

# DOWN TO EARTH

## The Many Facets of Old Age

By ASM Nurunnabi

When old age creeps in inexorably, one's outlook on life largely determines how it should be faced. By the blessings of modern medicine and by virtue of comparatively improved living conditions, old age is not considered a fixed stage in terms of years. Some people reach old age earlier than others, because of a number of biological and material factors. But since old age is an inevitability, a series of physical and psychological changes pave the way towards it.

From one aspect, old age is viewed as a stage where one is expected to lead a life in retirement and in peace and tranquility, away from the bustle of everyday life. Such a view is in fact an idealistic one, since none can escape the hard realities of life, irrespective of whether one is yet to reach old age or has already crossed into old age.

The urbanites who follow a busy routine in active life face some uncertainties on reaching the age of retirement, the portal to old age. Some try to keep up a busy schedule, like taking morning and evening walks. Sometimes in course of these daily rounds, acquaintanceship and sometimes camaraderie develop among the participants. These feelings grow to such an extent that some of them, when their daily rounds are done, sit on a bench or a patch of grass and lose themselves in spirited and sometimes boisterous discussion on any subject under the sun ranging from cabbage to king.

Some old people, on the

other hand, turn to religion or social service. In these fields, they find scope for exercising their faculties. There are, of course, many others who just idly pass their time.

The bane of old age is loneliness. With the gradual break-up of large families, the existence of grandfathers, grandmothers and other older relatives in the same families is being threatened. Loneliness does not seem to be much of a problem in lower strata of society. It particularly strikes those who, because of their financial independence and other favourable factors, choose to live separately from their children in urban areas. Many sons and daughters of affluent families, leaving their parents behind, have gone abroad for studies or employment and in some cases of daughters, after marriage. Their long sojourn abroad has created a typical situation. In many homes, only the old parents continue to live in this country. An old man placed in such a situation lamented that when we die, our bodies are kept in cold storage in morgue till our children come from abroad to complete the funeral rites.

In the west, the institution of old age homes has developed where old persons repair when their adult sons and daughters, on account of their family ethos, leave home and the parents are too old to look after themselves in their own homes. Because of our own family characteristics, most parents in their old age in this country continue to live with

their children or live independently where economic and other factors permit. In this country, the institution of old age home is yet to take shape.

In old age, the need for medical attention is perhaps greater than ever. In Dhaka City, the need is sought to be met by a non-official body named Prabir Hitaishi Sangha situated at Agargaon. With government grant they run a full-fledged medical clinic where treatment is available for old people at concessional charges. For the retired government employees, facilities are available free of charge at the Government Employees Hospital at Fulbaria.

In some countries in the west, old persons are called senior citizens. In some communities there, the old people are given benefits by way of discounts on purchases and travels by transports. Such examples are worthy of emulation here.

Old age is as much a personal problem as a social one. Since we have no social security system, as in the west, life in old age here is subject to uncertainties both in economic and health terms. In such a situation all possible community support, in the opinion of many, is called for to extenuate the helplessness of old age. Particularly, in order to care for the growing proportion of older people both humanely and in a manner society can afford, measures may be taken to encourage the revival of the extended family system, whereby the elderly reside with their younger relatives.

## Plea for restoration of secularism

By Staff Correspondent

A multi-religious rally in the city yesterday afternoon demanded restoration of secularism as a state-principle.

Bangladesh Hindu-Buddhist-Christian Unity Council organised the rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club in observance of 'Giant Dibosh' (Day of disgrace). On this day in 1990, communal forces attacked temples, residences and business establishments of the Hindu community in the capital and elsewhere in the country.

An eight-point charter of demand was announced in the rally. The demands include repairing of and compensation for the religious and commercial organisations damaged in the 'planned riot' of 1990, rebuilding the Ramna 'Kali Mandir' and 'Maa Anandamoyee Asram', destroyed during the Liberation War, enacting law ensuring protection of the religious institutions and punishing the rioters.

Presided over by T. Rojario, the rally was also addressed, among others, by Awami League leaders Amir Hossain Amu and Col. (ret'd) Shaawat Ali, MP, CPB leader Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, BSD (Khalae) leader Khalequzzaman Bhuiyan, Ganatantri Party leader Mohammad Afzal, Justice Debesh Chandra Bhattacharya, Abdul Awal and council leaders CR Dutta, Dr Nimchandra and Sreemot Badhipal Mahathero. Amir Hossain Amu accused all the post-75 governments of patronising the communal

forces in the country. Aided by the state, he added, the anti-liberation communal forces were now getting upper hand and attacking the freedom-loving people.

