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# Down to Earth Paradoxes in City Life

By A S M Nurunnabi

In our burgeoning city life, we observe some paradoxes which seem to impart a baffling image to our existence. These paradoxes appear in several spheres of life. To begin with, let us look at the current trend of urban housing.

At the moment, we are passing through a phase in which high-rise apartment buildings seem to take priority over lowrise buildings. As a result, old low-rise buildings in many important localities are pulled down to give place to high-rise

In the latter class, a new pattern seems to be emerging: the predominance of shopping complexes at some important city locations. These shopping complexes are now called shopping malls, some of which boast of provision of facilities bearing names not heard of before, such as theme park, multiscreen cinema, food court etc.

This boom in the construction of high-rise buildings may give the impression the country's economy is spiralling. Be that as it may, some points may naturally arise in one's mind: how the funding of such large numbers of big projects is made: if the shops housed therein with eye-catching furnishings become economically viable for the lessees of those establishments taking into consideration the volume of commercial transactions conducted there.

Obviously the shops at these finely decorated establishments, whatever the items they sell, are offered to customers at prices not comparable to those available at less showy places. The sellers at these high profile establishments have their point: the comparatively higher prices there are inevitable because of the higher outlay involved in their administration and maintenance.

The customers for these establishments generally belong to higher income groups; as such the comparatively higher prices charged from them don't matter much with them.

The manner in which such high profile shopping outlets

are proliferating seems to create the impression that the number of people who avail of these facilities may be considered financially well-off, whose number may be on the rise.

Next comes the issue of funding such high cost projects. The sources of funds for these projects are shrouded in mystery. The detracters may hint at defaulted loan money from banks, which may have been used such purposes. The returns from investments in various manners may have played a useful role along with earnings from our citizens working

The important point is that these high cost building projects, whatever be the nature or purposes of their use are proving quite profitable as it seems from the prevailing trend. An expert with knowledge in real estate business can only indicate the turn of the present trend in this business. But one thing seems to be certain: whatever impetus this business has acquired is not reflected in any project of vertical expansion of housing in suburban areas outside the periphery of the city

There is reportedly a government decision to develop a good number of satellite and new model towns around Dhaka city. If, in pursuance of such decision, suitable projects are taken up involving also the private sector. The proposed satellite and new towns are said to include Purbachal New Town Project, Expanded Uttara Model Town Project, Purba Baridhara Project and Dhansona New

Town Project. The Purbachal is reported to have already made some progress. The paradox is that even in that project, the progress of implementation is said to be slow. As a result, the planning purpose of taking some load off the growing pressure of the city population is not being realised.

If the private sector would have shown some measure of interest in developing the projected suburban areas similar

to the current trend in building multi-storied structures in important city areas, the social welfare aspect for people of moderate income would have brought a new era of hope for such classes.

The factor of profitability in such schemes could have been taken care of by taking suitable measures by the private sector. The idea may seem utopian for the present, but some segment of the private sector may give in a try from wider social and egalitarian considerations.

Whereas the high-rise shopping complexes are the present craze in the city, they are still limited in number. A paradoxical picture is, however, presented by the mammoth growth of smaller shops all around-in every conceivable space in lanes, by-lanes, streets and

The proliferation of shops in the city is such a staggering phenomenon that its nine million residents are virtually choked with them. While the larger complexes obviously draw a much smaller number of customers because of the prevalence of comparatively higher prices there, the smaller ones which are far more numerous draw the bulk of other customers with moderate means.

In fact, the smaller, not-sosophisticated shops form the backbone of the commercial phases in the country's econ-The transport sector of the

city presents a similar paradox. While the city road space is virtually choked with the steadily growing number of Japanese reconditioned cars, microbuses, two-stroke auto rickshaws, added to the unknown total number of cycle rickshaws, most of which are unauthorised, we find no feasible expeditious solution to the growing traffic chaos.

There were talks of bypasses, flyovers, circular railway around the city and girdle of water ways around to relieve the growing traffic pressure. We tend to hope that these do not turn out as pipe dreams.

#### India has no protection against ballistic missile' NEW DELHI, Jan 8: India,

which has developed an array of guided missiles, has no protection against ballistic missile attacks, the country's air defence chief said here today, reports AFP. Lieutenant General Amitava

Mukherjee said the proliferation of such weapons in Asia posed a threat to India's national strategic assets.

adequate systems to intercept ballistic missiles targeting our strategic national assets," said Mukherjee, Director General of Air Defence Artillery, speaking to reporters.

challenge to some extent, these are not adequate in the comprehensive sense," he said of a package of anti-missile weapons India recently acquired from Russia.

