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**Down to Earth**  
**Disquieting Aspects of City Life**

By ASM Nurunnabi

There are certain disquieting aspects of city life which appear to be galling to the sense of civic propriety. Take the case of illegal factories in residential areas. Recently, a couple of factories, about a dozen residential houses and a flour godown in Lalbagh area were gutted by a fire that was believed to have originated in one of the factories. That particular area has been earmarked as residential, but despite this clarification, it is reported that there is a number of plastic factories and several other manufacturing units in that area, all of which consume electricity and gas for production. As both of these have the potential for causing fire, there is no wonder that fire breaks out with an ominous regularity.

It is open to question how these factories are permitted to operate inside residential areas under the nose of the authorities. This is admittedly all the more puzzling when there are specific laws that prohibit the establishment of such units in these areas. Fires in factories are nothing new, but there is no denying that they are often the prelude to disaster. Warnings always seem to fall on deaf ears while the number of small and illegal factories mushroom in the narrow side-lanes and alleys of the city.

It is understood that the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has a department whose job is to inspect and report back on such units operating in residential areas. They are authorised to file a law suit against the perpetrators of such illegal establishments. The question arises again, when the laws are so clear in this matter, why the concerned department is so indifferent in enforcing such laws.

It is mandatory for factory owners to install fire-fighting equipment in the form of buckets of sand and water. Bigger establishments are required to have fire extinguishers and sometimes sprinkling systems but few care to have either. As a result of non-compliance with the mandatory regulations for fire control, fires even at the initial stage get out of control and tend to cause disaster. Linked with this matter is the question how such factories are able to get electricity and gas connections when the concerned authorities are aware of the legal restrictions. This gives rise to suspicion that the owners of such factories may be pilating these connections.

The overriding concern of all related agencies should be how to make sure that such factories can be kept away from

their unlawful functioning in places where people are supposed to live.

Another disturbing aspect is the establishment of the so-called Community Centres in the heart of residential areas. This tends to disturb the peace and the social structure of areas where families live. Also health clinics and tutorial centres are springing up in the residential areas. As a result, of these indirect business activities, the families living nearby or in the same premises become silent sufferers.

Another disquieting aspect is the opening of a large number of small private shops operating in the city which offer the public the use of their telephones on cash payment basis. While the charge made for use of such phones is somewhat higher than the official rate, the questions that arise are whether such proliferating shops have valid trade licences for such use and whether they are taxable.

The authorities concerned are aware of this side business, therefore, seems to be called for, incorporating provisions for registration of such establishments doing the telephone business and spelling out the approved standard rates.

**PM opens motel in Kuakata today**

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina goes to the scenic tourist resort of Kuakata today to open a 'Parjatan Motel', reports UNB.

The Prime Minister will open the tourist motel on the first day of her two-day visit to the southern districts of Barguna and Patuakhali.

She will reach Barguna by helicopter this morning and address a public meeting there. She will fly to Kalapara to address another public meeting.

In the afternoon, Hasina will reach Kuakata to open the tourist motel. Built by Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC).

At Kuakata, the prime minister will witness a cultural function.

She will make a night halt at the tourist spot from where both sunrise and sunset can be seen in the Bay.

On Sunday morning, Hasina will visit Galachipa and address a public meeting there. Later, she will go to Patuakhali to inaugurate the TV relay station.

The Prime Minister will also address a public meeting in Patuakhali town and return to the capital on Sunday afternoon.

**Nasim's death**

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the call of the hour to go for 'vital support system' and 'artificial ventilation' rather than performing diagnosis."

Nasim's younger brother Shiblee said that Nasim started complaining about deterioration of his health on Thursday morning. "He had his dinner at a wedding ceremony the previous night and started vomiting since the following morning. He had loose motions also."

My sister-in-law (Nasim's wife) phoned us and we rushed him to Holy Family. He was given glucose and saline and was rushed to PG at the advice of Holy Family doctors."

Shiblee, however, added that his brother had returned from a tour of Barisal and "may be the food at the wedding ceremony did not suit him."

**Cong, UF**

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Gowda left the Rashtrapati Bhavan without talking to the press.

Meanwhile, the BJP which already suffered a set back in having consultations with AIADMK and is 'hopeful of breaking the stalemate over getting its letter of support for formation of government led by Vajpayee, party general secretary Venkaiah Naidu said today.

