

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

Directorate for Archaeology is entrusted to look after them by carrying out necessary repairs and restorations.

The protected monuments of Dhaka city under the Directorate of Archaeology are as follows:

a. Lalbagh Fort including its fortification walls, gateways, Diwan Am, Hammam, Pari Bibi's tomb, Masjid, Masonry Tank and Garden.

b. Khan Muhammad Mirdha's Masjid.

c. Haji Khawaja Shahbaz's Masjid and Mazar.

d. Satmasjid.

e. Unknown Tomb near Satmasjid.

f. Idgah.

g. Pagla pul.

It is reported that simultaneously with the works of preservation, conservation, repairs and restoration of the enlisted monuments, the Directorate of Archaeology continues to add more and more monuments to the protection list.

The following monuments after careful field investigation, studies and research are proposed to be included in the protection list:

a. Bara Katra.

b. Chhota Katra.

c. North Brooke Hall.

d. Ruplal House.

e. Rose Garden.

f. Sutrapur Zamindar Bari.

g. Shankha Nidhi Bhaban.

h. Radha Krishna Mandir.

i. Bhaja Hari Lodge.

The problem in this behalf is reportedly that the ownership of all the above monuments has not yet been transferred to the Directorate of Archaeology. As some of these monuments or parts of them are under government possession, there may not be much difficulty in transferring them to the Directorate of Archaeology. But it has been the sad experience of that Directorate that there are instances where it took more than half a century for the complete transfer of a monument from the government to the Directorate of Archaeology.

The addition of new monuments 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 Ruplal House, Sutrapur Zamindar Bari, Bhaja Hari Lodge, Rose Garden, North Brooke Hall and Shankha 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 though 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-destructed debris of the past.



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

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 will be featured by distribution of awards today among six personalities for their contributions to the development and promotion of ORS worldwide, including the villages of Bangladesh.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will preside over the award giving ceremony at the International Conference Centre at 3:30 pm, organisers told a press briefing here yesterday.

Heads of four UN agencies — the UNDP, UNICEF, WHO and UNFPA — are expected to attend this auspicious ceremony.

Recipients of the awards are: BRAC Executive Director Fazel Hossain, Health and Family Welfare Minister Chowdhury Kamal Uddin Yusuf, UNICEF Executive Director James P. Grant, UNDP Administrator James Gustav Speth, Assistant Administrator of USAID Margaret Carpenter and WHO Director for Control of Diarrhoeal and Respiratory Disease Programme Dr James Tulloch.

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 be celebrating 25 years of the ORS this year because of the success of ORS and with the goal of improving its effectiveness.

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. Alam.

"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.

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 resist 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 Stoby 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.

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 by 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. The 650-kilogram (1,430-pound) missile is fitted with multiple warheads and can target up to five aircraft simultaneously. 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.

In response, Croatia's UN Ambassador said his country would unleash a new war, mainly against rebel Serbs occupying Croatian territory, if sanctions were imposed.

"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."

Car importers

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However, with the reduction of duties, prices of cars have effectively come down by between Tk 40,000 and Tk 50,000, depending on the makes. Hoping for a good market with the next budget approaching, automobile dealers are opening more and more Letters of Credit (LCs) for import of autos. Market sources said the LCs for cars have increased by about 25 per cent in the last two weeks.

But car dealers say the prices can be kept within easier reach of the buyers if some anomalies in registration fees and taxes are removed.

They point out that cars with engine capacity between 1300 cc and 1600 cc are charged an extra 50 per cent supplementary duty while luxury cars ranging from 2000 cc and above are not charged the duty.

The supplementary duty is usually applied either to discourage any item or protect local industries. Dealers feel that the extra duty should be withdrawn from the cheaper cars to keep prices within reasonable limits.

On the other hand, registration of reconditioned cars entails on additional charge of Tk 5000 each as "transfer fee," which is an unnecessary burden on the buyers. The reconditioned cars are imported just like brand new ones and are directly sold to the buyers which should not need any transfer of ownership, as in case of locally used cars, sources said.

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' conference

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diciary, which was his life-long desire.

Justice Shahabuddin said he had returned to the office of the Chief Justice to fulfil his desired task.

He said, "Judges of the Supreme Court are appointed in accordance with articles 95 and 98 of the constitution and the Chief Justice has no role in it. He is Mr Nobody there."

Justice Shahabuddin stressed avoiding of unnecessary adjournments and said it was the equal duty of both the judges and the lawyers to dispose of the cases expeditiously. Judges and the lawyers must utilise fully the time allotted for the disposal of a case, he said.

The Chief Justice said judicial activities were also obstructed due to various types of general strikes and hartals in the country and cases also lingered because judges were not appointed in the courts for a long time.

Justice Shahabuddin said although the establishment of a proper and appropriate judicial system depended on some persons and the authorities, yet the responsibility of the judges and lawyers was much more.

Justice Shahabuddin said the constitution enshrined provisions like the preservation of fundamental and human rights. But only the rich people could establish those rights through the courts while the poor were being deprived, he said.

He said in many countries legal aid programmes had been launched to provide support to the poor. In Bangladesh, too, some lawyers' bodies have introduced this, yet the efforts are inadequate compared to the need.

The Chief Justice called for amending the rules and procedure for enrollment of 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 Haque 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 reform 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 Ganos ahajya Sangstha, 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 Sangsad.

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.

2 Shibir activists arrested in Ctg

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 UNB.

Witnesses said Shibir supporters from the college rocked the city's Chalkbazar and Chandanpura areas with gunshots and bomb blasts after Shibir leader Nasir Uddin and his associate Abul Kalam were picked up from the college gate.

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

BJP leaders

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

Strike in Pakistan today in support of Kashmiris

ISLAMABAD, Feb 4: The entire nation will go to strike Saturday to express complete solidarity with the Kashmiri Muslims rendering sacrifices to get rid of Indian oppression, reports AFP.

A total strike will be observed all over Pakistan, Azad Kashmir and Indian-held Kashmir to press Delhi to accede to United Nations resolutions on Kashmir.

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 Kashmir.

Meanwhile AFP from Srinagar adds: Kashmiri Muslims staged anti-Indian protests and

Benazir losing touch with reality: Sharma

NEW DELHI, Feb 4: Indian President Shankar Dayal Sharma has launched an unusually strong attack on Pakistani Premier Benazir Bhutto, accusing her of "losing touch with reality" and ignoring the plight of her own people, reports AFP.

"Bhutto has lost her roots as well as touch with reality and the culture of the subcontinent," Sharma said during a speech Thursday 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.

Three accused

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The three people were produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) yesterday after the end of a two-day police remand and sent to the jail.

Police yesterday 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.

Mugger

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mugger hid behind a nearby 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 fatally injured Munir who later died at the DMCH.

Three other muggers managed to escape with the money.

Two separate cases were lodged with the Demra Police Station.

Opposition protests price hike in Delhi: 4000 held

NEW DELHI, Feb 4: Riot police arrested some 4,000 opposition supporters here today, thwarting a march on parliament to protest a series of stinging price hikes slapped on by the Indian government, reports AFP.

The slogan-chanting demonstrators broke through two layers of steel barricades in the city-centre and attempted to head towards the legislature but were beaten back by police, witnesses said.

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

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



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

75 picnicers hurt as buses overturn

From Our Correspondent

GAZIPUR, Feb 4: At least 75 people were injured, 30 of them seriously, when two buses overturned in two separate incidents on the Dhaka-Mymensingh road today in the morning.

The 30 critically injured were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) and the Tongi Hospital.

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 picnicers were injured.

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