

# DOWN TO EARTH

## Divorce Cases in City

By A S M Nurunnabi

There is a saying: Getting married is easy. Staying married is more difficult. Staying happily married for a lifetime should rank among the fine arts. Staying happily married is admittedly an enviable ideal, but it becomes a tragedy when in the life of some, staying married presents difficulties which ends in its being irretrievably broken down.

The ease with which a divorce is obtained in different countries varies considerably, and is also affected by different religious practices. In our country, divorce proceedings are regulated by the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance, 1961. Under this law, when any man wishes to divorce his wife, he shall, as soon as may be after the pronouncement of *talaq* (divorce) in any form whatsoever, give the Chairman (of the Arbitration Council) notice in writing of his having done so, and shall supply a copy thereof to the wife. The Chairman in this context means (i) the Chairman of the Union Parishad; (ii) the Chairman of the Paurashava; (iii) the Mayor or Administrator of the Municipal Corporation. If need be, a person with suitable legal background may be deputed to act as Chairman in all such cases.

From available statistics, it appears that divorce is becoming a growing sociological problem in the city. From statistics available, during the period 12.2.92 to 31.12.92, the total number of divorce petitions filed with the Corporation according to law was 1,180. Of this total figure, the number of divorce petitions initiated by the wife was 790 and by the husband 390. In this respect, the percentage works out at 69% and 31% respectively. The number of reconciliation effected through the medium of the Chairman as per law was 51. For the subsequent year, i.e. 1.1.93 to 31.12.93, the total figure was 1320. The break-up of this total figure is 960 by the wife and 360 by the husband with

the percentage of 72.72 and 27.28 respectively. The rate of reconciliation through the agency of the Corporation was 10%. For the current year up to the end of March, 1994, the total number of divorce petitions received by the Corporation is understood to be 320.

From the short range of the period noted above, it will appear that there is an increasing trend in the number of divorce cases in the city. Another notable feature is that the wife took the leading role in the majority of cases.

The increasing preponderance of the wife in the filing of divorce cases is significant from the sociological point of view. There may be several factors for this. The most important one may be the comparative economic independence of women at present in urban areas. Previously the comparative economic helplessness of women accounted to a large extent for their acquiescence in accepting their fate whatever be the causes of their maladjustment with their husbands. The spread of education among women in recent years may have also played a part in their economic independence, particularly in urban areas. This trend can be seen to a greater degree in advanced countries. This is perhaps inevitable in any country where with the march of education women gradually emerge from their isolation within the four walls of their homes.

It is well known that in western countries which are less conservative and more progressive than us, the number of divorces has been steadily increasing over the years. For instance, in the UK, between 1945 and 1990, there has been eight-fold increase in divorce.

There is one important feature in our legal system of granting divorce. The mandatory routing of divorce petitions through the Chairman, Arbitration Council exerts a moderating influence in settling marital disputes ending

