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# Down to Earth

# Beggary reaches new heights in city

By AS M Nurunnabi

Lately we have been witness-In the city, there are report-edly some groups of beggars who ing a growing presence of beggars in the city. This ubiquity overwhelms us. Their steady operate in an organised man-ner. At the head of each group increasing numbers are in evimostly consisting of cripples and those otherwise handidence on roads, pavements, shopping centres, railway stacapped, there is a leader who retions, steamer ghats and bus stations. Even when you are on portedly directs operation in the move either in cars, aueach area and at the end of the day appropriates a major por-tion of the collection from the torickshaws or rickshaws. there is no escape from them as your vehicle comes to a stop at group. These professional beg-gars are said to be common any intersection on traffic signals. Our socio-religious ethos sights at important areas of the inclines us to a charitable discity. The beggars of the city in position. But our feeling of general are said to be choosy in charity has its limits. When one accepting alms in monetary terms. Any offer of less than encounters a beggar at every step, the feeling of charity natuone taka is not normally acrally evaporates. The whole ceptable to them. This is a sort thing then becomes a nuisance. upward expectation of the This sometimes such a proporcity's beggars. An interesting tion that householders are aspect of begging is also re compelled to lock up their enported near the Zia Interna trance gates to prevent beggars' tional Airport. They crowd entry. Some of these beggars are round foreign travellers with intelligent enough to use callpleas for help in terms of dollar. ing bells to make their presence They are also seen to use stray words in English for begging For a poor country, beggary from foreigners. is an inevitable issue, linked

with wider socio-economic

implications. From the present

trend, it appears that the prob-

lem has reached a stage at

which the daily life of the

metropolis is being harassed to

a severe degree. It has been ob-

served that at times of religious

festivals, a heavy influx of beg-

gars into the city takes place

from outside. Similar move-

ment also takes place in the af-

termath of major natural

calamities. Besides, there is an

endemic flow into city life of

indigent people hit by landless-

ness, unemployment and social

neglect. From the rising trend

of beggary, it seems that most

of those who thus migrate to the

city choose to stay on in the city

attracted by its embellishments

and its offer of greater oppor-

tunities for easy earning by

in pornography and sex crimes.

Anti-Indian

The protesters, chanting slo-

gans which accused India of in-

vading "a docile land" delivered

a protest note to staff at the

Indian embassy, a police source

mediate withdrawal of the

Indian army unit from

Nepalese territory, and the can-

cellation of an Indo-Nepalese

river treaty which was recently

The communist movement

The demonstrators chanted

accused India of encroaching on

Nepalese territory along several

slogans against the Nepalese

government saying that signing

the Mahakali River Treaty with

India goes against Nepalese na-

tional interest.
At a public rally communist

leaders, including the founder

leader of the NDF Chitra

Bahadur KC, and former par-

denounced the Nepalese gov-

liamentarian Amik Serchan

ernment saying it was an.

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endorsed by the parliament.

parts of their border.

Indian stooge.

The note demanded the im-

We have not heard of any meaningful scheme formulated by the Department of Social Welfare for the control of beggary in urban areas. The probem is admittedly big and complex. There are reportedly seven vagrant homes in the country. They are located at Mirpur (Dhaka), Godnyle (Narayanganj), Betila (Manikganj), Dhaa (Mymensingh) Konabari, (Ka shimpur) and Pubail (Gazipur) The total capacity of such vagrant homes is considered very small, in view of the magnitude of the beggar prob-

More important in this respect is the need for undertaking suitable rehabilitation projects for the purpose of their poverty alleviation. There are various NGOs including

Grameen Bank and BRAC with their projects which are said to be actively involved in this respect. But the various causative factors for beggary have so many ramifications that it is very difficult for a developing country like ours to meet the challenge satisfactorily in a feasible time frame. The resource constraints are obviously the limiting factor. This is perhaps why the increasing incidence of beggary cannot be controlled until such time when it is possible to improve the economic condition of the peo-

There is, however, one aspect of the problem which needs be looked into by the authorities. There is no denying that there is in existence a class of organised beggars in the city Effective steps to deal with this ring may considerably help to reduce the presence of beggars in the city.

