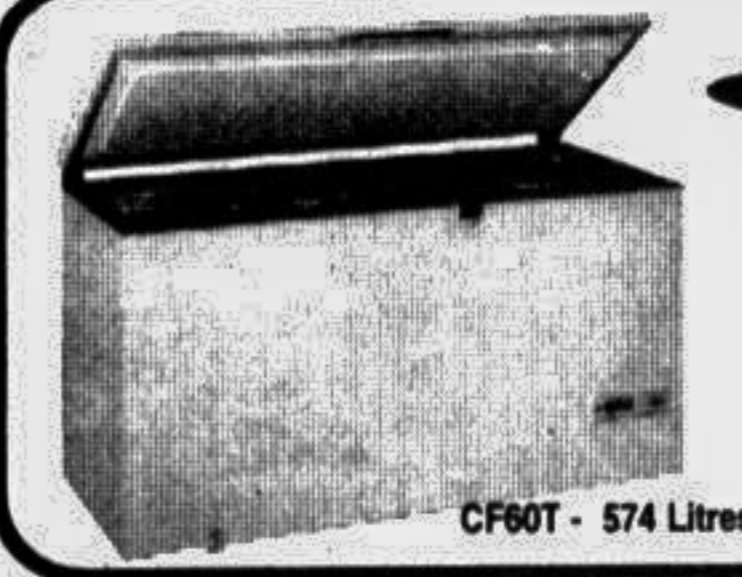




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# Down to Earth

## Springing City Shops

By A S M Nurunnabi

A notable aspect of metropolitan life is the rapid growth of shops in every conceivable space in lanes, by lanes, streets and boulevards. This is quite different when compared with situations in cities and towns of developed countries, where shopping centres are normally located away from residential areas. The proliferation of shops in the Dhaka city is such a staggering phenomenon that its nearly nine million residents are virtually choked with various types of shops, side by side with the steady growth of large shopping complexes. The trend of building high-rise apartment complexes in the city gives a fillip to the rise of shopping malls on the floors below, most of which have air-conditioning, lift and even escalator facilities.

And the once quiet and select residential areas are not spared from this proliferation. A large part of the Dhanmondi residential area has already been transformed into a commercial hub.

Same is the case in Gulshan area although it is developing gradually. The most galling feature of the trend is that the big shopping complexes at important city points are a constant source of horrendous traffic jams almost throughout the day. Of course, there are underground parking spaces in some of the important shopping

complexes, but they are too inadequate to make any difference.

One may wonder whether the burgeoning growth of shops carries any indication that the purchasing power of the city dwellers has significantly risen. Economists, however, tend to view that the mushroom growth has nothing to do with the strength of the country's economy. Backed by the economic indicators, they say that the growth in the manufacturing sector has not been so and that the purchasing power of the people has not improved much.

But the question still remains whether the unbridled growth of shops helps the economy in any way.

True that the manufacturers of indigenous products are benefiting from the increasing number of sale outlets. But there is the sombre picture that under the policy of free economy, sometimes unnecessary imports come into the market. In some areas, smuggling adds to the woes of the economy. Since a wide array of consumer goods are imported into the country, it is getting easy to have shops in posh or other areas, that are packed with biscuits, fruit juice, cheese, corn flakes, marmalades, etc.

It may be that due to better quality and higher import costs, prices are rather higher.

But there are many who can easily afford them. In this situation, indigenous products which may not be of comparable quality get a beating in competition with them. The end result is that, left to the market forces, the development of the shopping facilities starts at the top where there is more surplus money to spend for non-essential items.

As of now, the number of shops and markets approved by the Dhaka City Corporation is not accurately available. There is no doubt that real figure will be much more higher than the official one. Add to this the mini bazars (not shopping centres) selling meat, vegetables and other items which thrive not only near government offices and street pavements but also in every bustling commercial area of the city. This gives a broad view of the retailing business in the city.

Many shops in the city deal with frequent power failures by using portable power generators. The concession by the government for import of such power generators is of great help to the shopkeepers.

In the heyday of imperial glory, Britons were called a nation of shopkeepers by their detractors. We are left to wonder whether this happens to us. In any case, the rapid growth of city shops holds promise of better economic gains for the masses.



Rush of diarrhoea patients at the ICDDR,B in the city (top), and women queuing for drinking water, supplied jointly by CARE and WASA, in the city's Baridhara area yesterday.