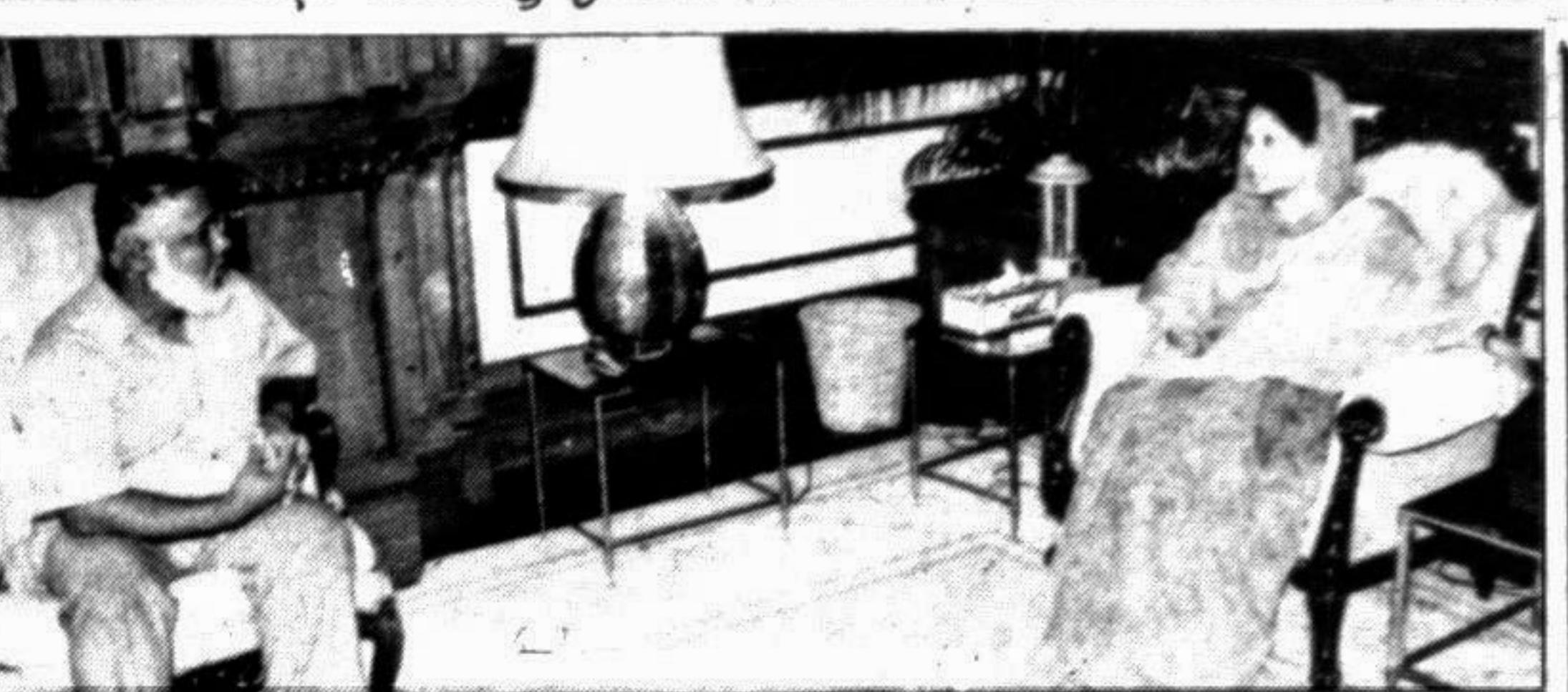
in divorce petitions. Since a divorce cannot be made absolute within 90 days of the *Iddat* period, the Chairman of the Arbitration Councils play a helpful role in bringing about reconciliation between the parties during that period.

It has been seen that during the long period of *Iddat*, much of the intensity of the disputes providing the grounds for divorce is tempered with more cool-headed after-thought and where there are children to think of, more sobriety prevails in the thought pattern of the parties which tend them more to a reconciliation. In this respect, the intermediary role played by the Chairman of Arbitration Councils goes a long way to help.

Of course there are some intractable cases which are beyond help. On queries to sources, it is learnt that divorce cases mainly arises, as the present trend shows, from two classes of society — the upper and the lower. Besides, among the lower classes, there are many unregistered marriages where divorces, if any, go unrecorded.

The Arbitration Councils also play a part in granting permission for second marriages. Some statistics are available on this account. During the period from 12.2.92 to 29.6.93, 10 applications were received by the Dhaka City Corporation for permission for second marriage. Out of this number, permission was given in 4 cases, 2 cases were rejected and 4 cases are still pending. During the current year only in one case permission for remarriage was granted.

Obviously the picture of Dhaka's increasing divorce rate is part of a wider picture in the country. But such a process is inexorable. After all, marital relation is at bottom a question of personal relationship which is the product of sumtotal of values of a particular generation, which are always in a state of flux in a changing society.



Meer Jahan Master, BNP leader and father of Habibur Rahman Milon who was killed by terrorists at Kaptan Bazar in the city Thursday, called on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her Sugandha office yesterday.

— PID photo

### JMB foundation laying

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a 230 KV electrical power line, a high pressure natural gas pipeline and telecommunication cables.

The length of the approach road from the existing national road network to the bridge viaducts will be 15.3 kilometres on the east from Elenga on the Tangail-Modhupur road and 14.4 kilometres on the west from the Nalka bridge on the Sirajganj-Hatikarmal road.

Major construction works will be done through four contracts for which the JMB has already issued letters of acceptance on March 21. Tender procedures, including pre-qualification of international contracts, started in January 1992.

The bridge authority has announced Hyundai Construction Co. Ltd of South Korea as the lowest bidder for the US dollar 247.4 million Contract 1: Bridge and Approach Viaducts (pre-stressed concrete bridge on concrete-an-steel pilings).

