

DOWN TO EARTH

A Down-To-Earth Issue

By A S M Nurunnabi

The present piece is literally a down-to-earth issue: city's graveyards. In the city there are at present five graveyards under the management of the Dhaka City Corporation. They are (1) New Azimpur graveyard (2) Old Azimpur graveyard (3) Jurain graveyard (4) Banani graveyard and (5) Shaheed Buddhijibi graveyard at Mirpur. There is also a housing department graveyard at Mohammadpur under the management of the Mosque Committee which is at present closed except for rare cases of burial.

In each of these graveyards, there is provision for reservation of space for burial on payment of cost for each plot of land. This cost varies in each graveyard for current burial and for reservation of plot for future burial. Such cost is not uniform for all the graveyards.

The new Azimpur graveyard is exclusively reserved for burial in purchased plots. Since this graveyard is reportedly totally filled up to its capacity, there is no more sale of reserved plots in this graveyard except in some exceptional cases where burial is allowed in space available between graves. The same is also the case, as reported, in the old Azimpur graveyard. However, a separate general area is earmarked here for burial free of cost. In this general area, graves are dug up one year after burial to make room for burials. Such practice is reportedly followed also in the general area of other graveyards.

In the Jurain graveyard, apart from the general area, it is learnt that about 1000 plots are now available in the reserved area for current and advance booking of plots. The price of a plot for current burial is Tk 25,000/- and Tk 35,000/- for advance reservation of each plot.

In the Banani graveyard, the price of each plot for current burial is Tk 60,000/- and Tk 1,20,000/- for advance reservation. Space in the reserved area is still available for 300 to 400 burials, as learnt from Corporation sources.

In the Shaheed Buddhijibi graveyard at Mirpur, it is learnt that a large area is available in the reserved area for about 10,000 burials. The price of each plot is the same as for Jurain graveyard, i.e. 25,000/- for current burial and Tk 35,000/- for advance reservation. Here there is a separate bloc for burial of distinguished freedom fighters. The total number of such plots in this block is 48 and no price is charged for such plots.

It is learnt that the Dhaka City Corporation has at present no plan for opening up any new graveyard for the city population.

It is felt that burying the dead in this city has assumed the dimension of a nightmare for the less privileged. This is due to the rising prices of burial materials. The cost of a shroud is not less than Tk 750/-, the bamboo needed for the grave is about Tk 300 and although pits in the general area of a graveyard are available free, the grave diggers charge a fee according to their estimate of the position of the relatives of the dead. There is a further cost of Tk 300/- to be paid at the gate. Thus all told a burial, even for those who do not buy a plot or can-



Devotees offering munajat after the Juma prayers on the occasion of Jumatul Wida the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan, at the Baitul Mukarram Mosque in the city yesterday. — Star photo

50 killed in S Africa

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African Embassy in Mbabatho, the homeland's capital, Friday after a day of shooting, rioting and looting that followed the apparent collapse of the independent homeland's ruler. A hospital worker said more than 80 people were admitted with injuries overnight.

Foreign Affairs Minister Pik Botha said South Africa's army were there to protect embassy staff, but he indicated they were prepared to battle rioting forces hoping to return Bophuthatswana President Lucas Mangope to power. The troops will "maintain law and order and to protect South African citizens and their interests should the situation deteriorate."

But Nelson Mandela, whose African National Congress is a fierce opponent of Mangope, said it was not enough. At a campaign rally in Pretoria, he called on the government and the Transitional Executive Council — a multiracial body that works alongside the government — to take control of Bophuthatswana.

The TEC was to meet later Friday to decide on possible action. It would need agreement from President F W de Klerk for any further military intervention. De Klerk has made clear he hopes to negotiate with Mangope rather than risk a bloody clash that could easily spread into South Africa and turn into a free-for-all among the country's countless political factions.

New unrest was reported Friday in other parts of Bophuthatswana, which comprises seven disjointed land masses in the north and east of South Africa.

