

DOWN TO EARTH

City's Image In Jeopardy

By A S M Nurunnabi

"Healthy cities for better life" is the theme chosen by the World Health Organisation (WHO) for this year's World Health Day to be observed in all countries on April 7. As far as the Dhaka city is concerned, the day will be observed against an alarming backdrop. Urban deterioration of the city is going on conspicuously in many ways. It's an obvious point that the present-day Dhaka is the result of haphazard and thoughtless actions of the past which has now put at stake the very sustainability of the city.

The present picture of city life has the following main features: Colonies of uprooted squatters lining the streets, piles of uncleared garbage clogging the sidewalks, a ramshackle public transport system operating lackadaisically, innumerable rickshaws causing ubiquitous traffic jams of horrendous nature, smoke emission and air pollution increasing perilously, open spaces, lakes and parks getting scarce, shopping plazas and high-rise apartment buildings springing up here and there—all these have been contributing to the creation of an urban wasteland.

What is being done to deal with the stupendous problems of our city life? A seminar lately held here on Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan gave consideration to the multitudinous issues involved. In this context, the vigorous campaign launched by The Daily Star last year for making all-out efforts to save Dhaka and the following round-table conference at the BUET at which recognised experts in related fields took part, may have played a significant role with its comprehensive recommendations.

It is a patent fact that Dhaka's growth from a mere provincial town to a mega city

in a little more than two decades has put tremendous pressure on all kinds of its physical facilities. According to knowledgeable observers, if the overstretching of such facilities has been a key factor in a number of areas, lack of planning and co-ordination between the different agencies have only compounded the situation. This aspect was duly highlighted in course of discussion at the round-table conference. Accordingly, as commented by an expert analyst, the metropolis is allowed to expand without an adequate plan in operation, the mega city, which is projected to rank among the 10 most populous in the world, may end up as an unmanageable, oversized slum.

The importance of the need for overall coordinated action plan may be viewed from another angle. Suppose the City Corporation can improve the municipal services, but it can hardly help those problems of the city which stem from the overall socio-economic situation of the country. It can do nothing to halt the influx of poverty-stricken rural people into the city or to improve the public transport system as a step towards easing out the vast numbers of rickshaws.

A common suggestion is often heard that the population pressure on the city can be reduced if a few satellite towns are developed around the capital. In the context, one opinion is that satellite towns will come up automatically if suburban service is improved and further developed. But unfortunately, as pointed out by some observers, as far as suburban transport and overall transport system is concerned, we have taken a giant step backwards during the last decade. As examples, it has been cited that suburban trains have almost ceased to run and

the wide-bodied buses have become fewer in number which means, in other words, that while no new amenities have been added, some old amenities have been allowed to fade out.

There are some other relevant aspects in this connection. It has also been pointed out that a city must take into account not only its physical expansion perspectives, but also its sustainability as an economic and environmental entity. It should be our aim to ensure that economic considerations alone don't get the better of environmental considerations, for the price we may have to pay for indiscreet planning for industrial and economic ventures can be heavy. It has also been suggested that in order to help in checking the exodus of rural people to the capital, environmental factors may not be undermined and employment opportunities be dispersed away from the centre.

As many as 10 principles have been chosen for a healthy city in observance of the World Health Day. They are: Clean and safe physical environment, basic needs for all inhabitants, a strong and mutually supportive community, local governments involving the communities, access to variety of experiences and interaction, promotion of cultural and historical heritages, easily accessible health services, diverse and innovative economy and a sustainable ecosystem.

At a time of explosive urban growth as taking place in Dhaka city, the health of city population, in terms of the objective principles enunciated by the WHO, is a challenge for all concerned with human development from municipal to national authorities to international health and development organisations.



An Israeli soldier handcuffs one of the 400 Palestinian students arrested from the Gaza Strip on Thursday. The students of University of Bir Zeit had ignored orders from the Israeli authorities to return home after the recent wave of suicide bombing in Israel.

— AFP/UNB photo

\$ 4.35 lakh Japanese grant for 6 local NGOs

Yoshikazu Kaneko, Ambassador of Japan in Bangladesh, yesterday handed over six cheques totalling about half a million US dollars to six local NGOs as financial support to their projects, reports BSS.

The Japanese government has been supporting NGOs' grass-roots level activities in Bangladesh by the programme of Japanese grant assistance for grass-roots projects.

