

## DOWN TO EARTH

# Perils From Fire In City

By A S M Nurunnabi

In the process of rapid expansion of the Dhaka city, proper care does not appear to have been taken by the authorities concerned for adopting appropriate measures against fire hazards in it. We saw the consequences in a number of big incidents in the past. However, the devastating fire at Bangabazar last November brought into bold relief the inadequacies and handicaps suffered by the Fire Service Department in dealing with big fires in the city.

The total number of existing fire stations in the city is ten. This set-up, which came into being three decades ago, has remained unchanged till now, even though there has been manifold increase in population and physical growth of the city. From sources in the Fire Service Department, it is understood that the existing fire stations in the city have been operating under severe strains of inadequate and worn-out equipments. Even the normal complement of equipments in a fire station in the city is said to be lacking. In view of this deficiency, in the case of a big fire in a particular area of the city, it sometimes becomes imperative to send out calls for help to nearby fire stations which pitch in to deal with the situation.

Besides, these deficiencies in infrastructural and supporting facilities, two main factors are identified by the Fire Service Department sources as standing in the way of their prompt and effective fire fighting capability. The first of these factors which proves highly frustrating in the matter of quick movement of fire engines to the sites of fire outbreaks is the horrendous traffic jams which at present plague almost the entire network of city roads. These traffic jams are said to be a serious handicap in prompt and efficient fire-fighting operations. Moreover, the congested ar-

easy access of fire engines in cases of fire. It is observed that the large number of garment factories, some of which fell victims to serious fire accidents in the past, are lately more conscious of the need for fire security in their premises.

The next major handicap in fire fighting capability of the Fire Service Department is the scarcity of sources of water in many areas. Once the city was dotted with ponds, canals, lakes and other sources of water. In the process of growth of the city, such sources of water have been lost.

According to some old-timers, in the early days following the partition of India, when Dhaka was a provincial capital, there were about 26 underground water reservoirs in the municipal area under the Fire Service Department for use in fire-fighting. None of these water reservoirs is now in existence. It is felt by knowledgeable quarters that in view of scarcity of sources of water for fire-fighting purposes and in view of the present rapid expansion of the city with concomitant high rise in population, there is need for construction of a good number of water reservoirs with suitable dimensions at strategic locations in the city to enable the Fire Service Department to play their due role in an effective manner.

Last but not the least is the imperative need for imparting training to the fire service personnel in the modern techniques of fire fighting. Unless we are able to train up our men in the modern discipline in fire-fighting with provision of adequate equipments and other supporting facilities, we as citizens will be living under a constant threat of a major catastrophe from destruction by fire without effective help from the expected quarters.

## Hijackers of Black Sea ferry surrender

ISTANBUL, Jan 19: Gunmen who hijacked a ferry in support of Chechen rebels surrendered today to Turkish authorities and were taken ashore, the ship's captain said in a marine radio broadcast with naval officials, reports Reuters.

"They've all left," said the captain of the Black Sea ferry, according to the broadcast monitored aboard.

## Palestinians go to polls today

JERUSALEM, Jan 19: Candidates for a Palestinian parliament ended an election campaign on Thursday in which ambitions for an independent and prosperous state clashed with the reality of Israeli domination and economic recession, reports Reuters.

Campaigners trudged through snow and mud to final rallies to win over voters in Saturday's polls.

"Everything is in place for the elections. Palestinian police will guard polling stations. They begin deploying today," said Ibad Barghouti, elections coordinator in the West Bank.

"This is our first experiment and we hope to be able to handle problems quickly and effectively," he said. Former US President Jimmy Carter, who is among hundreds of foreign observers monitoring the poll, said he expected the election to be honest despite cases of intimidation of independent candidates.

## 'PSI should cover

From Page 1 Customs authorities do not take into consideration international and internal price variation as they assess on the basis of pre-decided tariff value of a product or commodity while the PSI agencies face price variation factors as they always have to keep track of day to day price fluctuation of different commodities in the international market.

The study said that there has been loss of earnings because the same items imported through PSI carry less customs duty than those through traditional system and assessed on the basis of tariff value.

It also alleged that a number of PSI entities accepted deliberately under-invoiced documents as the basis for price verification, ignoring international price verification procedures adopted by PSI entities world-wide.

The government banned import of eight items under the PSI on December 12 last suspecting misuse of the system and "to protect the local industries and revenue".