Col. (ret'd) Shaawat observed that Bangabandhu liberated the country with the spirit of secular Bangalee nationalism. But minority religious groups have been subjected to repression since secularism was dropped from the state-principles after the killing of Bangabandhu in 1975.

The AL leader demanded formation of a national government with a view to resolving the country's political, economic, religious and other problems.

Saifuddin Ahmed Manik accused the government of failing to provide security to the minorities.

CR Dutta called upon the minority Hindus, Buddhists and Christians to group up with the majority Muslims to resist the communalists. He also asked the members of Hindu community not to leave Bangladesh for India. "Mind it, this is your motherland. You are born here, struggle to live in your own land with heads high."

Khalequzzaman Bhuiyan said that rise of Muslim fundamentalists was responsible for repression on the minority religious groups in the country. He called to work unitedly to restore the spirit of the Liberation War.

## Hasina condemns attack on Ahmadiya mosque

Sheikh Hasina strongly condemned the 'Jamaat-Shibir' attack on a mosque at Bakshibazar in the city Thursday burning hundreds of copies of holy Al-Quran, reports UNB.

In a statement Friday, the Awami League President alleged that this anti-liberation force also burnt and destroyed mosques by bombs during the 1971 Liberation War.

"Their attack on mosque and setting fire to holy Quran again proved that these elements do not really believe in Islam. They want to mislead the religious-minded people by using religion as a weapon of politics," she said.

Hasina, also Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, said pious Muslims cannot bear such disrespect to holy Quran.

She demanded exemplary punishment to the attackers of the mosque.

## Hasina

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Hasina said. She said Awami league moved a bill in parliament for independence of judiciary but the government had not taken any action to pass the bill.

"As a matter of fact, BNP tries to control judiciary through politicisation", Hasina alleged.

The Awami League President said her party has announced action programme to protest all misdeeds and injustice of the government. "We will not stop until achieving economic freedom."

## Democratic Forum

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party Awami League speculations were rife about his future political activities. It was speculated that Kamal would quit Awami League and launch another political organisation and his forum might be converted into a party.

The speculations on Kamal's political activities as well as future of BDF came up for discussion at a meeting of forum's Convening Committee Wednesday. At the meeting presided over by Kamal himself, committee members spoke in favour of keeping the present entity of BDF as a forum.

The members categorically said that the forum members would have the right to carry on their own party activities but the BDF should not be converted into a party. Later, the meeting unanimously took a decision in this regard.

## Indo-Pak talks on Siachen resume tomorrow

NEW DELHI, Oct 30: India and Pakistan are to resume talks Sunday on ways to reduce costly military deployment by both sides on the strategic Siachen glacier in the Himalayas, officials said here today, reports AFP.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia addressing the members of Doctors Association of Bangladesh (DAB) at her Sugandha office yesterday. Story on Page 1 — PID photo

## UN team gets death threat in Iraq

MANAMA, Oct 30: A UN team that was inspecting Iraq for weapons was harassed and even threatened with death despite official assurances they would be safe, the chief inspector said today, reports Reuters.

"In the beginning they assured us that they will see that the team operates in a safe environment," Nikita Smidovich said as he arrived in Bahrain with his 50-strong team from two weeks in Iraq.

"Unfortunately there was a denial of room service to the members. One night there was physical attack on the inspectors, and then there were threatening notes."

He said the anonymous notes, written in good Arabic, were slipped under the door of several team members 'threatening to kill people'.

In resolutions last year the UN Security Council demanded that Iraq provide safety and all logistical support requested by the UN special commission, the unit for

which Smidovich works overseeing the elimination of Iraq weapons of mass destruction.

He said for a week the hotel management refused to clean the rooms and provide new towels and sheets despite his requests.

Smidovich's team was the 45th and largest sent in by the special commission. It devoted most of its energy to whether the Iraqis had any more Scud or other ballistic missiles left.

AP adds: Smidovich said his experts were bringing back extensive information for analysis. He said that once his team's report was made, it would be up to the UN commission overseeing destruction of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction to determine whether Iraq still had Scud missiles.

