

## DOWN TO EARTH

## Present Milieu in Dhaka City

By ASM Nurunnabi

The present milieu in Dhaka city has reached such a stage as to give rise to the question whether it is really a city. According to an ADB-funded survey of urban poverty conducted by the Dhaka University lately, in Dhaka more than six persons out of ten do not live under a regular roof, do not use tap water and do not have access to anything even remotely resembling a lavatory. In this situation, the question is inevitable: by what name we may call these settlements of congested and deprived humanity.

A city postulates a higher level of organisation that provides a higher level of amenities of life sustained on the basis of a higher level of norms and values. Are all these elements present in the existing state of things in the city? We seem to be destined to wait a long time to find a positive answer.

There is no end to the litany of present woes of city life. The city dwellers tend to feel that safety of their lives and security of their property are something they have long handed over to fate. Though the city may have a cosmetic face and an impressive skyline in its affluent parts, more than half of its population live in shanties and slums. Our daily existence is bevelled by these nightmarish factors: there is no space to stretch the limbs, no clean air to breath, even no leg-space on the roads, lanes and by-lanes. Modern transportation is a shambles, compounded by traffic jams all over the city.

The RAJUK is understood to have in hand five projects for relieving the housing problem of the city. Of these, the biggest one is called the Purbachal or Yusufganj project. The project is due to come up within ten kilometres east of the Zia International Airport. It will extend over about seven thousand acres of land. For this project, situated at the junction of Dhaka, Narayanganj and Gazipur districts, it is understood that 6150 acres of land have already been acquired.

This project will provide for well-planned houses, roads,

lakes, parks, playing fields, schools, colleges, markets and shopping complex. To the citizens of Dhaka, beset with numerous problems, the projected township may appear as a dreamland. The present change in the top echelons of government provides a good opportunity to RAJUK to give a big push to those prized projects.

A recent seminar on Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan emphasised the need for coordination between agencies responsible for implementing the city development plans. Obviously, Dhaka's growth from a mere provincial town to a mega city in a little more than two decades has put immense pressure on all kinds of its physical facilities. If the overstretching of city amenities on account of this fast growth has been a key factor for poor services in a number of areas, it is felt that lack of planning and coordination between different agencies have only compounded the situation.

Some suggest that the Caretaker Government may take a serious look into the affairs of our capital city particularly relating to horrendous traffic jams, clearing of roads of mass encroachments and removing hitches as far as possible in regular supply of electricity and water.

If the metropolis is allowed to grow further without effective plans for tackling its manifold problems, this city which is projected to rank among the 10 most populous in the world, may end up as an unmanageable, oversized slum.



Early season lychees were being sold for Tk 50 per 100 at a city market yesterday. — Star photo

## Israel delays partial pullout from Hebron

JERUSALEM, May 3: Israel today delayed its partial withdrawal from the flashpoint town of Hebron until after the May 29 general elections, drawing swift accusations from the Palestinians of breaking the peace accords, reports AFP.

Prime Minister Shimon Peres, who is also the defence minister, made the decision after meeting with military chiefs in Tel Aviv, sources close to the Israeli leader said.

But until the redeployment goes ahead the army will continue to withdraw equipment from the West Bank town and could make a symbolic gesture to the Palestinians by evacuating some posts, they added.

Peres, who said after the meeting he was 'in no hurry to fix a date for the partial pull-out which is already more than a month behind schedule, published a statement saying it would be coordinated with the Palestinians.

The vagueness of the statement left the Prime Minister

## Serbs won't allow extradition of leaders

SARAJEVO, May 3: Bosnian Serbs are willing to cooperate with war crimes investigations by the UN tribunal, but will not allow the extradition of their leaders the speaker of parliament says, reports AP.

Both men, Radovan Karadzic and Gen Ratko Mladic, have been indicted for war crimes and genocide by the tribunal, based in the Hague, Netherlands. Neither is in custody.

Asked if the two would be extradited, Momico Krajisnik, a senior Karadzic aide, said yesterday that his government will cooperate 'only according to our constitution, which stipulates that our citizens can be tried only by our courts.'

Krajisnik was speaking with the British Broadcasting Corp's Serbian-language service.

Rajko Kasagic, a more moderate Bosnian Serb official, told reporters today in Pale, south of Sarajevo, that extradition 'contradicts our constitution'.

European Union

## 7 join BNP

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the nationalist forces to rally round BNP for making a better Bangladesh to face the challenges of the coming century.

Describing the forthcoming general elections as the most crucial one, the BNP chairperson said that it would decide whether Bangladesh will go ahead or go backward, whether Bangladesh would become an emerging tiger or become a bottomless basket, whether the people of Bangladesh would be successful in protecting their fundamental rights of work and livelihood or again become the hapless victims of famine and economic ruination.