# Govt's relief work confined to TV camera: Khaleda

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday accused the government of plundering relief goods, ignoring the demand for all-party relief committee, reports UNB.

"We wanted to work unitedly for mitigating the sufferings of the flood victims and for proper distribution of relief materials. But the ruling party did not respect our call to form the all-party relief committee," she said.

Begum Zia was briefly addressing a gathering at the Haji Mazharul Huq Govt Primary School relief shelter at Malitola in old city while distributing relief goods in the afternoon.

Earlier, the BNP chairperson distributed relief among 13,000 flood victims at six flood shelters in Lalbag, Kotwali and Sutrapur, including Armanitola Govt High School, Banglabazar Govt Girls' High School, Dhaka Collegiate High School, and Dhaka Govt Muslim High School.

The relief items included saree, lungi and a packet containing rice, pulses, chira, potato, candle and safety matches.

Begum Zia said, the Awami League government also gave a cold shoulder to the BNP's demand for opening gruel kitchens in the badly affected areas, where water-marooned people are passing their days in hunger.

She said the government has failed to remove the sufferings of the flood victims and ignored its responsibility to stand beside them.

"The government's relief campaign is only confined to the state-run television camera. Their relief activities stop after the snap," she alleged.

"Allah's blessings are not for the deceivers," the BNP Chairperson said, adding the people will not support the Awami League as they are "snatching away the rights of the distressed."

They (Awami League) are repeating their 'role of relief thief' as in the 1974 flood, she said.

Referring to a comment of the Health Secretary who reportedly called a ruling party minister liar, the former Prime Minister alleged that this government had resorted to falsehood in Parliament and in the parliamentary committee meetings.

Mentioning the huge rush of patients to the ICDDR,B, she said the government has failed to ensure medicare for the flood affected people. "There is no medicine in the government hospitals. Even tablets for fever are not available."

"Government medicines have gone to the houses of the party leaders and workers," she alleged.

Begum Zia said the government has failed to ensure supply of drinking water to the city dwellers and also the flood victims.

Turning to the Rubel murder case, she accused the government of hatching a conspiracy to hush up the trial of Rubel's killing in police custody.

About incidents of rape in the Jahangirnagar University, the opposition leader said the ruling party's student activists had violated the university students. "They also assaulted a female teacher of the university for protesting the incidents."

# Confusing decisions

From Page 1

All raw materials (*kachama*) and finished drugs (*Toiri oushadh*) must be imported from validated (local and international) sources.

They say the mention of raw materials and medicines in the same circular clearly differentiates between the two and as such, the DAA's position of not allowing import of raw materials is uncalled for.

For example, they say, the DAA has on several occasions refused to approve import of raw materials for cloxacillin and diclofenac diethylamine on the plea that these are produced locally. When asked, the director of DAA said import of these two were not allowed because Square Pharmaceuticals and other companies are manufacturing these items.

But The Daily Star has received documents which show Beximco Pharma itself had admitted that the stability data on cloxacillin is not yet ready and it needs some time to prepare an authentic report on it.

On the other hand, Square Pharmaceuticals, which is supposed to be producing diclofenac diethylamine, had also written to a company saying that they do not as yet produce diclofenac diethylamine. The DAA says this shows that the supervisory body, DAA, is unaware of what is being produced in the country and of what quality.

When DAA Director Abdul Malek was shown the documents, he blurted out that he was not aware of the stability situation of Beximco's drugs and that "it might be a mistake to reject import of diclofenac diethylamine".

The director also said many pharmaceutical companies are using locally produced cloxacillin. Stability report of which is still to be established.

When asked whether he should have taken all types of test records from the companies concerned before taking action as regards imports, he replied in the affirmative and said he is collecting these information now and the situation will be corrected in the next meeting of the Standing Committee.

But industry sources say such decisions of the DAA are harming the industry and they cannot chalk out their business plan. Ultimately, the patients suffer.

Interestingly, the same authority has allowed import of many drugs which are locally produced by a number of companies - some of them giants in production capacity. Lame excuses have always been given to support such import, the sources said.

For example, Famodine (*Famotidine*) is being produced by Beximco, Opsonin, Square, Novartis, Acme and many others. But still it is being allowed to be imported. Similarly, Metformin (*Metformin Hydrochloride*) is also produced by Square, Acme, Gaco, Aristopharma and many others and yet it is

being imported. Again, Nifecard (*Nifedipine*) is manufactured by Nifens, Square, Opsonin and Acme and still it is imported.

