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## Down to Earth

### Changing Urban Fabric of Old Dhaka

By A S M Nurunnabi

The urban fabric of old Dhaka seems to carry some elements of historic times. Some of these elements include narrow passages between contiguous structures, definitive boundary demarcations, separate commercial areas, growth of mohallas, and inward residential quarters. Since the days of the Mughals, for reasons of commerce or other factors, historic Dhaka used to wear a new look every time there had been a change of ruler. As a result, we find still extant a good number of notable monuments.

It is true that those who used to live in the sixties and seventies in the old part of the city may find notable changes in this part in the nineties. Yet there are some aspects of civil life which had hardly undergone changes in present times. For examples, the inadequacies in infrastructural facilities pose a serious problem. In the opinion of keen observers, the greatest anomalies in the urban fabric of old Dhaka have been created by the pre-existing road network and the patterns of old housing units. In the absence of forward-looking planning for this part of the city, the existing civic malaises continue unabated.

The old part of the city, partly on account of its historical legacy, suffers from intricate and vexed problem of traffic congestion. It is understood that Rajdhanī Unnayan Kartipaksha (Kajuk) is due to take up a project under which more than 1,000 lanes and by-lanes will be widened. It is the earnest hope of the residents of old Dhaka that a fair proportion of these lanes and by-lanes in that part of the city will be covered under the project. The narrow width of these lanes and by-

lanes was not much of a problem when that area's population was small and the traffic thinner. But now the alleys are far too inadequate to cope with the pressure of mounting traffic.

The Dhaka city seems to be gasping for breath with a load of nine million people. Sixty per cent of these people do not belong to old Dhaka; they have come from different areas of the country in pursuit of their various vocations. In the process of rapid urbanisation, old Dhaka has fallen victim to stifling congestion of living space. Open spaces which once met the demands of a low-density population have been gradually shrinking. The once well-known parks of old Dhaka are now under encroachment by anti-social elements.

Some good schools with sound past traditions are located in this area. On account of difficulties in getting easy access to such institutions, their former good image has lately considerably suffered. The same may be said in respect of medical facilities available in this part of the city. A single government hospital and a municipal clinic can hardly be considered adequate for a large segment of population in this area.

When we proceed along the main streets of old Dhaka, we notice a predominance of commercial buildings. Most of such buildings are more than two stories high. This gives the impression that the dwellers in this part of the city give greater priority to commercial considerations. As a result, a large number of small factories and manufacturing units have been set up even within limited space available. These manufacturing

units engaged in making a large variety of consumer items, including a wide range of adulterated products, cause undesirable environmental conditions for their neighbourhoods. Many of the houses where such factories operate are used for mixed purposes — commercial and residential. In many cases, such houses have no proper passage, staircase, light, air ventilation or fire-fighting arrangement. There is also no proper waste management practices in respect of such manufacturing units. Combined with this is the constant nuisance of noise pollution created by the operation of such units.

The wastes from the industrial units standing on the banks of the river Buriganga find their way into the river water, thereby polluting it on an enormous scale. There is also a proliferation of slums and shanties on the river banks and Kamrangir char and in other places.

Thus the inhabitants of old Dhaka are bedevilled by an array of adverse environmental factors. In particular, the low income groups of people in this area are becoming victims of the resultant low quality of life, creating thereby some measure of social instability which, in its ultimate impact, leaves scars on the fabric of the urban society.

A way out of the gloomy picture of old Dhaka may be found in the master plan for the city, incorporating in it the projected development schemes covering this part of Dhaka as well. In this manner, the general grievance of neglect voiced by some sections of old residents of that area, may be effectively attended to.

## Finalisation of promotion of police officials tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

The Superior Selection Board is scheduled to meet at 10:00 am tomorrow to finalise the promotion of some high police officials, sources at the Police Headquarters said yesterday.

Five posts of DIG are lying vacant in the Criminal Investigation Department, Special Branch, Dhaka Metropolitan Police, Police Headquarters and the Khulna Police Range.

Nurun Nabi, OSD in the Establishment Ministry, Hadduddin, DIG-in-charge, Khulna Range, Lutfol Kabir, Additional DIG, Khulna Range, Masudul Huq and A K M Ahmedul Huq, both Directors of NSI are likely to be promoted to the posts of DIG for filling up the vacant posts. All these five officers are currently serving in the rank of additional DIG, sources added.

## 34 children drown as trolley falls into river in India

NEW DELHI, Feb 6: At least 34 children drowned when a trolley hitched to a tractor that they were using to travel in a river, domestic news agencies reported, reports AP.