She said that the BNP is a modern political party imbued with modern thoughts and vision for the 21st century.

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## Arms recovered in Khulna

For Our Correspondent

ULNA, May 3: A special squad of police on Thursday unearthed bomb manufacturing factory in west Tootpara under Kotwali thana and arrested a young man in this connection. Police seized the home-made bombs, three pipe guns and firearms making material.

## Taliban rocket Kabul: 3 killed

ISLAMABAD, May 3: Rockets slammed into Kabul overnight and today, killing three civilians and wounding nine, government-controlled Kabul Radio reported, says Reuter.

The radio, monitored in Islamabad, said the rockets had been fired by the Islamic Taliban militia besieging the Afghan capital since October. It said several homes had been damaged.

Taliban leaders could not be reached for comment.

Rocket and artillery barrages on Kabul have occurred almost daily for several months as forces loyal to Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani fight off their Taliban foes.

Kabul Radio reported on Thursday that three civilians had been killed and 14 wounded in rocket attacks in the previous 24 hours.

## Baltic leaders meet in Sweden

VISBY, Sweden, May 3: The heads of government of the Baltic sea states meet for the first time today and Saturday in Sweden in a bid to add political vigour to their recent cooperation in the region, reports AFP.

The 11 leaders arrived separately today at midday on the island of Gotland, 90 kilometers (55 miles) off of southeastern Sweden, where Swedish Prime Minister Goran Persson will open the summit at 2:45 PM (1245 gmt).

Two work sessions are planned, this afternoon and Saturday morning, at a hotel in the Visby Port, after which a joint political declaration will be presented.

He called it 'absolutely unacceptable that the accord is being hampered, undermined, not to say sabotaged, by people like Karadzic who are still walking around free.'

Van den Broek advocated withholding reconstruction aid and possibly reimposing wartime sanctions to pressure Milosevic and Croatian President Franjo Tudjman to fulfil their promises.

Tudjman has allowed only one indicated Croat to turn himself in to the tribunal, while an indicted Tudjman ally is among several indicted Croats who remain free.

The commissioner, who oversees EU foreign policy, spoke yesterday during an appearance at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

In Sarajevo on today, the UN tribunal's deputy prosecutor, Graham Blewt, examined the logistics of exhume mass graves across Bosnia thought to hold the remains of thousands of victims, most of them killed by Serbs.

The Central Bureau of Investigation, the equivalent of the American FBI, has questioned Chandraswami several times in the past year, but didn't take any action against him.

'It is no longer a secret that Chandraswami continues to enjoy the confidence of Prime Minister (PV Narasimha Rao)', said The Statesman newspaper. 'The godman is one of the few allowed direct access to the prime minister's residence in his own car.'

Chandraswami is facing charges in more than a dozen cases, including giving refuge to a wanted criminal.

Last week Chandraswami was fined for violating currency regulations when he accepted 6,000 British pounds (4000 dollars) from a former international arms dealer.

## Cong-I admits, it can't dislodge communists ruling West Bengal

CALCUTTA, May 3: Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao's Congress (I) Party admitted today that it was in no position to dislodge hardline communists ruling the state of West Bengal since 1977, reports AFP.

Somen Mitra, the party's state president, said the Congress could only hope to slightly improve its tally in the 294-member West Bengal assembly.

'We do not have any problems in returning to power,' he said. 'The people are solidly with us.'

Election officials in this state capital reported enthusiastic polling on Thursday. Men and women, particularly in village which the CPI (M) considers its domain, were seen in long queues at polling stations.

The second and final round of polling in West Bengal is due on May 7.

Mitra's colleagues in the faction-ridden West Bengal

state of Tripura and is expected to storm to power in the southern state of Kerala.

Meanwhile, India's Election Commission today ordered a repoll in 123 voting stations across six states where balloting in the second round of national elections was marred by violence and alleged rigging.

Deputy Election Commissioner Subhas Pani said the fresh polling would be held Saturday and Sunday.

The stations are spread across 38 federal constituencies in the southern states of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, the northern states of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, the central state of Madhya Pradesh and the eastern state of West Bengal.

There have been several complaints about poll violence, rigging, intimidation and fraud in the current elections. The second round of balloting Thursday was marred by violence which left nine dead in the eastern state of Bihar.

The phrase said that nothing

## The Midnight File

## Liberian faction leaders barred from entering US

WASHINGTON, May 3: The State Department announced today it was barring Liberian faction leaders, their families and associates from entering the United States. This action results from the refusal of the faction leaders to heed the pleas of the Liberian people and the international community to stop the wanton fighting and killing and corruption and looting in Monrovia, State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said, reports AFP.

## 53 countries for ban on anti-personnel mines

GENEVA, May 3: Fifty-three nations today agreed to restrict the use of anti-personnel mines worldwide but human rights groups were already bitterly attacking the deal for legitimising a vicious weapon, reports AFP.