Four hijackers arrested in city

By Staff Correspondent

A team of Detective Branch (DB) police arrested four hijackers from Kakrail in the city and recovered a pipegun from them yesterday evening.

The hijackers riding an auto-rickshaw were prowling near the Kakrail Church crossing at about 7:30 pm.

When the DB men challenged them, they hurled a cocktail.

The DB men fired a bullet which hit one of the muggers, Sentu Mia, in his left thigh. He was admitted to the police hospital.

The other arrested are Shajahan Mia, Bahit and Hasnain. Police also seized the auto rickshaw.

Sylhet-Akhaura rail link disrupted

From Our Correspondent

SYLHET, Mar 11: Sylhet-Akhaura rail communications were disrupted for four hours as an engine of an inter-city train derailed this morning.

The Jayanta Express which left Sylhet Railway Station for Dhaka derailed near the Kushiara Bridge at about 6:30 am. However, no casualties have been reported. Later, the rail line was cleared by a relief train.

A squad comprising cops of Sadar, Rajoir and Shibchar thanas, led by Police Super Shaful Islam raided the centre and held the outlaws.

The miscreants fired several rounds of gunshots and blasted crackers before they were rounded up. They were identified as Rafiqul Islam Mafiz, 27, Habi, 25, Nannu alias Pannu, 23, Sirajul Islam, 25, and Babu alias Bhuju, 25. Police said the group abducted one Mongrej Khan, 85, from Char Shemareil in Shibchar thana of the district on March 6 and demanded Tk two lakh ransom from his relatives.

The outlaws declined to free Mongrej Khan although his relatives had paid them Tk 25,000.

Ctg BNP, Jamaat protest killings

CHITTAGONG, Mar 11: The BNP and its front organisations — Juba Dal and Chhatra Dal — brought out a protest procession in the city today against Thursday's killing of Juba Dal leader Aslam Parvez Selim, reports UNB.

Former city mayor and city BNP convenor Mir Nasiruddin led the procession which was brought out from the local BNP office and ended in front of the Dost Mohammad building.

Addressing the protesters, Mir Nasiruddin demanded arrest of the killers of Selim within 48 hours.

Two persons — Selim and Kazi Mohammad Yusuf, the later an activist of Islami Chhatra Shibir, were gunned down in two separate incidents in the city early Thursday.

The killings had led to wide-spread shootouts and violence between the rival groups throughout the day which continued till late night Thursday.

Police were patrolling the city thoroughfares today to avert further violence. Tension prevailed in the Chandanpura area where the killings took place. Five people were taken into police custody on Thursday in connection with the killings.

Jamaat-e-Islami also held a protest meeting at Andarkilla this afternoon after Juma prayers and demanded arrest of those responsible for the killing of Shibir activist Yusuf.

The party will submit memoranda to the civil and police administrations tomorrow demanding trial of the killers.

Slovak PM removed

BRATISLAVA, Mar 11: Slovakia's Parliament today removed controversial Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar from office by passing a vote of no confidence in him, reports AFP.

A total of 78 deputies voted for the resignation of Meciar and his government, while members of the ruling coalition refused to cast their votes in his favour.

After the vote, boycotted by Meciar's movement for a democratic Slovakia (HZDS) and its allies the Slovak National Party (SNS), Parliament was suspended on a motion put by the opposition party of the democratic left (SDL), the former communists. It will meet again Wednesday to discuss the date and arrangements for general elections.

During the no confidence debate Meciar demanded the resignation of a critical President Michal Kovac, saying he "does not have the right, according to the constitution, to control the government or initiate its removal."

Meciar's two-hour speech was devoted largely to his differences with the head of state, who had sharply criticised Meciar Wednesday, accusing him of "stirring up hatred," practising intimidation and being incapable of dialogue.

Bush fire in Ctg extinguished

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Mar 11: A big bush fire that blazed over a vast tract of land around a military ammunition depot and a naval camp at Madambibir Hat under Sitakundu thana, 20 miles off the city, was extinguished this evening after two days. Fire Service sources here said.

The fire broke out Wednesday evening.

