

# DOWN TO EARTH

## Miseries on City Footpaths

By A S M Nurunnabi

Dhaka city's main roads measure a total of 1,967 km, out of which only 163 km are accounted as footpaths. By and large, the pedestrians are unable to use a large part of the footpaths due to various reasons. Besides, the large-scale encroachments by hawkers in all commercial areas of the city, we find lately a process of such encroachment on footpaths in some new areas. For example, the footpaths of Panthapath are slowly being occupied by traders of foreign ship furniture. They are even seeking to spread on to the main road. At the same time, building materials, rickshaws and rent-a-car stands have taken up much space of that road.

The footpaths of the Green Road have gone under the illegal occupation of cane furniture traders. In front of the Tejgaon College, unauthorised tempoo stands and kutcha bazar have come up, leaving no space for pedestrians. The footpaths on the Sonargaon Link Road are similarly occupied by businessmen dealing in tiles and mosaic materials. In the New Paltan area, moves seem to be under way to encroach on footpaths with overflow of stocks from the newly established car shops.

Lately, prompted by a legal notice served by the Association of Lawyers for protection of environment, the City Corporation and the police launched a drive for clearing

obstructions on the footpaths in the Dhanmondi area. However, no such drive has been undertaken in any other areas of the city.

The city footpaths attract a large crowd of people as these places serve as venues for sales of a wide range of commodities at comparatively lower prices. Taking advantage of such assembly of people, some sections of unscrupulous traders adopt fraudulent means of various nature, some of which are so ingenious that the simple pedestrians are easily hood-

winked. Operators of such deceptive practices are mainly found on footpaths in certain areas. Their operations include a variety of methods and bogus products. The latter include so-called Ayurvedic medications made from exotic shrubs and plants; talisman rings claimed to have been made from mixture of gold, silver and copper; various oils and ointments claimed to have wonderful curative properties and foretelling the future with the help of parrots. Most of these practices relate to health, which, in fact, are threats to health, instead of helping it in any way.

The operators of such practices attract the passers-by by using cassette decks and cordless microphones. Various trickeries are adopted to boost sales of their harmful products. One of such tricks is to plant

some of their own men among the crowd. These men readily come forward to buy the bogus products. Another usual trick is their declaration that if their so-called medicines fail to produce the promised results, they would refund the money. Some of the planted men come forward to certify that they obtained satisfactory results from these products. This along with the fake guarantee of refund of money tend to create credibility among the general people.

The greatest tool of their trade is, however, their gift of the gab. These charlatans in most cases are past masters of ready wit and human psychology. If anyone in their audience expresses any interest in their products, there is no getting away for him from their enticing tricks. With the help of cassette recorders, they tape their words in such a way as to exercise maximum impact on the audience. Some of them seek to enhance crowd-drawing power by playing popular songs.

On account of these deceptions, a large number of people, mainly those from the villages lose heavy amounts of money. Observers consider it deplorable that no restrictive or preventive measure is taken by the authorities, in the interest of public health or order, to put a check on the activities of these fraudulent operators.



The Jatiya Party brought out a torch procession yesterday in the city to drum up support for its today's hartal. — Star photo

### Ethnic reprisals feared

## Security beefed up in Colombo

COLOMBO, Nov 24: A security blanket came down on Sri Lanka's capital Colombo today as President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga warned against ethnic reprisals ahead of the imminent capture of Tamil rebels' Jaffna stronghold, reports Reuter.

Police and army commandos set up new checkpoints

See also page 8

around the city over fears that extremists from the Sinhalese majority could provoke violence against the minority Tamils.

Security was beefed-up around government buildings after intelligence reports that rebel suicide squads were preparing revenge attacks for the army's march on Jaffna in the north.

"The war is not against Tamil civilians but against a ruthless group of terrorists who do not want peace," said Kumaratunga in a televised message.

"Do not in any way harass the Tamil community by word or deed," she warned.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka's state-run national news agency said today that up to 500 civilians were killed on Wednesday when a truck being loaded with explosives by

### British team

From Page 1

ranged by Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, South Asia Advisory Group (SAAG) of the Department of Trade and Industry, UK, and the British High Commission, Commerce and Information Minister M Shamsul Islam will inaugurate the seminar as chief guest.

