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Down to Earth

Multi-Facets of Mess Life in City

By ASM Nurunnabi

Mess is an English word meaning a group of persons staying in the same quarters and take meals out of a common kitchen. It is a popular style of living of a good number of individuals in all urban areas. The members of a mess belong to different classes with a variety of social and financial backgrounds. This is the characteristic feature of mess life. On account of the large-scale popularity of the concept, mess life has almost acquired the character of an institution.

From a look at our social history, it will be seen that the mess system has its roots in the hoary past. Over the years as the pattern of urban life grew in scope and diversity, the mess system kept pace with it, particularly on account of the growing housing needs of the expanding urban population.

In the context of the Dhaka city, the development of the system in recent years has been phenomenal. It is difficult to estimate the total number of messes in the city, but at a guess, it can be said that the number may exceed a few thousands. Like city slums, it is always on the rise. Among the many areas where such a system is said to be operating, we may mention some of the main locations such as South Kamalapur, Mugdopara, Kathal Bagan, Mirpur, Arambagh, Rampura, Jatrabari, Fakirapul, Malibagh and in some areas of old Dhaka. There is no denying that these proliferating establishments go a long way in meeting the accommodation needs of a large number of low-income group people.

The majority of residents of such establishments comprise low-grade service holders with

some segments of young men in search of jobs or pursuing studies in colleges and universities. There are different kinds of living arrangements in a mess. Sometimes four or five persons live in a single room. In other instances, some mess members live in separate rooms. Of course, for enjoying this facility, such members bear a larger part of the rental burden. But an increasing trend was observed that on account of pressure on available accommodation space, such exclusive arrangement for separate rooms was getting non-existent.

There are other aspects of the system which are mainly categorised in the following manner depending on the various facilities: a) messes located near railway or bus communication facilities; b) messes located near commercial areas; c) messes located near educational institutions; and d) messes located near industrial areas. All messes classified in the above manner are subject to variations in rental costs depending on available communication and dietary facilities.

It is quite apparent that mess life involves a corporate existence in which special identity of any member thereof gets submerged. Here all inmates — married, unmarried, young and old — have their individual identities lost in limbo to give place to a particular life style. In view of heterogeneous elements living under one roof, management of a mess, big or small, is always a ticklish job.

The rent of a seat in a mess is generally determined by many considerations. Chiefly among these may be the location of the establishment, the nature of composition of its inmates, the

Zia was involved in plot to kill Bangabandhu: AL

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Zillur Rahman yesterday alleged that former President Ziaur Rahman was involved in the conspiracy of the killing of father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, reports BSS.

"He (Zia) not only protected Bangabandhu's self-confessed killers from legal action through the so-called Indemnity Act, but also awarded them with diplomatic assignments," Rahman said.

"Through these activities, it appears that Zia was not only happy at the assassination of Bangabandhu but also backed the assassination plot," he added.

The Awami League leader said the earlier statements of the killers also substantiate the idea that Zia was involved in the plot.

He was addressing a discussion organised by BCL city unit (North) in observance of the month-long national mourning at the Shishu Academy auditorium. The meeting was also addressed by Awami League pre-

sidium member Abdul Jalil, State Minister for Social Welfare Dr Muzammel Haq, Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Prof Abdul Wahid Chowdhury and BCL president Enamul Haq Shamim.

BCL city unit (North) president Mazhar Hossain was in the chair.

The Awami League General Secretary also urged the party and BCL workers to mobilise the people to carry forward the development activities of the government foiling the evil design of the anti-liberation forces.

He criticised BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia for backing these forces saying her (Begum Zia) husband had promoted the cause of anti-liberation forces secretly to establish his power base, but today she is aiding them openly to destabilise the country.

In this context, he referred to the recent hartals called by the BNP and extreme rightwing and religion-based parties to protest the ugly act of an Israeli woman and the fuel price refixation.

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Teenaged boy drowns in Sylhet

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Aug 29: A teenaged boy drowned in a pond at Kastaghar area in the town this afternoon.

The dead was identified as Dharmajyoti alias Sumon, 16, son of Advocate Dhruvajyoti Shyam. Sumon passed SSC this year with star marks.

