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Down to Earth

City's Boat Hotels

By ASM Nurunnabi

The floating hotels on water front of the Buriganga river, located near Wiseghat form a characteristic feature of the city life. Such floating hotels, much reduced in number at present, stand among a medley of water vessels of various sizes—uncovered and covered boats, cargo boats, speed boats, tugs, motor launches, tankers, etc. In the foreground, however, the conspicuous existence of some houseboats can't be missed. These serve as popular floating restaurants-cum-residential hotels which serve meals from early morning till midnight.

These houseboats serving as eating houses are unadorned, lacklustre and mostly worn out with their existence dating back almost half a century. According to a source well-acquainted with situations at such hotels, the Muslim hotels get more customers than any other time of the year prior to Eid-ul-Fitr and the Eid-ul-Azha festivals. A substantial number of customers here are transit passengers staying for a day or two or even for shorter duration before they undertake onward journeys. There are also boarders who stay for some days in connection with their cases before civil courts. Besides such common visitors, people come in large numbers at the lone Hindu hotel here at the time of Langabandha Mela on the Sitakhyia river near Narayan-ganj.

A knowledgeable old timer of the city said that these eating houses had emerged after the

partition of the sub-continent in 1947. The income which keeps them in trade comes from the sale of cooked foods—mainly rice, vegetables, pulse and fish curries. Diners mostly belonging to the modest income bracket-hawkers, small retailers, manual labourers and so on are regular customers here. Items of eatables served at these establishments are comparatively cheap because of lower standard of ingredients used for preparation of the food items.

A typical houseboat used as a hotel has a dining room where about 12 persons can have their meals at a time. Normally 40 feet long and 12 feet in breadth, it has double decks. The are other smaller floating hotels. The immediate surroundings of these hotels, moored in the vicinity of the river bank, are far from happy. Dirt, filth and garbage of every description defile their location. Getting to one of them or disembarking from them is precarious owing to unstable wooden planks used by customers at those boats. Owners of these hotels face various problems, the chief among which is periodic visitation by 'mastans' who seek to enjoy themselves for some time on board with their questionable companions.

There are other major river terminals such as those at Coalundo, Narayanganj, Chandpur, Nagarbari, Barisal and Bahadurabad. But nowhere any floating restaurants and hotels can be seen except at Wiseghat in Dhaka. In the experience of those who have

travelled abroad, on both banks of the Nile river in Egypt, there is a large number of eating houses, pizzahuts, night clubs and tea shops. Similarly, many curio and souvenir stalls adorn shopping arcades on sea shores and river banks in different lands. But the Dhaka city versions of such floating establishments are a far cry.

Because of construction of the long wall along the bank known as the Buckland Bund, most of the floating hotels anchored there are not visible from the road. The existing ones are now a minority-remnant of the once brisk hotel business for customers of small means in the early part of the fifties. They have now almost ceased to be objects of curiosity and novelty among the city dwellers.

In the opinion of observers, if we are true to our tradition and heritage, these ignored and neglected ramshackle floating hotels could be made attractive by imaginative entrepreneurs if they carry out some innovations on modern lines. With better cuisine and other necessary facilities, some such boats could be developed into fine motorised vessels that could carry excursion seekers. They may thus become an interesting feature of tourism both for the domestic and foreign tourists. In the other hand, these derelict floating eating houses are not saved, they may in no time cease to be an interesting part of our heritage fed on a riverine background.

Hartal called at Habiganj Sunday

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Apr 25: A half-day hartal has been called at Habiganj district town on Sunday to press for restoration of Habiganj-Shaistaganj railway service.

The hartal was given at an "all party meeting" at the district Bar Library Hall yesterday. The meeting was presided over by former MP Chowdhury Abdul Hal, president of the newly formed Committee for Resumption of Habiganj-Shaistaganj Railway Service. Local leaders of all political parties and other organisations attended the meeting. The committee will hold a rally in front of the Bar Library Hall and bring out a procession in the town tomorrow in support of the proposed hartal.