The seminar will include four sectoral workshops on power, construction, textile, jute machinery and leather.

The members of the delegation are also scheduled to join the workshop on investment potentials in the capital market of Bangladesh, to be organised by the DCCI at the DCCI auditorium on November 27.

BSS adds: The leader of trade mission, Peter Lee, yesterday told BSS that there was "significant scope" for investment in Bangladesh as well as for industrial partnership.

"It's a good and exciting time" for us to visit Bangladesh for exploring opportunities for partnership as well as business because of a "great boom" of two-way bilateral trade, he said.

## AL, Jamaat's programme

From Page 1

ernment and said, "I like to know under what provisions of the Constitution she (PM) made the proposal for forming a national government."

"When she (Premier) agrees to a national government going beyond the Constitution, what makes her disagree to the demand for a caretaker government?" asked Sheikh Hasina.

AL president came down heavily on the ruling BNP for, what she said, "toying with the people by playing a by-poll, by-poll game."

"Stop this mockery now and once for all. Dissolve the House and arrange general elections under a caretaker government," Hasina said amidst clapping and full-throated anti-government slogans by the cheering crowd, mostly Awami League activists and supporters.

She said the question of holding by-polls at a huge expenditure does not arise at this stage when the whole nation is demanding general election under caretaker government. The ruling BNP has no right to cling to the power by giving announcement for holding by-elections, said Hasina and commented "this government is suffering from indecision."

### JP calls hartal

From Page 1

Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury demanded immediate shifting of Ershad to Combined Military Hospital (CMH) for treatment. The government ignored their demand despite street agitation and hunger strike, he said.

Moudud Ahmed called upon the people to observe hartal today.

Kazi Zafar said the government was violating fundamental rights of a citizen by not providing Ershad proper treatment.

Anwar Hossain Manju said the ruling party will face "dire consequences," for denying Ershad 'proper treatment'.

All the leaders reiterated that the agitation for holding general elections under a neutral caretaker government would continue.

The rally was followed by a torch procession.

Ershad has been suffering from viral hepatitis, commonly known as jaundice.

A party press release said, ambulance, medicine and food shops, fire brigade and vehicles carrying corpse, newspapers and journalists would remain exempted from the purview of today's hartal.

After the hartal is over, the party will hold a public meeting at the south gate of Baitul Mukarram Mosque.

Jatiya Party central leaders will address the meeting.

### 12 hurt as bombs hurled on BNP rally in Rajshahi

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Nov 24: At least 12 activists of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) were injured, when bombs were hurled on a rally here tonight.

The BNP was holding a rally at Shaheb Bazar Crossing in the town where city Mayor Mizanur Rahman Manu was addressing.

The rally was organised to hail the Prime Minister's speech.

The BNP blamed the Awami League activists for the incident.

### Jamaat

From Page 1

the reality is that the people have rejected the schedule for by-elections to the vacant seats of the Parliament.

"The people will also reject the general election if it is not held under a non-partisan caretaker government," he said.

Nizami said the idea of a national government had been floated bypassing the Opposition demand for a caretaker government.

## The Midnight File

### Serb leaders endorse Bosnia peace accord, confirms US

WASHINGTON, Nov 24: The United States confirmed today that Bosnian Serb leaders had formally endorsed the Bosnia peace accord agreed to by three Balkan presidents representing the warring sides earlier this week. The White House has received a copy of the accord which was initiated by key Bosnian Serb leaders at a meeting with Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic in Belgrade on Thursday, a US official said, reports AFP.

### 'Women's role in agri sector unrecognised'

By Staff Correspondent

The rural women of South Asia play a significant role in the agricultural sector, yet their valuable contributions generally go unrecognised and unevaluated.

This was observed at a regional conference on women peasants and agricultural workers yesterday in the city.

Moreover, the South Asian peasant women are victims of oppression, discrimination and exploitation, both at home and in the work place, and the situation is intensified by religious bigotry and fundamentalism, said the delegates.

