

# DOWN TO EARTH

## Problems of Elderly Urbanites

By A S M Nurunnabi

"Day For The Elderly" was recently observed in this country as elsewhere under UN auspices. It was an occasion for sparing a thought for the plight of the elderly and for improving their lot in our country. By the blessings of modern medicine and by virtue of comparatively improved living conditions, old age is not considered a fixed stage in terms of years, but, since old age is an inevitability, various problems crop in course of living of the elderly in the midst of the young members of their families.

In some aspects, the problems of the elderly urbanites are somewhat different from those in rural areas. In modern times, an urban family, by and large, tends to be more individualistic with comparatively less feeling of attachment for the elderly in its midst. In such an urban setting, the young often hesitate to give shelter to the elderly, even if they happen to be their fathers and mothers, because their presence in the home interferes with their newly adopted life styles. This is general picture in the urban areas, especially among the upper middle class and middle class families.

This presents a contrast with the past social ethos under which caring for the elderly was always the tradition and it was expected of the young to care for the old until the day of his death. It is said that the way in which a nation treats its elderly reflects the level to which its society has evolved. Therefore, whatever be our past good record of care and service for the elderly, their neglect wherever it takes place nowadays represents a blot on our social mores.

The urbanites who follow a busy routine in active life face some uncertainties on reaching the age of retirement, the

portal to old age. Some try to keep up a busy schedule, like taking morning and evening walks, indulging in reading books in various libraries, and those who have the knack for writing spend their time happily writing on various subjects that interest them. Some, on the other hand, turn to religion or social service, where they find scope for exercising their faculties. There are, of course, some others who just idly pass their time.

The bane of old age is mainly loneliness, for in many cases, the set-up in which elderly people living with their families give and receive emotional and material support has gradually eroded. The family's role in ensuring the care and well-being of the elderly is important. However, urbanisation, industrialisation and modernisation have contributed to the break-up of the extended family system. Households, formerly comprising more than one family, have been split up into a number of small families living in their own apartments, often a long way apart. As families become smaller and women participate increasingly in the workforce, the support traditionally provided to the elderly is being lost.

Sons and daughters of many affluent families, leaving their parents behind, go abroad for studies or employment. Their long sojourn abroad creates a typical situation. In many homes, particularly of affluent families, only the old parents continue to live in this country. An old man, placed in such a situation, lamented that when we die, our bodies are kept in cold storage in a hospital morgue till our children come from abroad to complete the funeral rites.

In the west, the institution of old age homes has developed where old persons repair



Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina visited the fire victims at Mohammadpur in the city yesterday.

— Star photo

## 3 Western envoys

From Page 1 Col 4

During their meetings, requested the Opposition leader not to go ahead with planned en masse resignation by the Opposition members of the Parliament.

The British High Commissioner and the US Ambassador also met the Commonwealth Secretary General's envoy Sir Ninian Stephen at the state guest house Meghna and stayed with him for some time.

The Opposition's latest proposal on caretaker government issue was sent to the ruling party yesterday. Dr Mosef Ananu, an aide to Sir Ninian, handed over the written proposal of the Opposition to Deputy Leader of Parliament Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday morning.

The ruling party is likely to discuss the Opposition proposal sometime today before giving any reaction to it.

UNB adds: BNP Secretary General Abdus Salam Talukdar reiterated that solution to the present political crisis must be worked out within the framework of the country's Constitution.

We want to wade through the crisis within the framework of Bangladesh Constitution," he told UNB over telephone last night.

**50 French army advisers working in Algeria?**

PARIS, Nov 18: France has about 50 military advisers working secretly in Algeria to support helicopter crews fighting Muslim insurgents, a French magazine reported on Thursday, quoting French intelligence sources, reports Reuters.

The weekly VSD said the advisers — technicians and pilots — were on temporary leave from the army and were on the payroll of French arms firms, earning 50,000 to 150,000 francs (10,000 US dollar) per month.

It said a subsidiary of French state firm Aerospatiale was refitting 37 Soviet-made Mi-24 hind helicopter gunships with night vision devices, thermal sensors and Laser-guided firing systems and Algerian pilots were being trained at France's military helicopter school.

Foreign Minister Alain Juppe flatly denied on Wednesday that France was providing military aid to Algeria, despite growing reports of the sale and upgrading of military helicopters.

**FFs urge MPs**

From Page 1 Col 5

His suggestions also include taking the oath of neutrality from the President by the chiefs of Army and BDR and the IGP.

He strongly criticised foreign mediation on a national issue and requested the political leaders to politely decline "all foreign interventions, including that of Sir Ninian" in resolving the crisis.

