

SAVE DHAKA ROUNDTABLE

Urban poor must get due share

By Schrezad Joya Monami Latif

In recent decades, Dhaka has seen a rapid growth in its urban population without a corresponding expansion in public utility services. Too much of Dhaka's populace live in overcrowded areas where minimum facilities for survival, safe water, sanitation and other basic amenities are lacking.

The poor contribute to every aspect of city life and play a crucial role in the national economy particularly in the unrecorded informal sectors.

To save Dhaka, we must first take the majority of its people into account and they are not Daily Star readers or those who drive around in cars and complain that the city is "heading the way of Bangkok".

There are NGOs and a few government departments working with the urban poor but much of the thrust of donor and NGO work is in the rural areas.

These observations were made at the Daily Star-BUET Roundtable on Save Dhaka held here recently.

P Rana of the Asian Development Bank and Pierre Landell Mills of the World Bank were among donors' representatives present at the Roundtable. As foreigners but very much residents of the city, they both expressed their concern as "developer/partners" at the rising traffic, pollution and other problems in the city. Mills commented in his presentation that Dhaka "was heading the way of Bangkok". He further commented that with a 2 per cent population, growth in Dhaka city, things needed to be shifted to other cities. "We need to create cities that work."

Both Rana and Mills, Resident Representatives of the ADB and the World Bank, respectively, had suggestions in their short presentations at the Roundtable. The ADB is currently working on three projects for the urban poor. One is the Mirpur Project where land is taken from the government, raised and given to landless urban dwellers. Another project, the Integrated Urban Services Project, maintains roads, bridges and sanitation in the capital and at district and village levels. Rana said that "rural to-urban migration is a symptom not a disease. The disease is poverty which needs a three-pronged attack, in Dhaka and at district and village levels."

Both Rana and Mills agreed that problems have to be tackled seriously by all concerned. Implementation of some fundamental things such as collection of taxes and expansion of NGO involvement is necessary. "The thrust of activity should be aimed at combating urban poverty," "Dhaka must be saved for the poor as well. They constitute majority of urban dwellers after all," Rana said, echoing the sentiments of most of the other participants.

Landell Mills had a three-part suggestion for "Saving Dhaka". One, there should be more workshops for critique and analysis. All, including the poor, must be taken into account and a plan agreeable to all classes of people must be arrived at.

Two, interest must be created among citizens. Instead of complaining about the lack of action by government departments the citizens need to

get together and act on their own initiative. This will be fashioned after the good neighbour organizations in the West, where each community will take care of their concerns by voicing their needs.

Three, Mills urged the government along with the Mayor to set up a Coordination Committee Council, which Mayor Hanif had suggested in his presentation earlier. This would hold coordination among different departments and agencies working in service sectors.

Humayun Khadeem of Rajuk in his presentation commented that no money needed from the World Bank to save Dhaka. Proper taxation, revenue collection and a single body in-charge of the city can solve the rapid urbanization problems.

Landell Mills appreciated Khadeem's observations but however said the World Bank was ready to give money to help develop Dhaka, provided there was a coherent plan and an agency appointed to help administer the overall development.

From the discussion at the Save Dhaka Roundtable Conference the measures appeared clear. Dhaka needs more activities that would ensure a better standard of living for the poor transport for female employees, and improved traffic control (and this does not mean getting rid of rickshaws), better sanitation facilities and sewage control public toilets for women, for example. The list of things that need to be done to save Dhaka are numerous but not insurmountable.

Manzur murder: Col Kamaluddin on remand again

By Court Correspondent

Col (ret'd) Kamaluddin Bhuiyan, arrested Sunday in connection with the Manzur murder case, has been placed on police remand for one more day.

After the expiry of a two-day remand, Kamaluddin Bhuiyan was produced before the chief metropolitan Magistrate's court yesterday.

The CID police had made a prayer for a further five-day remand.

A bail petition was also moved on behalf of Kamaluddin.

Police halts Nirmul's march toward PM's Secretariat

By Staff Correspondent

The Ghatkal Dal Nirmul Committee staged a demonstration in the city yesterday demanding the exclusion of the names of the "war criminals," including Golan Azam, from the voters' list.

The members of the committee also held a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club before proceeding towards the Prime Minister's Secretariat.

The anti-liberation forces should not be given the right to vote, the Nirmul committee leaders said.

