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Down to Earth

Space dearth for the dead

By ASM Nurunnabi

This piece is literally on a down-to-earth issue — city's graveyards.

There are at present six graveyards under the management of the Dhaka City Corporation. They are: New Azimpur graveyard, Old Azimpur graveyard, Banani graveyard, Mirpur Sahid Buddhiji graveyard, Jurain graveyard and the newly opened Uttara graveyard.

The new graveyard at Azimpur is now practically closed; the old one at Azimpur is open only for temporary graves. The new graveyard at Uttara is used for the same, no burial plot can be bought there. In other graveyards under the management of the City Corporation, particularly at Banani and some proportion of burial plots at Mirpur Sahid Buddhiji and Jurain graveyards, burial is allowed on purchased plots.

Besides these corporation-managed graveyards, there are some private graveyards at Shajahanpur, Mohammadpur, Mirpur Section 11 and Karatola, East Ramura. Apart from these private graveyards, there are at least 15 small graveyards in the city.

In the city, space in the existing graveyards is rapidly running out. This is due mainly to two factors — the highly accelerated pressure of city population and the prediction of people to reserve or purchase grave space. If the present trend continues, it is apprehended that in the near future, scarcity of space for burial will figure as a very critical issue.

It is obvious to anyone that

in course of the last few years the population of the city has crossed 90 lakhs. With such rapid increase in population, the death rate has also increased. At the moment, it is understood that the City Corporation has no plan for expansion of the existing graveyard facilities. In these circumstances, on account of the rise in death rate in the city, the available space in the existing graveyards has come under extreme pressure.

Even though the City Corporation attempts to discourage reservation or purchase of space in the graveyards, it has little effect, as citizens prefer to reserve purchase grave space for their parents and near and dear ones. Thus the system of reservation and purchase of grave space cannot be checked.

Apart from the reservation, there is provision for getting plot for immediate burial at Banani, Mirpur Sahid Buddhiji and Jurain graveyards. The rates are as follows: at Banani the rate is Tk 60,000 per plot for immediate burial and Tk 1,20,000 for reserved plot; at Mirpur Sahid Buddhiji graveyard, the rate for immediate burial is Tk 25,000 per plot and Tk 35,000 for reserved plot. The same latter rates apply in the case of Jurain graveyard.

In each graveyard, there is a separate general area which is earmarked for burial free of cost. In this general area, graves are dug up one or two years after burial to make room for further burials. Although pits in the general area are available free,

burial in that area involves a good amount of expenditure for the relatives of the less privileged. This is due to the rising prices of burial materials.

It is thus felt that burying the dead in this city has assumed the dimension of a nightmare for the less privileged. We need hardly bother about the privileged people, since they or their relatives can afford to spend a large amount of money for buying plots for burial. What observers feel concerned about is the problem faced by the less privileged. To relieve them somewhat, it is strongly felt the concerned authority may write off the registration fee charged at the gates of graveyards and the prices of shroud and for the bamboo frame may be put under control. It is apprehended in some quarters that if the trend of rising cost of burial continues, the poor would be reduced to going around to raise donations to have a relative buried.

According to a report, Japan, which is a rich country but with acute land scarcity, deals, in some cases, with the problems of internment of their dead in its characteristic way: small cubicles on shelves are built in multi-storied complexes which are closed as corpses are interred therein.

Since even the dead cannot escape the effects of inflation, it is not perhaps too much to hope the government should inter-vene in keeping the prices of grave and of burial materials at a reasonable level.



Traders taking cattle on a boat to Gabtali market in the city yesterday as the bridge near Aminbazar has been washed away by flood waters.

Italian PM loses confidence vote

ROME, Oct 9: Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi resigned today after his centre-left government suffered a shock defeat in a confidence vote in the lower house of parliament by just one vote, reports Reuters.

In one of the closest results in Italian parliamentary history, deputies rejected the confidence vote by a wafer-thin 313 votes to 312.

President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro accepted the resignation of the man who led Italy's first government led by the left, and asked him to stay on in a caretaker capacity, the president's office said in a statement.

"Prodi offered his resignation and that of his government," the statement said. Acceptance of a government's resignation is automatic after a confidence vote defeat.

