

DOWN TO EARTH

Conservation of Historic Dhaka

By A. S. M. Nurunnabi

It can hardly be overemphasised that preservation of past culture is important to nourish a sense of identity, national pride and self-esteem. There is, therefore, an overwhelming need for creating a general consciousness among the people for participation in conservation activities relating to the past heritage.

Experts in this line underscore that side by side with public participation, efforts should be made to attract and receive international cooperation and support in the light of a universal perspective implying the conservation of culture for the nation as well as for the world community at large.

Those who have made studies in this line sadly note that we have so far failed to conserve the landmarks as a whole of any city or town. In this context, it is felt it is high time we undertake studies for preservation of our cities, particularly of the capital city of Dhaka. There are many problems in this regard. The growing need for housing and development and modernisation activities presented and still continue to present problems, which have affected life and culture of the people and historical aspects of things, as noted by a competent observer.

According to one researcher, Dhaka's spectacular expansion in area and population began since 1947. It was then the appropriate time to conserve the old plan of the city in the new one, with its architectural and cultural wealth. It was remarked that this could have been easily done with some restrictions in the old areas only, with little obstruction to modern planning. Since this was not done and since things have progressed far, there is little left now to conserve.

According to a research paper read recently in a seminar at the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 259 sites and monuments now stand included in the country as protected monuments and the addition of new monu-

ments is definitely a positive step forward. It now needs to be supported with the provision of funds and urgent acquisition. In this connection, what is further needed is more cooperation, understanding and efficient work to make preservation of our cultural heritage a successful proposition. For all buildings under protection, old or new, admittedly need maintenance. The need of the older buildings is obviously greater and in no way these can or should be left uncared for, as stressed in the research paper.

In this connection, it has been suggested that new monuments like Rupali House, Sutrapur Zamindar Bari, Bhaja Hari Lodge, Rose Garden, North Brooke Hall and Shanka Nidhi Bhaban can, like the Ahsan Manzil, also be successfully preserved and developed into national monuments or city museums.

Experts stress that monuments for effective preservation need careful conservation not only of their structural remains but also of their original environment, but sadly enough through the Antiquity Act of 1968 prohibits construction on or near a monument, we find much of the original surroundings of our monuments have disappeared long ago and there has been a lot of additional constructions even on the monuments themselves, within their premises as well as outside.

In this context, it has been suggested that we may consider adoption of laws and regulations entrusting our local bodies to enlist and preserve the monuments of local importance and let the government to concentrate more on the monuments of national importance and also on those for which local interest cannot be inspired.

To emphasise the importance of conservation and restoration of old monuments of Dhaka, it has been observed by scholars that no nation's glory can be built on the self-destroyed debris of the past.

ORS saves 1m lives worldwide every yr

Bangladesh government and the ICDDR,B will celebrate 25 years of the Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) that now saves over one million lives across the world every year. Reports UNB.

The Dhaka-based Cholera Research Laboratory (CRL), later renamed the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Diseases Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B), successfully completed the first ORS clinical trial in 1968.

The celebration is also aimed at enhancing the efforts of the centre to save more lives, he said, adding that ORS had revolutionised primary health care worldwide.

Before the advent of ORS, Dr Habte said, cholera and other diarrhoeal diseases were the leading cause of death throughout the developing world and now ORS saves over one million lives globally per annum.

ORS remains the cornerstone of strategies against diarrhoeal diseases while water supply, sanitation and improving personal hygiene, which are necessary to prevent diarrhoea, are still costly and difficult to implement, he said.

Such celebrations will also occur in Geneva and New York, and many developing countries to highlight the importance of raising awareness of the role and cost effectiveness of international health research, said ICDDR,B Consultant Physician Dr Ahmed N Alami.

"Presently 6 to 8.5 crore episodes are being found in Bangladesh every year and it is possible to save over 4 lakh lives every year through successful use of ORS," he said.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Physician Dr M A Salam of the ICDDR,B said it has been saving 70 to 90 thousands diarrhoeal patients using 3 to 4 lakhs of ORS since last few years.

In 1968, researcher from US-funded CRL (now ICDDR,B) completed the first large-scale ORS clinical trial successfully at a Matlab field hospital in Chandpur district.

The government will issue a postal stamp commemorating the silver jubilee of ORS.

Briefing newsmen at the ICDDR,B, its Director Dr Demissie Habte said they will



Members of the Bangladesh Shishu Academy organised a Pitha (winter cakes) festival in the academy premises in the city yesterday.

— Star photo

Perry sworn in as US Defence Secy

WASHINGTON, Feb 4: William Perry was sworn in Thursday night as the new US Defence Secretary after being unanimously confirmed by the Senate, reports Reuter.

