuss their fears that Soviet Jewish immigrants to Israel will be settled in the occupied territories.

Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Arens secretly visited China for talks just after the Madrid Middle East peace conference, security sources said.

The Midnight File

Belgrade to challenge sanctions

GENEVA, Nov 22: The Yugoslav government has officially complained to the world trade body GATT over economic sanctions imposed by the European Community, the United States and several other Western countries, a GATT spokesman said Friday. Yugoslavia will present its case at the regular annual meeting of the 103-nation General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade starting December 3, spokesman David Woods said, reports AP.

PLO welcomes new UN chief

TUNIS, Nov 22: The Palestinians Friday welcomed the selection of Egypt's Deputy Prime Minister, Boutros Ghali, as the new UN Secretary-General. Under Ghali's leadership, "we expect that the United Nations will play its role in the application of international law and the protection of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories," spokesman Ahmed Abdel-Rahman said, reports AP.

Iranian woman sings in public

NICOSIA, Nov 22: A woman singer has given a public performance in Iran for the first time since the Islamic revolution in 1979 — but there wasn't a man in the band or even in the audience. The audience of 200 women listened to 10 mostly religious songs by Parisa at a house in Tehran last week, the official Iranian news agency IRNA reported on Thursday, says Reuters.

Bonded labour banned

ISLAMABAD, Nov 22: A law to outlaw bonded labour and free millions of men, women and children from virtual slavery in Pakistan has passed its first parliamentary hurdle. The legislation was passed by the Senate on Thursday. It now has to be ratified by the national assembly (lower house) before bonded labourers will be automatically freed of all obligations to their employers, reports Reuters.

Fighting subsides in Mogadishu

NAIROBI, Nov 22: Factional warfare subsided Friday in Somalia's capital of Mogadishu after five days of fierce fighting that killed or wounded hundreds of people, relief workers said. The reported lull followed artillery and rocket battles between supporters of President Ali Mahdi Mohammed and Gen. Mohamed Farrah Aidid, chairman of the ruling United Somali Congress, reports AP.

Drug policy

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it with high prices which were smuggled into the country.

"Only due to faulty drug policy, huge quantity of foreign medicines are being smuggled into Bangladesh and getting good market here," said a senior physician.

Other than the local pharmaceutical companies, the multinational companies were also hit by the drug policy.

Many of their medicines were banned by the government while life saving medicines invented in other countries in recent times could not be introduced in Bangladesh due to restrictions.

Most of the multinational companies have squeezed their business here while some others are considering winding up operations in Bangladesh.

Among the three US based companies in Bangladesh, one

has already left and another has decided to stop their operation here. The other company is waiting for the decision of the Drug Control Committee as well as of the Appellate Authority about some drugs on which the company's future operation here will depend. Six more companies based in other foreign countries are now continuing operation in Bangladesh.

The Health Ministry source said that the government is very much aware about the problems faced by the multinational companies.

"The drug policy will be recast in such a way that the multinationals can continue their operation while the local industries can also survive and grow," said the source adding, "local companies will be allowed to manufacture certain essential drugs of foreign companies under licence."

World Bank

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suggested denationalisation of all the public sector transports.

The official mentioned that the Taka 150 crore-assets of the Corporation would be sold at a nominal price if it was denationalized.

Moreover, the whole transport system would become hostage to some private companies and the job of nearly 4,000 employees would be threatened, he added.

The government was still undecided about the implementation of the WB suggestions the source pointed out.

The Corporation did not have any regular subsidy from the government but sometimes got grants, he claimed.

The BRTC has been burdened with a loan of Taka 100 crore and another Taka 1000 crore in interests since the beginning of its operations in

1961, the source said adding that since independence it has incurred a loss of about Taka 37 crore.

The Corporation now has 432 buses of which 220 are out of order and getting rusty over the years in 16 depots.

Taka 4.75 crore is needed to repair the damaged buses but there are no funds in hand to start the repair work, the BRTC official said adding that the government was actively considering providing the funds. If the fund was sanctioned, the BRTC would be able to operate more buses.

The source said that the Corporation has been sustaining a loss of 14 paisa per passenger as it follows the tariff fixed by government being a service-oriented Corporation.

The official however admitted that some unscrupulous employees and workers were instrumental for the present condition of the Corporation.

Dhaka

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ladesh and prosperity of the people of the country.

The Foreign Minister was accompanied by Additional Foreign Secretary Ali Mahmood Ali, Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs Abdul Hamid Chowdhury and Bangladesh Ambassador to Myanmar Mostafa Faruque Mohammed.

The Foreign Minister called on Brigadier General DO Abel, Minister for Trade and Planning and Finance in the afternoon and discussed the need for development of mutually beneficial trade and economic and technical cooperation between the two countries.