More than 50 school children in a small town called Bag Kejra in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh were crammed in the trolley when the tractor drawing it dashed against a truck full of stones on Thursday night, United News of India said.

The children were returning from a school picnic when the accident occurred, United News said, quoting local police in the area, about 500 kilometers south of New Delhi.

## Gunshot at PMO

From page 1

start questioning them this week. It has been alleged that unidentified gunman fired the gunshot from outside the boundary of the PMO. The bullet pierced a window pane of Advisor Dr S A Malek's office room of about 20 square feet space on the first floor.

## Justice Kemaluddin

From page 1

The post of chairman LC fell vacant following the resignation of Justice Dr FKMA Munim on December 31, last year. Munim, a former Chief Justice, was given a contract appointment on December 6, 1996 for a period of three years.

Following the resignation, Justice Aminur Rahman Khan, a member of the LC, was made the acting chairman.

## Food deficit

From page 1

are more precious than keeping the reserve intact. About the prospect of next Boro harvest, he said "There is no point in low harvest for consecutive seasons."

A multinational company trading in seeds and pesticides in Bangladesh based on field reports collected in December last said, "The winter chill and reduced sunlight have damaged Boro seedlings...Most seedbeds have already turned yellow due to the cold weather."

The Agriculture Extension Department, meanwhile, has launched a vigorous campaign to make the farmers aware of the possible attack of hispa on Boro field due to the unfavourable weather condition. Traders at Mohammadpur Krishi Market, the biggest wholesale market of rice in the city, told this correspondent yesterday that rice price remained static even after launching of the OMS on January 28.

They also said hoarding by a section of unscrupulous millers contributed to the price hike. "They (hoarders) took advantage of 'dadad' (loan), given to peasants during the beginning of Aman season. They have now raised the prices. Peasants in the northern region who took 'dadad' had no option but to sell their produce at a cheaper rate."

Peasants take 'dadad' because they have no easy access to agriculture loan from banks. Out of a targeted Tk 2352.50 crore agri-loan for fiscal 1997-98, only Tk 697.22 crore was disbursed in the first six months. In a recent meeting, the Food and Agriculture Minister expressed his dissatisfaction over "mismanagement and corruption" in disbursement of agri-loan by different banks. The Finance Minister, who was also present at the meeting, directed banks to disburse at least Tk 1000 agriculture loan by the end of the current fiscal.

Wholesale prices of different varieties of rice in the Krishi market yesterday were: Pajama Tk 14.87 a kilogram, Nazimail Tk 17.14, Swarna Tk 14.59 and Minicat Tk 19.91.



Louis Farrakhan waving at people on the premises of Baitul Mukarram Mosque in the city yesterday. — Star photo

## Louis Farrakhan calls for unity among Muslims

By Special Correspondent

American Black Muslim leader Louis Farrakhan yesterday called for unity among Muslims and resisting threats against them.

"The biggest problem Muslims are facing is not any superpower, USA or Britain, but illiteracy and disunity among the Muslim," Farrakhan told a reception in his honour at the Islamic Foundation shortly after arriving in the capital.

Referring to the standoff between Iraq and US over UN arms inspection, Farrakhan said: "Today the US and Britain are maneuvering to bomb Iraq, but they have armed the Muslim nations and set each against the another."

He further said, "Muslims are not realising that if they cannot resist the threat against one of their family members, others in the family would also have to suffer the same fate."

He stressed that Muslims should follow the teachings of Quran and Hadith and pursue scientific knowledge.

Farrakhan flew to Dhaka for a two-day visit by a chartered aircraft from Dubai after visiting Russia, Siberia and the Caucasus republics of Dagestan and Chechnia.

The visit has been sponsored by the International Islamic Representative Organisation (IIRO). He was received at the airport by IIRO organiser Majumder Mohammad Shamsul Amin and others.

The reception was arranged by the IIRO. It was also addressed by State Minister for Religious Affairs Maulana Nurul Islam and Dr Maimul Ahsan Khan, chairman of the Law Department of the Dhaka University.

He offered prayers at the Baitul Mukarram national mosque and addressed the devotees before the Jumma prayers briefly, saying that if Bangladeshi Muslims could unite they could play a vital role in the Islamic renaissance around the world.

Turning to American Black Muslims, he said that "Islam is helping them to live with dignity in America where they were brought as slaves 400 years ago."

Farrakhan also chatted briefly with the devotees and Khatib of Baitul Mukarram Maulana Obaidul Huq.

He is accompanied by his personal bodyguards, TV crew, wife Betsy Farrakhan and sons Wallace Farrakhan and Alif Mohammad.

Farrakhan later Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia at her official Minto Road residence.