The programme is utilised by all NGOs in Bangladesh for their sustainable and effective projects to promote social welfare in unprivileged remote areas under the supervision of NGO Bureau.

The precise amount of all cheques worth 4,35,759 US dollars were handed over to the chief executive officers or similar persons of the organisations at the Japanese embassy.

The names of representative organisations and projects which received the cheques are as follows:

Dr Neaz Ahmed, Director General of Family Planning Association of Bangladesh, received the cheque for 68,157 US dollars for the construction of Bhatpara Women Multipurpose Training Centre in Narsingdi.

Prof. Mahmoodul Haque, President, Bangladesh Friendship Education Society, received the cheque for 59,302 US dollars for the project of health and veterinary centre at Mazirhat, Doulatkhan, Bhola.

US dollars for the project of Health Nutrition Education Materials Development in Dhaka.

Engineer Moklesur Rahman, Executive Director of Jubo Academy, received the cheque worth 69,618 US dollars for the construction of Holohya Adarsha Buddha Niketan building at Nilphamari.

Kronomy Chakma, General Secretary of Valedi Multiplex Social Welfare Association, received the cheque worth 74,314 US dollars for the construction and equipment supply of Valedi Primary Health Care Centre in remote area.

James Mridul Haider, Director of Alohika, received the cheque for 90,581 US dollars for the construction of Barisal Mother and Child Clinic for Community Development at Agailjhara, Barisal.

M O Ratan, Chairman, Bhola Seba Sangha, received the cheque for 73,787 US dollars for the construction of multipurpose health and veterinary centre at Mazirhat, Doulatkhan, Bhola.

AL-BNP clash in Moulvibazar: 15 injured

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Mar 29: At least 15 persons were injured in a clash between the activists of Awami League and BNP at the Barlekha thana headquarters in Moulvibazar district tonight.

The clash ensued when the two groups took possession of the southern and the northern part of the bazar respectively.

They chased each other, blasted crackers, pelted stones and at one stage exchanged several rounds of gunshots at about 8 pm.

Police lobbed 35 rounds of tear gas shells to disperse the activists.

The authorities earlier imposed section 144 to maintain law and order.

Speaker, 9 others declared 'people's enemy' in Khulna

From Our Correspondent

KHULNA, Mar 29: The district and city liaison committee has declared ten persons as "people's enemies" and "persona non grata" with effect from this morning.

They are Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali, Whip Ashraf Hossain, City BNP president M. Nurul Islam, Ghazi Abdul Huq MP, Prafulla Kumar Mondol MP, Wazed Ali Biswas MP, Prof. Ali Ahmed MP, AU Ahmed MP, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman MP, and Nargis Ali MP.

The liaison committee has called upon the people not to allow these ten persons to hold meetings here and also to remove portraits of Begum Zia from all government and semi-government offices immediately.

People's suffering have increased due to the misuse of the government which has also ruined the country's economy," said the city mayor.

Meanwhile, Hanif inaugurated another "Janatar Manch" at Mirpur in the city yesterday.

Our Staff Correspondent adds: While addressing the sit-in demonstrators from "Janatar Manch", city AL general secretary Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya said if the issue of the caretaker government is not settled immediately, people would stage a sit-in in front of the Bangabhaban.

NLD asks Myanmar junta to convene parliament

YANGON, Mar 29: The National League for Democracy (NLD) of Myanmar led by Aung San Suu Kyi, has asked the ruling military to convene the parliament which emerged from a 1990 election won by the NLD, reports Reuters.

The party, in a letter written by its chairman Aung Shwe, asked the chairman of the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) to convene the parliament, whose existence was never recognised by the SLORC.

The NLD won more than 80 per cent of the seats in the May 1990 polls.

The letter, a copy of which was dated March 25, there has been no public response from the government to the NLD's suggestion.

Meanwhile, a constitutional convention organised by the SLORC to draw up the guidelines of a new charter, adopted on Friday sections on Myanmar's future executive and judiciary.

The chairman of the meeting convening commission, Aung Toe, said Myanmar would in future have a president elected by both an upper and lower house of parliament.

The president would have the power to appoint all ministers with the exception of the ministers of defence, home affairs and border region affairs, who will be nominated by the armed forces chief, Aung Toe said.

The national convention, which has met intermittently since January 1993, adopted on Thursday rules for a future bicameral legislature despite opposition from some delegates to military appointments in the future parliament.

The meeting decided Myanmar's future House of Representatives would have 440 members, with 110 appointed by the military and 330 elected members.