Perry was confirmed by a vote of 97-0 to replace Les Aspin, who resigned after friction with President Clinton's budget office over defence spending. Aspin had resigned effective January 20, but agreed to stay on until his replacement was approved.

After Aspin resigned, Clinton nominated former national security agency chief Bobby Inman to be defence secretary but he withdrew two weeks ago, citing unfavourable newspaper columns and a belief that Republicans would replace him.

Perry, 66, has been Deputy Secretary of Defence. He was sworn in at his old office by David Cooke, the Pentagon's Director of Administration and Management. Attending the swearing-in were Aspin and General John Shalikashvili.

Perry is to address the Munich conference on security policy '94, an annual conference of senior Western officials.

UN-JCGP

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Executive Director Catherine Bertine arrived in Dhaka yesterday while IFAD President Fawzi H Al-Sultan, UNFPA Executive Director Dr Nafis Sadiq and UNDP Administrator James Gustav Speth will arrive today to attend the meeting.

The executive heads of the UN organisations will be accompanied by 13 senior officials. United Nations Director Miles Stobie is also likely to attend the meeting.

The UN-JCGP was set up in 1981 to promote effective and efficient use of resources by jointly addressing common issues of policy programming and management.



This bus, carrying a group of picnickers, lost control and plunged into a ditch along the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway near Borabari, Gazipur yesterday, injuring all its occupants.

— Star photo

Opposition protests price hike in Delhi: 4000 held

Mohgul landmark.

"Down with Narasimha Rao," they shouted as they headed towards parliament to be blocked by the police barricades cordonning off parliament street.

The demonstrators displayed small packages of rice, wheat and sugar — commodities whose prices have been hiked in the past week.

The government also raised the price of cooking gas and petrol as part of its pre-budget revenue-raising exercise, steeply increasing the cost of living and stinging the middle class.

Domestic industry would be swamped by foreign multinationals, compromising India's economic sovereignty, he said, drawing a parallel to the entry of British colonial rule through the East India Co.

In the first incident a bus packed with a picnic party bound for the National Park lost control and fell into a roadside ditch at Barabari at 11:30 am. Sixty persons were injured in the mishap.

Another bus overturned at 12 noon near the ICTVTR in which 15 picnickers were injured.

The Midnight File

Armed attack on Mosque in Sudan : 10 killed

NICOSIA, Feb 4: Ten people were killed in an armed attack on a Mosque in Omdurman, twin city of the Sudanese capital Khartoum, during Friday prayers, the Sudanese Interior Ministry reported in a statement broadcast on state radio. About five attackers "carried out a wicked act of aggression" at the mosque, said the statement, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation, reports Reuter.

India test fires surface-to-air missile

NEW DELHI, Feb 4: Ignoring pressure from Western countries to scrap its missile programme, India Friday test fired its latest long-range surface-to-air missile, a news agency reported. The missile named Akash, which in Hindi means sky, was successfully fired and performed perfectly at the Chandipur test range in the eastern coastal state of Orissa, 775 miles (1,240 kilometers), the Defence Ministry said. Press Trust of India news agency said quoting a Defence Ministry statement, reports AP.

UN threatens Croatia

Quit Bosnia in 2 weeks or face sanctions

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 4: The UN Security Council late Thursday gave Croatia two weeks to begin pulling its troops out of Bosnia or face possible economic sanctions, reports Reuter.

"We would spark a new war in the area," he told reporters in answer to questions. "We would be running out of time and in the first place would liberate [Croatian territories] by our own forces, whatever the price would be."

Serbs dominate about a third of Croatian territory and refuse to recognise Zagreb's authority.

In a statement read at a formal meeting, the Council said it would consider "other serious measures" if Croatia fails to put an immediate end to all forms of interference in Bosnia.

Council members said "serious measures" was a code-word for sanctions, although it was uncertain if the Council would follow through on its threat.

Few expect any Council action in opposition to the European Union, which plans to discuss the issue Monday.

Denmark intends to propose sanctions but Germany has already signalled it would not approve of a trade embargo.

Breakfast

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the Washington Hilton Hotel this morning.

Guests from foreign countries included heads of state and government, cabinet ministers, politicians, business leaders and leading figures from different walks of life of the respective countries.

Five participants from Bangladesh including State Minister for Establishment Barrister M Aminul Haque and Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad, Sheikh Hasina joined hands with all the participants in presence of President Clinton and the First Lady in a prayer for divine blessings for establishment of world peace, unity and better understanding among the peoples.

lawyers by the Bar Council to enhance the standard of the legal profession. He also pleaded for the establishment of standard government law colleges.

