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DOWN TO EARTH

An Emerging Mega City's Nightmare

By A S M Nurunnabi

According to a recent government report, Dhaka will be one of the Mega Cities in the next century. Keeping that forecast in view, the question may naturally arise what the future may hold for us in the run-up to this city's status. The city is already in the grip of serious civic problems. Among the conspicuous ones, we may mention the problem created by overcrowding. In the opinion of experts, although in theory, the combination of a rapidly growing urban population means an increase in consumers, which should bring about an era of prosperity in an increase in trade. There are so many difficulties associated with rapidly increasing urban population, particularly in our case, that they will stand in the way of extracting any of the economic potentials of a larger city.

The foremost of such difficulties is the present infrastructural insufficiency plaguing the city life. Recently, it appears that the power supply position has deteriorated further, so much so that, whereas it was understood previously that the process of load shedding is applied not to all areas of Dhaka, it was later reported the programme would now be applied to all localities without discrimination, as and when required. In these circumstances, the important question is whether the authorities concerned have any realistic plan to rebuild a system that has all but turned obsolescent. Since the main problem lies in the generation side, as a result of which the output is far short of the over all civic and industrial needs, it is felt that the tax-payer has a right to know what plans, if any, the authorities have to bridge the big gap in supply, keeping in view the future perspective.

The second issue of critical importance in the water supply shortage. The current supply covers about two thirds of the actual need of the city. The malaise lies in the fact that this utility service has been staying practically where it had been 20 years ago although there has been tent to increase in population during the period. Even the present impossibly short and irregular supply is reported to be compounded by the questionable quality of the water supplied.

These days, an entire system of roads has been turned into inaccessible territory through the various public works in progress; a number of roads have turned into veritable danger or inaccessible zones for vehicles and pedestrians alike. None question the necessity of activities meant for improvements in the quality of civic life. But what one finds galling is the very slow pace at which such works are carried on.

Along with this, we may note the poor road transport system of the city which is a shambles.

Another serious problem affecting city life is the present extremely poor waste disposal and sanitation system. Drainage, roads and lanes and by-lanes, connected with this civic problem still as ramshackle as ever. The garbage carrying trucks still continue to ply at peak traffic hours spreading unbearable nauseating stench all around. The newly introduced big-size garbage containers which are hauled away by a special type of vehicles has proved to be a greater source of environmental pollution. As usual, some people continue to dump their garbage outside the confines of these containers. On this account and because of the larger contents of these containers which are not hauled away regularly, the sanitation situation nearby is seriously threatened. One wonders why the City Corporation authorities can't devise arrangements for garbage clearance during late hours at night or very early hours in the morning, as is done in many other cities.

In the eyes of servers, the whole range of these public services reflect a state of chronic neglect and spreading abuse. The lack of care-most important, accountability has over the years been the largest single factor in bringing performance and results to an all time low.

In view of the present nightmarish situation in the city, the BBC has reportedly wished lately none to have the misfortune of being condemned to live in Dhaka. According to observers, the strange part of the story is that the election manifestos of all the parties do not see any problems in the cancerous growth of the city population seriously lacking in some of the basic civic facilities.

It is felt by some observers that the government in office at present may at least launch the first positive step in attempts to improve the situation. This may put the citizens at some advantage over the party government that will emerge from the next election. The demand for accountability will acquire more strength in the process.

Since the big question before us how we can adequately meet the challenges of the 21st century when Dhaka will be a megacity, every onerous responsibility will devolve on future governments to make the city a better place to live in, belying the sad comment of the BBC.



Awami League President Sheikh Hasina exchanging pleasantries with Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali after taking oath as MP yesterday.

Hasina to take oath

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The August 15, 1975 military putsch and those killed in the Language Movement in 1952. Six-point movement in 1966, mass uprisings in 1971 and in the last democratic movement.

Tofael said that Sheikh Hasina, in her speech, at the ALPP the meeting expressed her gratitude to almighty Allah for the success of her party in the June 12 elections. She conveyed her sincere gratitude to the countrymen for giving their mandate to Awami League to form the government and serve the nation.

Sheikh Hasina expressed her firm determination that her party would fulfil all its election pledges at any cost. She called upon her party MPs to help run an honest and dynamic government.

She said that her first and foremost responsibility would be to eliminate terrorist activities from all levels of national life at any cost. Allot steps would be taken to establish a poverty-free society, she added.

Sheikh Hasina also sought cooperation of her party MPs to establish a total corruption-free society.

Reiterating her earlier pledges to run the government through a national consensus.

132 MPs-elect

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retaining only one each.

Sheikh Hasina retained Gopalganj-3, Abdur Razzak Shariatpur-2, Tofael Ahmad Bhola-2 and Mohammad Nasim Sirajganj-2.

The oath taking over Hasina stood up with a happy smile and turned to the audience and raised her hand saying, 'Assalamu Alaikum' which was duly reciprocated.

Later, the MPs went to the office of Parliament Secretary to sign their names in the register book and posed for photographs to be taken for their identity cards.

A list of 273 MPs-elect has been gazetted so far. Of them, 134 are from the AL. Gazette notification on the results of repolling in 26 constituencies held on June 19 are yet to be published. Repolling in another constituency takes place today.

Stage set for clash over post of UN Secy-Gen

UNITED NATIONS, June 21: With the United States vowing to end Boutros Boutros-Ghali's term as UN Secretary General, the stage is set for a major clash on who will lead the world body into the 20th century, reports Reuters.