A house of nationalities would have 224 members with 56 appointed by the military and the remaining 168 coming from Myanmar's 14 administrative regions, Aung Toe said.

Both houses would have five-year terms, he added.

Inter-dist buses ply, charge higher fare

Star Report

A few inter-district buses left the Syedabad and Gabtali terminals in the city for various destinations yesterday, according to witnesses and transport workers.

At least 10 buses left the Syedabad terminal for Comilla, Noakhali and Chittagong. There were some incoming buses also, transport workers said.

Over a dozen buses left the Gabtali terminal for Aricha and Manikganj. This correspondent also saw some buses from Aricha entering the terminal.

At both the terminals, passengers complained that the fare was higher than the normal. The drivers said the higher fare was charged because of toll payment and risk of damage in plying vehicles.

Some passengers on board a bus bound for Aricha complained that they were charged Tk 40 instead of the normal fare of Tk 25.

At the Syedabad terminal, transport workers were seen calling passengers for Comilla, Noakhali and Chittagong. Passengers there also complained of higher fare. Transport workers there said they faced no obstruction in plying vehicles in the routes.

In inter-district bus left Mahakkhal terminal yesterday, claimed some transport workers there.

Plan to boost Palestinian economy in WB, Gaza

WASHINGTON, Mar 29: Responding to Arab anger and European appeals, the Clinton administration has forged an agreement to ease Israel's restrictions on Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, reports AP.

The plan, announced yesterday by Secretary of State Warren Christopher, shifts gears both on the focus of a two-day conference of 27 nations and US strategy for coping with terrorism and the anxiety four suicide bombings have caused the Israeli people.

The conference, continuing today at the State Department, is expanding its agenda from considering measures to counter terrorism to ways to ease the impact of Israeli security measures on Gaza and the West Bank.

35 secys

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government is not formed within their deadline (March 29).

They also urged officials and employees in all divisions, districts and thanas to bring out protest processions from respective local press clubs.

The joint statement said the country has been pushed towards anarchy by not forming a caretaker government within the deadline set by the Council and the Parishad.

BSS adds: Four representatives of the Bangladesh Government Employees Coordination Council in a joint statement yesterday expressed their solidarity with the programme of officials-employees liaison committee.

They said the country's administration, law and order and economy has broken down because of the current political crisis. Officials and employees were now unable to attend their offices normally and discharge responsibility for lack of security, they added.

They urged all tiers of employees of all offices in Dhaka metropolitan city to assemble in front of Press Club in processions using banners at 11 am today.

Employees of all offices and courts at the divisional, district and thana levels have also been urged to observe similar programme at their respective places.

The next course of programme will be announced from the rally in front of Press Club, they said.

The joint press statement was issued in the names of Babu Nani Gopal Das, President, Bangladesh Government Employees Coordination Council, Nur Ahmed Chowdhury and Abdul Khair, vice-presidents and Md. Iqbal Hussain, organising secretary.

Sit-in

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Khokan, Shahjahan Ali Saju, Abu Alzai Babu and Anisul Islam.

Jubo League president Sheikh Fazul Karim Selim presided over its rally which was addressed by Awami League leaders Amir Hossain Amu, Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya and Jubo League leaders Advocate Kazi Iqbal Hossain, Tarana Halim, Abul Kasem Mantu and Ami Hossain Gazi.

Mayor Hanif addressed both the rallies, saying the people from all walks of life are fighting for the fall of this "illegal" government.

People's suffering have increased due to the misuse of the government which has also ruined the country's economy," said the city mayor.

Meanwhile, Hanif inaugurated another "Janatar Manch" at Mirpur in the city yesterday.

Our Staff Correspondent adds: While addressing the sit-in demonstrators from "Janatar Manch", city AL general secretary Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya said if the issue of the caretaker government is not settled immediately, people would stage a sit-in in front of the Bangabhaban.

Non-cooperation

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plying from morning.

Some private cars with banners of Hajj passenger and trucks carrying food items were also seen plying yesterday.

A few rickshaw vans were seen carrying portraits of Awami League president Sheikh Hasina, playing songs condemning the government and welcoming her as the leader of the country.

Processions were also brought out by both the ruling party and opposition political parties condemning each other.

The ruling party activists were seen setting up their podium near its headquarters at Naya Paltan yesterday.

The opposition parties were also seen raising their podiums on the main roads in various parts of the city.