The package submitted to the conference has now been accepted, said Johan Molander, Swedish chairman of the 53-nation UN conference called to revise a 1980 UN convention on 'excessively injurious' conventional weapons.

However, he admitted the results were modest given the scale of the problem.

The announcement came after Pakistan lifted its objections. The compromise agreement was to be formally adopted later today. Handicap International said the accord had failed to curb the spread of mines and had betrayed the hopes of thousands of mine victims across the globe.

The compromise deal was hammered out after two weeks of intense negotiations, with Pakistan — a loggerhead with India over Kashmir, Pakistan complained a 'mine import/export ban could infringe its right to self-defence.'

Islamabad, which feared a mine export ban would set a precedent applicable for other types of weapons, secured the insertion of a paragraph into a political declaration that accompanies the accord reaffirming the right to self-defence and non-interference in domestic affairs.

Meanwhile, the Gono Forum mine export ban would set a precedent applicable for other types of weapons, securing the insertion of a paragraph into a political declaration that accompanies the accord reaffirming the right to self-defence and non-interference in domestic affairs.

Meantime, the Gono Forum

Parliamentary Board has set the last date on May 7 for receiving applications seeking party nomination for contesting in the coming parliamentary elections.

Interviews of candidates from Rajshahi, Khulna and Barisal divisions will be held on May 8 and those belonging to Sylhet, Chittagong and Dhaka divisions on May 9.

## GF: Forge unity

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Impartial elections 'free from arms, terrorism and influence of black money,' the meeting noted.

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## Party tickets

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from Chittagong division first.

The interview process will continue till May 6.

Candidates seeking to contest the polls on Jatiya Party tickets can collect application forms till tomorrow and the JP parliamentary board will start taking interviews from May 6, according to party sources.

On the third and final day for submission of forms yesterday, 278 forms were sold from the AL central office and 616 were submitted.

Some 30 forms were collected on behalf of party chief Sheikh Hasina, noted Jali. But he could not confirm how many of those forms were finally submitted.

Party sources, however, said that Sheikh Hasina may seek party nomination from four seats - Gopalganj-3 (Tungipara-Kotalipara), her home constituency; Rangpur-6 (Pirganj), the home district of Dr Wazed Mian, her husband; Bagerhat-1 (Fakirhat-Molbarhat-Chitalmari) and Dhaka-10 (Tejgaon-Ramna).

Five application forms seeking BNP nomination were collected for party chief Begum Khaleda Zia.

The Jamaat-e-Islami's parliamentary board would finalise party nominations in all 300 constituencies of the Jatiya Sangsad by May 6.

## SAARC

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for being put to the next SAARC summit scheduled for early 1997, he said.

The SAARC convention on terrorism provides for summary extradition of people wanted in terrorist cases when appropriate and trials of alleged offenders in the country where they are found.

India and Pakistan, which have fought two wars over disputed Kashmir since independence from Britain in 1947, are both part of the SAARC initiative, despite trading charges of arming insurgents in each other's countries.

## AL polls campaign

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Ershad with a narrow margin of 325 votes. More than our application form from each of the six divisions has been collected in the name of the party chief.

Probable AL candidates in the eight constituencies in Dhaka city are Habibur Rahman Molla in Demra-Sabujbagh (Dhaka-4); Rahmatullah, a newcomer in the party in Gulshan-Cantonment-Uttara (Dhaka-5); Saber Hussain Chowdhury in Motijheel-Sabujbagh (Dhaka-6); Fazlul Karim in Sutrapur-Kotwali (Dhaka-7); Anwar Hussain, a businessman, in Lalbagh (Dhaka-8); Makbul Hussain in Dhamondi-Mohammadpur (Dhaka-9); Dr B M Iqbal in Tejgaon-Ramna (Dhaka-10) and Kamal Mazumder in Mirpur-Pallabi (Dhaka-11).

However, AL did bad results in greater Dhaka district by bagging only two seats out of 35. Greater Dhaka consists of six district - Dhaka, Munshiganj, Narayanganj and Narshingdi.

The AL's trauma in Dhaka city was reversed with the big victory of Mohammad Hanif, AL president, in the Mayor election in 1993.

## Tremor

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this year following quakes in southwestern Yunnan and in northwestern Xinjiang.

The magnitude 7 Yunnan quake, which hit Feb 3, killed at least 304 people and left 3,775 people seriously injured. The magnitude 6.9 quake that struck March 19 in Xinjiang, a much less densely populated area, killed 24 people and injured 40.

Xinhua said 11 temblors measuring more than magnitude 5 have hit China so far this year. Five measured greater than magnitude 6, already higher than the usual three or five that hit China annually.