The blaze however, caused no major damage either to the depot or any other property, Fire Service said.

Some local men reportedly set the fire to weed out the jungles for the purpose of cultivation.

Pak citizen

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trate's Court, Dhaka, today (Saturday).

Sayed came to Dhaka from Karachi by an Emirate flight on Wednesday. His passport has been impounded.

It was the second attempt of smuggling currency through ZIA foiled by the customs this month.

Another Singapore-bound passenger, Mohammad Nazmul Haque, was held at ZIA with foreign currency equivalent to 1.5 crore last Wednesday. He was sent to the Dhaka Central Jail. The Detective Branch (DB) of police is investigating the case.

Serb missiles kill 11 in Maglaj

SARAJEVO, Mar 11: Bosnian Serbs fired a missile barrage into the desperate Muslim enclave of Maglaj, killing 11 people and flattening eight apartment buildings, Bosnian radio said Friday, reports AP.

The radio reported that Russian-made short-range Luna missiles were used in the attack Thursday.

There was no independent confirmation of the report, which also said 32 people were wounded. Bosnian Serbs encircling Maglaj have prevented UN monitors and convoys from reaching the besieged enclave.

A UN convoy turned back Thursday just a few kilometres from the city after four days of Serb delaying tactics.

"The Bosnian Serbs are completely intransigent," said Peter Kessler, a UN relief agency spokesman in Sarajevo. He said the Serbs were violating an agreement signed by both warring parties permitting free movement of aid through-out Bosnia.

"We hope the international community will hold them to their commitments... because no one else will, and people simply won't get fed," said Kessler.

The UN commander in Bosnia, Lt Gen Sir Michael Rose, has pledged to take a tougher line with combatants who interfere with aid convoys. But UN mission chief Yasushi Akashi's spokesman, Michael Williams, said there were no plans to use force in the Maglaj case.

The town has been surrounded by Serb and Croat forces for most of the past nine months. UN officials who travelled with the last convoy to reach the city in October described it as a "shattered town" of "subterranean people" forced to cower in shelters.

Reuters adds: NATO warplanes were called in near Bihac in northwest Bosnia Thursday to buzz Serb gunners who were menacing a UN observation post of French soldiers, the United Nations said.

But officials said the NATO aircraft were not asked to use any air power as the guns fell silent once they appeared.

UN spokesman Joe Sills told a news conference that Serb shells southeast of Bihac were falling near an observation post manned by French soldiers from the UN protection force.

Meanwhile the US and Russian special envoys to the former Yugoslavia held talks in London Friday aimed at resolving the conflict in Bosnia.

President Clinton's envoy Charles Redman and his Russian counterpart, Vitaly Churkin, were meeting at the US Embassy, according to a Russian Embassy spokesman.

The US Embassy issued a one-line statement saying: "Mr Churkin and Mr Redman took advantage of their simultaneous presence in London today to meet on Yugoslavia."

The Midnight File

12 killed in Pak accident

ISLAMABAD, Mar 11: At least 12 people were killed and five others seriously injured in a collision between a minibus and passenger bus in Punjab province today, the official Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) said. The accident occurred near the town of Kharian some 130 kilometers (81 miles) south of here, the agency said, reports AFP.

Former Bolivian president held

SAO PAULO, Mar 11: Former Bolivian president Luis Garcia Meza, a fugitive who was sentenced in Bolivia last year to 30 years in jail for treason and armed insurrection, was arrested by federal police Friday. The United States has also accused Garcia Meza of being involved with drug trafficking. The news of Garcia Meza's arrest was broadcast on the Bandeirantes and Globo television networks, but police would not say what he was charged with, reports AP.

Arafat

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forces in proper crowd-control and equip them accordingly, or they should be withdrawn and replaced with ordinary police already specifically trained and equipped for crowd-control.

AP adds: Islamic militants issued a veiled warning Friday that revenge for the mosque slaughter in the Israeli-occupied West Bank by a Jewish settler might come in New York.