The police halted the processionists at the Bangla Motor crossing and did not allow them to proceed towards the PM's secretariat.

Grameen Bank activities now in 359 thanas

State Minister for Finance Mojiobor Rahman yesterday informed the Jatiya Sangsad that Grameen Bank activities have been extended to 359 thanas of the country, reports BSS.

Replying to a question from Treasury Bench member Mohammad Niamat Ullah (Dhaka 12), the state minister said the bank has an investment of Taka 5,208 crore.

Answering to a supplementary question from Alamgir Hyder Khan (Chandpur 6), the state minister said the Grameen Bank charges eight per cent interest on housing credit and 20 per cent on other rural credit per annum.

Rahman said the banking division of the Ministry of Finance supervises the activities of the Grameen Bank, but the rate of interest on loan of the bank is decided by the board of directors of the bank.

To another supplementary question from whip Ashraf Hossain, Rahman said the Grameen Bank is involved in various socio-economic activities in the rural areas.

The rate of recovery of credit extended by the Grameen Bank is over 90 per cent, the state minister said in reply to another supplementary question.

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Imran Khan, the former Pakistan cricket captain and Jemima Goldsmith leaving Richmond Registry Office in London after their civil marriage Tuesday. — AFP photo

Writ against ex-CEC's return to SC Hearing continues

By returning to the High Court Division, Justice Mohammad Abdur Rouf had "not only jumped the constitutional provision but also jumped the terms of his appointment," the High Court was told yesterday, reports UNB.

If the appointment letter as CEC gave Justice Rouf the mandate to complete the elections of 1991 and come back to the High Court Division, then he has failed and ignored it," Barrister Amirul Islam told the court.

He further said that Justice Rouf had chosen not to come back to the court although the elections were over in February 1991. If he was asked to return to the bench after completing the 1996 elections, he had come back without completing the prime task, the lawyer added.

Actually, Justice Rouf's ambition was one of facilitating and ambivalent, he said.

As the hearing on the writ petition resumed yesterday, Additional Attorney General Abdul Wadud Khandaker filed affidavits in opposition for the three respondents — Justice Rouf, the Registrar of the Supreme Court and the Law Secretary.

The writ challenging the authority under which Justice

Rouf is holding the office of a judge of the Appellate Division was filed by convener of the "Council for Lawyers", Advocate Shamsul Huq Chowdhury, on June 11.

Barrister Islam said Justice Rouf was inspired to come back to the HC Division in order to fill the vacancy through promotion or elevation, which he must have known by way of understanding with by the government.

Equality and social justice cannot be ensured if the judiciary is not separated from the executive and separation of the judiciary is ensured by Article 22 of the Constitution, he said, indicating that the appointment of Justice Rouf to the Appellate Division was imposed by the executive.

The hearing resumes today.

The Midnight File

US to support Lanka against LTTE

MADRAS, India, June 21: US ambassador to India Frank Wisner said today that Washington would support Sri Lanka against Tamil separatist rebels by seeing no arms reached to the guerrillas. "We are watching the activities of the LTTE very, very carefully, both internationally and in the US," Wisner told a news conference, referring to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), reports Reuter.

JS debate on MPs

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Article 67 (1) (b) of the Constitution says that a member will vacate his seat if he remained absent for 90 consecutive sitting days, without the leave of Parliament.

Today is the private members' day. So the issue is likely to come up again at next week's first sitting.

Four ministers took part in yesterday's debate. State Minister for Establishment Aminul Haq, Shipping Minister MK Anwar and State Minister for Textile Abdul Mannan raised various points saying that the relevant rules would not be applicable to the absentee members. On the contrary, Education Minister Jamiruddin Sircar said the rules were very clear and would be applicable to the absentee members.

Aminul Haq was first given the floor at 7:45 pm to complete his Monday's speech. He maintained that since the High Court in a ruling termed the opposition's boycott of the House illegal and unconstitutional, a decision cannot be taken counting those days in the 90-day limit.

"A constitutional decision cannot be taken on an illegal matter," he argued, adding moreover, the matter now remained pending with the Supreme Court.

The Chair asked him to show any judgement or decision by a court in support of his contention.

"My point is how the illegal boycott could be treated as their presence," the Speaker said.

"Since the absence is illegal and unconstitutional, the penal provision has been inserted in the Constitution," Razzak Ali noted.