When asked, Dr Momenul Huq, Convener of the standing committee on import of medicines said these drugs are imported in different dosage strengths. Metformin is imported in 850 mg form while it is locally produced in 500 mg form. Imported Nifecard tablets are in 20 mg form while those locally produced are in 10 mg form. Famodine is imported in capsule form and it is locally produced in tablet form.

But industry sources say there is no qualitative difference in tablets and capsules and that dosage is always adjustable with number of tablets. For example, two 10 mg tablet can substitute a 20 mg tablet. Nifecard is also locally produced in 20 mg strength.

They also claimed that there is no mentioned dosage for 850 mg of metformin Hydrochloride in British National Formulary (BNF) followed in Bangladesh.

# Floods: Khaleda to meet press

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad, Khaleda Zia will soon meet the press to speak on the on-going flood situation and the government role in this regard.

This was decided at a meeting of the party's National Standing Committee held at her Minto Road official residence last night.

However, the date and venue of the press conference was not decided in the meeting.

The meeting also discussed, among other issues, the on-going move to collect resignation letters of the party lawmakers, the flood situation and the Rubel murder case, insiders said.

An NSC member indicated that the party might take up fresh programme against the government role regarding the progress in the sensational Rubel murder case.

# PM tells flood-hit people at Manikganj Number of VGF cards to be increased

MANIKGANJ, Aug 28: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today said the government will increase the number of VGF cards in the flood affected areas and continue it until the recession of flood waters, reports UNB.

"We will increase the number of Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) cards, if needed to 1,000 in every union, and continue it till Agrabayan," she told flood-victims at the Sadar thana parishad ground this morning.

"Help the people as much as you can, help them with whatever you have," she appealed to the affluent section of people, NGOs, different organisations and political parties. The Prime Minister said the government has already sought international help for the post-flood rehabilitation programmes.

To cope with the rush of passengers, the BR authorities have already cancelled weekly 'off-days' of all trains plying between Dhaka and Chittagong. Besides, the 'Padma Express' will be put in the Dhaka-Chittagong route from today (Saturday), suspending its service in its original Dhaka-Jagannathanj route as flood water has inundated the Jagannathanj portion of the route.

The Dhaka-Sylhet 'Parbat' inter-city train had its weekly rest yesterday. It was put in the Dhaka-Chittagong route for the day only under a special arrangement, the sources said.

In the Dhaka-Narayanganj route, trains run up to Chashara because the track between Chashara and Narayanganj has been inundated.

The victims were identified as Sonia, 5, and Munia, 4, of Goyalia village of the outskirts of the town, Rokeya Begum, 32, and Shamsul Alam, 12, of Shewra village in Sadar thana. A four-month-old child lucky of Char Algi village in Pakundia thana and Baby, 5, of Mathurapara village in Karimganj.

The Prime Minister distributed relief goods, including rice, sari, lungi and cash, among the flood affected people and assured that the relief works will continue here by the local administration and others concerned.

The government has taken immediate steps for the flood affected people, but this is not enough to tackle the catastrophe," Hasina said calling upon all to come forward in aid of the flood victims.

"Help the people as much as you can, help them with whatever you have," she appealed to the affluent section of people, NGOs, different organisations and political parties. The Prime Minister said the government has already sought international help for the post-flood rehabilitation programmes.

The Prime Minister said: We have made arrangement for distribution of adequate relief materials among the flood affected people across the country and the stock of medicine is also sufficient.

The flood, now sweeping the country, has hit hard the Manikganj district situated on the bank of the mighty Jamuna, affecting nearly 6.39,602 people.

The Prime Minister distributed relief goods, including rice, sari, lungi and cash, among the flood affected people

# Rail tracks

From Page 1

and Chittagong on each day during the last three days. But it is hard to cope with the situation because of the pressure. BR is having a tough time now in accommodating the growing number of passengers because train is the only means of communication, he said.

During a visit to Kamalapur station yesterday this correspondent saw hundreds of people standing in long queues for tickets. Some people said they were standing in the long queue for hours. An elderly man said he got a 'standing ticket' (no seat) of a Chittagong-bound train after standing in the queue for over an hour. Another man said he was lucky to get a ticket of a Sylhet-bound train after standing in the queue for hours.

# Bodies of 5 police personnel yet to be recovered

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Aug 28: Bodies of five police personnel who were feared drowned in a boat capsized in the river Kushiyara yesterday, are yet to be recovered, official sources said.