The targeted completion date for Contract 1 is November 30, 1997.

HAM/Van Oord ACZ Joint Venture of the Netherlands is the lowest bidder for the costliest Contract 2: River Training Works and Reclamation. The estimated cost of the job is about US dollars 276 million with a June 1996 completion date.

Contract Nos. 3&4: Construction of East and West Road Approaches were awarded to Samwhan Corporation of South Korea. The East Road Approach and the West Road Approach are expected to be completed on March 31, 1996 with a cost of US dollars 29.1 million and 26.6 million respectively.

Rehabilitation of the East Flood Embankment-cum-Access road has been completed on August 31 last year by AML-MONICO Consortium with a

cost of US dollars six million.

Three consultants — Rendel, Palmer & Tritton (RPT) of Britain, NEDECO (Haskoning) of the Netherlands and Bangladesh Consultants Ltd (BCL) — have done the feasibility study, the design of the bridge and prepared tender documents for the project.

The contractors will mobilise their heavy equipment and engineers as soon as the bridge's foundation is laid. The river training job, first of the two major works, which will take three dry seasons to complete, are expected to start this September.

Hyundai, the main bridge contractor, will begin work during the third dry season, i.e. sometime in late 1996, it was learnt.

An estimated 77,000 people in the project areas on both the river banks as well as on the chars may be displaced as work gets underway.

JMB sources said steps had already been taken to resettle the affected people at a cost of US dollars 46 million. This programme will include wide-ranging training programme for them followed by self relocation of the affected people.

Besides, the project is conforming to strict environmental protection and there will be afforestation schemes in the project areas.

As construction of the bridge gets underway, the country's economy is likely to have a shot in the arm with a large number of people being employed on the project.

Bangladesh Railway is expected to earn an additional Tk 300 million annually during the construction period for carrying boulders to the project site. The owners of river vessels are also expected to cash in by carrying of materials and equipment in the project area.

Earlier, the namaj-e-janaza of Milon was held at Dogair after the Jumma prayers and he was buried at the family graveyard. Salahuddin Ahmed, MP, Amanullah Aman, MP, Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal president Fazil Haq Milon and general secretary Nazimuddin Alam were present on the occasion.

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The body of Paran was taken to the BIRDEM hospital at about 11 am and hundreds of BNP leaders and workers laid wreaths on the body as a mark of their last respect.

BNP Secretary General and LGRD Minister Abdus Salam Talukdar, Home Minister Abdul Matin Choudhury, Energy Minister Dr Khandakar Mosharrat Hossain, Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah al-Noman, DUCS VP Amanullah Aman and JCD leaders, including Fazil Haq Milon attended the janaza.

The body of Paran was then sent by helicopter to his village home at Bilbilash in Bauli Thana of Patuakhali district.

Earlier, addressing the gathering, Salam Talukdar accused the Awami League of killing two persons by resorting to terrorist activities on Thursday and strongly condemned the killings.

He also blamed the AL for "pursuing a politics of corpses" and urged all concerned to resist such practices for the sake of democracy.

AL held a halaal: Salam

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Referring to the visit of a Japanese investors' team in Bangladesh, he said they (investors) had seen the situation arising out of the Awami League's April 7 'siege' programme. So, naturally, the BNP Secretary General said, the foreign investors might not show interest in investing in Bangladesh.

He referred to a press report yesterday which said the Awami League leaders — Sheikh Selim MP and Kader Siddiqui — had opposed the Awami League's April 7 gherao programme at the party's April 6 working committee meeting on the ground that such a programme would be damaging to the country's economy.

The BNP Secretary General said the terrorists of the Awami League had killed two members of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal in Siddique Bazar and Kaptan Bazar Thursday and their attempts to make the political arena unstable by capitalising on the corpses of the two JCD members had failed.

Their (Awami League's) designs to claim the two dead young men as their party workers, he said, had also failed because the family members of the deceased are all active workers and supporters of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

Salam said the Awami League had not only championed the snatching of ballot boxes but this time the people had accused them of attempting to snatch the dead bodies of the two JCD workers to serve its mean political purposes.