Ex-officio Chairman Attorney General Aminul Haq said the Bar Council had taken punitive measures against many lawyers on charges of professional misconduct. But he said some of them were still continuing their practice after getting stay orders from the court.

Dr Kamal Hossain in his speech criticised the government for not separating the judiciary from the executive, as promised in the joint declaration of three former political alliances in 1990.

He spoke of the need for establishing the rule of law to give democracy an institutional shape. He reiterated the demand for amending some laws and procedures like civil revision cases, and formation of administrative tribunals at the divisional headquarters.

To meet the needs of the time, a law reformation council comprising lawyers and judges, needs to be established," Dr Kamal said.

He also suggested the setting up of a training institute for judicial officers.

Seminar on Rule of Law concludes

By Staff Correspondent

A three-day seminar on "Rule of Law: Citizens and the Government" concluded at the Planning and Development Academy in the capital yesterday.

Organised by the Ganayana Sangsada, an NGO, the seminar was attended by 350 lawyers from 31 districts.

Asiaweek Editor forced to resign

HONG KONG, Feb 4: US media group Time Warner Inc has forced the founder and editor of its troubled Hong Kong-based Asiaweek news magazine to resign, reports Reuter.

"After a remarkable career as its creator and editor in chief for nearly two decades, Michael O'Neill is leaving Asiaweek," the company said in an internal memo to staff today.

O'Neill, a New Zealander, founded Asiaweek in 1975 and a decade later Time took an 85 per cent stake. But the magazine has performed poorly and last year staff had to take pay cuts.

JS session

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fact that procedural bindings do not allow the Speaker to sanction any discussion before the presidential speech, the AL legislators will stage their planned walkout.

The Jatiya Party is likely to follow an almost identical play. In addition, the JP is also expected to accuse the President of a "partisan approach" towards political issues of the country.

Barrister Moudud Ahmed of the JP, while talking to The Daily Star yesterday evening, told this correspondent that his party would finalise its strategy at its parliamentary party meeting scheduled for this morning.

Replying to a question, the JP leader said there would be no qualitative change in the party's stance on the issue of the presidential address. The JP had boycotted all the presidential address during the present Sangsads.

The Jamaat-e-Islami, though determined to be more critical of the ruling party in the House this time would, however, not boycott the speech.

It is not proper to belittle the presidential institution in a parliamentary democracy," Sheikh Anser Ali, MP of the Jamaat said.

However, this realisation would not refrain the Jamaat from criticising the "undemocratic" role of the government, he added.

The Opposition parties in Parliament had informal discussions among themselves yesterday. Mohammad Nasim of the AL told this correspondent, adding that they would formally sit this morning to chalk out a common strategy for the winter session.

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Three accused

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CHITTAGONG, Feb 4: Police arrested a leader and a worker of the Islami Chhatra Shibir from Chittagong College here today on various charges, including murder and terrorism, reports AFP.

The government has also declared its full support to the call given by the national assembly's committee on Kashmir. Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has supported the strike call to apprise the world about the human rights violations in Kashmir.

The day has already been declared as a "protest day" and all federal, provincial government offices, banks, private business, educational institutions shall remain closed.

Public meetings and demonstrations have been scheduled all over the country. Both the government and the opposition parties have made plans to hold protest demonstrations with a view to press India for a plebiscite in the northern city of Jaipur.

"She has lost the essential values of India, Pakistan and the goodness of all religions," he said.

"Otherwise she would not have ordered the police to open fire at her mother, brother and a host of her countrymen when they had gathered to pay homage to the late prime minister of Pakistan," he said.

Meanwhile, police sealed off Shaheen Chocolate Factory of Abdul Aziz in the ground floor of his Abdul Aziz Lane residence.

Meanwhile, prayer was offered at the Baitul Mukarram Mosque after the Juma prayers yesterday for the victims of post-polls carnage at Nawabganj.

They said at least a dozen pedestrians and shopkeepers were injured.

BJP leaders

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Abdullah, Ashok Singhal and Acharya Giriraj Kishore of the allied Vishwa Hindu Parishad (world Hindu forum) Party, Moreswar, Save of the Shiv Sena (Shiva's army) and Bajrang Dal chief Vinay Katayam.

Three other muggers managed to escape with the petrol-pump.

Police said they also hid for about 20 minutes until the muggers came out and hurled crackers at the police men. A police constable Mridha also fired in return, police added.

Police also recovered a knife and a live bomb from the possession of the fatigued injured Munir who later died at the DMCH.

They were arrested after minor scuffles and detained briefly. It was the first major street protest against the recent price hikes.

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Waving placards denouncing Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao's government, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian People's Party supporters set off from a downtown