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Down to Earth

City's High-rise Buildings

By A S M Nurunnabi

The city's sky-line is fast changing at present with the booming of building activities pertaining to high-rise apartments, commercial and non-residential complexes in a large part of new areas. This is a new phase of our urban development. Inevitably, this raises some questions connected with the new phenomenon. Such questions mainly relate to problems in several fields which may be indicated as follows.

One of such problems relates to technical aspects. In this respect, we may cite congestion density created not only by the existing volume of city population but also by the burgeoning traffic pressure caused by the increasing number of vehicles of all descriptions. This congestion is further heightened by the steady growth of high-rise buildings which inevitably leads to over-faction. As a result, there are emerging threats to normal functioning of the service sector in such fields as gas, water and electricity which are already over-loaded. This obviously calls for adoption of measures on a priority basis for augmenting the capacities of infrastructural facilities to meet the challenge of growing pressure on them in the coming years.

There are other disadvantageous factors which are mainly social in character affecting the homes of the residents of such buildings. Admittedly a home is a place for the children to grow up in and learn from the environment prevailing therein. But it is felt that in the limited space in an apartment, the factors which help the healthy growth of a child by and large, greatly inhibit it both in the physical and mental aspects, resulting in a less active life for the child. Even there is no playing space for children in most

of such buildings. To these inhibiting influences are now added the growing addiction to TV, VCR and computer games. As a result, the young minds are prone to influences, which are quite alien to our own values.

Next come the economic factors. The price of land in the city has risen to such a pitch that it is now a difficult proposition for many except the affluent few to acquire it for building purposes. A disconcerting trend is noticeable to the effect that in many important areas of the city, lands which had previously been developed and built upon have been given way to new high-rise structures through the process of demolition of the old structures. This is causing the value of the property to push up further with the result that such housing units go beyond the acquisition capacity of the people within middle income brackets. The beneficiaries in these cases are the people with high income, who are capable of investing heavy amounts of their capital and reaping substantial financial benefits therefrom. In most of such cases, it is rather a case of development with more substantial capital of a piece of land on which a low-rise building previously stood.

This phenomenon of affluent people owning/occupying high-rise building apartments has gradually spawned a change of social structure. The richer classes enjoying such high-rise property seem to symbolise a growing process of class segregation as a result of middle class people with moderate income being thrown out of the competition/ability for acquiring such housing property. Besides these social implications, there are environmental considerations arising from

such buildings. Most of the apartments in the high-rise buildings use air coolers with the result that, although air/ventilation in the interior enjoys cool temperature with the help of mechanical gadgets, this creates heated temperature outside. There is thus an imbalance in the environmental situation with adverse effect particularly on such greenery/vegetation as may be existing in close proximity to the high-rise buildings using air coolers.

The basic question relating to high-rise building seems to be whether the present trend in this respect really affords any meaningful relief by way of meeting the housing needs of any significant section of the city populace, besides the affluent classes in society. Some knowledgeable quarters feel that the present emphasis on high-rise buildings for residential purposes in city areas may be shifted to low-cost lands available out-side the periphery of the main city areas with provisions for housing for people with moderate income, besides the help of subsidies concessions for the private sector. In that case, the housing policy may provide for certain percentage of allotments each for high income, middle income and low income people under such a policy in the private sector, which may be more democratic, and help ease congestion both of traffic and people in the city the lesser amount of profit accruing from the lower categories of allottees may be taken into account for assuring reasonable returns in the light of higher margins of profit to be derived from the top category of allottees. Similar policies are said to be in operation with suitable modifications in many countries, including India.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina receiving donations to the PM's relief fund at the Ganobhaban yesterday for the cyclone-affected people. — PID photo

CJ unhappy over ACR of junior judges

Chief Justice ATM Afzal yesterday warned that junior judges would not get promotion if they failed to dispose of satisfactory number of cases with qualitative judgement, reports UNB.

"I am shocked to find inadequate number of cases disposed of in the annual confidential report (ACR) of the judges," he said at the certificate awarding ceremony of a training course for sub-judges and assistant sessions judges in the city.