AL council

From Page 1

tees in different districts would not affect the process of councillor nomination. He explained that council elections and committees were held in most of the districts. He added that the outgoing and newly elected presidents and general secretaries would co-opt other members in the district units where formation of the committees could not be completed as yet.

Meanwhile, a meeting of AL sub-committee on preparation of the party general secretary's report was held yesterday at the Awami Foundation in the city with committee chairman Fazlul Haq in the chair. The committee will meet again at 7:30 pm today.

The meeting discussed the draft of the report, to be presented at the forthcoming national council by Zillur Rahman. Sub-committee member-secretary K M Jahangir and its members—Sayed Ahmed, Monam Sarkar, Siddiqur Rouf Khan and Abdul Mannan Khan were present.

The sub-committee on constitution will meet at 10 am on April 28 while a meeting of sub-committee on publication and publicity will be held at 7 pm the same day, said the party release.

DSE plan

From Page 1

A rendezvous around the DSE yesterday revealed a murmuring among punters that blue chips would hit the rock bottom soon and one should wait for the kill, keeping their purses zipped although brokers reported good orders.

That was unusual, triggering a fresh panic among the rest of the 'faithfuls' who had been hoping that the market would again round the corner once again to a stable course.

Minor girl dies after rape in N'ganj

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Apr 25: An eight-year-old girl died after she was allegedly raped by a youth at Dauli-Chowrapara near river Shitalakhyia under Bandar thana on Thursday.

Police recovered her body from the river this morning. Police said the girl was raped when she went to the river for a bath at around 2:30 pm.

Later, police arrested one Akhter Hossain of Chowrapara village from his home on charge of raping the girl. Akhter gave a confessional statement to the police, thana sources said.

Sharif for better ties with Delhi

ISLAMABAD, Apr 25: Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said today he wanted to improve ties with arch-rival India, the Reuter quoting official news agency AP said.

It quoted Sharif as saying that he "shared the commitment of his Indian counterpart Inder Kumar Gujral to improving relations between the two countries" and looked forward to meeting him at a regional summit in the Maldives capital. Sharif was speaking at a meeting with Indian High Commissioner Satish Chandra, who handed over a message from Gujral.

New house handed over to Taraman

KURIGRAM, Apr 25: The document and key of a new house on an area of 30 decimal land constructed with the money donated from the Prime Minister's fund was handed over to valiant freedom fighter Taraman Bibi Bir Protik here today, reports BSS.

State Minister for Information Prof Abu Sayeed formally handed over the document and key of the new house to Taraman Bibi. The land was bought by Taka 50,000 donated from the Prime Minister's fund.

Equal rights demanded

From Page 1

every sphere. The memorandum was received on behalf of the President by his military secretary.

The inaugural session was addressed by BNP standing committee member Abdus Salam Talukder, Jamaat-e-Islami secretary general Maulana Matiuur Rahman Nizami, Democratic League president Oli Ahad, JAGPA president Shaful Alam Prohdhan and Khelafat Majlish secretary general M A Matin.

Organising committee president Ferdous Ahmed Koreshi presided while its member secretary Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan gave the welcome address. Some leaders of BNP and Jamaat from the hill districts also spoke.

Although the organisers called it a national conference, no central or local representative from ruling Awami League, Jatiya Party and the left-leaning organisations was present at the inaugural session held at the Engineers' Institute auditorium in the city.

Dissident JP leader Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury was scheduled to address the session, but he also did not turn up.

Addressing the conference, Salam Talukder said there was no scope to continue talks with 'terrorist' Shantu Larma on their 5-point demand that was going on between the government and the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS).

He said, "There is a plot behind the talks to destroy our independence and sovereignty... if that is implemented an anarchic situation will engulf the country."