Abducted Ctg jeweller yet to be rescued

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Oct 9: A jeweller abducted from Nazirhat area under Fatikchhari thana two days ago is yet to be rescued, police sources said.

Police raided different places of Fatikchhari and other adjoining areas to trace out the abducted jeweller Shankar Banik, police said.

Shankar was abducted at gunpoint on his way back home Wednesday night from Nazirhat bazar. A group of local terrorists kidnaped him to realise ransom, police said.

CHT talks

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On many occasions, he also expressed dissatisfaction over a number of government steps and accused it of violating written and unwritten accords reached during the long negotiations leading to the CHT peace treaty signed in December last year.

Envisaged to oversee law and order, development and local government, the RC dominated by tribesmen also has six members from the Bengali settlers.

But Larma alleged that the names of three of his nominees were dropped.

The government had refuted his allegations and Kalparanj Chakma indicated that it was contemplating alternative measures to break the standoff on RC.

Although he did not elaborate, there had been speculations that an alternative chairman was being searched and Upendra Lal Chakma was being tipped in place of Larma.

Besides, the government is also preparing to announce schedules for election to the RC.

Impeachment

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panel would immediately begin "intense strategising... to see in what direction we want to move, what evidence we need to acquire, what subpoenas we need to issue and how fast we can do it."

Republicans said they wanted the committee to question White House Deputy Counsel Bruce Lindsey, though Democrats were expected to object pending the Supreme Court appeal of his executive privilege claim.

"I think Bruce Lindsey is a key player in this," said Rep. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina.

"He may have some information that is relevant to this investigation," agreed Rep. Charles Canady, a Florida Republican.

At the White House, Clinton said he would continue his work during the impeachment process, which now was "in the hands of Congress and the people of this country — ultimately in the hands of God. There is nothing I can do."

The Judiciary constitutional subcommittee will kick things off Oct. 22 with a hearing on defining impeachable crimes. The full committee will hold hearings between the Nov. 3 congressional elections and the end of the year, Hyde said Thursday.

He spoke minutes after the House voted 258-176 to trigger a presidential impeachment inquiry for just the third time in US history.

Automation of DU library likely this month

By Mahbub Zaman

Automation of the Dhaka University Central Library is likely to be completed by the end of the month, the university officials said.

Once completed, the Tk 1.13 crore project, jointly funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and University Grants Commission (UGC) will bring all the university libraries and departmental seminars under computer network.

The DU library is the first in the country to brace with an integrated and total computerisation. The library is one of the oldest and richest academic libraries in Asia with more than 55,000 books and journals.

But due to lack of modern technological support, the library has been facing problem in providing necessary services to the users.

The ambitious project also aims to provide all the students and teachers of the university with internet facilities free of cost.

Mugger killed

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gold ornaments worth Tk 6,000 from two rickshaw passengers at Siddheswari in the city yesterday.

They were identified as Jamal Akiz and Alamgir, all aged between 25 to 30, police said, adding, they were detained at Ramna thana after being treated at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The mob also put the autorickshaw used by the muggers on fire, police said. Two knives were also recovered from them.

According to police, the gang of three riding an autorickshaw intercepted the rickshaw carrying two women, while they were passing through the area at about 2 pm.

Wielding knives, they snatched two gold chains from Hema and Mina, two sisters of West Malibagh. The snatchers also exploded crackers when the women cried out for help.

But local people and passers-by caught them while they tried to flee the scene.

The mob started beating the snatchers until police rescued and took them to DMCH.

Three cases were filed with Ramna thana in connection with the incident yesterday.

Police, car owner

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searching all possible places." The investigating officer of the case, however, said police did not find anything with the victim.

The OC of Tejaon thana, when contacted yesterday, said that the owner of the car had taken the car as per order of the court.

The driver of the vehicle was also granted bail when he surrendered before the court, he claimed.

Asked about the allegations made by relatives of the victim, the OC replied "It is nothing new. There are a lot of allegations against police and it cannot be stopped."

Asked why Monir's photograph was not given to the newspapers, the OC said, "We were in the process of doing it."

Sharif warns

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place superseding two senior generals.

The rule of the Constitution and law should be the supreme consideration and priority in the country, he said, adding supremacy of the parliament and the democratic principles should not be undermined at any cost.