Sumon went to the pond to have a bath at about 5 pm after playing cricket on a nearby playground.

His body was recovered from the pond.

IOJ renews its programme to gherao TV bhaban

Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ), at a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday afternoon, renewed its programme to gherao the TV Bhaban at Ram-pura on September 18, reports UNB.

The IOJ, an alliance of some smaller political parties and groups preaching Islamic ideology, observed the demonstration yesterday to protest 'harassment' on its activists on August 22, the day it held a grand rally at Manik Mia Avenue.



The badly damaged car of Shama. — Star photo

Shama killed

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The victims were coming from Mahakhali New DOHS to Eskaton area after attending a party.

Police said, Shama, her relative Jannatul Ferdous, 40, and the latter's son, Alvi, 14, were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where doctors declared them dead.

The injured are Jannatul's daughter Anika, 16, Shama's nephew Maruf, 24, Himu, 40, and his wife Fahima Mahmud, 33. They were admitted to DMCH and a private clinic.

Police suspected that 'reckless driving' of the truck caused the accident.

Hearing a big bang, the on duty personnel at the nearby Fire Service and Civil Defence Station, came out and found the damaged car with the victims inside.

The fire servicemen and patrol police took them to the DMCH immediately.

The truck left the scene.

Tejgaon police said they could not yet trace the truck or its driver till last night.

Krishak Dal rally today

The Jatiyatabadi Krishak Dal will hold a rally today at 4 pm demanding fair price of jute, rice and other agricultural products and to protest price hike of gasoline and agri-inputs, reports UNB.

BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan will address the rally as chief guest while acting president of Krishak Dal Mahbubul Alal Tara will preside it, said a press release.

Mirpur thana BNP will hold a rally at Mirpur Section 10 Golchattar today at 4 pm. BNP Standing Committee member Chowdhury Tanveer Ahmed Siddiqui will address the rally as chief guest. Central leaders Abdullah Al Noman, Sadek Hossain Khoka MP and others will also speak at the rally.

JCD, BCL clash

SIRAJGANJ, Aug 29: Eight people were injured, one of them seriously, in a clash between the activists of pro-Awami League Chhatra League and the BNP-backed JCD in the town today, reports UNB.

The clash is a sequel to the Thursday's incident when BCL district leader Shaban Uddin JCD's Sayed Dhangana mahalla convenor Jahangir Alam during a quarrel over renaming the Jamuna Bridge as Bangabandhu Bridge.

Aid Club

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During the last Paris meeting, the new Awami League government proposed to organise the event in the Bangladesh capital and it was accepted by the members of the Bangladesh Aid Group.

The government deferred the meeting, noting that it will coincide with the historic Jall Killing Day, a black chapter in the Bangladesh's history.

Four of the country's national leaders were killed in the Dhaka Central Jail on November 3, 1975, following the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on August 15 the same year.

Preparations are a foot to hold the Aid Club meeting and the Investment Forum, where international private investors will be invited to put their capital in Bangladesh using its advantages and opportunities.

The officials said the inter-ministerial meeting would be held on the proposed aid memorandum, to be prepared by the Economic Relations Division (ERD), during the first half of the next month.

Later, the memoir would be placed before the Cabinet for its approval.

Bangladesh is yet to decide about the amount to be sought from the country's development partners.

Donors would enquire about the usual issues like the progress in reforms, particularly in the financial sector and the administration, and privatisation. Various other issues would come up for discussion.

CRC: No bar

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or other legal obstacle to withdrawing the reservation in respect of Article 21 of the Convention," the LC observed. It, however, said, "Islamic law does not recognise or permit adoption. So, Muslims cannot be involved in any way by this article."

The government also wanted the LC to decide whether the age limit for immunity from criminal liability could be raised to 12 years from 7 years; if the age of a child as defined in the Children Act, 1974, can be raised to 18 years from 16 years; and whether the age limit for immunity of a child from being sentenced to death or imprisonment for life can be raised to 18 years.

