

DOWN TO EARTH

It's time DCC pulls up its socks

By A S M Nurunnabi

Dhaka city is one of the fastest growing urban centres of the world in terms of population. According to a recent international survey, the city is on the threshold of becoming one of the megacities of the world by the turn of the century.

The prospect, though a cause of pleasure, confronts us at the same time with the stark realities of the inadequacies of our civic amenities. We cannot reasonably hope that in the near future it may be possible to make significant progress in that sphere so as to match the status of a megacity. For the odds are tremendous. Even at present, a vast majority of the city dwellers are bereft of basic amenities. With the expansion of population and area, the existing problems are certainly going to be more acute.

Admittedly, the cause of our backwardness in this respect is financial constraint. But there is no hope or possibility that in the future the constraint will sufficiently ease to enable us to make notable progress in this sphere. So the pessimists will foresee not so

bright a picture of our city as a megacity.

There are, however, certain other problems in the urban life which are largely man-made. These problems are more or less amenable to solution if they are tackled with better management, planning and co-ordinated efforts on the part of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC). The DCC should play a more effective role, it is felt, in improving the quality of urban life. There are general complaints that the standard of service offered by the DCC in such matters as road maintenance, sewerage, drainage, conservancy, street lighting, etc is not up to the desired level. Of course, the problems in these matters are not new ones. Yet, instead of their abatement, the problems are getting serious and complicated. In these respects, the different development agencies are no less to blame.

In fact, the main source of the problems is the lack of co-ordination among agencies like T&T, Titas, WASA and DCC, who are required from time to time to dig roads for execution of development schemes. It is

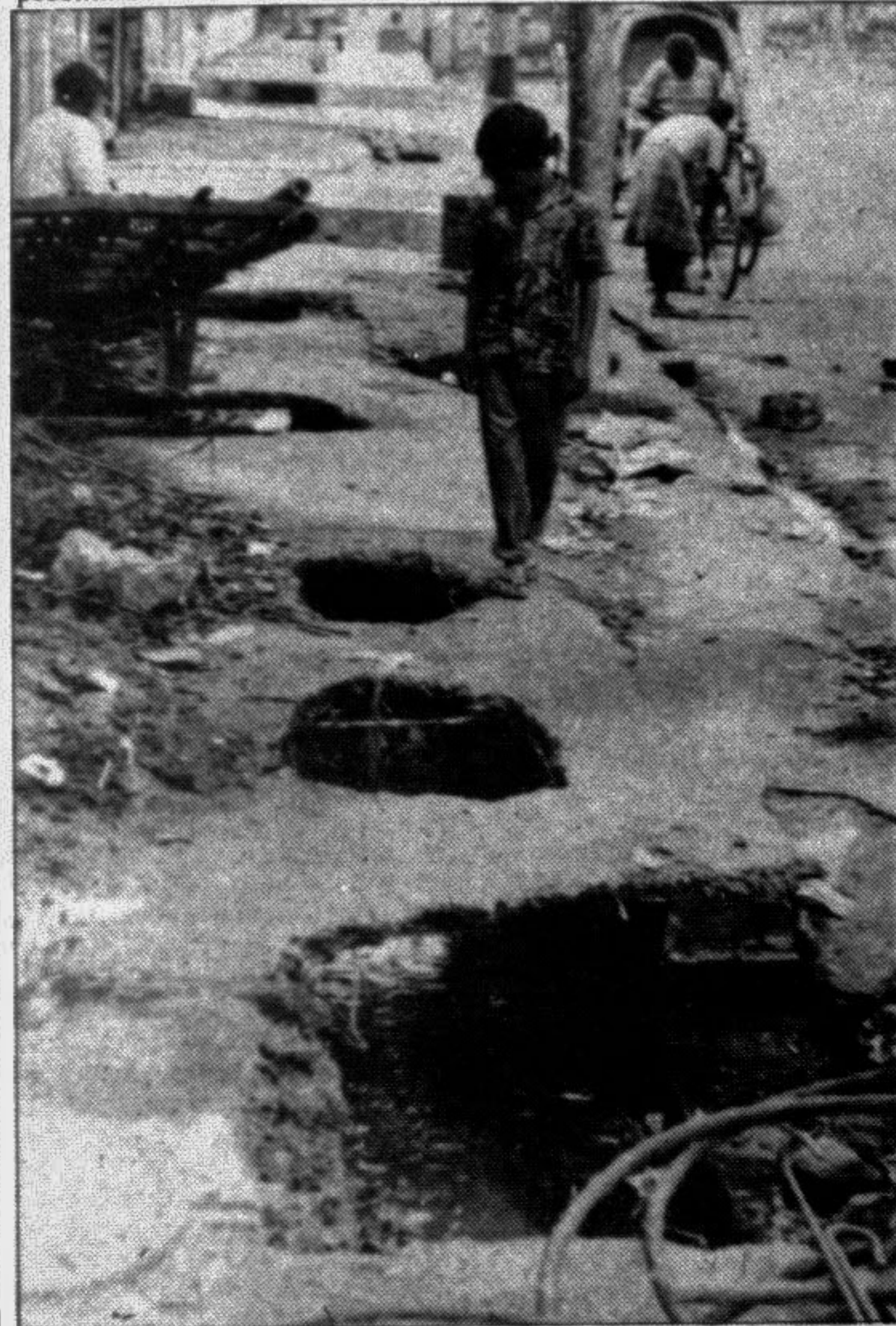
a common feature that after a road is dug up and then repaired by one agency, another agency comes up to do the digging again for its own scheme. Thus a good road is made bad and public funds are wasted. Because of lack of timely action by the development agencies, residents of the city are made to face risks of accidents and serious inconvenience.