The Chief Justice advised the judges not to be satisfied by disposing of six cases in a month as directed by the Supreme Court. "Always keep it in your mind how much time you spend for your sacred service,"

not whole Bangladesh. Asking the officials to discharge their duties with utmost sincerity, Justice Afzal assured them of appreciation by promotion, posting and training abroad for good work.

"Remember, Supreme Court is not only monitoring you... there is another one," he said directing his finger up. "You have to be answerable to Almighty Allah. He is also monitoring you as he monitors me and each and everyone."

"You don't need tall talks like rule of law, independence of judiciary and enforcement of human rights," Afzal added that all good words would be implemented if every one discharges his duty properly.

He said: "How human rights will be ensured if I do not stay at my office in the office time."

Woman MP hurt in road accident

Meher Afroz Chumki, a Woman MP of Gazipur-Narsingdi, was injured yesterday in a road accident on Mohakhali-Banani Link Road, reports BSS.

Family sources said Chumki received injuries in her legs, when the three wheeler she was travelling in was hit by a speeding bus.

Chumki was treated at the Holy Family Hospital and released afterwards.

VGF in Chittagong

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6,47,09,120 programme, he said. State Minister for Planning Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir who visited cyclone-hit Kutubdia earlier in the day was also present at the press briefing and informed newsmen about the relief operation in the affected areas.

Jawadul Karim also said four persons so far died of diarrhoea in Nohkhali and 861 were attacked in the district, 457 in Chittagong, 24 in Bhola, but none in Cox's Bazar. The crisis of drinking water in the affected areas in almost over with resumption of power supply, he claimed.

The Press Secretary said, the death toll from last Monday's cyclone rose to 106 yesterday. The number of injured people in 9,663, missing two, affected 30,45,272 and houses damaged are 6,11,929, he said.

So far, Tk 58,25,000 has been sanctioned from the Prime Minister's relief fund and the relief ministry for the affected people, he said. The Prime Minister will receive donations to her relief fund from 4 pm to 5 pm every day from today, he said.

Denying some press reports Karim said that nothing happened at Nijhum Dip, Charkhata, Charkajal, Barabaisdiya, Choto baishdiya and Charkhali. He also denied the reported loss of life in 'Anderchar' saying that the Deputy Commissioner Patuakhali who visited the tiny char area found no basis of the press report that there were some loss of lives

Minister to quit

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the affected people. Members of the council of ministers have been deputed in various cyclone-hit areas to coordinate and supervise the relief operation, he said adding that the Prime Minister herself was supervising the overall relief and rehabilitation works round-the-clock.

Mohiuddin rather alleged that during his stay in the Kutubdia, the local parliament member who happened to be a BNP member was not seen in the cyclone-battered island.

Narrating his experience in the island he said that the island, inhabited by one lakh 77 thousand people, suffered less loss of life than what was apprehended. Only six persons were killed and 61 injured. However, the cyclone caused severe damage to dwelling houses. The islanders were lucky enough as most of their paddy fields and salt beds were harvested before the catastrophe hit the area, he said.

there. The Press Secretary further said that there was no existence of chars like 'Charhari' and 'Sonar Char' under Bhola district and as such the question of loss of life and property in these two chars does not arise at all as reported in a section of the press.

About the allegation of BNP published in a section of newspapers that there was no relief activities in Banshkhal under Chittagong district Karim said that the Prime Minister herself visited the area and addressed a public rally there after the calamity. She also distributed relief there in her own hands among the cyclone victims. The Additional Deputy Commissioner and Additional District Magistrate from Chittagong were present at the time of relief operation, he added.

Mohiuddin said the government has decided to build one cyclone shelter for each 2.5 sq. mile area in the coastal belt. The area mapping task for the purpose will begin soon.

He said all damaged educational institutions in the coastal areas will be rebuilt with pucca structures. The state minister said, repair of damaged embankments will begin before the coming rainy season while the work for raising the heights of the dams by two to three feet will begin after the rainy season.

Khan said shrimp cultivation was severely damaged in Chokoria and Teknaf areas but salt production did not suffer loss as the season is over.

