

## DOWN TO EARTH

# Agonies in City Life

By A S M Nurunnabi

Lately the Bangladesh Bank has introduced extended banking hours up to 3 pm on all week days except Thursdays when the banking hours extend up to 12 noon. This schedule is operative beyond the month of Ramadan.

In a recent article in this paper under the feature Dhaka Day by Day, there was some satirical musing perhaps with some touches of imagination how a client comes face to face with odd situations in a government bank during the extended period of business. The satirical and possible fictional aspects apart, the core reality is that a client does not get fair treatment if he happens to arrive at a government bank for business after 1 pm. In most cases, there is no element of fiction in the developments that follow.

The extended period of banking hours was welcomed on all hands, as it provided longer business hours to the clients. In most cases, however, there is a shut-down of all business from 1 pm to 2 pm for purposes of prayers and lunch. This is understandable. And many clients schedule their business accordingly. But it has been observed that in some banks the normal work does not resume on the expiry of the 2 pm deadline. Many of the employees of such banks take their own time, leaving their seats vacant, while their clients impatiently wait for their return. As a result of such employees taking things easy after 2 pm, the actual time available for business is curtailed and the clients are put to a trial of patience with un-

necessary waste of time. It is, therefore, felt that in the interest of the clients for whose facilities the extended banking hours have been introduced, due discipline is enforced in such government banks where any such laxity is observed.

### Load Shedding

For a few weeks now prolonged power cuts have become a regular feature bedeviling domestic as well as industrial consumers all over the country including the capital. The overall requirement of electricity in the country is reported to be 1700 megawatt whereas, the production is less than 1200 megawatt. The reason given for the shortfall in production is closure of several power generating stations at the same time for repair and overhauling and disruption of gas supply due to extension work.

What is felt to be galling to the affected public about the power situation is the fact that the Power Development Board (PDB) or for that matter the Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA) does not feel the necessity of informing the public of the frequent suspension of power. This callous mentality of the electricity authorities cannot be said to be above reproach. Another deplorable aspect is that the authorities are not inclined to share with the public any information with hint of shortcomings or inefficiency of the system. The current trend of cut in power supply poses a serious menace to productivity at a time when the industrial sector is already overwhelmed

The authorities have assured us that the situation will improve within a short time. The people expect that the improvement will be effected and maintained not only in the short run but also over longer term by making the production of electricity more cost-efficient with the much needed reforms in the whole system.

### Makhan's qul held: Mourning Day on February 26

By Staff Correspondent

The qulkhwan of Abdul Quddus Makhan was held yesterday with a call for observing a 'mourning day' on February 26 throughout the country.

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina, Ministers, leaders and workers of different political parties, social and cultural organisations, university teachers and student leaders attended the qulkhwan held at Makhan's residence at Elephant Road.

Thousands of people offered munajat for the peace of the departed soul in the qul organised by the national committee for 'mourning the death of Abdul Quddus Makhan.'

President and secretary of the committee Noor-e-Alam Siddiqui and Shahjahan Siraj respectively in a press release called for observing February 26 as the 'mourning day', as a mark of respect to Makhan.

The committee will hold a condolence meeting at Gangabandhu Avenue at 2 pm on that day.

### Jamaat

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Finally proved that Jamaat's support is not guaranteed for BNP to win any election, the leader said "We never thought of ourselves as a supporting force of the BNP."

People had started thinking that there was an alliance between the BNP and the Jamaat since the party unconditionally supported BNP to form the government following the 1991 parliamentary election.

"This is not true. We tried our best to dispel the misgivings and played our role as an opposition party," he said. "We did not go for any alliance during the last city corporation polls."

Jamaat feels that some anti-people actions of the ruling party resulted in the BNP's debacle in Dhaka.

The Jamaat leader admitted that their candidate selection in Rajshahi was wrong. On the other hand, the northern city witnessed massive development during the past three years which motivated the voters to vote for the ruling party candidate.

Similar results came from Khulna but in Chittagong, the Jamaat candidate bagged a considerable number of votes against the strong Awami League candidate ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury.

Chowdhury has been grooming himself for the last 20 years to become the Mayor of the city. He succeeded because of less factionalism within his party from which BNP suffered considerably."