A growing menace to city life stems from the steady deterioration of the quality of urban life on account of several factors due to the lack of vigilance and effective control on the part of the Dhaka City Corporation and the RAJUK. Among the causative factors may be mentioned the indiscriminate setting up of industries, big and small, in residential areas. Butchers' shops can be found here and there, vegetable markets have come up in every locality encroaching on roads and open spaces. Eateries have proliferated recklessly.

The combined effect of all this is that it is no longer possible to distinguish a commercial and industrial area from a residential one. A great damage to environment is caused by industrial wastes, refuse from vegetable bazaars and butchers' shops. The poor conservancy services of the DCC do very little to alleviate the sufferings of the residents on this account.

The present system of garbage disposal is another irritant. The practice of movement of municipal trucks at peak hours in the morning through the city's road networks is highly obnoxious. This is unthinkable in any modern city, which Dhaka is steadily growing into. The DCC should take steps to stop this nauseating practice immediately and ensure that the work of collection and carrying of garbage from different points in the city is taken up at the early hours of the morning, as is the practice in many modern cities. A section of residents also create difficulties in the way of proper collection of garbage from specific points by their unconcerned attitude in disposing off kitchen waste.

According to observers, the solution to these man-made problems is not difficult to find. Paucity of funds is no issue here. What is needed is the will to minimise the suffering of the city dwellers. It is also felt that more emphasis should be laid on developing a system in which areas of responsibilities are defined and measures against lapses are spelled out.



The sorry sight of a city sidewalk

50000 cases before High Court

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lower courts and criminal appeal cases to wait for years while languishing in jail.

Of the total number of cases pending before the High Court 25,638 are civil cases including 18,186 civil revision and 5,969 appeal cases.

Of the 20,205 criminal cases pending before the court, 11,697 are criminal appeal cases, 218 reference cases in which interpretation is sought from district and lower courts, 78 death reference or confirmation cases, 5,939 criminal revision cases while 2,273 are criminal miscellaneous cases.

In addition, there are another 1,024 original civil jurisdiction and 5,425 writ petition cases pending before the High Court.

According to the records, on January 1, 1992 there were 44,700 cases pending before the High Court while 4,088 new cases were filed and 7,899 were disposed off during the year.

Similarly, 1991 started off with 38,830 cases before the High Court while 12,007 new ones were filed and 6,137 cases were disposed off throughout the year.

There were 34,917 cases pending before the court at the beginning of 1990 while 11,877 new cases were filed and 7,964 were settled during the year.

The above figures indicate a clear trend of the increasing number of pending cases as the total figure increased by 3,913 cases in 1990, by 5,470 in 1991 and by another 6,189 in 1992.

Thus, it can be safely predicted that the total number of pending cases before the High Court would reach the one talk mark by the year 2000 if the present trend continues.

Proceedings are also delayed and execution of judgements are "regularly thwarted" by procedural abuses by lawyers, noted the FIAS report, based on

a study conducted last year at the request of the government to identify the primary bottlenecks to investment in the country.

As no market rate of interest is charged to the date of judgement or when an amount of money is found to have been due in a commercial case, the report pointed out, there is every incentive to delay the proceedings.