BSS adds: Train operations to and from Dhaka were disrupted due to the domestic programme. All the domestic and international flights, however, operated as per schedule, it said quoting airport sources.

Launch services were almost normal, according to the Sadarghat Launch Terminal sources.

Officials

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different cadres, professions and non-cadres were retired on the plea of completion of 25 years of service and people were appointed on contract service to politicise the administration, the press release signed by Mohammad Foiz Ullah said.

Those who were present in the meeting are: Kazi Baharul Islam, former Managing Director of Agrani Bank, Taifur Hossain, former MD Rupali Bank, Golam Moshed, former additional IG police, Waliur Rahman ex-ambassador, Mohiuddin, ex-ambassador, M Taheruddin, former MD Janata Bank, Moniruzzaman Chowdhury, former additional secretary, Kazi Anwar Hossain, former member National Board of Revenue, Khandaker Moniruzzaman, former Commissioner of Taxes, Gola Mohammad, former General Manager of Bangladesh Krishi Bank and Enamul Huq Chowdhury, former General Manager Janata Bank.

The meeting said that retirement of so many efficient and experienced high officials without showing any cause was a proof of BNP's misuse and serving party interest.

"This was violation of human rights and disregard to rule of law," the meeting said.

The meeting decided to prepare a list of such affected officials and employees. Persons concerned have been requested to contact Kazi Anwar Hossain, former member of the National Board of Revenue at phone no. 841249.

The meeting also decided to take up a programme to inform the people about the "affected" officials and employees.

An ad-hoc committee was formed at Thursday's meeting.

Share trading

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any serious disaster in the share market when it reopens.

A majority of the companies, due to production shut down for long are not in a position to declare dividends this year. This will cause depreciation in share price, M A Haque Hawladar, councillor and former honorary secretary of the DSE said.

Whenever the floor will reopen, there will be a rush of small investors to sell their shares to collect money for buying essential goods. This will bring down the share price index, he observed.

At the closing day of the DSE, the all-share price index was 796.81 points while it was 835.83 points at the end of 1995.

The Market Capitalisation of the DSE was Tk 5192.10 crore on the closing day while it was Tk 5363.68 crore during the closing week of last year.

The share market operated only for 17 days in January, 11 days in February and only 6 days in March this year.

Abu Ahmed a teacher of Dhaka University and share market analyst also said that prices of most of the shares would fall after the DSE re-opens.

It is a serious blow to a very small and flourishing share market like the DSE, Ahmed said.

He however said the investors will regain confidence if the politics in the country takes a positive turn and show good signs of stability.

Shot dead

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Killing could not be known immediately. However, police suspect that the murder was a sequel to a dispute over business matters.

According to sources, unidentified persons called Khokan from his house in the morning. Police recovered the body in the afternoon and sent it to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for autopsy.

A brother of the victim filed a case with Teigaon thana in this regard. None was arrested in this connection till last night.

Meanwhile, one Sumon 6, son of Md Karim, was run over by a tempo in Anandabazar area at around 1 pm. He died on the spot, medical sources said.

Police recovered the body of one Yunus, 22, from a canal at Rupnagar in Mirpur yesterday morning.

Yunus, son of Shamsul Huq of the area, was missing since Thursday afternoon. The body was sent to the DMCH for autopsy.

Besides, a youngman identified as Mustafa Tutul, 25, son of a government official, reportedly committed suicide by hanging himself from a ceiling fan in their Green Road residence early yesterday.

The body was sent to the DMCH.

Chinese hairdresser Kenneth Shu at the High Court in London on Thursday, after he was awarded damages totalling 330,000 dollars against the Metropolitan Police Commissioner for unlawful arrest and assault.



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The Midnight File

Taliban rocket Kabul: 4 killed

ISLAMABAD, Mar 29: Rebels fired five rockets at residential areas in the Afghan capital Kabul today, killing four people and wounding seven, official Kabul Radio said. The broadcast, monitored in Islamabad, said the Taliban Islamic militia fired the rockets from the south of the city, also damaging three houses, reports Reuter.

Protest against hike in tuition fees

Police beat up ROK students: One dies

SEOUL, Mar 29: A South Korean student died during a street protest in Seoul today, witnesses said, reports AFP.

Other students said Noh Suk, 20, had been beaten by police during the protest against increased tuition fees.

Noh, a student at the prestigious Yonsei University, was pronounced dead upon arrival at the National Medical Centre, doctors said.

Police used tear gas on the demonstrators and detained around 60 of them, witnesses said.