Responding to a question about death toll, he said the government this time was giving the actual figure of deaths and extent of damage in the cyclone.

One held for raping minor girl in Demra

Demra police yesterday arrested one Abdul Alim, 42, from north Sayedabad area on charge of violating a minor girl, reports BSS.

Police said arrested Alim kept hostage one Rita, 9, inside his residence at North Sayedabad and raped her.

Mohammad Fazlur Rahman, a day labourer and stepfather of Rita had left her to Alim's residence on May 8 before he went to his village home in Madaripur.

Residents of the area came to know the matter and handed over Alim to police yesterday.

The victim was given first aid at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Over 500 join BNP

BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday called upon the patriotic people to rally round the BNP to foil all sorts of conspiracy against the country and its people, reports UNB.

She alleged that the ruling party had made all preparations to hand over the country to others and national interests are being sold out one after another.

Begum Zia was addressing a gathering of newcomers to her party at the 29 Minto Road official residence of Leader of the Opposition in Parliament in the evening.

More than 500 leaders and workers of the Awami League, Jatiya Party, Gano Forum and a group of freedom fighters of Dhunat thana of Bogra district joined the BNP, yesterday.

Housewife

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pital this evening, alleged that Bashiruddin beat his daughter to death for dowry.

Shahinur got married to Bashiruddin, 22, six months ago. Her father promised dowry to the bridegroom but failed to collect the entire amount.

However, Bashiruddin told police that his wife had committed suicide by taking poison.

Kashmiri boy

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They alleged Sheikh had been tortured to death, but police would not comment on the charge.

Residents of Sheikh's locality said he had been "taken" by gunmen late Wednesday after found celebrating Pakistan's 35-run win over India in a one-day match commemorating the 50th year of the Indian independence from British rule.

People from Sheikh's area said the abductors were Indian security forces deployed to fight insurgency in Indian-administered Kashmir, where a Muslim separatist drive has claimed more than 20,000 lives since 1989.

They later staged protests, shouting "We want freedom," "long live Pakistan" and "our hero Saeed Anwar" — a reference to the Pakistani opener who hammered a record 194 against India in the Independence Cup match in Madras.

Fujimori

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groundless. Officials had received an anonymous telephone call informing them there was a bomb on Fujimori's Lufthansa flight, forcing a special bomb squad team to carry out an exhaustive search of the aircraft.



A house damaged by earthquake that hit Jabalpur in India on Thursday. — AFP UNB photo

Dams blamed for tremors in Madhya Pradesh

NEW DELHI, May 23: A flurry of dam-building in earthquake-prone central India is responsible for Thursday's earthquake, which measured 6.0 on the Richter scale and killed nearly 40 people, a leading Green group said, reports AFP.

The 'Narmada Bachao Andolan' (NBA, Save Narmada Movement) said short-sighted government policies in the region, marked by a rift along the valley of the Narmada river, were putting millions of lives at risk.

"Reservoir-induced seismicity is a real phenomenon here," NBA activist Sripad Dharmadhikari said by telephone from Baroda, close to Jabalpur — the worst hit city in the central state of Madhya Pradesh.

"It has probably caused the tragedy."

"The government has planned 30 major dams in the region. Some have been built while others are in various stages of planning on the drawing board or nearing completion," he told AFP.

"We have repeatedly issued warnings but they have fallen on deaf ears. The government claims it is making safe dams."

Geophysicist JG Negi said Madhya Pradesh, where the mighty Narmada river is located, literally stood on shaky ground.

Negi said: "The entire Narmada Valley, spread over an area of 12,312 kilometres is susceptible because of tectonic plate movement in the river's rift valley zone."

"There are 29 major, 35

medium and over 3,000 minor irrigation projects and as the construction work is still going on enough care should be taken in this most vulnerable area," he said.

"Several river valley rift zones in India are getting reactivated," he said.

"The Indian subcontinent is moving northward at the rate of five centimetres every year and colliding with the Eurasian plate."

2 remanded

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Metropolitan Magistrate's Court yesterday afternoon. The court granted the remand for further interrogation.