Freedom fighters Naseem Jahangir, Fateh Chowdhury, Capt (retd) Nurul Huda, Maj (retd) Syed Mizanur Rahman, Maj (retd) Syed Munibur Rahman, Eng Saiful Islam and Alhaj Khaled Hossain were present at the press conference.

**Editor : Mabfuz Anam**

Printed & Published by A. S. Mahmud, Managing Director, on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd, 52, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000, from City Publishing House Ltd, 90 Kakrail, Dhaka-1000. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: House No: 11, Road No: 3, Dhammandi R/A, Dhaka-1205. PABX: 500092-4, Commercial: 500091 (Direct), Fax No: 88-02-863035. GPO Box No: 3257, Cable: DAILYSTAR, DHAKA.

## NGOs seek way to raise sanitation coverage

By Staff Correspondent

Government officials and representatives of different non-government organisations (NGOs) will meet in the city today to discuss how to increase the national sanitation coverage by 15 per cent.

Under the programme, some 30 lakh hygienic latrines will be installed in the country to provide safe sanitation to half of the population by the year 1995.

The government will pay Taka 200 as subsidy for each of the latrines to be built, according to NGO sources.

Officials of the Public Health Engineering, NGO Bureau, Chairman of the NGO Forum For Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Week 1994 that sanitation coverage will be increased to 50 per cent.

According to government statistics, about 35 per cent of the people have access to safe sanitation.

Out of every 100 rural households, 30 have hygienic latrines. In the cities, 75 in every 100 households have those.

About 60 lakh village families still opt for open-air and the banks of the rivers and canals for defecation.

The water supply picture in the country is not that grim.

Roughly, 96 per cent of the rural people have access to safe drinking water.



Anjali Kapur, the 24-year-old lawyer who posed nude for a pin-up magazine and sparked a storm in the Indian capital's legal community, poses for picture November 10 in New Delhi. The Delhi Bar Association has demanded that her lawyer's license be revoked saying her conduct was unbecoming of the legal profession. — AFP photo

## Peasants agony mounts

From Page 1 Col 4

other party to the disputes — far more numerous — is the vast army of landless farmers who obtain orders from the government for settlement on certain char areas — usually deemed Khas or public land — and cultivate the newly risen tracts.

But in most cases the more privileged *jotedars* defy the government's settlement orders and snatch away the crops from the farmers on the plea of their claimed ownership. And, for this, they turn to the *lathials* and armed hooligans.

Absence of proper border demarcation of the coastal districts, where accretion of land in char areas is a normal annual phenomenon, is yet another reason leading to bloody disputes over ownership.

District administrations concerned have little coordination among themselves, often issuing overlapping orders of settlement which

fuel bitter wars of attrition between private armies.

A huge number of title suits filed by rival claimants of the chars remain pending in the courts for years. These unsettled litigations also contribute to the spread of violence.

Observers maintain that adequate and appropriate action by the government is the crying need of the hour to bring an end to this seasonal violence in the coastal land once for all. They suggest immediate and proper demarcation of district borders, setting up of police camps in the troubled areas, firm action against the *lathials* and other miscreants and constant vigil by the law enforcing authorities, especially during the harvesting season.

"Delay in adopting these measures will only cause unfortunate eventualities while the poor farmers will continue to suffer and the problem will keep getting worse," observers said.

District administrations concerned have little coordination among themselves, often issuing overlapping orders of settlement which

## The Midnight File

### Iran, Pakistan to press OIC for action against Serbs

TEHRAN, Nov 18: Iran said today that it and Pakistan were urging a 50-member grouping of Islamic nations to take action against a Serb onslaught against a UN safe area in Bosnia. Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati and Pakistani counterpart Asef Ahmad Ali agreed Thursday to press the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) for action over the city of Bihac, a foreign ministry statement here said, reports AFP.

### Islamic Jihad forms suicide battalion

BEIRUT, Nov 18: The leader of Islamic Jihad in Palestine, a deadly foe of Israel, was quoted Friday as announcing the formation of a suicide battalion for attacks on Israeli troops. The independent Arabic-language newspaper Al-Hayat said the group's leader Fathi al-Shaqqaq made the announcement in an interview in Damascus, Syria, reports AP.

### Reynolds' departure leaves peace efforts in Limbo

DUBLIN, Ireland, Nov 18: Weeks after being hailed as a hero for helping bring about an IRA cease-fire, Prime Minister Albert Reynolds has resigned in a scandal over a priest accused of child molestation, reports AP.

His departure Thursday left lawmakers stunned, the government facing a potentially tortuous road to repair, and prospects for the Northern Ireland peace process uncertain.

"In life... You can't win them all," a grim-looking Reynolds told a hushed parliament as lawmakers were about to take a no-confidence vote on his coalition government.