"Some steps should be taken to defend our strategic installations he said, but did not specify if he meant secure complexes where New Delhi planned to store its recently-developed nu-

India conducted five nuclear tests in May last year and has developed an array of guided missiles, including two longrange systems which can transport nuclear warheads to a distance of 1,500 kilometres (930

# Grozny

out today at an oil refinery in the Chechen capital Grozny, blanketing the city with smoke and soot, the Interfax news agency reported, reports AP. Fuel oil from the burning

tank has covered the Sundzha River, a tributary of a river that flows on to the Caspian Sea, Interfax said. The city's firefighting de-

partment does not have the resources or equipment to extinguish the fire, it said. A security official said that the fire-fighters' equipment had been destroyed during the two-year war of independence against Russia. No deaths were reported, but

Grozny residents have called local hospitals complaining of smoke poisoning, Interfax said. Police have not ruled out arson.

### Mine blast kills 3 Afghan children

KABUL. Jan 8: Three children collecting wood in a deserted field about 15 kilometres (9 miles) outside the beleaguered capital were killed today when they stepped on a land mine. Radio Shariat reported, reports

The children, between the ages of seven and nine, were roaming through the field near Sang-e-Nowishat when they triggered the unexploded mine, the radio reported. Two of the children died instantly and the

third died later of his injuries. According to the radio the land mine was buried during the relentless feuding between rival Islamic factions who took control of Kabul in 1992 after throwing out the communist

ISLAMABAD, Jan 8: Pakistan's Supreme Court issued an interim order today to stop any executions imposed by military courts in Karachi from being lence last year. carried out until next week, the official APP news agency re-

Court bench asked the Attorney-General to ensure no capital punishment sentences ordered by the military courts would be carried out until Mon-

Muttahida Qaumi Movement went to the Supreme Court to challenge the validity of the military courts, and asked that any death sentences awarded by these tribunals not be carried out until the validity ruling was

already been carried out. The government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif set up

Khaleda visits

Rouja Mubarak

of Mohammad (SM)

the military courts to dispense speedy justice in Karachi, where 800 people were killed in ethnic, sectarian and political vio-

The province was placed un-der direct federal rule in October and the military courts started hearing cases in Decem-

"The court asked the Attorney-General of Pakistan to give an undertaking on behalf of the federation (government) that executions will not take place till the time the court decides validity of military courts established in Sindh under ordinance XII of 1998," APP said.

"The Attorney-General agreed to the direction of the court and said that no execution

will take place till Monday...," The Supreme Court was to continue hearing the case on

Monday, APP reported.

#### LP gas cylinder factory gutted in city

By Staff Correspondent A fire gutted a godown of a Liquified Petroleum (LP) gas cylinder factory at Nazirabazar in the old part of the city in the early hours of yesterday.

Total loss was estimated at about Tk 20 lakh, fire service sources said. The fire broke out at the

godown on North South road at about 2:30 am and also damaged two nearby shoe godowns. It originated from illegally used LP gas in the factory, the sources said quoting local peo-Fire fighters from the head-

quarters and Sadarghat station rushed to the spot and took two and a half hours to extinguish the fire after about. When contacted, Kotwali po-

lice said they were informed of the incident but could not give

### Two Koreans beaten up in city

were beaten up by a mob yesterday afternoon in the city's posh Gulshan area following a brawl over smoking, reports UNB.

Krichent 24, and David 27, received severe injuries during the incident and were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

attack near Gulshan crossing number one at 4 pm as the foreigners allegedly slapped one local man who along with others protested their smoking in public during the Ramadan.

### Ahmad Badawi Mahathir's new deputy

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 8: Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad announced today that Foreign Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi would become his new deputy, reports AP.

Badawi, 59, would relinquish his job as foreign minister, which he has held since 1991. In the massive cabinet shuffle, Ahmad Badawi was also named Home Minister.

ter an emergency session of the United Malays National Organhis chief economics aide, would become Finance Minister.

"The deputy prime minister's position must be filled now," said Mahathir, who has been under pressure by top UMNO leaders to fill the post left vacant since he sacked Anwar Ibrahim.