The banned items are: car, dry cell battery, air conditioner, filament lamp, fluorescent tube light, GI pipe, soda ash and caustic soda. The four other banned items

the Hacı Baba fishing vessel on the scene. The captain said the pro-Chechen gunmen, about seven or eight mainly ethnic Turks, left the ferry aboard rubber dinghies.

"So is the ship all clear?" asked the naval officer.

"Yes, all clear," said the captain.

Earlier the gunmen, who hijacked the ferry on Tuesday in the Black Sea port of Trabzon with about 200 hostages, had said they were preparing to surrender and naval authorities ordered all vessels to clear the area.

"From our point of view we hit our target," one of the gunmen, speaking by cellular telephone, told the private Atv television minutes before the surrender.

Witnesses earlier said a medical team moved in just hours after the 3,838-ton vessel anchored just outside the Bosphorus strait on Friday morning after the hijackers heeded a Turkish warning not to enter the strategic Bosphorus waterway.

Anatolian news agency later said a total of eight people were evacuated.

## 2 chopped to death in Khulna

KHULNA, Jan 19: Two persons were chopped to death at midnight Thursday night by unknown assailants a shrimp enclosure under Rupsha thana, 16 kilometres from the city.

Azim Molla 35, and his cousin Ahad Molla, 30, were found dead in the fish enclosure, according to police.

were cigarette, powdered milk, cumin seed and black pepper.

On the other hand, the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) strongly favours continuation of the PSI system, saying the only alternative is "to go back to the much misused old valuation procedures."

The PSI services are used by the private sector in Bangladesh under Section 25A, Customs Act, 1969 and SRO and Notifications. But the PSI entities are not supervised under the GATT principles, the study pointed out.

The Uruguay Round Agreement recognises that the GATT principles and obligations apply to the activities of PSI, mandated by government or assigned government bodies. The obligations also include non-discrimination, transparency, protection of confidential business information, avoidance of unreasonable delay, use of specific guidelines for conducting price verification and avoidance of conflicts of interest by the PSI agencies.

The PSI is the practice of employing specialised private companies to check shipment details like price, quantity and quality of goods.

## NDA to take part in polls

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA), an alliance of seven parties including Freedom Party and Democratic League yesterday announced its decision to take part in the sixth parliamentary elections, reports BSS.

Announcing the decision at a press conference, Secretary General of the NDA, Anwar Zahid said in view of the present political situation it is now clear that if the elections are not held in time as per the Constitution, a "no government situation" would be created endangering the national independence and sovereignty.

## Fire in garments factory

By Staff Correspondent A garments factory on the top floor of the three storey Bikrampur Plaza at Kaliganj caught fire at around 7:25 pm yesterday.

An hour long operation by the fire fighter controlled the fire, said officials of the Fire Brigade. However, the estimated losses and damages of the fire was not immediately known.

## Rule on govt

From Page 1 rank of major and captain in the army. This has injected inequity and imbalance in the entire police service, it claimed.

It was noted that the home ministry had sent the draft graduation list to the PSC for scrutiny, review and finalisation. The PSC in its Annual Report, placed before Parliament in 1994, had pointed out that due to non-compliance and non-cooperation of the home ministry, it could not perform its constitutional responsibility.

The Petition Committee of Parliament, headed by the Speaker had discussed the matter and it was communicated to the Ministry of Home Affairs to keep in mind the objection raised by the PSC.

But the Ministry of Home Affairs failed to meet the objections raised by the PSC and the Parliamentary Petition Committee. In addition, the reference from the PSC was withdrawn and promotions were given in a haste by an order dated December 3 last year.

Moreover, the reference was withdrawn unceremoniously and in an arbitrary manner, it was alleged.

The Bench also called upon the respondents to show cause why a directive should not be given for finalisation of the graduation list on the recommendation of the PSC.

Rule was also issued for testing the vires of Public Service Commission (Consultation) Regulations 1979, purporting to exclude consultation with the PSC in certain matters and Defense Services (fixation of seniority in civil post) Rules 1983 purporting to allow prematurely retired army officers to have entrance in civil posts with ante-dated seniority claim.

Family members, film celebrities and leading Indian political figures watched, some in tears, as Rama Rao's body was consumed by the flames.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia placing wreath at the mazar of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman on the occasion of his 60th birth anniversary yesterday — Star photo

## Picnicker, three others killed in accidents

By DMCH

At least four persons, one of a picnic party, were killed and six injured in separate incidents yesterday in the city and at Daudkandi and Dhaleswar.

Four persons of the picnic party were seriously injured when they fell from the roof when the bus, returning from the National Park, was passing through a tunnel near the Sangsad Bhavan in the evening.