On-duty police men at Sonargaon crossing caught the two when they tried to flee after killing a 30-year-old Ashiq Iqbal, a contractor of the Public Works Department (PWD), in front of the PG Hospital gate at Shahbagh crossing at about 12 noon.

However, the other persons accused in the killing could not be arrested till last night.

Police was yet to confirm whether the murder was sequel to a tender-related dispute between two groups. It was alleged that Ashiq was killed after he got a supply-work of the PG Hospital through a tender recently.

Juice Extractor advertisement for Philips, Transcom Electronics Limited. Includes image of the extractor and contact information.

Rural infrastructure development Dhaka achieved only 39 pc of '85-95 targets: WB

The country will need nearly Tk 6300 crore over the next 10 years to attain a realistic target of meeting 70 per cent of the current infrastructure improvement needs, reports BSS.

A recent World Bank study on Bangladesh's rural infrastructure said the country's maintenance cost under the 'realistic' scenario would increase gradually from Tk 130 crore annually to about Tk 290 crore by 2005.

The study said the increase implied an annual increase of Tk 16 crore for maintenance, and a cumulative annual average maintenance over the first year of Tk 178 crore and a cumulative average maintenance over 10 years of Tk 210 crore.

It said currently the country spends about Tk 550 crore — about 5.5 per cent of its development budget — on rural roads and markets development.

According to the study report, only about 39 per cent of the physical targets set for the ten-year-period ending in 1995

were achieved due to the lack of resources and ambitious target. This has left a huge unmet demands for improvement, further increased by population growth.

The study has suggested for adopting the realistic approach of expanding rural development infrastructure instead of ambitious approach like the past.

Detailing the funding scenario under ambitious approach of the past, the World Bank said the funding requirement are estimated to be Tk 8960 crore over the next 10-year period or Tk 890 crore per annum. In addition, Tk 370 crore for recurrent maintenance is required on completion, the maintenance cost increasing gradually from the present Taka 130 crore.

The bank said under the realistic scenario, the annual funding resource requirement, using five-year maintenance average, would be Tk 810 crore. As against this, the current level of resources availability is about

Tk 680 crore, of which 54 per cent is foreign and 46 per cent domestic. This indicates the need for about 20 per cent increase in annual resources to meet future needs if Bangladesh is to meet the realistic 10-year target as proposed in the study.

The implementation capacity exists, or is feasible, for this level of realistic approach, the bank said, adding the increase in the required financial resources would seem justified in view of the proven major economic and poverty alleviation impacts of such investments.

Describing the main characteristics of the rural infrastructure, the study said the rural transport infrastructure consisted of an extensive network of feeder roads of 8,400 kilometres and rural roads of 78,000 kilometres at present. It said existence of 38,000 gaps or about one gap every two kilometres in rural road system causes major constraint to rural mobility.



Bangladeshi student dies in Moscow road accident

Md' Ahsanur Rahman Ananda, 26, a Bangladeshi student died in a road accident in Moscow city on Friday, reports BSS.

He was a final year student of computer engineering in Moscow. He is the son of Shubha Rahman, Assistant Editor of Daily Janakantha and Fazilatunnesa, Assistant Head Mistress of Anwara Begum Muslim Girls' High School.

Ananda was associated with cultural and literary activities in Dhaka. He was a founder member of Arani Shilpi Gosthi.

Chemical factory blast kills 8 near Delhi

NEW DELHI, May 23: Eight people were killed when a powerful explosion destroyed a chemical factory near the Indian capital, newspapers reported today, reports AFP.

The owner of the factory and five labourers died instantly in the blast on Thursday at Faridabad, an industrial town that borders New Delhi, the Indian Express said.

Two men travelling on tractor also reportedly died after being hit by flying debris. "The tractor was lifted high into the air and fell more than 20 feet (six meters) away," the Express quoted a witness as saying. "Two scooters parked nearby were also smashed."

The cause of the explosion was not immediately clear. The police said the factory was producing chemicals to manufacture fibre glass.

Gusty wind

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sufferings of the already affected people in the district. Many of them complained that even four days after the cyclone, they got too inadequate relief. They kept hoisting 'red flags' at places, signalling the need for relief.