"Lawyers have become skilled in requesting adjournments and overburdened judges are willing to grant them," it said, adding "Advocates are equally adept at putting forward frivolous motions and defences in order to delay proceedings, and often file appeals without any real grounds for doing so."

The report suggested imposing interest on all awards, retroactive to the time when damages were first suffered or payments should have been made, to deal with the practice of deliberately delaying the judicial process.

It also recommended assessing costs on a progressive scale for each adjournment granted and imposing sanctions and disciplining of counsel for the abuse of the judicial process by advocates.

Two basic case management techniques, to speed up the judicial process, as followed by the United States federal rules of civil procedure was also recommended for Bangladesh in the FIAS report.

One is to provide for pretrial conferences between counsel and with the court in an attempt to limit issues and to encourage the settlement of cases. "Considerable pressure can be placed on counsel by a judge who is determined to move his calendar forward," it said.

The keystone of the federal rules of civil procedure, the report added, is the provision for

very broad discovery to enable counsel to examine documents and witnesses before trial. "This very process acts as a catalyst for settlement."

These proceedings are heard without a judge and it is only when objections are made, which cannot be resolved by counsel, that the matter is taken before a judge for decision, the report noted.

It also suggested authorising Chief Justice to implement a case management programme, to ensure that each case is moved through the judicial process as quickly as possible.

The FIAS report went on to note that the courts operate under fairly difficult conditions without any modern judicial technology and the filing system is completely outdated and incapable of handling the growing demands of a developing economy.

It urged for providing funding to modernise court facilities and equipment and suggested that computers be installed for a modern filing system.

Increasing the number of judges through the appointment of additional judges under Article 98 of the constitution and providing them with the necessary court rooms, chambers and facilities was also recommended in the reports.

Finally, it observed that a stable legal framework, consisting of an autonomous and independent judicial system, is an essential element for a favourable business climate.

Articles 115 and 116 of the constitution, which originally separated the judicial from the executive functions, were amended in 1975 granting the President the power to appoint all persons exercising judicial functions.

Noting that with the recent return to democracy, it was hoped that the independence of the judiciary would be restored, but it has not materialised so far, the report said: "This is perhaps the most basic of law reforms and a necessary precondition for all others."

Re-establishing the independence of the judiciary is a necessary pre-requisite for the restoration of confidence in the country's legal system, it added.



With Eid-ul-Azha drawing nearer, a number of temporary cattle markets have been set up in different city areas. This picture has been taken from the Kamalapur area. — Star photo

Plea for a village-based economy

Speakers at a seminar in the city yesterday stressed the need for building a development framework to promote village-based economy involving economists and planners to ensure sustained in national growth, reports BSS.

They urged the government, opposition political parties, professionals and other concerned quarters to evolve a strong political will and culture through constructive and mutual discussions to implement this.

The seminar, on "our budget and problems in public life," organised by the Bangladesh Nagorik Adhikar Parishad, was held at the Engineers' Institution auditorium.

Chairman of the Parishad MA Mohaimen presided while Deputy Leader of the House Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, Former Planning Minister DR Fasihuddin Mahtab, city BNP President Lt Gen (ret'd) Mir Shawkat Ali (BU) MP, Dr Mozaffar Ahmad of the IBA of Dhaka University, former Chairman of the PSC SM Al-Hussaini and Editor of the Daily Telegraph Reazuddin Ahmad took part in the discussions.

Mohaimen, who presented the keynote paper, said increase of taxes every year was, in fact, making the already shattered life of the common man more and more unbearable. "People get frightened because it brings tax increases

but shows no way to rid the already accumulated miseries from their lives," he said.

Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury called for taking full advantage of the present parliamentary form of government to develop the country.

He said there were now 43 different parliamentary standing committees with 55.45 per cent membership of government and opposition MPs. Professionals and experts also had every access to offer their valuable suggestions and recommendations.

Speaking about development of the overall economy, the Deputy Leader of the House laid stress on smooth payment of taxes and eradication of bribery and corruption from all levels.

Choudhury called for waging a social movement against the tax evaders and corrupt people in the society along with increasing production in all fields.

Dr Fasihuddin Mahtab called for ensuring food security and other basic demands alongwith strengthening the purchasing power of the rural masses by cutting revenue expenses and investing more in the agricultural sector.

Dr Mahtab said the decade of 1980s saw only 1.63 per cent growth in agriculture which must be raised to 3 to 4 per cent by 2020 through crop diversification and livestock development to ensure balanced diet for the people.