Ahmad Badawi was unanimously backed by the UMNO Supreme Council. "I promise to carry out my

duties with full dedication, organised between 11 am and 1 Manathir announced that he

party elections scheduled for to be taken beforehand. June would be postponed for at least 18 months. He said the party was beset

with political and economic problems and that it needed time to strengthen and prepare for general elections now sive slogans. Abdullah was also appointed

Mahathir himself held until now. The home minister is responsible for the actions of the Royal Malaysia Police. The change at the Home Ministry comes a day after Malaysia's top law-enforce-

> authorities. OC closed sion will have to be taken at From Page 1

forced an indefinite strike re-

# Once sanctuary of birds now a home to homeless fishermen

By Morshed Ali Khan, back from Pakkhir Char, Sundarbans

The land was called Pakkhir Char (island of birds) mainly because it was home to thousands of birds, some of them

Now this rare natural bird sanctuary is facing a man-made disaster as some 800 fishermen settled there after they were evicted from nearby Kachikhali in an unplanned way to imple-ment a World Bank aided pro-

ikhali station said the fishermen "occupied" Pakkhir Char after they were evicted from Kachikhali in September last year to implement the project to ensure 'cleanliness' of the Sundarbans.

Forest officials at Kach-

An influential man, locally called 'lord of the jungle', settled the fishermen on the island ignoring repeated Forest Department notices. The 'lord' Major (Rtd) Ziauddin, is too influential to be touched by law enforcers in the difficult terrain of the Sundarbans.

Ironically, the WB project, which had the objective of cleansing the forest, has now made the bird's haven a filthy and noisy place. The new human habitation is, at the same time, taking its toll on the woodlands in the island. Fishermen are felling trees in scores to build their houses.

Previously, the island, at the estuary of a river, was officially declared a sanctuary for birds and other wild animals. Pakkhir Char is also known as Dimer Char because fishermen used to 'collect' bird eggs from its sandy beaches. More than two third area of the island comprise new vegetation while the rest is sandy beach which attracts birds in thousands as small fish are available in

plenty during low tide.

Most of the birds and wild animals have now disappeared from the island because of human habitation. More than one hundred makeshift houses have been constructed along the beach of Pakkhir Char and the entire area teems with fishermen drying their catches in the sun and movement of fishing trawlers day and night. The Bay in the area abounds with 'fish fries' which the fishermen catch and dry in the beaches to

produce poultry feed. Forest officials in Khulna said that the Forest Department had no rehabilitation scheme before eviction of the fishermen. They thought the evicted fishermen would settle down in Dublar Char and another island

which were 'given out' for them. " But Ziauddin refused to accommodate these fishermen on 'his' Dublar Char and physically intervened to settle these people on Pakkhir Char," alleged a top forest official in Khulna. He (Ziauddin) exercises so much authority in the

area that we feel helpless." In the island, a huge signboard reads, " Aoria Char Fishing Village ( Pakkhir Char), Sharon Khola Range, patron-ised by Maj (retd) Ziauddin Ahmed, Sub Sector Commander, Sector 9, Sundarbans

Fishermen said they have no other place to settle down. " We had settled in Kachikhali twenfy years ago and these people (environmentalists) evicted us without telling us where to go. We invested so much money in the business that now if we are evicted again we will be ruined," said Abdul Majid Mia, a dry fish trader and the owner of a depot at the Pakkhir Char.

The settlers said they were small fishermen and they only caught 'fries' which were available in the vicinity. They could not go to Dublar Char because it was far away. " Zia Bhai told us to be here and continue our business and we will stay here." said Khaleque Howladar, another trader and owner of a fishing trawler.

Moreover, the fishermen claimed that the island was not part of Pakkhir Char because there is a small canal separating the island. " This part of the island is called Aoriar Char and it is outside the project area," claimed Howladar.

As the fishermen built makeshift mosques and houses with Sundari trees, armed forest officials led by Deputy Ranger Mir Abdul Khaleque arrived to serve a notice to the fishermen to move out. Khaleque said that a general diary had also been filed with the Swarankhola thana about the "illegal occupation" Maj (Rtd) Ziauddin Ahmed

could not be reached for comment despite repeated attempts.