The women farm workers labour twice as much as their male counterparts since they have to work at home as well they said, adding but instead of credit, they earn much less than men for the same work.

### 77 file nomination papers for by-polls

As many as 77 candidates filed their nomination papers in 47 constituencies yesterday to contest the parliamentary by-elections which were scheduled for December 15.

Election Commission sources said, reports UNB.

The Election Commission (EC) on November 22 announced the schedule for by-elections to 145 vacant seats of Parliament to fulfil its constitutional obligation, but Parliament was dissolved last night.

The EC sources said none filed nomination paper in 98 constituencies. Of the rest 47 constituencies, 27 received only one nomination paper each.

### Cyclonic storm

From Page 1

north and north-westerly direction at a speed of about 30 km per hour with an intensifying hurricane core, the sources added.

PTI adds: Under the influence of the storm moderate to heavy rains were likely in Calcutta, Howrah, north and south 24 Parganas and Midnapore districts today.

Windspeeds between 100 to 110 km were expected off the West Bengal coast with phenomenal seas. Fishermen were warned not to venture out to sea.

Great danger signal number nine was replaced by great danger signal number eight in Hooghly ports.

### Bosnia

From Page 1

have effectively denied UN peacekeepers access to the area since it was captured from Bosnian Serbs in September, and October.

Although Ivanko said today's report covered only about a dozen houses, UN relief officials, some of whose staff have been able to transit the area, report widespread burning and looting of vacant Serb property in the area in recent weeks.

## Jatiya Sangsad dissolved

From Page 1

Bangladesh were very democracy-conscious, independence-loving and uncompromising on the question of sovereignty.

The political decisions of the people were never wrong, she said and added, "We have great respect for you". Begum Zia said they had always stood by the people both in their will and woes.

"We were with you (people), we are with you and we will remain with you inshallah", she said.

The Prime Minister said that a section of opposition political parties had taken to the streets by leaving Parliament with the motive of imposing a system which the Constitution did not permit.

The Opposition, she said, had disrupted normal life of the people by enforcing hartals and sieges.

The frequent hartals and sieges, she said, had caused untold sufferings to the people particularly the rickshawpullers, hawkers, garment workers, small traders, elderly people and patients.

Chaos and indiscipline, created by a section of opposition, Begum Zia said, also caused damage to the industries, trade and business, incurring loss of Taka thou-

sands of crores.

The relief and rehabilitation programmes and health care activities in the country's flood-hit northern parts were also affected due to stoppage of transport, the Prime Minister said.

She also described as 'not democratic acts' the manhandling of the old and working women, beating of the rickshawpullers, the throwing of bombs at the hospitals, and torching of ambulance and press vehicles. Referring to her letter to the Awami League president inviting her (Hasina) to sit for discussion about the parliament polls Begum Zia regretted that the Awami League chief in her reply had set pre-condition of accepting the caretaker government issue by me.

Begum Zia said that the Awami League president had remained firm in her pre-condition even after my second letter through which I had invited her to sit across the table to discuss any of her proposals.

The Prime Minister said that they had tried to solve the existing problem through discussion.

The Opposition, she said, had stopped the way of understanding by attempting to forcibly impose their demand

"on us".

The Prime Minister said that they sincerely wanted the holding of free, fair, and violence-free and rigging-free elections to strengthen democracy.

She said the Election Commission had been strengthened and election-related laws were passed in such a way that no government or anti-government force could influence the election process.

Electoral process had been improved, Begum Zia said and added concerned government administration, all officers and employees related to election would come under the control of the Election Commission immediately after the announcement of the election schedule.

The Prime Minister said there was a provision to try any candidate or individual or party in case of the violation of the election laws during the elections by a committee of judges.

Referring to the introduction of the ID card and preparation of a new voters' list to curb false voting Begum Zia said atmosphere had been created to hold free and fair polling.

## It's people's victory

From Page 1

Zillur Rahman said. But Zillur reiterated that his party would not go to the polls without realising their demand for a neutral caretaker government.

Jatiya Party acting chairman Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury said, dissolution of parliament without forming a caretaker government was a "blue print" of the ruling party to hold elections under it.