In this connection, the Con-

troller of Vagrancy, Depart ment of Social Welfare said that, though the police sometimes conduct raids to pick up vagrants for their rehabilitation at the vagrant homes, such attempts do not usually vield fruitful results, because the beggars, in most cases, manage to escape from the vagrant homes on one plea or another. As a result, about 250 seats have reportedly remained vacant in the vagrant homes inspite of the best efforts of the concerned authorities. According to the authorities of the vagrant homes, beggars, by and large, are not willing to lose their freedom of movement for begging, whatever facilities are

made available to them

through their restricted stay at

the vagrant homes. This is gen-

erally said to be the prevailing

attitude of the city beggars.



delegates from SAARC nations today pledged for accelerated economic cooperation among South Asian countries for speedy creation of the muchawaited South Asian Free Trade

Area (SAPTA), reports PTI. Participating in the regional SAARC economic conference here today, business delegates from India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan called for breaking down tariff barriers among the SAARC nations to create a separate regional economic

inaugurating the meet. West Bengal Minister for Commerce and Industry Bidyut Ganguly said economic cooperation among the SAARC nations could not develop properly as it has developed in the case of South East Asian countries. "Our strengths and weaknesses are common and if we worked together our strength will in-crease which would be beneficial to the people of these coun-

Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Bangladesh AKM Shamsuddoha said the focus should not be on what the size of the trade was or is, but on what it can be and should be for alleviation of the condition of the South Asian people Vice President of the zonal

Vice President SAARC

committee of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry Ifthakhar Ali Malik expressed the hope that this conference would achieve its goal for better and speedy trade arrangements.

President-elect of Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC). Gaurav Swarup, in his welcome address said the recent ratification of South Asian Preferen(SAPTA) has been a landmark in this regional economic integration process.

The countries have already announced a list of items which would be jointly considered for tariff concessions. This was a momentous beginning for a preferential trading arrangement which, if carried to its conclusion, would pave the creation of SAFTA," he said.

Shamsuddoha said considerable progress was made during the last year as there has been substantial expansion of concession and deepening of tariff cuts and removal of nontariff barriers.

He said that an inter-government expert group (IEG) on transition to SAFTA has already been elecided upon which would start operating as soon as the second round of trade negotiations among the SAARC countries, now on in New Delhi was concluded.

### 3 bodies recovered from Meghna

NARAYANGANJ, Dec 20 Three bodies were recovered from the river Meghna here to day, reports BSS.

The bodies were sent to Narayangani General Hospital for autopsy

The victims were identified as Shaheen, 9. Munir, 8. and their father Dulal, 38.

They were learnt to have drowned in the river Meghna near Boyddher Bazar ferryghat under Sonargaon thana on December 17 when launch ML Sharif collided with a country boat, police said.

# Political stability needed for investments: UK envoy

British High Commissioner in Dhaka David C Walker has said political commitment stability and national consensus could attract more foreign investments in Bangladesh.

"Bangladesh is a country with enormous economic potentials, but there are certain infrastructural difficulties which will have to be overcome to maximise those potentials," he told UNB.

In an interview at his office on Thursday, the new British High Commissioner touched upon various issues ranging from parliamentary democracy to economic development in Bangladesh as well as bilateral relations.

He said the inflow of foreign direct investment would increase if a long-term political stability is ensured in Bangladesh through consensus of all

In this context, the British envoy referred to a recent roundtable where politicians, professionals, bureaucrats and academics underlined political

consensus on basic issues. Walker felt that problems in communication, energy, banking and public sectors are soluble provided there is a broad national consensus and clear-cut direction from politicians.

Replying to a question about British assistance in strengthening the function of Bangladesh parliament, he said Britain is associated with the

UNDP Task Force project. We are very happy to help either through UNDP or directly to strengthen parliamentary institutions," he said, adding that Britain has a long experience in parliamentary democracy and "we are happy to help with our experience.

About the British Prime Minister's planned visit to Bangladesh on January 11 Walker said it demonstrated John Major's interest in Bangladesh as well as an acknowledgment of warm bilateral relations, British trade and investment and the role of Bangladeshi community in Britain.

The British Prime Minister is likely to be accompanied by two or three senior British businessmen, he said. The visit would also help attract more British businessmen to trade and investment here.

Describing the London-Dhaka relations as extremely good and productive, the high commissioner said there are some positive features in the bilateral relations between the two countries

These include the presence of about 300,000 Bangladeshis in Britain that makes a bridge between the two countries, increasing trade and investment. and positive collaboration between ODA (official development assistance) and the Bangladesh government and Bangladeshi NGOs in the aid field.

### Turkish C-in-C leaves Dhaka

as their children appeared in the admission test for class one vesterday.

The Commander in Chief of the Turkish Armed Forces General Ismail Hakki Karadayi left here yesterday after a four-day visit to Bangladesh, reports

He was accompanied by Be gum Seren Karadayi and a five member Turkish military goodwill delegation, an ISPR press release said.

Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General Muhammad Mahbubur Rahman and Begum Nagina Mahbub. Chief of the Naval Staff Rear Admiral Mohammad Nurul Islam and Begum Saleha Islam, Chief of the Air Staff Air Vice-Marshal Ja mal Uddin Ahmed and Begum. Tahura Jamal, senior military officers and their wives saw the distinguished guests off at the Zia International Airport.

The Turkish Ambassador To Bangladesh Kemal Ozcan Deavaj. Begum Deavaj and other embassy officers were also present at the airport to bid them farewell.

## Rebels kill 7 policemen in Tripura

AGARTALA. Dec 20: Seven policemen including a sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) were killed today on the spot in an ambush by suspected Ultras of the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) in Maracherra area under Manu police station in Dhalai district, reports PTI.

According to preliminary information from police control room here, the militants ambushed a police vehicle at around noon when it was on its way to Karaticherra on receiving information about abduction of some passengers of a private bus.

### plete development of these wells delay in installation of the AB by the last quarter of 1997 when pipeline which is supposed to

said The British company. Cairn. has already stuck a gas reserve of over 1 trillion cft in the Sangu-1 well in the shallow waters of the Bay of Bengal. It has drilled and appraisal well and

The Cairn, the sources added, is scheduled to supply 160 mmcft gas per day to the Ashuganj-Bakrabad Pipeline

The British company has already spent 30 million US dollars and will invest 200 million dollars to set up a processing plant at Sangu-I, build platform and a 50 km pipeline to connect the gas field with the Bakhrabad system in Chittagong. The Cairn has assigned another company. Brown and Roots of USA, to complete 25 per cent of the work on its be-

within the next two weeks in this connection.

"Both these companies took dynamic plans to develop these wells. If everything goes well according to the schedule and installation of Ashuganj-Bakhrabad (AB) Gas Pipeline in Chittagong region is completed by April next, we are hopeful that the existing gas supply problems will be solved," an official of the Energy Ministry

The Chittagong region is currently faced with a severe shortfall in gas supplies due to depletion of gas in the

## Court orders arrest of Phoolan Devi

NEW DELHI, Dec 20: An Indian court has ordered the arrest of former "bandit queen" Phoolan Devi on 55 cases of murder and robbery, news re-

ports said today, says AFP. A high court in the northern

Allahabad High Court Justice GSN Tripathi said: "She should now be arrested as the period of parole granted by the apex court has now come to an end with the present judge-

The Supreme Court had ruled that Devi could remain on parole unless "a competent court" ordered her to be taken

Devi, who was elected this year from the constituency of Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh spent 11 years without trial following the alleged killing in 1981 of 22 men accused of gangraping her.

### Trial of 6 foreigners

From Page of India reported. If convicted ment or even death.

Peter Blitz and the five Latvians have been in jail since their arrest awaiting the trial to commence.

Earlier this month. India's Home Minister, Indrajit Gupta told parliament that police were still trying to track down some more people involved in the arms drop.

Requests for help have been sent to Interpol and other police agencies around the world, he said but did not give detail of the people or the nationalities.

Investigation into the arms drop has unravelled a complex web involving foreign pilots and nations, according to the Indian government.

Bakhrabad gas field as well as

- Star photo

connect the Chittagong region with the national grid. The shortfall has resulted in suspension and minimisation of operation of the Raujan 210 MW power plant. Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Factory and same other gas-based production

"In the course of the next three years, the Sangu well region is likely to become one of the most prominent gas fields in international standard having potential for export of both natural gas and Liquid Natural Gas (LNG)," said a source. Export of gas will help the government pay the foreign companies in foreign currency, as per agreement, the source

This is a crucial stage in the discovery of gas fields in Bangladesh," said an energy expert. "Procedural delay by bureaucrats is not acceptable now It would be disastrous for this sector."

### Dhaka seeks

From Page 1 minister for his active role in the process of signing of the historic treaty to share water of the river Ganges.

A problem, pending for last 20 years, has been resolved fairly with the signing of the agreement, he said, adding that it would expand friendship and cooperation of the two countries and help resolve the other

Jyoti Basu told the commerce minister that India considers Bangladesh very important as a neighbour and both the countries would get fruits in economic and political fields if the atmosphere of friendship

and cooperation prevails. Later, the West Bengal industries and commerce minister called on the Bangladesh min-

A delegation of the Calcuttabased Bengal National Chamber of Commerce and Industries also called on Tofael Ahmed. He discussed various aspects of the prevailing environment of in-

# SAFTA

policy in Bangladesh.

vestment and liberalised trade

From Page 1 said. "Nobody is being excluded especially not Pakistan.' BSS adds: The Bangladesh

delegation at the meeting was led by Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad. The council of ministers directed that the newly established inter-governmental group (IGG) on transition to South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) should start its work

at the earliest to prepare an action plan with time frames for each individual step for realisation of the role of SAPTA, preferably by the year 2000. According to a press release issued after the meeting, the council of ministers expressed satisfaction at the conclusion

of the second round of trade negotiations under South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) and approved the report of the fourth meeting of the inter-governmental group along with its annexed nationa schedules of concessions.