None has been named as accused in the FIR, police said. Alok's murder, however, sparked off violence at Daulatpur this morning. Supporters of the ruling party damaged several vehicles and roadside shops. They put up barricade on Daulatpur highway disrupting road communication till 1:30 pm.

Occidental

From page 1

initial exploration period. Rather, Occidental's "callous" operation in Magurchara led to an explosion in June last.

Occidental did not even apply for extension of its PSC for that block six months prior to the termination deadline. It, however, applied for an extension on January 6 — only 5 days before the expiry of the PSC's validity.

Now the PSC is being scrutinised by legal experts to see whether it could be extended or terminated right away.

In such a situation, the DOE last month held back an application of Occidental for environmental clearance of its proposed operation at Jalalabad in Sylhet.

The Petrobangla in a letter also told the DOE that the PSC was not currently valid and that legal experts would soon give a suggestion about extension or termination of the contract.

But the DOE last week cleared Occidental's application.

Now Occidental has sent a letter to Petrobangla saying that it had the clearance of the DOE and Petrobangla should immediately extend the PSC.

Occidental said that its drilling equipment, including an expensive rig, is now ready at Jalalabad to start operation.

The US company pointed out that in such a situation, if the Petrobangla did not extend the PSC immediately, Bangladesh would have to bear the daily cost of the equipment mobilised there.

The US company had signed two PSCs with Bangladesh. One for block 12 and the other for blocks 13 and 14. It is already enjoying an extension in block 12.

## FM arrives on Tuesday

### Spl Australian fund for HR Commission likely

The Australian government is likely to give a special fund to support the government's plan for setting up an independent human rights commission in Bangladesh.

Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, who arrives in the capital on Tuesday, is expected to announce an initial fund for the proposed commission.

The initial fund may be about one million Australian dollar, diplomatic sources told UNB yesterday.

They said Australia is also interested in providing financial assistance for the development of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Downer's visit is viewed as very important as he is the first Australian Foreign Minister to be in Dhaka after eight years since August 1990.

During his two-day visit, Downer will hold official talks with his Bangladesh counterpart Abdus Samad Azad on Tuesday.

The two foreign ministers are expected to discuss the entire gamut of bilateral relations, economic cooperation, and regional and international issues.

Domestic issues like the CHT Indonesian FM

From page 1

The Indonesian foreign minister will hold official talks with his Bangladesh counterpart Abdus Samad Azad tomorrow. During the discussions, the two sides are expected to review the entire gamut of bilateral relations with special emphasis on expanding economic cooperation.

The visiting foreign minister is expected to convey his country's interest in investing by Indonesian private entrepreneurs in the garments and cement industries and in the gas sector.

Both sides will also explore the potential of increased cooperation in setting up joint venture enterprises and increasing trade between them, the sources said.

The official talks are also expected to focus on the modalities of opening direct air services linking the capitals of the two countries. An agreement to this effect was signed during the Bangladesh Prime Minister's visit to Indonesia.

The Indonesia minister will visit the Export Processing Zone at Savar.

Ali Alatas will deliver the keynote address on "ASEAN and SAARC" at the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies tomorrow.

The total volume of trade between the two countries in which Indonesia enjoys a trade surplus stood at 117 million US dollars in 1996. Jakarta's exports to Dhaka in 1996 was 107.30 million dollars while Dhaka exported goods of worth only 9.30 million dollars.

The sources informed that the volume of trade between the two countries has not seen any significant increase in the last two decades.

Bangladesh exports to Indonesia comprises mainly of jute, jute products, leather, and raw cotton while imports constitute cement, tyre, pulp, paper, glass, and furniture.

During his stay, the Indonesian Foreign Minister will make courtesy call on President Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

BNP

From page 1

formed at a Speaker-mediated dialogue in September last year. Since its formation, the committee met only once which was not attended by the BNP members.

The BNP secretary general told the press conference that convening of a meeting of the committee would not be of much use unless all issues of discontent are well covered.

## 'Make Feb 10 demonstration a success'

The City BNP yesterday cautioned the government that it would be held responsible for all consequences if the CHT agreement is not cancelled, reports UNB.

A resolution adopted at its emergency meeting said the country's situation would take a dangerous turn due to what it called the government's blueprint to implement anti-protest agreement by force.

The meeting chaired by city BNP convenor Sadeq Hossain Khoka asked the government to scrap the CHT accord immediately by showing respect to the "popular verdict."

The meeting urged the BNP leaders and workers and its front organisations to make success the demonstration programme on February 10 to protest the accord which is against the Constitution and the nation as well.

## Anup Chetia

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Chetia, said to be the secretary general of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), was arrested along with two others, identified as Lakhmi Prasad Goswami and Babul Sharma, from a flat in the city under Mohammadpur thana on December 21, 1997.