"A modern state believes in equal rights of every citizen and works to ensure those," the BNP leader observed. "It does not allow special rights to people liv-

Basu for further cooperation in all fields

Post, Telecommunications, Housing and Works Minister

Mohammad Nasim called on West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu at his Writers' Building office in Calcutta yesterday, reports UNB.

The minister conveyed to Jyoti Basu the personal greetings of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and gratitude of the people of Bangladesh for his historic role in signing the Indo-Bangladesh water treaty.

The West Bengal chief minister stressed the need for increasing cooperation in all fields, including trade and culture.

Jyoti Basu also conveyed his personal greetings to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and recalled the impressive reception accorded to him during his recent visit to Bangladesh.

Nasim said Bangladesh would like to strengthen the telecommunication system between the two countries that needed further improvement.

Hazaribagh

From Page 1

It said funding of up to 25 per cent of Free On Board (FOB) value should be provided instead of the present Duty Draw Back system.

Other members of the leather task force committee are vice-Chairman of Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) Faisal Ahmed Chowdhury, Chairman of the National Board of Revenue Shah Abdul Hannan, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce Mohammad Shaful Islam, president of Bangladesh Finished Leather and Goods Association AKM Rahmat Ullah and representative of Bangladesh Finished Leather Goods Exporters Association (BFLGEA) Bazulur Rahman.

The task force also recommended that the Bangladesh Finished Leather and Leather Goods Exporters Association be given authority to issue quality certificates on an experimental basis.

It also suggested that import duty, advance income tax; and the licensing fee for raw hides, skins, pickles and wet blue leather, be withdrawn and that struggling leather businesses be spared 100 per cent interest and compound interest for 5 years.

It recommended that the import of materials used by leather industries—including spare parts accessories and raw leather finishing chemicals—be made duty-free, and that the Leather Technology Institute be empowered and updated to create necessary technical expertise.

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PHILIPS



Jatiya Party leaders Justice Habibul Islam Bhuiyan and Mujibul Haq Chunnun joined the BNP at the Minto Road residence of Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday. —Star photo

Khaleda

From Page 1

unitedly against the "government conspiracy to sell out national interests to its foreign masters."

She also accused the AL government of destroying the garments, tea, leather and all other prospective industries in a planned way to "protect the interests of another country."

"In our five-year rule, we eradicated poverty and illiteracy, created employment opportunity and increased exports but they've destroyed all those achievements... people are now comparing our five-year tenure with the present government's 10-month governance," Begum Zia told the gathering.

The BNP chairperson called upon her partymen to devote themselves to the cause of the people and the country. "BNP has nothing to gain but to give a lot to the nation... Leadership to protect independence and sovereignty of the country."

BNP leaders Abdus Salam Talukdar, Moudud Ahmed, Nazmul Huda, Fazlur Rahman Patal MP and Akhteruzzaman MP were present on the occasion.

3 JP joint secys for 3 divisions

By Staff Correspondent

Jatiya Party chief HM Ershad has nominated three joint secretaries of the party giving them responsibilities for party activities in three divisions, a party press release said last night.

Advocate Humayun Kabir has been made joint secretary for Chittagong division, MA Mukit Khan, MP, for Sylhet division and ASMA Rab for Khulna division, the press release said.

Truck carrying dummy missiles missing in US

FAIRFIELD, Texas, Apr 25: A tractor trailer carrying four dummy Air Force missiles to New Mexico was missing today, and it was last seen heading in the wrong direction about 500 miles from its destination, reports AP.

The truck, which carried a tracking beacon and was being monitored by satellite, vanished from computer screens Thursday.

Court

From Page 1

expensive and substantial justice to the common man," he emphasised.

The government has recently formed a four-member committee to probe the reasons of delay in the disposal of cases, suggest remedial measures. The committee would also look into whether some legal and administrative reforms were needed for this.

5 activists of MQM faction gunned down

KARACHI, Apr 25: Gunmen ambushed three activists of a breakaway faction of a militant ethnic group today in the southern port city of Karachi, the authorities said, reports AP. The victims are members of the Haqiqi faction of the Mohajir Qaumi Movement.