The team did not find any assembled Scud missiles, but discovered evidence that certain ballistic missile infrastructure still remain in Iraq, other UN officials said. They would not elaborate.

## Badruddoza urges Opposition Register protest in House not in streets

Deputy Leader of the House in Jatiya Sangsad Prof. AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday urged the opposition to register their protest against the government action instead of resorting to frequent walk-out and street agitation, reports BSS.

Prof. Chowdhury said in a democratic set-up it was usual that the opposition would stage walk-out and point out the ruling party's faults, but frequent parliament boycott or taking to streets were contrary to democratic norms.

He was addressing as chief guest the conference of Jatiyatadbadi Sheshashebak Sangatan Lalbagh Thana unit at Hazaribagh park yesterday afternoon.

Presided over by Humayun Rashid, the conference was addressed among others by Mir Showkat Ali MP, Nasir Uddin Ahmed Pintu, General Secretary of Dhaka City Chhatra Dal, Ali Akbar Babul, Badruzzaman Mukul, Hasan Jewel, Mozammel Huq and Advocate Farukul Islam.

Kazi Asaduzzaman Asad, convener of Jatiyatadbadi Sheshashebak Sangatan, inaugurated the conference.

## Rebels shell Luanda Suburb: 13 killed

LUANDA, Oct 30: At least 13 people died when mortar and artillery shells rained down on a suburb of the Angolan capital Luanda early today, residents said, reports Reuters.

A government source said unformed soldiers of the former rebel movement UNITA tried to take over an air force ammunition dump in Cassenda suburb, near Luanda airport, but were repelled by government forces.

Residents in Cassenda said the shelling broke out at about 2.00 am (0100 GMT) and lasted 45 minutes. Ambulances later took away the bodies of 13 local people killed in the incident, they added.

There were no reports of the incident in the Angolan media and spokesmen for the ruling MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) and UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) were not immediately available for comment.

Prof. Chowdhury described the government as the most balanced one since independence, saying the strength of the ruling party in parliament is 172 as against the combined opposition's strength of 158.

Prof. Chowdhury said the BNP government was ready to accept any constructive criticism of the opposition but the opposition did not follow this path.

Referring to frequent walk-out and boycott of parliament, Prof. Chowdhury said the oppositions were not properly using the elected parliament.

He urged the opposition to refrain from street agitation which he said would cause great inconveniences and sufferings to the people.

Prof. Chowdhury was also critical of the past role of the Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami and said the people knew fully well their activities.

Referring to the establishment of one party BAKSAL rule, curbing of press freedom and repressions on the innocent people he said all of their old misdeeds would be repeated if they could return to power.

## Jamaat demands arrest of Ahmed Sharif

Leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday demanded immediate arrest and exemplary punishment of renowned scholar Dr Ahmed Sharif for his remarks against Islam, reports UNB.

Branding him as an "apostate" at a protest rally at the North Gate of Baitul Mukarram yesterday afternoon, they also blasted the BNP government for not taking any action against Dr Sharif.

The rally, organised by the City Jamaat to demand capital punishment of the former faculty member of Dhaka University, was presided over by City Ameer ATM Azharul Islam and addressed, among others, by party leaders Mujazzaman and Ali Ahsan Mujahid.

Referring to the introduction of anti-terrorism bill in parliament by BNP, Assistant Secretary General of Jamaat-e-Islami Ali Ahsan Mujahid said, the law will be useless if not properly enforced.

Describing the leaders and activists of Nirmul Committee as terrorists, he said Dr Ahmed Sharif is the leader of that terrorist group and he must be given exemplary punishment.

City Ameer ATM Azharul Islam urged all Muslims of the country irrespective of their political affiliations to foil any conspiracy against Islam.

He also cautioned the government that they would be compelled to go for action programme if their demand was not met.

The rally was followed by a big procession.

## Three killed in separate incidents

By DMCH Correspondent

Three people were killed and another two wounded in separate incidents in and outside the capital Friday.

An eight-year-old boy Rashedul Hasan died on the spot and his brother and father were seriously injured when their car bumped against a bridge-railing at Dewanbagh near Katchpur on the Dhaka-Chittagong Highway at around 9pm Friday.

Abdul Majid Chowdhury, 40, and his son Saiful Hassan 22, were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) last night.

The victims said that the accident occurred while they were returning to Dhaka from Chittagong.