A five-member team of divers of Navy conducted a rescue operation for the bodies in the nearby areas of Sunampur and Chandrapur ferry ghats this afternoon. Local people apprehend that the bodies might have been carried away downstream by strong current.

When DAA Director Abdul Malek was shown the documents, he blurted out that he was not aware of the stability situation of Beximco's drugs and that "it might be a mistake to reject import of diclofenac diethylamine".

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# Special munajat offered

A special *munajat* was offered at Baitul Mukarram national mosque after Juma prayers yesterday seeking divine blessings of the Almighty Allah for saving the people from devastating flood, reports UNB.

Thousands of people from all walks of life participated in the *munajat* organised by Islamic Foundation.

# Food crisis

From Page 1

lion hectares of crops have been affected and 4.8 million totally destroyed, with more rain expected in the country's central low-lying plains.

Both the early rice harvest and plantings of late rice were affected, with the bulk of damage in the major producing regions along the Yangtze River, it said.

In Bangladesh, where the death toll from the floods is around 370, some 760,000 hectares of farmland have been affected and nearly 425,000 hectares of rice and other crops destroyed. The overall damage to farm produce is provisionally estimated at 150 million dollars, FAO said.

Although some one million tonnes of government-held cereal stocks should meet immediate flood relief needs, international assistance is needed once those run out, it said.

In South Korea, about 47,000 hectares, mostly rice fields in the North, were flooded and some 4,440 hectares of vegetable-producing farmland in the South were destroyed.

"The target for paddy production this year, set at 6.7 million tonnes - already 11 per cent lower than last year - is not likely to be achieved," it said.

Indonesia's financial crisis has exacerbated the consequences of the floods, and forecasts of more heavy rains and tidal waves associated with La Nina are "worrying," FAO said.

The agency said it planned to send a joint mission with its sister food agency, the UN's World Food Programme, to Indonesia in September, to review the overall food supply situation.

# BJP, Cong both oppose caretaker govt

# Gill's move for Bangladesh-style polls in India faces setback

From Pallab Bhattacharya

NEW DELHI, Aug 28: Bharatiya Janata Party, the lead partner in India's ruling coalition, and main opposition Congress have opposed a proposal by the Chief Election Commissioner Mohinder Singh Gill to hold assembly elections in four states under a neutral caretaker administration.

More than six months ago, Gill had gone on record for praising the provision of general elections in Bangladesh under a non-party caretaker government and said this could provide a lesson to many developing countries.

The Chief Election Commissioner, in an interview with a news agency a few days back, suggested that assembly polls in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi and Mizoram in November be held under a neutral administration. For this, he proposed that Chief Ministers of the four states resign six weeks before the polls and allow a neutral caretaker government headed by the governors in these states to oversee the hustings.

While BJP is ruling Rajasthan and Delhi, Congress is in power in Madhya Pradesh and Mizoram (in a coalition ministry).

Gill said BJP and Congress should become "symbols of sacrifice" by voluntarily giving up power for six weeks in the run-up to the elections. This time, however, the Chief Election Commissioner did not mention Bangladesh in this context.

He said Article 356 of the Indian Constitution should be amended to provide for an elected state government to move out of office once elections are announced so that the state could be placed under governor's rule. Since such an act would take time, the four states should set an example with the governments there stepping down on their own, he said.

Gill said his suggestion was aimed at allaying fears voiced by opposition parties about possibility of conducting impartial polls under a party administration in those states.

Congress has rejected the Gill's suggestion saying it would not endorse such an idea.

Congress spokesman Ajit Yogi said his party would oppose any move to change the basic structure of the country's Constitution.

Yogi said government in a state is elected by the people whereas governor is a political appointee. "Any attempt to change the basic character of the Constitution should not be encouraged," he added.

BJP Vice-President KL Sharma termed Gill's suggestion as "impractical and inappropriate" but hastened to add that BJP was ready to consider it favourably only after there was consensus among all political parties on this.

The Chief Election Commissioner should first convene an all-party meeting and discuss the proposal, Sharma said.

Veteran CPI member of parliament Geeta Mukherjee said there was no reason why President's Rule should be imposed for normal elections. If a particular administration wanted to do something wrong, mere resignation by serving Chief Minister in a state going to polls would not help.

# Armed gang

From Page 1

a high official of Chittagong railway alleged.