"Poverty alleviation is not at

all possible without solving the food problem," he said, calling for a drastic measure against bribery and corruption which had now become an accepted practice at all levels of the society. The former Planning Minister called upon the BNP, the Awami League and other political parties to strike at the roots of corruption to free the country from the grip of the "mafia clique" who had held the nation hostage. He also called for freeing Parliament from bureaucratic tangles to really make it a people's parliament.

Dr Mozaffar Ahmad said 60 per cent of the people were under the poverty line while 10 per cent of the remaining 40 per cent was holding the maximum wealth, pushing the whole nation towards a precarious situation. He also referred to the status of the present parliament members and said 70 per cent of them were industrialists and businessmen while only two per cent were directly involved with agriculture. Whereas, he said, 40 per cent of the parliament members in 1970 were from the agriculture sector.

One killed, many injured in bus-plunge

By Staff Correspondent

A 35-year-old woman was killed and a dozen others were injured when a passenger-bus skidded off the road near the Kanchpur Bridge Friday morning.

The ill-fated bus bearing number Dhaka BA-2136 was on its way to Narayanganj from Meghna Ghat, said Sonargaon police.

Of the four severely injured passengers rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), an unidentified woman succumbed to her injuries just after admission.

Witnesses said that the driver lost control and the vehicle fell into a roadside ditch on the eastern side of the bridge at 6.10 in the morning.

Sonargaon police said that they rushed to the spot immediately after the accident and arrested the driver Idris Ali. He was detained at the Sonargaon Police Station, added police.

Hajj rituals

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deployed thousands of national guards, police personnel and volunteers including scouts in all the holy sites to ensure safety, security and welfare of the pilgrims.

The Saudi Deputy Minister for Pilgrimage and Endowments Dr Mohammad Ashree received Hajj delegations from different Muslim countries including Bangladesh and discussed with them matters relating to strengthening of fraternal relations among the Muslim Ummah and Islamic issues of common concern.

Prof Mannan, who is leading a nine-member delegation, lauded the efforts of the Saudi Kingdom to ensure security and comfort of the pilgrims. The delegation includes Textile Minister Abdul Mannan and four MPs.

Abbas Ali Khan calls on Fahd

Acting Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh Abbas Ali Khan, now in Saudi Arabia to perform Hajj, made a courtesy call on the King of Saudi Arabia Fahd Bin Abdul Aziz on the night of May 26. Khan called on the Saudi King at a reception and dinner arranged at the King's palace in Jeddah for the chiefs of Hajj delegations of different countries, ambassadors and distinguished guests, reports BSS.

The Midnight File

Benazir vows to throw Sharif out of power

ISLAMABAD, May 28: Pakistan's reinstated Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif offered an olive branch to his opponents today, but arch-rival Benazir Bhutto told a cheering crowd of thousands she would fight to throw him out. "The Supreme Court decision does not mean a people's decision," she told a late-night rally of more than 15,000 supporters massed in a Rawalpindi park. "This is the start of our struggle," she cried. "Our path is the path of elections and that is in the interests of the people," reports Reuter.

All set for W Bengal Panchayat polls

CALCUTTA, May 28: The stage is all set for the election on 71,119 seats in the three-tier Panchayat in West Bengal scheduled for May 30 in which 3,03,64,513 voters would exercise their franchise to decide the fate of over 2.24 lakh aspirants including 67 new women candidates. Altogether 1,90,773 candidates including 60,630 women would vie for 61,010 seats in Gram Panchayat, while 30,515 aspirants including 9,240 women were in fray for 9,453 seats in the Panchayat Samity. 2,731 candidates were contesting for the 656 seats in Zilla Parishad, reports PTI.

Polish PM tenders resignation

WARSAW, May 28: Polish Prime Minister Hanna Suchocka today submitted her government's resignation to President Lech Walesa after parliament passed a vote of no confidence, a government spokesman said, reports AFP.

The announcement was made following an emergency meeting of the cabinet which was attended by Walesa and leaders of the parties in Suchocka's coalition government.

"The president will apply the constitution," government spokesman Zdobyslaw Milewski said, adding that under the country's provisional constitution, Walesa could either accept the government's resignation and name a new prime minister or dissolve parliament and call early elections.

AP adds: It was the fifth administration to fall since the Communists were toppled in 1989.

Ms Suchocka looked stunned as the vote was tallied — 223 in favour of the no-confidence motion, the absolute minimum needed to bring down the government. One government backer who was too late for the vote could have made the difference.