In another road accident, Tita Mia, 25, was killed at Gabtoli early Friday morning. His body was taken to the DMCH morgue.

A 24-year-old woman, Hasina Begum committed suicide by hanging at a slum at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar early Friday.

Police brought the body to the DMCH morgue for autopsy.

## CRPF arrests 330 in Manipur

IMPHAL, Oct 30: At least 330 persons were rounded up during combine operations by the combined forces of CRPF, Manipur Rifles and state police in different parts of Manipur in the past three days, according to the Superintendent of Police (Imphal) F N Shyamanna Singh, reports PTI.

## 55 Muslim rebels held in Kashmir

JAMMU, Oct 30: Indian Security Forces captured 55 Muslim militants on the Kashmir border while they were trying to clandestinely enter the Indian territory today, officials said, reports BSS.

The 55 were intercepted by the army and paramilitary forces in the Uri and Titwal areas on the line of control dividing Indian and Pakistani-held Kashmir, the officials said here in Kashmir's winter capital.

## The Midnight File

### Sophia Loren to visit Somalia, Kenya in Nov

GENEVA, Oct 30: Italian actress Sophia Loren will travel to Somalia and Kenya next month as a United Nations good will ambassador to draw world attention to the refugee crisis in the Horn of Africa, the United Nations said today. A statement from the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said Loren would be officially appointed on November 18 and then start a six-day visit to the region on November 21, reports Reuters.

### Kidnapped Chinese mine officials released

ISLAMABAD, Oct 30: Six Chinese copper mine officials kidnapped in Pakistan 10 days ago and taken to Afghanistan have been released, state television said today. The four men and two women, who were abducted by Afghan gunmen on October 19 in the southwest province of Baluchistan, were expected to arrive soon in the provincial capital of Quetta, it said, reports Reuters.

## Miyazawa apologises for gangsters scandal

TOKYO, Oct 30: Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa apologised to the nation today for a damning gifts-and-gangsters scandal and promised not to renege on promises of political reform, reports Reuters.

"Sharply aware that the current public distrust of politics is much more severe than any we have seen before, I would like to express my humble apologies to the people..." Miyazawa said in a policy speech on the opening of a new Parliament.

There have been accusations, that political figures were involved with organised crime, and it goes without saying that political figures should not consort with people of that link."

Miyazawa said he was "unalterably resolved" to keep his promises of thorough political reform.

The Sagawa Scandal, which has topped backstage political boss Shin Kanemaru and split

the dominant ruling party faction, now threatens Miyazawa's emergency economic package and therefore, the survival of his year-old government.

The parliamentary session is to run for 40 days. Opposition parties have demanded that Kanemaru and his crony-ex-Premier Noboru Takeshita, appear in Parliament to testify under oath on their roles in the scandal.

Kanemaru took 500 million yen (dollars 4 million) in illegal political donations from Sagawa Kyubin, a large trucking firm with ties to Japan's "Yakuza" gangsters.

Kanemaru, 78, is also under fire for allegations that he courted the favour of gangsters to put pressure on militant right-wing groups in the late 1980s. He has not denied the allegations, which came in a court hearing.

Takeshita has agreed to testify but the ruling liberal democratic party (LDP) has been reluctant to agree to summoning Kanemaru, who quit Parliament on October 14.

## Winter birds

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added. Some 20 to 25 migratory birds always stay back in the lakes when their returning trip begins.

The 180 acre Mirpur Zoo has two lakes spread over an area of 32 acres. For the birds, the Zoo authority, provides rice and wheat as food and cultivate different types of fish. Other than teals, a number few of partridges, pintail ducks and knight herons were found swimming in the lakes yesterday.

In Bangladesh, a large number of migratory birds, some of which are endangered, descend on the marsh areas of Dinajpur, Barisal and Mymensingh. A small part of these come to the Mirpur Zoo.

The Zoo authorities meanwhile is constructing a bird aviary, where birds would be given enough space for spreading on wings. The aviary will be 45 feet in height over a 11,000 sq ft area.

It is also planning to construct experimentally 25-bird-nests in the lakes in expectation that a few of the migratory birds may nestle and lay eggs.

The Zoo Curator informed that the last year's expenditure of the zoo was only Taka 1 crore 50 lakh approximately and the income was 1 crore 8 lakh. "The entire budget is dependent on its income and government subsidy," the Curator said, "no foreign aid."

## Mudslunging

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said about my record my plans and anything that comes to mind.