About the enhancement of the age limit for immunity from criminal liability, the LC said, "There is no constitutional or other legal obstacle to raise the age of immunity from criminal liability by amending Section 82 of the Penal code, but it may be stressed that such enhancement is likely to do more harm than good to the children and to society as a whole."

Regarding enhancement of the age of a child as defined in the Children Act, 1974, the LC observed, "There is no constitutional or legal obstacle to the enhancement of the age of 'child' as defined in Section 2(f) of the Children Act, 1974, by amendment thereof."

Massacre

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African nation has risen sharply since June, when a newly elected government took power, promising to stop the brutal attacks. Some 1,500 people have been killed since then.

More than 60,000 people have been killed since the start of the insurgency in 1992. It began when the army canceled parliamentary elections to thwart a likely victory by the now-banned Islamic Salvation Front.

Latif Siddiqui MP sued on charge of violence

ROK Vice FM due in city Sept 1

TANGAIL, Aug 29: A case was filed here today against 14 people, including Abdul Latif Siddiqui MP, accusing them of resorting to violence and making an attempt on the life of a local labour leader, reports UNB.

The case was filed with Kalihati thana, making the local MP as the principal accused, police said.

They said a group of armed terrorists attacked Kalihati Thana Engineering Workers Union general secretary Abdul Malek at the union office at about 8:30 pm Thursday and chopped him with sharp weapons.

The attackers also blasted crackers and created panic in the area, leaving another labour leader, Haider Ali, seriously injured.

The miscreants again attacked the two labour leaders when they were being taken to Kalihati thana health complex and stabbed Malek indiscriminately.

Police rescued Malek in an unconscious state and send him to Pangu Hospital in Dhaka.

Malek reportedly had an exchange of hot words with Latif Siddiqui MP during an interschool football match at Kalihati High School playground on Thursday afternoon.

According to the case filed by Malek's wife Monowara Begum, associates of the ruling Party MP had threatened to kill him.

A tense situation was prevailing in the area.

Clinton-Gujral

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the line of control (LOC) by Indian troops in Kashmir "are against the spirit of the dialogue," Sharif told a news conference in Quetta.

Sharif renewed an allegation that India has deployed missiles on the Pakistan border and said: "It is a matter of grave concern for us."

He vowed that the Pakistani armed forces were fully capable of meeting any threat to the country's security.

Foreign minister Gohar Ayub Khan told parliament on Thursday the Indians were sending "mixed signals" about the next round of talks scheduled for September in New Delhi.

JRC talks

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According to international water-sharing rules, Bangladesh and India should get 33 per cent of the total flow each. But in the absence of any agreement, India is taking 85-90 per cent of the total flow in the lean period.

As a result of the unilateral withdrawal of the Teesta water by Indian authorities, Bangladesh is getting only 10-15 per cent (3,000-4,000 cusec). The lowest flow recorded on January 13 last was only 2,700 cusec.

But the country's largest irrigation project, the Teesta Barrage, constructed at a cost of Tk 1,000 crore, and its 34-kilometre main distribution canal need at least 8,000 cusec water in the lean season, the source said.

The total command area under the project is 7.5 lakh hectares of which 5.4 lakh hectares are under the irrigation network.

The source said if Bangladesh gets its due share of Teesta water, additional crops worth Tk 400 crore will be produced in the first phase and crops worth Tk 1,400 crore in the second phase.

JS: Women

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in the male dominated parliament," Barrister Rabeya Bhuiyan, said speaking as chief guest at the seminar.

The seminar also discussed a draft bill, scheduled to be placed in the parliament by Rabeya Bhuiyan. The bill will seek 'no more than two hundred male members and no less than one hundred female members' in parliament.

Prof Nazma Chowdhury said women should have one third representation in the parliament. "It is high time for us to come forward and give due importance to women empowerment," she said.

Maleka Begum of Gana Shasthya said shortage of funds was the number one problem during election campaigns of women. "Women can not spend as much money as men can. This is a major obstacle for women candidates to win elections. So, I welcome the initiative of Rabeya Bhuiyan and give all our support for one third representation of women in parliament."

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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JS session

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tary Affairs Minister Abdul Matin Khasru told UNB that the ensuing session would be a session of legislation.