They were rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital where fatally injured Babul (30) died and the others, Nurul Islam (25) and Abdur Rahim (26) were admitted. Another injured person, Monsur, was shifted

## Hasina

From Page 1

next election and this is why they do not want the caretaker government to conduct the hustings.

"We want a non-partisan caretaker government to restore the voting rights of the people," she told the gathering.

The Awami League president asked the Prime Minister to step down to pave way for constituting a neutral caretaker government to conduct a free and fair voting.

## Zia's birthday

From Page 1

Liberation. Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia visited the mazar in the morning.

She placed wreath at the mazar and offered fatiha. BNP Standing Committee members Irrigation Minister Majidul Haq, Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Housing and Works Minister Barister Rafiqul Islam Mia, Agriculture and Food Minister Kamal Ibne Yusuf, Labour Minister and city BNP President Mir Shawkat Ali, among others, were present.

The Prime Minister also opened the voluntary blood donation camp at the mazar premises.

Leaders of different front organisations of BNP also placed wreaths at the mazar of Shaheed Zia.

Call for hartal in Khulna today From Our Correspondent KHULNA, Jan 19: The HSC examines have called a half-day hartal in the city tomorrow demanding cancellation of the government's decision to introduce same set of question paper in the HSC examinations under four boards from this year.

Sohail, 15, a grocer was stabbed at Nayatola, Moghbazar late Thursday night in his hand and leg for his refusal to provide cigarettes to a gang of muscle men on credit. He was later admitted to the DMCH.

One Aktar Hossain, 18, received bullet injury in his left leg at Hazaribagh, during a clash over a cricket match between the two rival teams yesterday. Aktar was rushed to the DMCH.

Khairshida Akter, 25, allegedly committed suicide at a residence at Kamrangirchar under Lalbagh thana on Thursday night.



The Dhaka City Awami League brought out a torch procession yesterday protesting police action on the party procession at Farmgate Thursday afternoon. — Star photo

## Family feud overshadows Rama Rao's funeral

HYDERABAD, Jan 19: Film star turned politician N T Rama Rao was cremated on a pyre of sandalwood today in a funeral overshadowed by the bitter family feud that had haunted his final year in politics, reports Reuters.

The family infighting that cost the charismatic politician his job erupted in full public view when his widow was ordered off the cortege before it proceeded to the cremation site.

"I have been humiliated by the family members," said Lakshmi Parvati, second wife of Rama Rao.

"I will boycott the funeral," Parvati told reporters as she left for home from Hyderabad's Lal Bahadur Cricket Stadium, where her husband's body had lain in state.

Populist Rama Rao led his Telugu Desam Party (TDP) to a landslide victory in elections in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh in December 1994.

But he was ousted as chief minister by his son-in-law, Chandrababu Naidu, in a family coup nine months later that was triggered by Parvati's unwelcome political influence.

Aides said the 73-year-old former actor died of a massive heart attack early on Thursday while doing physical exercises.

Rama Rao's eldest son N Jayakrishna lit the funeral pyre, made of sandalwood logs and ghee, or clarified butter, in accordance with Hindu tradition.

Family members, film celebrities and leading Indian political figures watched, some in tears, as Rama Rao's body was consumed by the flames.

site at the Buddha Purnima complex on the Hussain Sagar Lake nearly 100,000 people milled around the city centre and Rama Rao's home to bid farewell.

Family tensions had flared earlier today during Hindu religious ceremonies over Rama Rao's body, Parvati said. Parvati complained that her name was left out of the vedic hymns chanted by priests. She said only Rama Rao's first wife, who died 12 years ago, was named.

## BNP conspiring to switch over to presidential system: Nizami

SIRAJGANJ, Jan 19: Jamaat Secretary General Matlur Rahman Nizami today urged the people to foil all designs of the BNP to "introduce one-party autocracy through farical elections," reports UNB.

Addressing a meeting in Sirajganj Bazar station premises, he alleged that the BNP was now conspiring to switch over to the presidential system through voterless elections.

"The BNP had no confidence in the parliamentary system. The Prime Minister's passive role and indifferent attitude in Parliament proves the fact," Nizami said.

Referring to the abortive dialogue, the Jamaat leader said the Prime Minister's intransigent attitude frustrated all efforts of the Opposition to resolve the political crisis through discussion.

## The Midnight File

### Ciller asked to form govt

ANKARA, Jan 19: Turkey's caretaker Prime Minister Tansu Ciller said today she had been given the chance to form a new government after inconclusive general elections last month. "The president has given me the task of forming a government as head of the DYP (true path party), she told reporters after a meeting with President Suleyman Demirel, reports Reuters.