"The American people must see him for what he is — a desperate person who just wants to hold power and doesn't give a rip about them," Clinton said about Bush.

"You've got a guy here who will literally say or do anything to get elected," Clinton added, "Anytime you're an incumbent president and you don't have any standards you have a chance to win especially with Mr Perot spending anything to get elected."

Perot appearing on CNN's 'Larry King live' television programme on Thursday night said he could win if he could convince Americans that a vote for him would not be wasted.

"He (Bush) can't win. We're going to win all 50 states," Perot said. "Governor Clinton and President Bush are not facing our problems," he added.

On today Bush is campaigning in Tennessee, Missouri and Wisconsin while Clinton is visiting New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Georgia. Perot has no appearances on Friday but will speak in Florida and Missouri on Saturday.

Bush will also get help from former President Ronald Reagan, who will speak at a Bush rally in Phoenix, Arizona.

## S Asian judiciary

From Page 1 Col 7

paramount importance, Desai said.

"Our lawyers are more than the British...we need total change of our concept", he said adding that reform of some articles of laws is not sufficient.

Chief Justice of Pakistan M Afzal Zullah, commenting on the papers, said it time for us to change the colonial laws in the subcontinent on the perspective of the socio-economic structure.

Justice Mostafa Kamal, a judge of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh, differed with some points of Barrister Islam, saying if PIL cases filed in High Court one after another, they will face tremendous pressure. PIL should be filed in lower courts, he said.

Former Attorney General of India Solf J Sorabji and Dr Kamal Hossain presented two papers on "Protection of Fundamental Rights by Public Interest Litigation (PIL)" and "Interaction of Fundamental Principles of State Policy and Fundamental Rights" at the second session of the seminar.

It was presided over by Barrister Syed Ishtiq Ahmed. In Social Action Litigation (SAL), Sorabji said, the petition is for the enforcement of the specific rights of a determinate class of people who are primarily injured by the impugned action.

The injury suffered by members of this class is direct and redress is sought on their behalf because they are unable to approach the court on account of indigence, illiteracy or social and economic disabilities, he said.

Sorabji said PIL has taken precedence over old matters pending in courts, but courts are meant to redress constitutional violations.

He further said that PIL is likely to be abused by parties to further their private ends and one hears of fears about public interest litigation becoming an oppressive instrument of private pressure litigation.

This is most unfortunate and must be corrected if the credibility of the court and the efficacy of PIL are to be preserved", said the former Indian Attorney General of India.

The court's reluctance to wield its contempt power against defaulting governments and concerned authorities have led to a sense of frustration among those who approached it with the high expectations, Sorabji observed.

## Biman

From Page 1 Col 8

Aviation and Tourism Abdul Mannan, Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism Habibur Rahman and other high officials including the Acting Managing Director of Biman Li Col (ret'd) Mahmoodur Rahman were present to see off the inaugural flight.

Special munajat was offered prior to the departure of the flight.

The minister exchanged greetings with the passengers of the flight and enquired about their well-being.

Every Friday, departing Dhaka at 9 pm Biman will operate a 2 hours 20 minutes wide-body DC-10 flight to Delhi and from Delhi onto Dubai, Athens and Amsterdam.

The Biman in its route expansion drive will also open a number of destinations namely Hong Kong, Seoul, Jakarta, Ho-Chi-Minh City and New York soon.

## Asia Watch report

### Troops, militants violating human rights in Punjab

AMRITSAR, Oct 30: Asia Watch, an internationally known human rights organisation, has charged both security forces and militants in Punjab with flagrantly violating human rights and advised them to abide by international human rights laws to protect civilians, reports PTI.

The organisation in its report on human rights violations in Punjab titled crisis in Punjab, asked the militant groups to abide by the provisions of common Article Three which prohibit killings or other attacks on persons taking no part in hostilities.

The Article also asks them to refrain from issuing threats against members of ethnic or religious groups, journalists, government employees and other civilians.

Editor: S. M. Ali  
Executive Editor: Mahfuz Anam  
Published by the Editor on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd., 52, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000 and printed by him at The Sangbad Ltd., 36, Purana Paltan, Dhaka. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: House No 11, Road No 3, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka-1205. PABX: 500991-4. Advertisement: 500091. Fax No 88-02-863035. GPO Box No 3287. GRAM: DAILY STAR DHAKA.