Aminul Haq said that in future those who would plan to destroy democracy would follow the same path.

The state minister argued that the Speaker had nothing to do with this matter and it was the House which would grant leave to the absentee members.

The Speaker said none of the opposition members sought leave. He asked, how could the House grant leave voluntarily?

"There is no further option after I inform the matter to the House," Razzak Ali said, referring to the Constitution and the Rules of Procedure of Parliament.

The Speaker also asked Aminul Haq to show the rules under which the House could take a decision on the matter as insisted by him that Parliament should take the decision and not the Speaker.

"I am not giving any decision I would just inform the

Body to probe JU question papers leakage

By JU Correspondent

The Jahangirnagar University authorities yesterday formed a four-member committee to investigate the allegations of the leakage of question papers.

The question papers of the 'Ka' Unit' under the faculty of Science for admission into the first year honours classes are alleged to have been leaked out.

The committee, headed by Prof Mesbauddin of the Chemistry Department, includes Prof Bazlur Rahman, Dr Azizul Haq and the Registrar Prof Mohammad Ali as members.

Hasina

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called the present government a "betrayer" alleging that it had repeatedly given pledges to the people and forgotten the promises after some days. "Breaching commitment has become a habit of the government"

Hasina said the Prime Minister earlier offered to step down 30 days before the general elections, but now it is being heard that she will not resign before the elections.

On the proposed national budget, she said the government did not impose new taxes keeping the election ahead. "It will realise the tax after elections by SRO (statutory regulatory order)," Hasina added.

The meeting was also addressed by Abdul Jalil, Prof Abu Sayeed, AKM Azizur Rahman, Ferdous Zaman Mukul and Iqbalur Rahim. Thana AL president Moslem Uddin presided

Our Correspondent from Rangpur adds: More areas were flooded in Rangpur yesterday.

Ershad, another indicted by special court

Deposed president HM Ershad was indicted yesterday in yet another case of corruption and misuse of official position, reports BSS.

Divisional Sessions Judge and Special Judge, Dhaka, Anwaruddin Sikder, formally charged Ershad under Section 5(1)(d) of Section 2 of the Prevention of Corruption Act of 1947 for reinstating a government servant more than a decade after his dismissal on disciplinary grounds.

The charge was framed nearly twenty months after the special court was formed to hear the Special Case No 33 of 1993. The delay was attributed to a number of reasons, including supplementary charge-sheet and defence attempts to shift the case from the original court to another court.

Ershad is the principal accused, while Sultan Alam Mullick, once the superintendent of Suhrawardy Hospital and the employee in question, is the abettor.

Judge Sikder charged Mullick of committing an offence under Section 5(2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act of 1947 and Section 109 of the Bangladesh Penal Code.

Both Ershad and Mullick entered "not guilty" pleas. The judge fixed July 24 for recording the deposition of

prosecution witnesses. By misusing his official position and status, Ershad had violated set rules in ordering the reinstatement of the co-accused Mullick, vice president of the Jatiya Sramik Party, more than ten years after dismissal to consolidate his political organisation, the charge said. The action caused the state exchequer to suffer a loss of Taka one lakh thirty-two thousand, the prosecution charge added.

After being reinstated illegally, Mullick received Taka 1,32,061.49 as salary and benefits enjoyed government accommodation until 31.5.94, the charge added.

Mullick was put under suspension last April, it is learnt.

After the charge was read out, Ershad told the court that neither in Mullick's application nor in the brief given to him for the purpose, was it mentioned that the co-accused was a vice president of the Jatiya Sramik Party.

The FIR was lodged on 2.1.1992 and a charge-sheet was submitted on 5.8.1993. In the original charge-sheet, Ershad was the lone accused. Mullick was made a co-accused in the supplementary charge-sheet submitted in February this year.

Drainage congestion

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mm and Patuakhali 665 mm as against 482 mm. An expert explained that the normal amount of rainfall in an area during a particular period is calculated by averaging the total rainfall in the area during the past 30 years, as per the standard followed by the World Meteorological Organisation.

The Brahmaputra basin usually becomes more vulnerable to flood during the period June-July, when it experiences the maximum rainfall. The Ganges basin becomes vulnerable to flood when it experiences the maximum rainfall in August-September.