The council decided that all member states should complete the necessary procedures, including the issue of customs notifications, so that the schedround can enter into force latest

ules finalised during the second by March 1, 1997. The meeting approved the report of the seventh meeting of

the Committee on Economic Cooperation (CEC), which includes recommendations on the preparation and conclusion of common agreements for investment promotion and protection of investment, and a agreement of avoidance of dou-

ble taxation. The council endorsed the recommendations of the first meeting of SAARC commerce minister for the approval by the ninth SAARC summit and a greed that such meetings of the

# - AFP/UNB photo

protest in From Page 1 Kathmandu KATHMANDU, Dec 20: Nearly 5,000 people turned out here today for an anti-India demonstration organised by

> 2656.66 points. The market capitalisation of the bourse fell by Tk 495.70 crore to Tk 18478.45 crore from

79.06 points last week and

Thursday. Market capitalisation of the CSE decreased by Tk 887.05 crore falling to Tk 14443.33 crore from the previous week's

Tk 15330.38 crore. down on the DSE floor and trading in volume and value increased last week compared to

that in the previous week. On an average, 31 companies shares gained daily while 50

issues. Market operators and brokers said that the downward trend prevailed in the market

# DSE index falls by 104 pts

week's from the previous week's

18974.15 crore in the previous The Chittagong Stock Exchange's All Security Price

closed at 1230.94 points on

The gap between gainers and lossers, however narrowed

Index also registered a fall by

incurred losses, out of 97 traded

due to the year-ending and be-

cause the holy month of Ramadan is nearing. Normally a bearish trend prevails in the stock markets in December because banks

adjust their loans, they said. Although the situation was better last week than in the previous week, "full momentum was yet to return in the market due to various rumours and panic among the investors." said Ahmed Iqbal Hasan, Vice

He said as the circuit breaker does not allow adjustment of price according to the market force, a number of blue chips issues could not be traded. According to him it would take much time to regain the

earlier position of the market. Meanwhile, the Out Market Share Trade Association. which had submitted a memorandum to the Prime minister urging implementation of their 11-point demand, expressed concern over non-implementation of their demands yet.

The association which is one of the two major platforms of outside market operators, held a meeting yesterday at its office and said that there was no positive sign in this regard though their I1-day ultimatum would expire today.

They demanded implementation of their demands immediately, according to a press re-

try", "Great Liberation War and Bangladesh," and "Bangabandhu and Bangladesh." Noted artist Hashem Khan

Bangabandhu

From Page 1

also spoke on the occasion Later, the wife of martyred freedom fighter Baduizzaman distributed prizes among the winners.

### Revolt at Dhaka Central Jail From Page But the security forces, using batons and rifle butts, overpowered the prisoners and took

and BDR guarded the prison with some army personnel seen around, some undaunted prisoners took to the rooftops of the prison barracks hollering about their demands.

They also indicated to journalists around that they did not have water, blaring their charter of demand, some chanting slogans 'Joy Bangla' 'Allahu Akbar' 'Bangladesh Zindabad'

plementation of a reported decision to free 10,000 on the occasion of Silver Jubilee of Victory, published in a widely circulated Bangla daily on November 19. Besides, they are demanding withdrawal of Special Powers

The demands included im-

Act, speedy trial within three months of filing of charges. commutation of life sentence from 20 years to 14 years, ban on fetters and chains on prisoners, improved diet, food, medical facilities, lodgings and better human treatment by wardens, sending of foreigners who completed their terms to

their homes etc. Overcrowding, poor sanitation, complaints of ill treatment and corruption by a section of jail personnel, coupling with lengthy process of trial ignited the revolts in these pris-

Conflicting claims regarding the origin of the trouble at Dhaka Central Jail were reported by prison sources, officials were not available for comment on the claim by a source that certain student leaders were responsible for sparking off the abortive revolt. But one highly placed source denied politicking behind the trouble saying it was the snow

balling effect of the Jessore

Central Jail revolt that in-

spired some prisoners in the

Dhaka Control Jail to use their

aluminium plates and mugs to

chase some wardens out of

block numbers 3,4,5,26,15 and

the kitchen in the morning. The trouble began at around 10-30 am when prisoners were gathering in queues for noon meals. Soon they were joined by others, forcing the frightened wardens out of these blocks.

control quickly. The prisoners, with plates and mugs, fled to their barracks.