Chetia is charged with illegal entry into the country, posing foreign currency and holding Bangladeshi passports illegally. The two others were charged with illegal entry and stay in Bangladesh.

## Indian nationals

From page 1

went to install a shallow tubewell in their paddy field, a group of Indian nationals allegedly backed by BSF personnel attacked them and tried to snatch the tubewell.

They beat up the villagers mercilessly, resulting in 10 injured.

On receiving the news, the other villagers rushed to the spot and launched a counter-attack. They snatched one SLR from one of the BSF members and chased them across the border.

A tense situation prevailed in the area throughout the night.

The villagers of Diar-Khidirpur fled their homes with cattle and other belongings and took shelter in Rajshahi city.

A flag meeting was held this morning on the Indian territory of Khidirpur. The snatched rifle was returned to the BSF, BDR Battalion Commander Lt Col Joinal Abedin said. The situation at Diar-Khidirpur is returning to normal following the flag meeting and both sides decided to maintain peace in the border area, the commander added.

At least 15 persons of the same village were injured in an attack by the Indian nationals on Tuesday last.

## Book Fair opens today

From page 1

campus because of her autocratic activities."

Earlier in 1996, when Awami League was in the opposition, the student wing of the AL, Bangladesh Chhatra League, also made the same threat, Begum Khaleda Zia, the then PM, came to the campus to inaugurate the fair despite the BCL's threat.

Police, on January 31, 1996 had attacked Jagannath Hall during a clash with the BCL activists in which more than 200 students were injured, to ensure safe entrance of the then PM.

A tense situation was prevailing on the DU campus yesterday as the activists of JCD and Bangladesh Chhatra League, the student wing of ruling Awami League, organised separate processions and rallies.

JCD organised the procession and rally protesting the planned visit of the PM and called to resist the PM from opening the fair while the BCL organised procession and rally welcoming the PM's visit.

Additional police forces have been deployed on the campus.

## Gazipur EPZ

From page 1

approved the GEPP project on April 12, 1997 to set up the EPZ on 500 acres of land near Mawna Bazar in Gazipur district on the eastern side of Dhaka-Mymensingh highway.

BEPPA completed all necessary arrangements for land acquisition, but had to refrain from going ahead in the face of stiff opposition by the local people.

People did not make any disturbance during other necessary preparations in that area, but they created stiff resistance when the authority wanted to serve final acquisition notice, the sources said.

The proposed GEPP area featured sparsely dwelling houses with vast crop lands, considered by the inhabitants as the main sources of their livelihood.

Also, there are some pucca structures for industries with mere signboards, but hardly any caretaker to look after the proposed industries.

Residents of the area told UNB that value and compensation for land that the government had intended to pay was not acceptable to them.

The present market price of land in the area is Tk 3 to 5 lakh per bigha (33 decimal).

On the other hand, the authority could never pay the value and compensation of land beyond the market price as reflected in the land deeds, officials said.

It was also alleged that some vested quarters had illegally took possession of others' lands in the area. They could not produce proper documents before the authority and the compensation would be accounted for the actual owners.

This is why the vested quarters are resisting the land acquisition process, the sources said. Moreover, those quarters have managed the local politicians to oppose the acquisition of land.

## Violence in Ctg

From page 1

BCL activists also brought out processions in the city protesting the arrest of their leader.

Traffic movement came to halt for few hours at those troubled places, police said.

A large number of police were deployed at those places as tension spread in the city.

Meanwhile, another BCL leader, Shaiful Alam Dobash was arrested early morning today after a raid at his residence at Feringhizbar.

Police said Dobash was arrested in connection with a number of criminal cases of murder and rioting.

BCL protested the arrest saying that Dobash was implicated in false cases and brought out processions.

## CID squad

From page 1

lice for investigation. The proposal said that the team must have the authority to establish direct contact with another country through the Interpol.

It said recent reports suggested that most of the incidents of trafficking of children and women take place through land borders of the neighbouring country. To obtain rapid assistance from that country's police, our foreign mission should play a greater role, it said.

The proposal has suggested a special form to be filled up by the relevant police unit which will receive the news first. The squad chief would take steps if he thinks that the case has to be investigated by the CID.

If there is information that the victim has been kept at a certain place, the squad will be able to conduct the rescue operation with the assistance of local police.

Many slums in the city have become transit points for trafficking children and women. So the squad will work closely with the NGOs to obtain information.

বাংলাদেশ পোশাক প্রস্তুতকারক ও রপ্তানিকারক সমিতি (বিজিএমইএ)

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