On Saturday, Narayanan was to meet again with Vajpayee. The president first turned to him because the BJP won the most seats, 178. The Congress party and its allies control 166 seats and the United Front, 96.

**11 jt Secys**

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Ministry of Agriculture, Nazrul Islam in the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, Khondakar Abu Mohammad Abdullah in the Home Ministry, Nilufar Begum in the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Dr Jainab Begum in the Rural Development and Cooperatives Division, and Begum Hazera Khatun in the Ministry of Forest and Environment.

Besides, Member of Bangladesh Tea Board (Chittagong) Mohammad Shamsul Haq has been made Joint Secretary of the Energy Ministry. Joint Secretary of the Telecommunications Ministry Abu Taleb has been transferred to the Economic Division, Joint Secretary Zillur Rashid Chowdhury of Local Government Division to the Jatiya Sangsad Secretariat, and Joint Secretary Mohammad Hossain Serriabat of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs to the Local Government Division.

Commissioner for Relief and Rehabilitation for Refugees in Cox's Bazar ASM Kamrul Huda has been made Joint Secretary of the Commerce Ministry, while Director of the Privatisation Board Sarwar Hossain has been appointed Joint Secretary of the Commerce Ministry and Member of the Tant Board Mainuddin Ahmed Chowdhury made Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs.

Ex-member of the Planning Commission Dr Fazlul Hasan Yousuf has been appointed Director General of Rural Development Academy, Bogra.

Mohammad Muniruddin, ex-chairman of BJMC, was made Chairman of Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation for one year.

**Border confce**

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agency, trafficking of women and children, land dispute, illegal trespass and law and order were discussed and some important decisions were taken, officials said.

**Anup Chetia**

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Mohammadpur thana against Chetia, General Secretary of United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), and two of his associates.

Police said they were charged with illegal entry into Bangladesh, possessing forged passports and foreign currencies.

Chief of the armed wing of ULFA, Paresh Barua, in an interview with the BBC at that time, had appealed to Bangladesh authorities not to hand over Golap Barua to India. He also called for unconditional release of Golap Barua.

It was reported that Golap Barua was staying in Bangladesh for about a year, using various names and addresses.

**Robbery at Philips show room in Ctg**

CHITTAGONG, Mar 13: A gang of dacoits today committed robbery at the Philips central show room near the Chittagong Shopping Complex and stole nine television sets and two VCPs, reports UNB.

One dacoit identified as Abul Hashem, 31, was caught red-handed by a guard at the centre at about 9 am and five sound boxes and one VCP were recovered from his possession.

Police said the dacoits entered the shop by digging a tunnel under the floor of the show room. A case has been filed with Panchlais thana in this connection.

**Rice instead of wheat under VGD programme**

The government has decided to supply rice instead of wheat under the vulnerable group development (VGD) programme this month, an official handout said yesterday, reports BSS.

**21 more held**

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camp registered their names voluntarily with camp officials and UNHCR representatives here for returning home.

They registered their names over the last three days expressing willingness to go back home. Additional Refugee and Repatriation Commissioner Rakibuddin Ahmed told The Daily Star today.

After arrests of some anti-repatriation elements from the camp in a recent police raid, the general refugees are now expressing their willingness to be repatriated soon, said the official.

The last group of 21,411 Rohingya refugees are now staying at two camps — Kutupalong and Nayapara — in Cox's Bazar.

**Rape**

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tion, police said.

The alleged rapist was being interrogated at Rangunia thana, police said.

Mujakir was a neighbour of the girl. He had lured her to a nearby tubewell at a secluded hilly slope on the pretext of taking bath and allegedly violated her.

A case in this connection was filed with Rangunia thana yesterday. Filing of the case was delayed as village elders tried for a "compromise" with the victim's parents, police said. But at one stage, the accused fled from his village.

After filing of the case, the accused was arrested from a neighbouring village, Jangalgodala.

**Nasim Biswas laid to rest**

Dr Ehteshamul Haq Nasim Biswas MP, was laid to rest at Banani graveyard here yesterday afternoon, reports UNB.

The first janaza was held in front of the BNP central office at 10 am.

Hundreds of people, including BNP leaders and workers attended it.

Later, his body was taken to the south plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad at 11 am for the second namaj-e-janaja, which was attended by Speaker Humayun Rashed Chowdhury, ministers, MPs, political leaders and elite of the city.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina placed wreaths on the coffin of Nasim Biswas MP at the South Plaza of Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan yesterday. —PID photo

**Rapist still untraced**

From Page 1

The victim, now under treatment at the Dhaka CMH, is improving and she will take another 10-12 days for complete recovery.