"We reject this plan and no question arises to participate in an election under any party government," Mizan told The Daily Star last night.

The Jatiya Party secretary general, Anwar Hossain Manju said that he was very much concerned about the fate of democracy in the hands of the ruling party leaders.

She (PM) is violating its norms. I can only pray to the almighty Allah for protecting democracy," Manju said while talking to The Daily Star.

Manju said that his party's stand at this moment was clear. The Jatiya Party would not go to the polls until there is a neutral caretaker government, he said.

"We will continue the struggle of realising the demand for a neutral caretaker government," Manju said.

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Prof Golam Azam and secretary general Matur Rahman Nizami in a joint statement last night said there was nothing new in the Prime Minister's speech.

"The government has bowed down to the demand of the people. Now we are demanding of the govern-

## PM's office denies meet with Merrill

From Page 1

ment to arrange a free and fair election by constituting a caretaker government," they said.

Rashed Khan Menon, general secretary of Workers Party said that the PM should have resigned after dissolution of the Parliament. The President would then consult all parties to conduct elections under a neutral caretaker government. Only then there could have been a trustworthy election, Menon said.

A contingent of police in riot gear, led by the OC of Motijheel thana was seen patrolling the area at around 10 pm. Police lobbed two tear gas shells, said the OC.

Police sealed off all entry points of the Dhaka University campus at 8 pm after some cocktails went off there.

Awami League brought out a procession from Bangabandhu Avenue, rejecting the PM's speech and reiterating its demand for a caretaker government for holding the general election.

Witnesses said they hurled home-made bombs and pelted stones on passing vehicles on Bangabandhu Avenue, near the Press Club and in Paltan areas.

Jamaat supporters also brought out a procession in Paltan area, protesting the Prime Minister's speech.

DUCSU VP Amanullah Aman, who was a member of the just dissolved House, led a procession of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), brought out from the BNP central office. Two separate processions were brought out by the Jubo Dal and Jatiyatabadi Ain Chhatra Forum, lauding the PM's speech.

JSD (Inu) brought out a procession and held a rally in front of the party office denouncing the announcement.

### Rallies

From Page 1

protest demonstrations instantly.

Police lobbed tear gas shells to disperse the activities of two rival sides when two processions of the BNP and the Awami League came face to face near the Bangabandhu Avenue. A few cocktails were exploded.

A contingent of police in riot gear, led by the OC of Motijheel thana was seen patrolling the area at around 10 pm. Police lobbed two tear gas shells, said the OC.

Police sealed off all entry points of the Dhaka University campus at 8 pm after some cocktails went off there.

Awami League brought out a procession from Bangabandhu Avenue, rejecting the PM's speech and reiterating its demand for a caretaker government for holding the general election.

Witnesses said they hurled home-made bombs and pelted stones on passing vehicles on Bangabandhu Avenue, near the Press Club and in Paltan areas.

Jamaat supporters also brought out a procession in Paltan area, protesting the Prime Minister's speech.

DUCSU VP Amanullah Aman, who was a member of the just dissolved House, led a procession of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), brought out from the BNP central office. Two separate processions were brought out by the Jubo Dal and Jatiyatabadi Ain Chhatra Forum, lauding the PM's speech.

JSD (Inu) brought out a procession and held a rally in front of the party office denouncing the announcement.

## Star Fashion '96

*The Daily Star Readers too become Fashion Judges*

For Eid '96 your favourite newspaper will organize a fashion competition in which YOU, THE READERS will be asked to judge the Best Design for Eid '96 in 7 categories of items.

So, fashion designers start your creative work to win the hearts and minds of the Daily Star Readers.

Enter STAR FASHION '96.  
(See page 11 for details)

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

Printed & Published by A. S. Mahmud, Managing Director, on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd, 82, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000, from City Publishing House Ltd, 90 Kakrail, Dhaka-1000. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: House No: 11, Road No: 3, Dhanmandi B/A, Dhaka-1206. PABX: 500092-4, Commercial: 500091-3, Direct: 500091-3, 500091-4, GPO Box No: 3267, Cable: DAILYSTAR, DHAKA.