The Islamic Resistance Movement, or Hamas, said in a leaflet distributed in the occupied Gaza Strip that the Lebanese-born gunman who attacked a vanload of orthodox Jews in New York City on March 1 was inspired by Islamic teachings.

"We will retain the cry of condemnation on your heads and our hand is backed by millions of Muslim hands that are ready to carry out their execution role against Jews," said the leaflet.

It claimed that Rashid Baz, 28, was acting under Islamic inspiration when he opened fire on a van carrying 15 Orthodox Jews on the city's Brooklyn Bridge, killing one and wounding three others.

Hasina returns home

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League president Sheikh Hasina returned home last night after a week-long visit to India, reports UNB.

During the visit, Hasina offered *fateha* at the mazzars of Khawja Mainuddin Chisty (RA) at Ajmir Sharif, Nizamuddin Awlia in Delhi and Tipu Sultan in Mysore in India. She also met her daughter, Saima Putul, in Bangalore.

The opposition leader, accompanied by her younger sister Sheikh Rehana, left Dhaka for Ajmir on March 4.

Party presidium member Abdul Mannan, Dhaka city Mayor Mohammad Hanif, Obaidul Qader, K S Nabit, Abul Hasan Chowdhury, MP, and Rahmat Ali, MP, received her at the airport.

Shop gutted in Barisal

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Mar 11: Property worth about Taka four lakh was gutted in a devastating fire that broke out in an oil shop at steamer ghat in the town yesterday evening.

Everything inside the shop was reduced to ashes. Taka one lakh in cash was also burnt, owner of the shop said.

Electric short circuit triggered off the fire which engulfed the entire shop within a very short time. One employee was also injured in the fire.

Ravi Shankar to set up music school

NEW DELHI, Mar 11: Star maestro Ravi Shankar has been promised cheap government land for a music academy, after he threatened to take his project to the United States, reports AP.

The school will stock his music recordings, instruments, books, memorabilia and will train students in Indian classical music, said K Dharmarajan, a government housing official, Friday.

Given Ravi Shankar's stature and the nature of his project, the government decided to reduce the price by a sixth of the original offer," he said in an interview.

Shankar had at one time said he might build the school in Encinitas, Calif, with the help of his fans.

He now hopes to work on his other dream project in India: a national radio channel broadcasting only classical and folk music.

Extortionists clash with timber merchants: 15 hurt

SIRAJGANJ, Mar 11: At least 15 people were injured three of them seriously, when they were beaten up by a group of armed extortionists at the ferry ghat here today (Friday), reports UNB.

Police and witnesses said a group of toll collectors demanded money from some timber merchants of Ruppur in Iswardi thana of Pabna district, while they were returning from Mymensingh. When the merchants refused, the extortionists hit them with iron rods and sticks, and looted cash and other belongings.

Seriously injured Alauddin 25, Jafaluddin, 26, and Rajab Ali were admitted to a local clinic.

A case has been filed with the local police in this connection.

Ctg mayor

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corded a reception in front of the city corporation by Nagarik Committee (citizens committee).

The reception held after the Juma prayers was presided over by M A Mannan, president of Chittagong city unit of the Awami League.

Mohiuddin entered the office of the mayor after a *munajat*.

US : Kashmir

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The United States and most European countries had made it clear they would abstain if the resolution came to a vote.

Kursheed said: "Pakistan's unconditional withdrawal of its resolution on Kashmir showed that even OIC members did not support their own resolution."

"Pakistan should gracefully accept defeat," he told reporters after his overnight return from Geneva.

Kursheed said India was ready for a dialogue with Pakistan on Kashmir, the spark for two of their three wars since 1947.

He said, he hoped the diplomatic reversal in Geneva would not lead to political instability.

"Political stability in Pakistan would not be in the interest of India, or continuing bilateral dialogue," he said.

Opposition parties in Pakistan have criticised Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto for the withdrawal of the resolution, calling it a "diplomatic fiasco."

Pakistan moved a similar resolution on Kashmir during last year's session of the Human Rights Commission and at the 48th session of the UN General Assembly in 1993. It did not come to a vote on either occasion.