Prison sources said some public display of beatings and cries effectively deterred the potential trouble makers. Earlier, the prisons nook and corner were searched as a precautionary measure. Some sharpened rods, lathis and other assortments, secreted from workshops and kitchens were recovered. The search since Wednesday had stocked the sentiment of some prisoners who were reportedly roughed up during the search. Some match

boxes were also recovered from the prisoners. During the trouble, the prisoners at the Dhaka Central Jail missed their lunch. Some of them shouted to newsmen in the afternoon from their locked calls, indicating that they were not given food. Authorities later said food was served in the

evening. The jail remained under a tight security ring thrown by BDR and riot police on the outer perimeter of the high walled red-bricked prison. Inside, police took up positions at every block to deter further trouble.

Prison officials said 10 to 12

of their personnel were injured

during the trouble. They were

treated at the prison hospital. But they declined to give details of prisoners who were injured. High prison and police officials were interrogating some prisoners, reportedly masterminds of the trouble. A case has been filed in this connection

with Lalbagh police station,

prison officials said. Our Staff Correspondent Mizan Ali last night reported from Jessore that the situation at the Jessore Central Jail remained tense although morale of the mutineers was wobbling after a face-to-face negotiations with the authorities through prison windows yesterday afternoon.

The authorities earlier restored electricity and water connections as demanded by the rebel prisoners before agreeing to talk.

But they remained firm on their ten-point demand, prodded by some hardened convicts serving 30 to 105 years of hard

labour. They are reportedly demanding remission of their sentences through reintroduction of the presidential ordinance promulgated in 1991 during the tenure of the then caretaker government.

Officials sounded optimistic about the peaceful resolution of the conflict but declined to comment on a possible assault to crush the rebellion.

They used loudspeakers to

broadcast taped religious ser-

mons in a bid to soften the pris-

oner's minds and drown their slogans which drew worried relatives and curious on-look-But no information was available to them excepting an assurance by the deputy com-

missioner that everything

would be alright. Authorities declined to comment on the reported death of a Tanzanian out of seven foreigners and two children out of three, due to suffocation and lack of power, claimed by the prisoners.

Officials said, they checked

the rumours and during negoti-

ended at around 9:30 pm yester-

day as the prisoners surren-

ations with the prisoners, the Tanzanians were summoned and all three of them were seen in good health. Our Tangail Correspondent said the 37-hour jail revolt

Abdul Kader Siddiky, MP. along with additional divisional commissioner, Dhaka and an Additional IGP, DC, SP and other district officials persuaded the prisoners to end their barricade for talks.

Kader Siddiky told the pris-

oners that he would take up their demands with the government and urged them to return to their barracks. Finally, the prisoners returned to their cells and freed the three prison wardens and an hospital orderly. A female warden who remained among the female prisoners also came out of the

# Gas purchase deal signed

it will be able to pump in 100 million cubic feet (mmcft) gas in the national grid. The Occidental has completed its gas field development plan and the land acquisition process is nearing completion, the sources

Cuardians anxiously waiting on the compound of Viquarunnissa Noon School in the city

will drill two more wells in the Bay and two others in Chittagong by March next.

from the second quarter of '98.

Chief of the Brown and Roots' parent company, Haliburton former US defense secretary Dick Cheny, who had earlier visited Bangladesh, is expected to visit Dhaka again

city of Allahabad Thursday dismissed a petition from the Uttar Pradesh state government, which asked for permission not to prosecute the newlyelected member of parliament.

ment.

into police custody.

they could face life imprison-

commerce ministers should be held on an annual basis.

### Last week trading took place only for four days - an upward trend dominated the market in the first two days while a bearish trend returned in the last two days. communist factions, police Trading was closed on sources said, reports AFP. Sunday and Monday on the oc-The demonstration was orcasion of Silver Jubilee of ganized by the National Victory. Revolutionary Front (NRF) and The DSE All Share Price the National Democratic Front Index decreased by 69.41 points (NDF) led by prominent com-President of the DSE. falling to 2587.25 points last munist Dr. Babu Ram Bha-

Nepal National Students Union of a revolutionary communist faction burning pornographic

magazines at Ratna Park in Kathmandu yesterday while demonstrating against an increase