She is taking food, mostly liquid. She starts crying if her father gets out of sight," the official said. Her father gives her company at the CMH.

Meanwhile, the investigating officer (IO) of the case filed with Kotwali thana interrogated members of some floating families who used to sleep in and around the court building. The case was lodged under the Women and Children Repression Act of 1995.

The IO, Alam Mollah, Assistant Commissioner of Kotwali crime zone have already recorded statements of about 20 people who were reportedly around the place of occurrence at the time of the incident.

A boy who used to play with the girl told the IO that a tall dark complexioned man wearing a lungi took the girl towards an abandoned place near the police control room.

The investigators are waiting for the medical examination report of the victim. A police official said the report may reach them from the Dhaka Medical College Hospital by Monday.

Meanwhile, the judicial probe committee headed by Additional CMM Habibur Rahman continued gathering information about the incident. But it could not be known when the committee would submit its findings to the government.

Some women's bodies and human rights organisations are likely to begin an independent investigation into the incident, next week.

UNB adds: A medical report yesterday confirmed that the child was raped. The report was prepared at a private clinic in the city, Alena Khan, a human rights activist, said.

**IU: Politics**

From Page 1

Shibir activists were beaten up by BCL activists on March 8 and following which both the groups traded gunshots. A Chhatra League worker was admitted to Kushtia General Hospital. Three Shibir activists received bullet injuries and they were admitted to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital in a critical condition.

After the incident university authorities held an emergency meeting at the office of Vice-Chancellor with acting VC Prof Md Mahtabuddin Sarkar in the chair. The meeting took a number of decisions to improve the campus situation. The meeting also imposed a temporary ban on political activities on the campus from March 8 to 12 to avoid further clashes.

In spite of that campus situation became tense as the rival activists of Shibir and Chhatra League (S-P) took positions at important points on Sunday. About 300 police were deployed on the campus to avert any possible clash. But the student groups, backed by armed outsiders, were still preparing to face each other.

No classes or scheduled examinations were held and all academic and administrative activities in the University were virtually paralysed.

**Billboards all around**

From Page 1

sations are renting out their own spaces for advertisement without obtaining permission from the DCC or paying the rent as required under the law.

Besides, Maghbazar, New Market, Shantinagar, Tejgaon, Purana Paltan, Fakirerpool, Gulshan, Dhanmondi and other important city spots are rapidly changing their look due to the unauthorised hoardings.

DCC sources also said very often they were under pressure from 'influential groups' to give them space for advertising in the city without any planning whatsoever.

In one such incident, recently, a DCC engineer used his influence to obtain permission to cover some city road islands and roundabouts with advertisement boards.

Permission to construct permanent structures was given on the reasoning that maintenance of the islands would be ensured by the advertisers," said a DCC official.

The road islands at Elephant Road and in Ramna and Gullistan areas have been mostly covered with hoardings and the green space was hardly getting sunlight.

When the matter was brought to the notice of DCC's Chief Engineer, he said, "we want to remove these boards immediately. The revenue wing did not ask us before allocating the space for advertisement."

Revenue department sources said there were more advertisements on private lands than

on DCC's. Any land owner can rent out his own land for advertising, provided he pays an annual rent to the DCC.

Asked whether it was the responsibility of the DCC to ensure the city's beauty, an official at the Nagar Bhavan replied that the only thing they could do stop this 'nuisance' was to warn the advertiser through a letter.

"We have only four people working in the relevant section, we have no transport, how can we manage?" he said.

A revenue wing official, however, said they would not rent out any new space until all the unauthorised hoardings in the city were removed.

"We are now detecting the unauthorised hoardings and we will soon launch a drive to remove those," he added.

**Rabindra Sangeet confce begins**

RAJSHAHI, Mar 13: The 17th annual national Rabindra Sangeet conference began on Rajshahi University campus today, reports BSS.

The two-day conference, organised by National Rabindra Sangeet Conference Parishad, was inaugurated by noted cultural activist Nazim Mahmud at Sabbash Bangladesh Chattar.

A seminar on "Rabindranath and Swadesh Chinta" was held in Kazi Nazrul Islam Auditorium with eminent litterateur Hasan Azizul Haq in the chair.

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