A judge whose appointment precipitated the crisis resigned several hours later. A few days ago his resignation might have saved the government, but by Thursday the damage was beyond repair and all parties agreed Reynolds was right to step down.

His voice breaking and close to tears, Reynolds told parliament the main achievement of his 22-month government was "the breakthrough to peace in Northern Ireland," and he was stepping down to keep negotiations from being derailed.

The Labour Party withdrew from the governing coalition Wednesday over the appointment of former attorney general Harry Whelehan as president of Ireland's High Court. Labour was unsatisfied with Reynolds' explanation of why Whelehan's office had failed to act on an extradition warrant for a Catholic priest accused of molesting children.

Whelehan, sworn in as president of the High Court just three days earlier, announced Thursday that he too would resign despite the "unjust attacks" against him.

Labour opposed Whelehan, a conservative Catholic, because he failed for seven months to extradite the Rev. Brendan Smyth to Northern Ireland to face child molestation charges. Smyth eventually returned under orders from cardinal Cahal Daly and is serving a four-year sentence.

### India-Ukraine accord on space cooperation

NEW DELHI, Nov 18: India and Ukraine have signed an agreement for enhancing space cooperation in the areas of remote sensing, communication, material processing in space and mutual use of ground facilities, official sources said here today, reported Xinhua.

The agreement, which was signed by India's Space Secretary Dr Kasturirangan during his recent visit to Kiev, also provided for conducting joint research missions by sending scientific payloads in each other's spacecraft.

Irish and British ministers had been working for several months on a framework for inter-party talks in Northern Ireland. Sinn Fein, the IRA's political partner, had just joined the mainstream debate.

### 4 Tamils

From Page 1 Col 4

Nadu state. They procured Bangladeshi passports from Sir Abdul Gani in Singapore in exchange of 2,800 Singapore dollars.

They said they went to Singapore last September and were staying there as illegal immigrant.

The arrested are: K Thanu Thappgam alias Maqbul Hossein (as written in passport), P Teja Karujan alias Maqbul Hossein, S Abbas Mandiri alias Shahjahan Mollah and R Naba Bharat Harkisan alias Delwar Hossain.

### Arrested Indians

From Page 1 Col 4

lice prayed for a seven-day remand but the magistrate granted one-day remand for each for questioning.

The security personnel arrested Meena and Ashfaq Thursday evening at the entrance to Sangsab Bhaban. Meena was carrying a six-inch dagger in her bag.

Both the Indian nationals came to Dhaka last month and on Thursday they went to see parliament session.

A police source said late last night they could seize two passports so far but were still looking for the other one.

### Hamas

From Page 1 Col 3

the crowd reportedly started hurling rocks after police tried to dismantle loudspeakers.

A Hamas activist said the march was planned, to be peaceful and was in solidarity with arrested members of the Islamic Jihad who were rounded up by the Palestine Liberation Organisation after attacks on Israeli soldiers.

"We call on the Palestinian Authority to calm down because we do not need a civil war," said the activist interviewed on Israel radio.

The shooting began about 12:20 pm and continued for more than 40 minutes. Witnesses said police began shooting after one policeman was hit in the head with a stone.

The dead worshippers were identified as Hazen Dalu, 22, of Gaza City, and Hamdi Awani, 19, of Shati refugee camp, according to officials at Shifa Hospital. The name of the dead policeman was not immediately available.

### Bihac

From Page 1 Col 8

of the no-fly zone to cover the airspace over Croatia's Serb-held Krajina enclave.

It was this loophole which enabled the first jet attacker to escape without any NATO action being taken.

UN and NATO commanders sought Croatian permission on Monday to put planes into Croatian airspace to war off attacks on Bihac.

Sarajevo radio said two planes took off from Udbina in Serb held Croatia and carried out the raid on Bihac town and its suburbs at 11:00 am (1000 GMT). It said there were many casualties in the attack.

The government-controlled BH press news agency in Sarajevo said three planes were involved and one of them dropped at least two cluster bombs on a district of Bihac about 2 am. He died on the spot.

A truck knocked down one Mujib Rahman, 30, at Farashganj at about 12:30 am. He died at DMCH early yesterday.

It said another aircraft strafed the ground with machine gun fire, while a third directed the operation.

The Security Council on Thursday warned warring parties around Bihac to stop fighting, saying NATO aircraft might be sent in to counter any attacks on the town or on Bihac.

The dead worshippers were identified as Hazen Dalu, 22, of Gaza City, and Hamdi Awani, 19, of Shati refugee camp, according to officials at Shifa Hospital. The name of the dead policeman was not immediately available.