AP adds: Ten thousand students rallied in downtown Seoul on Friday to demand an end to political corruption, with many of the protesters clashing violently with police.

Dozens of students were beaten with clubs and arrested by police, who fired hundreds of volleys of tear gas to disperse and round up the protesters.

Others were dragged along the wet pavement by police and loaded onto waiting buses.

Several dozen police were also surrounded by students, who swiped their shields, gas masks, and clubs. One policeman was seen being helped to the ground by fellow officers, and appeared to have difficulty breathing.

Having taken over a 10-lane avenue for three blocks, students roared and marched to the sound of gongs and drums, only to be forced to retreat when the staccato blasts of tear gas covered the streets with foggy smoke.

At least 5,000 police had been deployed near the protest site to disperse the students and prevent protesters from marching on government buildings nearby.

Pedestrians were seen running into alleys and eateries to avoid the sting of the tear gas. Most of the stores had already lowered their shutters and closed for the day.

Traffic was backed up for blocks with the street confrontation coming to a head during evening rush hour.

"Make election found public" students shouted, clapping and stomping to the beat of the chant. Others waved brightly coloured banners calling for Kim's resignation.

Students claim that President Kim Young-Sam accepted bribes and other questionable money during his 1992 election campaign, and were demanding that he make his financial records public.

Nobel prize winner to become Taiwan's premier

TAIPEI, Taiwan, Mar 29: President Lee Teng-hui will name as his premier a Nobel Prize-winning chemist with close ties to China, a leading newspaper reported Friday, says AP.

Despite his landslide election victory last weekend, Lee has bowed to opposition objections to other possible candidates. His Nationalist Party has only a two-seat majority in the 164-seat legislature, which must approve his choice.

Lee plans to name Lee Yuan-tseh, a non-politician who shared the 1986 Nobel for chemistry and whom the opposition says it will accept, the United Evening News reported. The two Lees are not related.

Quake toll rises to 62 in Ecuador

QUITO, Mar 29: Defence Minister Alfonso Alarcon said today that 62 people died in the earthquake that rocked central Ecuador overnight, reports AFP.

Citing information from the special forces brigades on the site of the quake Alarcon said most of the victims were in Pujilli around 100 kilometres (62 miles) south of the capital, the worst hit region near the earthquake's epicenter.

The quake registered 5.7 degrees on the open-ended Richter Scale and followed by several aftershocks.

Lok Sabha

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unit, which is opposed to both the Atadmk and its leader, state Chief Minister Jayalalitha Jayaram.

"It's unacceptable to us," declared G K Moopanar, the Congress chief in Tamil Nadu, a sprawling southern state of nearly 55 million people which has been ruled by the Atadmk since 1991.

Congress sources say the party cannot win even half-dozen seats in Tamil Nadu on its own, and Rajoo agreed to a joint campaign because the election beginning April 27 is expected to be extremely close and could result in a deadlock.

While the violent reaction in Tamil Nadu has stunned Congress leaders in New Delhi, party spokesman Vithal Gadgil put up a brave front: "It is the initial reaction. Everyone will fall in line eventually," he said.

Liason body

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leaders Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid, Quamaruzzaman and Sheikh Ansar Ali.

Nasim said that the ruling party was "plotting conspiracy to cling to power." Government officials including those in the Secretariat have joined the peoples' movement, Nasim claimed.

The meeting urged the authorities concerned and the officials to keep constant vigil so that none can remove or destroy documents and files containing evidences of their (BNP) corruptions and misdeeds."

The meeting also condemned the attacks on the residences of the Cabinet Secretary, Jute Secretary and Syed Mohiuddin, Leader of the Government Employees Coordination Council, Nasim said.

Ctg normal

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"Janatar Mancha" (People's dais), said today they would not leave the streets until the 'illegal government' resigns.

Hundreds of people from all walks of life joined the Janatar Manch, erected in front of the New Market under the auspices of the Chittagong civic committee.

Leaders of different opposition political parties, professional groups, trade unions and individuals are attending the Manch and many of them are expressing solidarity with the ongoing movement of the opposition.

A big procession from the Janatar Manch was brought out yesterday and it passed through important city roads.

Normal traffic movement came to a halt for about one hour due to the procession which was led by Chittagong city mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury.

Leaders of different cadres of the Bangladesh Civil Service in a statement, expressed their solidarity with the people's demand for handing over power to the caretaker government immediately.