# The Daily Star

## The Midnight File

### 34 Kurds killed in clash with Turkish troops

ANKARA, Apr 8: Thirty-four Kurdish guerrillas and six Turkish soldiers were killed in four days of clashes in Turkey's southeast provinces, a security statement said today. Thirty rebels of the separatist Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) were killed in a combined air and land attack launched on Tuesday against their mountain strongholds in Bitlis province, the regional emergency rule said, reports Reuter.

### War may break out anytime, says DPRK

TOKYO, Apr 8: North Korea, embroiled in a dispute with the West over a suspected nuclear weapons programme, said today a war could break out at anytime on the divided peninsula. The tense situation in which a war may break out at any time has been created in our country owing to the vicious anti-social, anti-DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) campaigns of the imperialists and other international reactionary forces, North Korea's Vice Marshal Choe Kwang said, reports Reuter.

### ALWC meets Apr 15

A meeting of the Awami League Working Committee will be held at its party central office here on April 15 at 3 pm. Leader of the Opposition and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina will preside.

### JCD claims

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licity secretary of the JCD, New Model Degree College unit, and JCD Lalbagh Than convenor.

The two countries signed

the MOU for formulating a corporate strategy and development plan for the Bangladesh police.

It was the first official visit of a British police expert after the signing of memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the two countries in March 1993.

Condemning the killings, he said Paron had always been an active supporter of BNP. He contested for the post of the executive member in the election to the New Model Degree College students council as a JCD nominee in 1991.

In order to testify to Paron's true political affiliation, the JCD president showed a poster published during the college election in 1991.

Fazil Haq Milon alleged that some AL leaders had put pressure on the parents of Paron and Milon — a school student — Thursday night to declare that their sons were the members of the AL.

Terming the secretariat

siege programme of the Awami League as anti-people, the JCD president said, during the programme, common people were harassed, shops ransacked, looted, and bombed.

The Awami League activists unleashed a reign of terror which cannot but make the democracy loving people worried and frustrated.

The people of the country are well aware of the history of terrorism of the Awami League and the Chhatra League. We thought the AL would change its policy in the present environment of democracy, but it is what it was, he pointed out.

The JCD leader said the AL's politics had lost direction and its chief Sheikh Hasina wanted a dead body to revitalise its politics.

He urged people to resist the anti-people politics of the AL and demanded arrest and trial of the "armed terrorists of the Awami League and the Chhatra League."

The press conference was also attended by JCD secretary general Nazimuddin Alam and JCD leaders Abul Bhuyan, Nasiruddin Pinto and others.

AL procession

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the results of the Magura byolls.

The mourners, wearing black badges started the procession from the premises of the Baitul Mukarram Mosque where the gayebana janaza of the two youths, killed on Thursday, was held.

The mourning procession was followed by a brief rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club.

The gayebana janaza was attended by the leaders and workers of different political parties and the devotees attending the Jumma prayers.

Prominent among them were Abdul Mannan, Tofael Ahmed, Zillur Rahman, Amir Hossain Amu, Abdul Jalil, Abul Hasan Choudhury, MP, Shawqat Ali, Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Mozafer Hossain Palti and Obaidul Kader of the AL, Rashed Khan Menon, MP of the Workers Party, Kazi Aref and Hasanul Haq Inu of the JSD and Prof Abdul Mannan Choudhury of the Nirmul Samad Azad.

Samad Azad advised

complete rest

The condition of Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdus

Samad Azad, who was injured during Thursday's Secretariat

siege programme, remained

unchanged yesterday, reports UNB.

The Awami League presidium member was admitted to PG Hospital with head injuries. He was feeling pain in his head this evening, party sources said.

Azad, who is undergoing treatment under Prof Alfa

Zad, has been advised complete rest.

### BCL's claim

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the Chhatra League (M.I.).

Paron was the Organising

Secretary of Lalbagh Ward No

66. He came to join the siege

programme of our party ....

but the hoodlums of Khaleda

Zia killed him, Mainuddin said.

The BCL president urged

the JCD leaders and "corrupt

ministers" not to play with the life of the people.

The press conference held

at Madhus Canteen of the

Dhaka University was attended

by BCL leaders including

Iqbal Rahim, Akhtar Hossain,

K. H. M. Lizu and Pankaj

Debnath.

Earlier, truck-loads of riot

police escorted the mourners

and keeping another under

their control at the Demra

house of the deceased.

This government has

started the politics of corpse,

the AL leader alleged and de-