### Fourth founding anniversary

## Try war criminals, demands Nirmul

By Staff Correspondent

The Ekatturer Ghatok Dalai Nirmul Committee celebrated its fourth founding anniversary yesterday by reiterating its call for the trial in a special tribunal of Golam Azam and other war criminals and a ban on all communal and fundamentalist politics.

The committee, founded by late Jahanara Imam, organised a rally at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday afternoon and brought out a procession to drum up support for its cause.

The rally was addressed by Poet Shamsur Rahman, Prof Kabir Chowdhury, Kalim Sharaif, Syed Shamsul Haq.

Shawkat Ali Khan, Maulana Abdul Awal, Prof Abdul Mannan Chowdhury, Kamal Lohani, Kazi Mukul, Kamal Hossain and Towhid Rezanur.

The speakers blamed past governments, particularly those of Ziaur Rahman and H M Ershad, for rehabilitating the fascist Jamaat-Shibir and Razakars (those who collaborated with the Pakistani army during the War of Liberation). They also condemned certain political parties for "shaking hands" with those Razakars for their own benefits.

An anniversary declaration, read out at the rally by Zulfikar Ali Manik, called upon the people to unite for intensifying the on-going movement against the anti-liberation forces.

The committee members and supporters then brought out a procession in the city, carrying placards and portraits of Jahanara Imam popularly known as Shahid Janan.

Later, a Nirmul Committee delegation placed wreaths at the grave of Jahanara Imam at the Martyred Intellectuals Graveyard at Mirpur.

Police arrested four persons from near Hotel Purbani at Motijheel in the city yesterday for damaging a car and pelting stones at the hotel.

It was alleged that the four persons had damaged a car and pelted stones when Col. (ret'd) Rashid a leader of the Nationalist Democratic Alliance (NDA) was addressing a press conference at the hotel. Rashid's car was also parked outside the hotel at the time.

The arrested persons are Babul, Feroz, Shahed and Nikhil.

## DSE review

From Page 1

during the quarter compared to 1.12 crores during the previous quarter, showing rise of 13.03 per cent during this quarter compared to 15.57 per cent during the previous quarter.

Total amount traded in the DSE stood at Tk 220.60 crores during the current quarter compared to Tk 177.80 crores during the previous quarter showing an increase in amount traded of 24.07 per cent during this quarter compared to 19.33 per cent during the previous quarter.

Total volume and total amount traded in CSE during the period from October 10 to December 31, 1995 aggregated 121.59 thousand securities and Tk 1.93 crores.

According to SEC review, 65 listed companies held their annual general meetings during the last quarter of 1995 compared to 38 such companies during the previous quarter.

Thirty three listed companies declared dividend out of which 30 companies declared cash final dividend, one company cash interim dividend and six companies stock dividend during current quarter.

## Eye Hospital

From Page 1

had reported the findings of the probe body.

The dilemma now is who will take action, said an official of the Health Directorate requesting anonymity.

The Health Ministry wants the Health Directorate to take action but some high officials of Directorate consider it beyond their jurisdiction and responsibility.

Shamsuddin Ahmed told The Daily Star that the inquiry committee report has been placed with the ministry, which is the supreme authority to decide on what follow-up actions should be taken.

Health Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, talking to The Daily Star said, "The inquiry report has not yet been placed before me."

While the Ahsanullah committee report on IEH remained stuck up due to bureaucratic red-tapism, yet another committee has been formed to probe into the matter.

State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism, Abdul Mannan who heads the new committee told The Daily Star, "The Health Minister has requested me to probe the IEH affairs."

"I am interested in probing the issue as the IEH is in my constituency," Mannan added.

When asked about the logic of formation of a second inquiry committee while the report of the first committee has not even been placed before him, the Health Minister posed a counter question "Is there any constitutional or legal bar in that regard?" "It was just an informal request by me to Mannan," he added.

আজ শনিবার ২০ শে জানুয়ারী '৯৬ইং,  
৭ই মাঘ ১৪০২ বাংলা  
চট্টগ্রামের ফটিকছড়ি থানার দৌলতপুর  
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কুড় উদ্‌ঘাটন

নতুন শাখা উদ্বোধনীর এই শুভদিনে সম্মানিত গ্রাহক,  
পৃষ্ঠপোষক এবং শুভানুধ্যায়ীদের আন্তরিক সহযোগিতা  
আমাদের একান্তই কাম্য।

সোনালী ব্যাংক

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