Believing he has to carry through the reform and diplomatic work he began, Boutros-Ghali told reporters in Bonn: 'I still hope that the United States will change its position. We still have six months until the elections.'

Boutros-Ghali, 73, announced late on Wednesday he would seek a second five-year term. His spokesman, Ahmed Fawzi, said the timing of the announcement was because the United States decided to go public with its position in Thursday's editions of the New York Times.

'I don't think that because one member state says one thing, that should necessarily be the law,' he said.

A US official said key allies were called earlier to tell them that Washington's position would be made public.

Battle lines were drawn as the United Nations faces its toughest crisis yet, with debts mounting daily, due mainly to the 1.5 billion dollars that the United States owes.

In Washington, White House spokesman Mike McCurry said bluntly: 'We think there are most likely other people in the world who would be more capable of pursuing the type of UN reform agenda (that is needed).'

US State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns was even more direct, saying, 'It's unfortunate that this situation has arisen as it has, (but) we're prepared to use our veto.'

Laying of wreaths at Bangabandhu's portrait today

All MPs of the Bangladesh Awami League will place wreaths at the portrait of the father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman this morning at the Bangabandhu Bhawan in city, party sources said, reports ISS.

Led by party chief Sheikh Hasina, the Awami League MPs will gather at 32 Dhanmondi residence of Bangabandhu, now the Bangabandhu Museum to express their tributes to the father of the nation.

On the eve of formation of government, the Awami League MPs, on the occasion, would also take renewed pledges to translate the ideals and spirit of War of Liberation and the dawn of Bangabandhu into reality in its true perspective to establish an exploitation-free and a self-respected nation.

Attack on garments workers protested

By Staff Correspondent

The National Garments Workers Federation yesterday brought out a procession in the city protesting attack on garment workers by the owner of a factory in Malibagh area, says a press release.

Seriously injured Anwar, a worker and communication secretary of the Federation was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

They alleged that the owner of Fashion Linkers had illegally fired 35 workers on April 28. When the workers went there to collect their dues some terrorists hired by the owner attacked them, the press release said.

They accused Sabuj, an owner of the garments factory and Shamim, Humayun, Momen and Rony for the attack.

The leaders of the federation demanded immediate arrest and punishment of Sabuj and others.

Myanmar junta frees 262

YANGON, June 21: Myanmar's military government said today it had freed nearly all the 262 members of Aung San Suu Kyi's pro-democracy movement who were detained last month, reports AP.

The government said they had released 240 activists, but officials of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy said only 168 were confirmed freed.

The ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), carried out mass arrests last month to derail a party congress that posed Suu Kyi's biggest challenge to the regime since she was freed from house arrest last July.

Those arrested included 238 delegates to the congress, which was to bring together opposition candidates who overwhelmingly won parliamentary elections in 1990 that the SLORC refused to honour. In the end, only 18 eluded arrest and attended.

Suu Kyi, winner of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize, staged the congress anyway in a show of defiance. The delegates urged the military to hand over the power it has held since 1962 to a civilian Parliament.

One beaten to death in Jhenidah

From Our Correspondent

JHENIDAH, June 21: Miton, 21, a day labourer of village Bagutia in Sallakupa thana was allegedly beaten to death by his rival groups last night.

A case was lodged with Sallakupa thana and the body was sent to district hospital morgue for autopsy. Police could not arrest anybody till filing the report.

Airbus

From page 1

caused due to the 'passenger overflow' and 'little difficulties in taking off and landing.'

'We like to keep our position clear to all,' said Farooque, adding that it was a temporary problem and nothing to worry about.

Death toll from rains rises to 283 in India

NEW DELHI, June 21: Indian authorities today sounded a red alert in Kashmir state after torrential rains killed four people, as the death toll from heavy rains soared to 283 across the country, officials said, reports AFP.

The situation worsened in the Kashmir valley after flash floods washed away six bridges and marooned some 100 villages, forcing the state administration to order the army to stand by, domestic news agencies said.

All major rivers in the Himalayan province were flowing above the danger mark as heavy monsoon rains which began on Tuesday continued to lash the state, the United Nations of India (UNI) reported.

An official spokesman said a helicopter rescued 31 men and women marooned at their village on the outskirts of Srinagar, the state's summer capital.

Today's deaths took the death toll in Kashmir to eight. The Press Trust of India (PTI) said the situation in the state was grim.

Besides, Kashmir on India's northernmost tip, the monsoon has been playing havoc in the southern most state of Kerala and parts of the country's west coast since breaking out about 10 days ago.

Four people were killed on Friday in Kerala, which gets the first monsoon rains in India, pushing the number of dead in the state to 23, UNI said.

The latest victims included a man who died when a school wall collapsed after it was battered by continuous rains.

Cyclone-hit 15 Indian trawlers with 120 fishermen still untraced

BOMBAY, June 21: At least 15 trawlers, with about 120 fishermen, were still missing nearly 36 hours after a cyclone devastated India's west coast, a spokesman for a fishermen's union said today, reports Reuters.

'Today is crucial. If they don't return by late tonight we'll presume they are either lost or dead,' said Vijay Bandarkar, secretary, Maharashtra Matchimari Kruti Samiti said in Bombay.

'There could be mechanical or engine failures, causing the boats to drift away,' Bandarkar said. 'And the other possibility is that they may have been drowned.'

The cyclone, with wind speeds of up to 100 kph (60 mph), struck the west coast early on Wednesday, its fury trained at the two western states of Gujarat and Maharashtra.



General view of the Arab