His remarks were the first after Gen Karamat resigned on Wednesday following a rift with Sharif over the General's strong criticism of government's policies.

The PML leaders, against whom action is likely, include party vice president Ejaz-ul-Haq, who had openly endorsed the comments of Gen Karamat during the past couple of days.

Ejaz-ul-Haq, son of former military ruler Zia-ul-Haq, had developed differences with Sharif immediately after the February 1997 elections because of his non-inclusion in the cabinet and has been criticising the actions of the government from time to time.

This time Ejaz-ul-Haq is not going to be spared, the 'Nation' newspaper quoted a senior government official as saying.

He added that Haq along with Ejaz Shafi, another PML MP from Sindh, may be served with showcause notice for violating the party discipline by commenting on Gen Karamat's statement.

A number of opposition leaders had also welcomed Gen Karamat's comments on the functioning of the government and his proposal for setting up a National Security Council.

Santu Larma

From Page 1

written agreement". Larma said, "Our stand on RC will not be changed."

Replying to a question Larma said "I am not informed about withdrawal of any army camp because any information regarding this was not given to me, although I am one of the members of CHT peace accord implementation committee."

He further said they had submitted lists regarding cases filed against tribals and former Shantibahini guerrillas to the government.

He alleged that a large number of tribal returnees from Tripura could not come back to their respective ancestral abodes due to land dispute. He urged the government to solve all these problems.

Larma will visit Bandarban district for the first time. He will leave Khagrachhari for Bandarban on October 11, if the BNP-backed Parbatya Sarbadaliya Oikya Parishad withdraws its two-day road blockade programme from that day.

The parishad announced the programme protesting arrest of their activists.

Nasim

From Page 1

said his party would deal with any opposition movement politically as they had done in the past.

He said BNP leadership thought that the government would not be able to tackle the severe floods and gigantic post-flood tasks, and lakhs of people would die from hunger.

"But BNP's dream has turned into a bad dream as we have been able to overcome the initial impact of the disaster. Insha Allah, we will successfully face the aftermath of the flood with the support of the people."

Nasim said seeing the success of the government in combating the flood, BNP has become frustrated. Finding no other issue, they are out to protect the culprits of August 15 and November 3 killings.

He said those who have no political aim, and no responsibility for and trust in democratic means, can dream of grabbing power through conspiracy.

He said the way people have rejected BNP's "drama of movement" in last two and a half years, the "future agitation would also be thrown into dustbin."

The Minister said as a matter of fact BNP is suffering from political bankruptcy and it has become desperate to protect the killers and their patrons. "But their conspiracy must have to be foiled."

Nasim said Awami League government is now busy with the rehabilitation and reconstruction works.

"At this time, any conspiracy to foil the post-flood rehabilitation work will be thwarted by the conscious citizens," he said.

Gangsters

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(threats were still there. Some other local people told Odhikar that the abductors were being patronised by some local politicians and that they were seen sipping tea and gossiping with policemen at the camp even after the incident.

The demand for punishment also came from Vice Chancellor AK Azad Chowdhury of Dhaka University, who had talks with home ministry officials, said Odhikar.

Odhikar investigation also found that police gave misleading information to the VC that the girl had an affair with the principal accused and that they were married later.

Odhikar also said that the alleged abductors had two political faces. They allegedly pose as Awami Leaguers during the day and act as members of the outlawed Biplobi Communist Party at night. Local people do not dare speak against them.

The OC of Shaikupa thana told Odhikar that the alleged abductors were members of Biplobi Communist Party but declined to say anything about their liaison with local Awami League leadership.

Abdul Majid, the OC, claimed he was despatching his men everyday to nab the accused but could not locate them. The OC said he was not aware if the accused had access to the police camp.

Asked why BNP was reluctant to hold the trial of President Zia's killing during Begum Zia's five-year rule, he replied: "No comment."

When contacted, several senior BNP leaders declined to give their instant reaction on the issue.

BNP office sources said party secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan may give a formal reaction today.

Referring to Major General Manzur's killing, the BNP leader said a case is pending in the court "and I should not make any comment about that."

About the trial of the killers of Bangabandhu and other national leaders in Dhaka central jail, Oli Ahmed said: "I've no comment on it. I don't believe in the politics of vengeance, I believe in politics of welfare."

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