Aziz Bhai

From Page 1

# Where is the money?

at Sharjah branch Tk1.52 crore, at Ras-Al Khaima branch Tk 11.51 lakh during 1976-84, at Azman branch Tk 37.29 lakh during 1976-82 and at Al-Ain branch objections involving Tk 2.23 crore during 1985-96 remained unresolved, the report

Besides, audit objections involving Tk 449.86 crore at Sonali Bank's London branch during 1972-96 remained unresolved. Tk194.09 crore at bank's London Wall branch during 1980-83, Tk 22.16 lakh at Lutan branch during 1980-94, Tk1.13 crore at East London and King's Cross branches during 1978-96, Tk 6.46 lakh at Bradford branch during 1980-94, Tk 5.35 lakh at Öldham branch during 1978-93, Tk 4.18 branch at Manchester branch during 1978-94, Tk 21 lakh at Birmingham branch during 1977-94 and objections involving Tk 5.86 crore at Calcutta branch during 1974-96 remained unresolved, the report

said. It further said that audit objections involving Tk 11.14 crore at Rupali Bank's Azman branch during 1976-96 remained unresolved.

An audit of the 1992-94 accounts of Sonali Bank's London Branch revealed that a total loan of Tk1.22 lakh disbursed in 1986 remained unrealised.

As the loan remained outstanding for long, the bank authorities went to court and it directed the borrower to repay the loan. But the loan still remains unrealised, the report said. A former credit controller of

Code of conduct From Page 1

It procession has to be brought out to mark any special occasion, permission will have

The processionists will not be allowed to carry firearms. explosive end crackers. They will not use mikes and musical bands. The processionists will not chant provocative or offen-

If the code of conduct is violated and peace is disturbed on the campus, the students body in question will have to bear the responsibility, the code of conduct said.

Presence of any outsider at any rally or meeting is totally prohibited. Mikes can be used to an-

nounce programmes but not before 12 noon and only after receiving permission from the The permission for proces-

least a day before, and the authorities may withhold permis-No meeting, sit-in or chant-

front of the administrative building. All students will have to carry identity cards. No graffiti or posters will be allowed.

Sonali Bank's London Branch Meanwhile. Bunty Islam, the was paid an amount of Tk 1.09 owner of Tramps Club, arrested in connection with the killing of Sohel, was sent to Dhaka

> Bunty, paternal uncle of Aziz Bhai's wife, was nabbed from the clinic on January 4. Police said they would move

to court for Bunty's remand for elaborate interrogation on the sensational murder of Sohel Liton, also arrested in the

earlier in the day after expiry of Our Staff Correspondent

clinic certified that he was cured. Police said he was shifted to

Different tests will be conducted at the jail hospital and it will be decided later where

Bunty will be kept, police added.

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Indian government officials board the bus amid tight security in New Delhi yesterday. A proposed bus service between arch foes India and Pakistan was flagged off for a test run Friday. This is the first bus service between India and Pakistan since the two nations' achieved independence from Britain in 1947. -AP/UNB photo:

### Situation tense Addl riot police deployed at Jagannathpur

SUNAMGANJ, Jan 8: Additional riot police were deployed at Jagannathpur thana headquarters today as tension mounted further following Thursday's clash during a half-day hartal, reports UNB.

The clash between police and the hartal supporters left 25 people, including 10 policemen A faction of Jubo League, known as Hiron group, enforced

\*\*. - 'x-hour hartal demanding release of its district convenor Nazrul Islam who was arrested on Tuesday during a clash with a rival group, led by another Jubo League leader Siddiqui. Four of the injured were shifted today to Osmani Medi-

cal College Hospital in Sylhet in critical conditions. Meanwhile, district Awami League leaders have condemned the incident.

From Page 1

Bacteria

He said patients with peptic ulcer caused by the bacteria should be given Pylori Eradica-tion Therapy. Endoscopy is the only technique for diagnosing peptic ulcer. Bacteriological examination is not necessary and only three drugs are needed to cure it in two weeks.

The seminar, chaired by BGS president Prof. AK Azad Khan, was also addressed by National Professor Dr Nurul Islam and Novartis managing director Gerhard G Doege.

# Delhi-Lahore 'test run' of bus service starts

· NEW DELHI, Jan 8: The first trans-border bus link between India and Pakistan began its final "dry run" today, prior to the launch of the service later this month, reports AFP. The bus, carrying around 20 Indian officials and half-a-

dozen armed guards, left New Delhi at 6:30 am (0100 GMT) for the Pakistani city of Lahore. Security was tight as the officials boarded the bus at the Ambedkar Stadium in the south of the Indian capital.

screened, and the bus left the stadium in a convoy of police escort vehicles. According to Delhi transport minister Parvez Hashmi, the regular Delhi-Lahore service should be inaugurated "anytime after January 20," with the or-

All baggage was carefully

ganisers just waiting a final goahead from the home ministry. The bus, which will run four times a week from both sides, will take nearly 14 hours to cover the 650-kilometer distance between the two cities.