UN: Jerusalem

From Page 1

make their work even more difficult," Richardson said. He added that proposals made during the opening day of the emergency session Thursday are "dangerous for the credibility of the United Nations."

Despite Clinton administration opposition to the project, Richardson said a resolution submitted by Arab and Muslim countries "sets a dangerous precedent" by infringing on the authority of the Security Council, where Washington used its veto twice last month to block resolution critical of Israel.

Miscreants

From Page 1

40 people equipped with lethal weapons swooped on Asmat and Aftab Majhee at about 7 am.

Asmat was killed on the spot. When Aftab ran away and took shelter in a nearby house, the gang chased him and stormed the house. At one stage, they set fire to the house.

The gang also exploded a number of hand bombs during the hour-long rampage.

The injured Sabuj, 25, and Aftab, 40, were admitted to the Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in a critical condition.

According to local people, the incident was a sequel to previous enmity over a land dispute.

A huge contingent of police was deployed in the area.

Condensate

From Page 1

cubic feet there. Now, Cairn is drilling a third well in the same area which has already struck gas sand at a depth of 3000 feet. Cairn will drill this well up to a depth of 4000 feet.

"Availability of gas in this third well now indicates that the reserve of the Sangu gas field might exceed 10 trillion cubic feet," the sources said. "But to confirm that figure, Cairn will have to undertake drilling of two more wells."

By April next year, Cairn will have a total of five wells in Sangu. The five wells will simultaneously produce 160 mcf of gas, the sources said. More wells will be drilled at the same site after April next year, they added.

The British company will begin drilling a well in Semutang in Chittagong Hill Tracts in the second week of May and another in Halda valley in Chittagong afterwards.

Dhaka deplors

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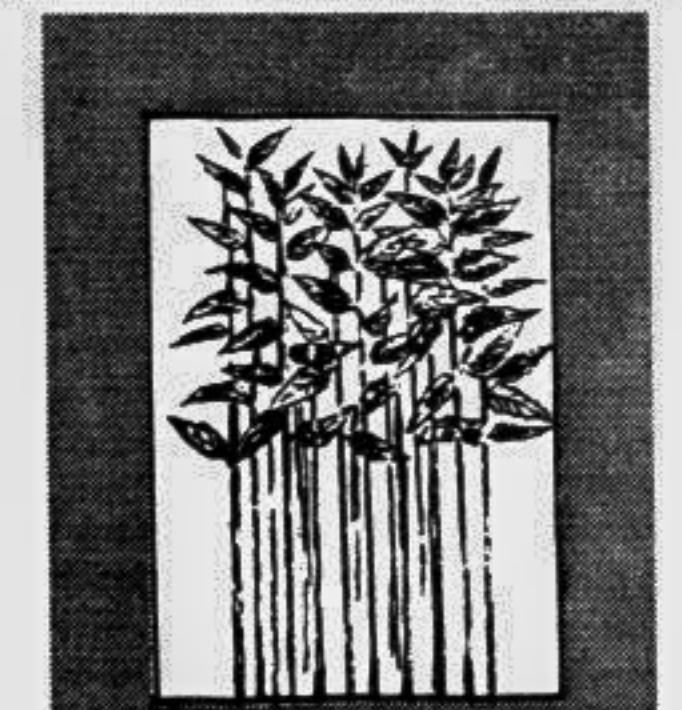
question of Palestine was essential for achievement of a durable, just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Ambassador Anwarul Karim Chowdhury, Bangladesh's permanent representative to the UN, reiterated the country's stand on the issue at the 10th emergency special session of the UN General Assembly yesterday, according to a message received in Dhaka.

Ambassador Chowdhury said that Israel's dogged policy of construction of new settlements in east Jerusalem constituted flagrant violation of the relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council and General Assembly.

"Bangladesh believes that if the present trend continues, peace in that region would remain in elusive dream."

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