Scarcity of pure drinking water in Kutubdia and Moeshkhali caused diarrhoea to spread and a baby, Md Tareq, died of diarrhoea in Kutubdia yesterday, confirmed the control room in the Civil Surgeon's office.

A total of 81 medical teams were now providing medicare to the affected people in the district.

The Deputy Commissioner of Cox's Bazar, at a press briefing last night, put the number of affected people at 11,12,174, belonging to 2,19,957 families, in the district. A total of 166 tons of rice and Tk six lakh in cash were already distributed and another Tk 10 lakh was in the process of distribution among the affected, he added.

In 50 per cent of the affected areas power supply was resumed while 30 per cent telephone connections were also restored, the DC said.

President: Power games

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clashes and gun-battles. "These dreadful things are known to our political parties which engage the students as their partners of day to day political activities and in power games."

The President said, "For God's sake, stop these abominable things and allow the students to pursue knowledge in a congenial atmosphere, failing which we may one day cease to exist as a civilised nation."

The convocation ceremony was also addressed, among others, by eminent educationist National Professor M Innas Ali, IUB President Dr A Majeed Khan, its Rector Prof Bazlul M Chowdhury and Treasurer Abdul Haliz Chowdhury.

President Shahabuddin, also Chancellor of the University, conferred the Bachelor degree among some 29 students who have successfully completed their course in Business Administration, Communication, Environmental Science and Management faculties.

The President lamented that well-established public universities were missing their convocations due to polluted academic environment prevailing in the country for nearly three decades.

52 lawyers in Sylhet demand govt action against police officer

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, May 23: Some 52 members of the Sylhet District Bar Association have demanded punitive measures against ASP An Palit of Sylhet Sadar (south) circle.

The lawyers, in statement, said the ASP without any lawful authority arrested the Assistant Public Prosecutor Advocate Nilmoni Singh on May 9. He also passed some 'unwanted' comments against the lawyer community, they alleged.

Khaleda: Media coverage

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body from the government during my three-day visit," she said, alleging that the prime minister's relief operation was designed only for media coverage.

"Her (PM's) relief activities stopped soon after she returned from the affected areas... The ministers were busy meeting the officials... They were missing from relief activities," Begum Zia alleged.

Begum Zia also alleged that there was acute crisis of food, drinking water, medicine and house-building materials and demanded adequate supply of those and restoration of communication links immediately. She also demanded interest-free loans for the affected people.

Termining the official death toll as incorrect, the Opposition Leader said, "I think the toll will be more as death reports from most of the inaccessible areas are yet to reach... The death toll may rise to some 150."

Claiming that her government had efficiently faced a more severe cyclone in 1991, the former prime minister said, "We had developed a reliable system to face cyclone. If that system is followed, I think there should not be any problem for the government."

Replying to a question, the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament said that her party would certainly cooperate with the government but regretted that no cooperation was sought. "Rather, the Opposition MPs are not being integrated with the relief and other post-cyclone activities," she commented.

To another question, the former prime minister said that

Pak-Lanka final

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Cup champions tomorrow in the first match of a best-of-three final at the limited overs tournament.

Pakistan were elated after beating India in Madras on Wednesday in the league stage. "Winning against India meant a lot to us after the fury we faced when we went back home," Raja said in a reference to events after Pakistan's quarter-final defeat by India at Bangalore in last year's World Cup.

"We can safely go back home now, he said.

Raja said the final would in all probability be a high-scoring affair on the easy-paced Mohali pitch.

Pakistan are to play Sri Lanka in Calcutta next Tuesday in the second match of the final, with a third game on Wednesday in Calcutta if the teams are level 1-1.

Mobutu flies to Morocco

RABAT, May 23: Mobutu Sese Seko, the ailing and deposed ruler of what once was Zaire, flew from Togo to Morocco today and was whisked to a beach resort on the second leg of his flight into exile, reports AP.

Shamsi

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Rights who was also present at the press conference said that Shamsi had reported to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court on April 29 last and said she had left her husband's house following torture.

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From Page 1

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