Joint venture discussed

He discussed the possibility of establishing joint venture in the private sector in the field of cement and pulp in particular.

Brigadier Abel welcomed the idea of receiving a delegation of private entrepreneurs from Bangladesh who would explore the possibility of joint ventures in various sectors where private foreign investment is permitted in Myanmar law.

Boutros Ghali

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166-nation General Assembly but this is considered a formality.

In the past two years, the United Nations has greatly increased its profile, playing a major role in authorising the Gulf war against Iraq and in overseeing peacekeeping operations in Namibia and now in Cambodia.

French ambassador Jean-Bernard Merime an early supporter of Ghali, said, "we welcome Boutros Ghali as the next Secretary-General."

"I am very glad we have a new Secretary-General and that the Council had reached an agreement" without casting a series of vetoes, he said, referring to elections 10 years ago when the five permanent members of the Council vetoed each other's candidates for weeks.

"I think the choice is excellent," British Ambassador Sir David Hannay said.

The first indication Ghali was the winner came well before all the ballots had been counted. Yemeni diplomats dashed out of the Council chambers and embraced waiting Egyptian envoys who immediately rushed to telephones.

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Sikander Bahadur, the elephant roams the beach amid the ruins of the old police post. —Star photo

front complex. With the new tourist season knocking on the door, Rahman is hoping Cox's Bazaar's image as a 'tourist paradise' has survived the battering dished out by the cyclone.

If bouncing back is a Bangladeshi speciality, then Cox's Bazaar is no exception. Even those who lost everything, like the owners of the small 'Jhinuk' Market selling trinkets made from seashells and elephant bones, are back in business. Some, like the farmers harvesting the winter crop a stone's throw away from

whose sincerity and enthusiasm for the job is quite out of proportion to the resources at his disposal, said.

Development of tourism awareness among the people of the district is a theme Hye harped on constantly. Widespread poverty, lack of education, poor infrastructural facilities and a degree of religious and cultural xenophobia are all combining to prevent the supremely friendly people of Cox's Bazaar from getting a clear idea of what tourism is all about. In addition to the deplorable 13 per cent rate of literacy, the state of higher

currently collecting dust in the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, awaiting decision on its implementation.

In the meantime, Parjatan has hired a mountain elephant named Sikander Bahadur from Rangamati to roam the beach and entertain the tourists. Unknown to Bahadur, his heavy, ponderous, aimless trudging on the sand is running the risk of becoming symbolic of the state of the tourist industry itself.

Notice: Look out for a special four-page supplement on Tourism in Bangladesh in tomorrow's The Daily Star.

No scope for chaos

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the nation from foreign dependency as no nation could achieve self-sufficiency depending on foreign aid and assistance."

Begum Zia said her government took up various projects to lead the country towards progress and prosperity. In this regard, she sought co-operation of the people to help implement those programmes on self-help basis. The government would extend all out cooperation in this regard, she added.

She said one of the basic objective of the present government was to develop the rural areas and remove poverty. This would stop influx of rural people to urban areas, she said.

Begum Zia said the government would welcome any initiative of the people to set up small-scale, medium-scale and other cottage industries in the rural areas to gear up economic activities there. This would also solve unemployment problem to a large extent, she said.

The Prime Minister emphasised the need for curbing smuggling across the border and said it was hampering the growth of our national economy and also rendering a large number of people jobless as production in the mills were hampered due to abundant availability of smuggled goods in the local markets.

Referring to the violence and terrorism on the campus, the Prime Minister said de-

structive activities were being carried out in a planned way, to create anarchy in the society.

She called upon the people to identify the terrorists and isolate them from the society. "The offenders would be punished whichever party they belong to," she said adding "we will not spare the offenders if they belong to our party." She said a criminal can not be a patriot.

Dwelling on the garment sector, the Prime Minister said that conspiracies were being hatched at home and abroad to destroy our garment industries. "We will not allow discipline in any organisation, and will punish those responsible for the situation," she said emphatically.

Begum Zia also listed various development programmes under taken by her government to improve the country's situation which included mass education, primary education and poverty alleviation.

Amidst thunderous applause, the Prime Minister announced that a residential area will be developed in 2,000 acres of land in the area. She said all modern amenities would be provided to build up the residential area.

She said as a people's government we have plans to develop the whole of Bangladesh. In this respect she sought cooperation of the countrymen in achieving that target. She said, "we need people's active cooperation if we want to develop the country."

Begum Zia said that the country had already lost nine years during the autocratic rule. "We cannot make further delay in leading the nation towards progress and prosperity," she added.

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