Moreover, the Jamaat working council held the opinion that without strong commissioner candidates, it was difficult to expect good results in any mayoral election.

The Jamaat has now decided to work out a different strategy to enrich its vote bank, the Jamaat leader added.

### AL programme in Tungipara

By Staff Correspondent

A three-day programme will be held at Tungipara, Gopalganj, in observance of the 74th birth anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, on March 17 next.

This was decided at a meeting between Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina and the Bangla 1400 shaat Uddipan Parishad yesterday. The parishad also decided to celebrate the Bangla fifteenth century and the Independence Day on March 26. The meeting was attended by Poet Shamsur Rahman, Shamsul Haq, Gaziul Haq, Dr Abdul Malek, MR Akhbar Mukul, Panna Kaisar and Belal Chowdhury.

The epidemic of air piracy has bedeviled attempts by China and Taiwan in their efforts toward detente. The two do not recognise each other and China regards Taiwan as a renegade province.

They have tried to broach their differences, encouraged by their booming trade and travel links, with what has been billed as unofficial talks involving officials selected by the Communist and Nationalist governments.



Munajat is being offered after the namaz-e-janaza of Anwarul Islam Bobby at the National Press Club yesterday.

— Star photo

## Japan trying to appease US

TOKYO, Feb 18: Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa outlined measures to appease the United States today as it prepared a list of possible trade sanctions against Japan for allegedly violating a telecommunications accord.

The authorities have assured us that the situation will improve within a short time. The people expect that the improvement will be effected and maintained not only in the short run but also over longer term by making the production of electricity more cost-efficient with the much needed reforms in the whole system.

Our country must act on its own will to take the measures it can", he said. Hosokawa also said he "understands that there is frustration in the United States over the trade imbalance", urging Washington to act "sensibly".

Hosokawa agreed Thursday to consider a package to promote deregulation, imports and investment from abroad, competition and government procurement following the collapse of summit talks with President Bill Clinton last week.

She also faces charges in Madhya Pradesh state in central India, but they are likely to be dropped once she is freed.

Since Phoolan Devi surrendered in 1983, after running from law for 10 years, she has not been put on trial in India, where the court system often holds thousands of suspects in jail for years awaiting trial, or even formal charges.

Now that Uttar Pradesh has decided to drop the charges, she must be freed on parole until that happens, the court ruled.

She gained fame after allegedly gunning down 18 high-caste Hindus in the state in 1981 to avenge the killing of her lover.

Phoolan Devi, born to a poor, low-caste farmer whose land was stolen, has denied responsibility for the massacre.

It said the purpose of his visit to the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad was mainly humanitarian, as he would take up the question of food supplies to Kabul following reports that the six-week-long military siege had resulted in a food shortage there.

The canteen is run by the same contractor since 1988. Hall students are also representatives of the canteen committee.

Some students talking to The Daily Star complained that sub standard food was being served by the canteen authorities.

Provost of the Hall Jagadish Chandra Shukla Das said the authorities were trying to identify the reason of the food poisoning. The particular canteen will remain closed, he said, till the matter of food poisoning was settled. The Provost, however, said, arrangements will be made for students to have their meals in three other cafeterias located in the same hall.

According to authorities, there are nearly 2000 students living in the Jagannath Hall, although the actual residential capacity is for 1111 students.

Some of the affected students had to buy drugs from outside the campus," he said.

University doctors who visited the students prescribed Oral rehydration solution and some other drugs including antibiotics.

One of the managers of the canteen, Munir Hussain said that they had purchased sixty pieces of cauliflower from Kawran Bazar on Thursday, thirty of which were cooked the same day while the rest were cooked on the day of the incident. He could not identify the reason for the food poisoning but said he suspected the cauliflower were responsible.

Similar results came from Khulna but in Chittagong, the Jamaat candidate bagged a considerable number of votes against the strong Awami League candidate ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury.

Chowdhury has been grooming himself for the last 20 years to become the Mayor of the city. He succeeded because of less factionalism within his party from which BNP suffered considerably."

The police thought it to be a sequel to enmity between two groups in the area.

However, relatives suspected some local young men for the killing.

The victim's mother, Alhaj Reziya Begum, lodged a case with the Kotwali police last night. But none of the suspects for the killing was arrested till 10.30 last night.

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