The railway guards stopped the movement of trains for about two hours from 8 am protesting the incident, railway sources said.

However, the train service resumed at 10 am, the sources added.

# 5 electrocuted

From Page 1

DMCH morgue for autopsy.

BSS adds: Three persons were electrocuted on Friday night at Sadarpara in Munshiganj pourashava when they were returning home by a boat, police said.

Mohammad Akbar, 30, Mohammad Afsaruddin, 45, and Mohammad Yusuf, 18, of Sadarpara village were electrocuted when they came in contact with a live electric wire at around 8-30 pm.

The accident occurred when the victims, returning from poura market, tried to put aside the wire from the course of the boat, police added.

# DMCH dumps waste

From Page 1

arduous waste but the authorities do not pay any attention to this problem."

A colleague of Quasem agreed and said, "I have developed skin disease in my left hand and have tried different types of remedies but I am yet to be cured."

An expert conducting studies on hospital environment said, "The prevalence of typhoid, pneumonia, meningitis and other deadly transmittable diseases is spread to a great extent by the unplanned disposal of the laboratory specimens and other waste discarded by hospitals."

Dr Samir Saha, a leading microbiologist, said, "When typhoid bacteria grows in laboratory from blood or stool specimens, a single bacteria multiplies to billions. If the cultures are discarded without killing the microbes, which occurs in most cases, it can infect another 100 people. In fact, most of our hospitals are disposing clinical wastes without any treatment."

He added that apart from typhoid, cholera and dysentery

micro-organisms, hepatitis A and E viruses are also spread in the same manner.

"It is ironic and deeply concerning that the health professionals and their institutions are such significant contributors to the public health threat of environmental pollution, putting present and future generations at risk," an environmental activist said.

When asked about options of waste disinfecting techniques that can be used in hospitals like DMCH, Dr Reaz Mobarak, who has recently conducted studies on hospital waste management, said, "An autoclave, the most commonly used technique, destroys infectious agents through the use of steam heat. Unlike incineration, the material is not burned thus reducing the risk of producing deadly dioxin."

Microwaves can also be used to disinfect hospital waste. It uses radiant energy to heat water that is sprayed onto waste. Once the water reaches boiling point, it boils the microbes, rendering most of them harmless, he noted.

# Power generation at two barge mounted plants likely in Sept

KHULNA, Aug 28: Power generation at country's first private sector power plant is likely to begin next month with the inauguration of two barge-mounted plants.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the two barge-mounted power plants, Tiger-1 and Tiger-3, of Khulna Power Company Ltd (KPCPL) on September 12, an official of KPCPL told UNB today.

The 110-mg capacity plants were set up on an artificial lake at Daulatpur.

# Water supplies

From Page 1

logging and gets inundated with a few hours' rainfall.

The WASA, in cooperation with UNICEF and Care, is supplying drinking water in some of these areas through water tankers, they said.

# Sharif's move

From Page 1

bourning Afghanistan, where the Taliban religious army has imposed a harsh brand of Islam on its people.

In Afghanistan the Taliban has banned women from school, forced them off the job, demanded they stay indoors and travel outside only when accompanied by a close male relative.

Sharif, by comparison, said he wanted Pakistan's version of Islamic rule to be an example of "an Islamic welfare state" that he said guaranteed freedoms and would eradicate the corruption and lawlessness that has become rampant in Pakistan.

# JU authorities

From Page 1

ities are "conspiring to close the university" on the ground of deteriorating flood situation in a bid "to contain the ongoing movement".

Female students of the university who have been carrying on agitation demanding action against alleged rapists of some fellow students alleged yesterday, "Activists of an organisation are threatening us of rape over telephone if we continue to participate in the agitation on the campus".

They also alleged harassment by the 'surveillance Committee', earlier formed to 'prevent any untoward incident on the campus'. They brought out processions and held rallies on the campus, protesting the "authorities' conspiracy to virtually impose 'sunset rule' through activities of the Surveillance Committee, without announcing it".

# Power plant

From Page 1

was scheduled to complete its project in Khulna this month. But this will be delayed by one more month due to technical reasons.

The third one was signed with Malaysian company Westmont and US company Westsila. It is also being delayed by several months.

When these three barge-mounted plants will start supplying power, the government will have to pay around Tk 45 crore a month in foreign currency. Sources said, this cost would be 25 per cent to 30 per cent higher than that of the private gas-based power plants.