The vulnerability to flood multiplies when heavy rainfall occurs in the Brahmaputra and the Ganges basins at the same time, experts say.

They note that onrush of rain water from the hilly regions in the upstream contributes more to flood in Bangladesh than the rainfall within the country does.

Monsoon begins in

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SC Bar accords reception to Justice T H Khan

Justice T H Khan was accorded a reception yesterday by the Bangladesh Supreme Court Bar Association on his election as a judge of the International Tribunal for Rwanda constituted by the United Nations Organisation (UNO), reports BSS.

Presided over by Zillul Haq, Vice President of the bar, the reception was also addressed by senior advocates Sirajul Huq, Kazi Golan Mahub, Golan Dastagir, H K Abdul Hye, Tofael Ahmed and A F M Ali Azgar.

Speaking on the occasion Justice T H Khan said that he would try to put in his efforts to ensure proper functioning of justice in the international tribunal.

He said his election as a judge of the tribunal was not only his credit but also credit for all. It is a unique recognition of our Judiciary. He sought prayer from all so that he can perform his job honestly.

8 shot as JCD factions clash in Pabna

From Our Correspondent

PABNA, June 21: At least six persons received bullet injuries during a gunbattle reportedly between the two factions of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) at Moynamati under Pabna municipality this evening.

The clash occurred following a dispute over keeping stronghold in the locality, sources said.

Faridpur JCD clashes

UNB adds: Fifteen people were injured and 10 vehicles, damaged in sporadic clashes between two groups of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) in Faridpur today.

Witnesses said the clash erupted following declaration of the party's new district committee today.

Pirates attack trawlers, loot goods in Barisal

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, June 21: Armed pirates looted fish, fishingnets and engine spare parts, including about Taka ten lakh from four trawlers, some 70 kilometres off Patharghata thana headquarters early yesterday.

According to the Fishing Trawlers' Owners Association of Patharghata, a gang of 20 to 25 pirates on board an engine boat swooped on trawlers FB Mayer Kole, FB Sonia, FB Sonar Bangla and FB Daria one after another.

The pirates also beat some fishermen and threw three of them — Berek, 27, Jalil, 39, and Salam, 31 — into the sea. FB Daria was later taken to Patharghata by another fishing trawler.



Russian deputy Vyacheslav Marichev, dressed as Chechen fighter Shamil Basayev, points a toy gun yesterday as other deputies of the Duma, lower house of parliament, discuss the no-confidence vote in the government which was passed. Story on page 8. — AFP photo

Flood situation worsens

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yesterday. The rivers Surma and Kushiara were still flowing above danger-levels at all points in the region. Sylhet's road communication with Biswanath and Jagannathpur thanas have been cut off following the damage of a bridge at Kumarkhali in Biswanath. Road communication with Gowainghat, Jaintapur, Kanaighat and Companyganj thanas remained snapped for the seventh day yesterday.

Dulal Miah, 35, drowned in flood water at Companyganj thana headquarters. Tammam Ali, 40, of village Lalakhal in Jaintapur was washed away while collecting a floating tree.

Meanwhile, bodies of six persons were recovered in Gowainghat yesterday and

the day before. They are, Manotasha, 45 and his 6-year old son of Panch-Hatirkhel tea garden, Shanti Miah, 35, and Masuda Begum 2, of Dhakerpar, Luthfur Miah, 9 and another boy unidentified of Is-lampur, all under Jafflong union.

All the bodies were floated in the flood waters because there was no dry place for burial.

All the educational institutions in Balaganj thana have been closed.

Our Moulvibazar Correspondent reports: Flood situation in the district improved slightly yesterday with waters of the Manu and the Dholari rivers started receding.

However, road communication in Juri-Pultola and Brahmannagar-Shamshernagar routes remained snapped for

the sixth day yesterday as the roads were still under three feet water at many points.

According to the district control room, flood had inundated 38 out of 67 unions of Moulvibazar covering an area of 500 square kilometres affecting about 3.5 lakh people.

Our Correspondent from Sirajganj reports: Eight people drowned in Shahjapur on flood waters engulfed more areas breaking the Jamuna embankment yesterday. The victims were Aminul 6, Rafiqul, 11, Rahman 9, Sabina, 7, Alim (55), Ramija Khatun 50, one could not be identified.

Our Correspondent from Rangpur adds: More areas were flooded in Rangpur yesterday.