Although ticket prices have yet to be finalised, Hashmi said the trip would cost 600 rupees with three meals included. The luxury bus will boast an international phone dial facility as well as the telephone

numbers of top police officials

in the places en route. Special visas will be required for those using the service, which will mainly be restricted to people having relations in either country. Holders of regular tourist

visas will not be allowed to pur-

Plans for the luxury bus

chase tickets.

hours Thursday evening with the House prosecution team. "It was a good discussion on

move him.

House Judiciary Committee. "The senators listened to us." Following a trial, whose dates are still not set, the Senate would vote on Clinton's future. It takes a two-thirds vote to convict a president and re-

Impeachment From Page 1 nonetheless met for several

emerged during a meeting be-

tween Indian prime minister

Atal Behari Vajpayee and his

Pakistani counterpart Nawaz

Sharif in September in New

people-to-people contacts will

ease the uncertainty and mu-

tual suspicion which cloud bi-

ger train called "Samihouta

(understanding) plies between

India and Pakistan twice a

lims waving flags and con-

demning the government

protested today against the first

bus service in 50 years between

white marble Shuada mosque

in the heart of Lahore protes-

ters warned Prime Minister

Nawaz Sharif to stop the bus

service or "we will forcibly stop

Gathered outside the grand

lateral relations.

Pakistan and India.

Observers say increasing

Besides air traffic, a passen-

Hundreds of militant Mus-

some of the options," said Paul McNulty, a spokesman for the

# SC stops executions imposed by Pak military courts till Monday

ported, says Reuters. A seven-member Supreme

In December, the opposition

Two death sentences have it said.

BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia, who is now in Saudi Arabia for performing the holy Omrah, visited Rouja Mubarak of the great prophet Hazrat Mohammad (SM) Thursday night, according to a message received here yesterday, reports UNB. Begum Zia offered prayer at

the mosque in Madina under special royal arrangement. Earlier, Begum Zia was accorded a warm reception at Jeddah airport as she reached there at 5 pm on Thursday. Many Bangladeshis living in Saudi Arabia were also present at the airport to welcome the BNP

The country does not have

Although the Tunguska air defence systems can meet the

clear arsenal.

## Fire at oil refinery in

MOSCOW, Jan 8: A fire broke

government.

# Two South Korean nationals

The Koreans, identified as

Police said they came under

Mahathir said Ahmad

Mahathir told reporters af-Supreme Council of the ruling isation that Daim Zainuddin,

Mahathir said his choice of

said Ahmad Badawi. had made 12 ministerial appointments and the UMNO

scheduled for April 2000. Home Minister, a role which

ment official resigned to take responsibility for a beating inflicted on Anwar on the night of his arrest Sept 20.

cently. They were also demanding removal of OC Belal Hossain and the ASP of Manikganj. The union, however, called off the strike after a discussion with State Minister for Land. Rashed Mosharraf.

## The fishermen of Pakkhir Char -Star photo

lakh as foreign allowance violating rules. " The official was paid the allowance in full though he was entitled to a 10 per cent reduced rate as per rules as his family did not stay in London for more than six months," the report said. Family members of the official was paid Tk 1.2 lakh as air

fare to Dhaka from London vio-

lating rules between 1992 and 1994. As per rules, an official is entitled to air fare for returning home only after working 24 months abroad. Two security guards at Janata Bank's Dubai branch owed Tk 5.35 lakh to the branch on December 31,1994. They took the loans between 1992 and 1994. The bank authorities informed auditors in 1996 that

legal actions were taken against

them but the money was yet to be realised, the report said. Janata Bank's Dubai branch suffered a loss of Tk 35,000 as it failed to pay the Ruler's Tax to Dubai government on time, an audit of the branch's 1992-94, accounts says.

Central Jail from a clinic at posh Gulshan area.

Chowdhury. case, was taken on remand for another five days yesterday. He was produced before the court

five days remand adds: Bunty Islam was taken to Dhaka Central Jail hospital yesterday. Gulshan police said. Sources said doctors at the

the Central Jail hospital for further treatment.



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