LGRD Minister Zillur Rahman said the two Local Government Bills would be placed and passed during this session to ensure elections to the village and Union Councils in December.

Some 1600 questions, 2300 resolution motions, 31 special privilege motions and three notices for general discussions were submitted by the ruling and opposition legislators, the sources said adding two previous amendment bills — President Award Fund (Amendment) and Drug Control Ordinance (Amendment) are expected to be tabled in this session.

Apart from legislative business, the current session is likely to witness some stormy scenes as it begins the sitting at a time when the opposition camp generated a lot of heat on the street.

The raise in fuel prices, alleged repression on opposition, and the law and order situation may figure prominently during this session.

Ruling Awami League and Opposition BNP will determine their strategies for this session at their respective parliamentary party meetings this afternoon.

The Business Advisory Committee on Thursday decided to hold general discussions on foreign policy, a terrorism-free society and fair price of jute.

Ershad

From Page 1

Rangpur Pourasava Chairman for long over leadership of the party in the district.

Workers of both groups were present there.

At one stage when the JP Chairman attempted to deliver his speech, a group of workers raised slogans and started shouting. The other group also raised counter-slogans, followed by brandishing of arms by both the groups. The pandemonium ensued when one group demanded that Sharfuddin be allowed to speak before Ershad, the sources said.

The situation was however brought under control by Ershad.

The meeting ended with a brief speech by Ershad calling upon party leaders and workers for unity.

Blackmail: 5 arrested in Narayanganj

NARAYANGANJ, Aug 29: Five people were arrested on Thursday night and early today from Paikpara and Beparipara area on charge of blackmail, reports UNB.

Plainclothes police held Mostak Hossain, 27, and Golam Nabi, 35, from a pharmacy at Paikpara around 9 pm on a complaint from the owner, Abul Hossain, that he was being blackmailed.

Later, police arrested three others — Shahnaz Begum, 37, Umme Habiba Akhter Milla, 20, and Panna Akhter alias China, 15, from Beparipara at 3 am today on the basis of confessional statement by Mostak and Golam Nabi.

Police said pharmacy owner-cum-compounder Abul Hossain complained to Sadar thana that two people were blackmailing him for Tk 50,000 after taking some obscene photographs on August 1.

Abul Hossain said on the day, he was called in to a house at Bhuiyanbagh to attend a patient, but on reaching there, he was trapped in a room as the

Gene bank

From Page 1

have to be well prepared now to fight against rampant patenting of things. If North takes resources from us and develop things and again sales those to us in exchange of patent royalties, why should we search in protecting our resources?"

R K Arora, — talking to The Daily Star said, "IGRI, founded in 1971 (previous name — International Board for PGR) was working for strengthening national programmes in member countries. About Bangladesh, Arora commented, "Here strengthening national programme is more a question of better coordination. You have some brilliant scientists and experts in this country."

In Bangladesh, there are genebanks in various agro-research institutions like — BRRI, BARI and BJRI. But, the scientists who attended the workshop that discussed some 28 research papers, felt the urgency of a national genebank so that local varieties are not lost for ever.

Conservation of rice varieties in the country started back in early '70s with the establishment of genebank for rice at BRRI and the total collection reached up to 7,100 varieties. Agriculture Minister Begum Motia Chowdhury while inaugurating the workshop on Tuesday last had said that before the inventory of high yielding varieties (HYVs), there were over 8,000 local varieties in '60s.

Accident

From Page 1

one person dead and another wounded at Dholaiapur under Demra thana in the city this morning.

Auto-rickshaw driver Joy-nal Molla, 35, died on the spot. The injured, Golam Mawla, 37, was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

English

From Page 1

bers of parliament the country should concentrate on Indian sports like hockey and kabaddi — a territorial team game of tag — rather than cricket.

Yadav said cricket was a 'Gulam (servitude) game,' imposed on India by British colonialists.

The use of English in the Indian parliament, which has adopted Hindi as its official language, often raises hackles.

India boasts 18 official languages, Hindi, spoken in the north but which bears little resemblance to southern languages, is the most widely spoken, by almost half the population. English remains favoured among the country's affluent middle class.