The no-confidence vote was brought by deputies from the Solidarity trade union, which helped bring her government to power but now contends the economic reforms have hurt too much. Solidarity had threatened a nationwide general strike if the no-confidence

Nat'l programme on Nazrul concludes

By Staff Correspondent

The four day-long national programme to celebrate the birth anniversary of national Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam concluded at the Shilpakala Academy yesterday.

The programme included a Nazrul fair in the academy premises with displays of traditional handicraft, 26 portraits of the poet by country's eminent artists, 120 black and white as well as colour photographs of Nazrul, some of his manuscripts, letters and a collection of Nazrul memorabilia.

The academy also staged a dance drama, plays and musical programmes everyday.

On the concluding day Nasir Haidar, Parveen Mustari, Shamil Yusuf, Rehana Ashiqur Rahman and Altuzzaman presented a musical evening.

TV manufacturers condemn govt decision

By Staff Correspondent

The Bangladesh TV Manufacturers' Association has condemned the government's latest decision to treat completely knocked down (CKD) televisions as 'completely built up (CBU) sets and enhance duty accordingly.

The association in a statement, said importers of radio and TV components used to enjoy a 10 per cent duty rebate, having to pay 30 per cent duty on television parts.

However, the National Board of Revenue (NBR), through a notification on May 22, has decided to impose 75 per cent duty on CKD sets. The association said there is no basic difference between spares and CKD sets and stated that this move of the NBR would destroy the TV assembling sector of the country and force the virtual closure of many units.

Earlier this week, the association, in a press conference, had claimed that close-down of the TV assembling factories would render nearly 5 lakh people jobless.

Mostafiz greets Kanjoo

Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman has felicitated State Minister for Foreign Affairs Siddique Khan Kanjoo on his return at the head of the Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In a message to Kanjoo, the Bangladesh foreign minister recalled the brotherly cooperation and understanding with which they worked together in the past. Mostafiz said he was looking forward to continue this cooperation in the years ahead as "We strive to serve our peoples." Mostafiz also wished a happy and long life of Kanjoo, reports BSS.

25 injured as villagers clash in Sirajganj

SIRAJGANJ, May 28: Twenty-five people were injured, two of them seriously, in a clash between the villagers of two neighbouring thanas in Sirajganj and Jamalpur districts today, reports UNB.

The clash erupted at 8 am over the ownership of a piece of agricultural land involving the inhabitants of villages Gubar and Guakhara in Kazi-pur thana of Sirajganj and village Probaldighi in Sharishabari thana of Jamalpur district.

Both the seriously injured Abdul Hanif (40) and Abdus Samad (29) were from Guakhara village. Hanif was rushed to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital while Samad admitted to Kazipur Thana Health Complex.

Tourism sector

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tural agreement, Bahrain also proposed help in the tourism sector, the source added.

All the proposals were being processed by the ministry. The BPC, for its part, is planning to undertake development work at the world's largest Sundarbans mangrove forest to increase tourism facilities there.

Currently, about 125,000 tourists visit Bangladesh each year between October and March, BPC sources said, adding that the corporation provides facilities in Dhaka, Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Rangpur, Rajshahi, Rangamati, Bogra and the Sundarbans.

Sonadia is a 20-sq km island located about seven kilometers northwest of the Cox's Bazar beach resort. The island is just one metre high from the sea-level. It takes about an hour by an engine-boat from Cox's Bazar to Sonadia.

The Kuakata sea beach is separated from the mainland of Patuakhali district by an oval-shaped canal. If developed as a holiday resort, it would be an ideal spot where tourists can enjoy the brilliant sunsets and sunrises along with other facilities.

The BPC official said that the two spots would be able to attract tourists from across the world.



Opposition Leader in Parliament and Awami League Chief Sheikh Hasina speaking at a seminar on 'Poverty Alleviation' at the auditorium of the Engineers' Institution yesterday. — Star photo

AL on poverty

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education, population growth, law and order, residence and industrialisation and viewed that none of these problems could be resolved unless poverty was removed.

Saying that 86 per cent of the population was living below the poverty level, the opposition leader blamed the government for the absence of effective measures in resolving national issues.

"A complicated problem like poverty cannot be removed by cheap slogans alone. Well-thought out programmes and proper political leadership are needed to involve the whole nation in the process," she remarked.

Hasina suggested that the line of action be decided in the light of necessities and wants raised by each and every village and the local chapters of the AL might participate actively in the task.

Rural infrastructure must be built centering around the local government units and people in the villages should get involved in the development process, free from bureaucratic interference by the

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