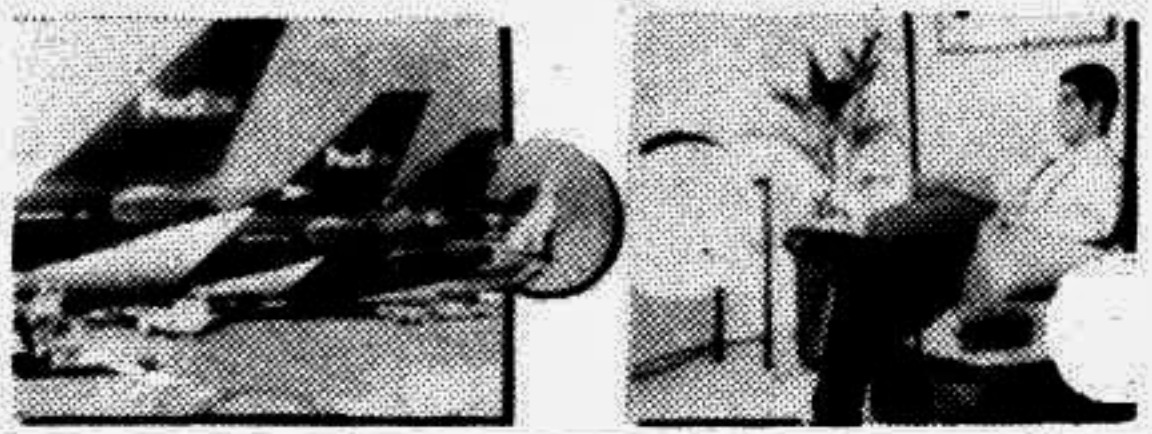


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# Down to Earth

## Waning Animal and Professional Species

By A S M Nurunnabi

In Dhaka city, certain animal species and professional classes were disappearing in the recent past. In the case of animal species, some environmental factors may be the cause, whereas in the case of professional classes, the growing urbanisation may account for it. In both cases, these are striking phenomena which may be of interest to keen observers who have been residing in the city for a long period.

Take the case of monkeys whose existence in the city was quite noticeable in the old parts of the city, particularly in Gandaria, Wari, Nawabpur and Labagh areas about three or four decades back. Over the years, this animal gradually became depleted in numbers and now only some stray members of that species can be found in isolated pockets of the old part of the city.

The cause seems mainly environmental; over the years that part of the city has undergone a lot of urbanisation following denudation of a large number of fruit trees which sheltered and sustained that species before.

The disappearance of monkeys from the old neighbourhood may not be a phenomenon to be grieved over by the old city dwellers because these monkeys often proved themselves troublesome by their forays into family homes and were the cause of headaches to the owners of the fruit-bearing trees. The growing process of urbanisation has led to the gradual disappearance of the monkeys in the city.

Another victim of fast urbanisation is the horse. In old days a good number of them formed an important element of the transport system in the

form of hackney carriages. With the increasing number of mechanised vehicles and rickshaws, the hackney carriages fell into disuse. These horse-drawn carriages are now some times used for publicity purposes for local films.

Even now, quite a good number of them are some times found on city thoroughfares to create greater publicity impact in other fields. The city horses had their hey day in the past when they were used in some kinds of miniature horse-racing on the Race-course Maidan, now Subhwardy - Uddyan. Nowadays, only very few of such ill-bred horses can be found in the old part of the city.

A strange thing in the city is that a small variety of the horse species — the donkey — is never seen here. In old days, donkeys were used as carriers of washermen's loads. The proliferation of mechanised vehicles in the city somewhat accounts for the decline in the number of horses in city areas, but it is quite mysterious why there is no existence of donkeys here, though in the northern districts of the country, a small number of them are still seen.

As regards some professional classes which are gradually disappearing in the city, the conspicuous one that can be cited is a small group of people used in band party for various ceremonial occasions and festivals, particularly in the old part of the city.

Among the old dwellers of that part, marching of a band party at the head of a marriage procession was a common practice with the well-to-do people of that area. Its presence at venues of marriage was also sometimes noted. Such band

parties commonly used equipment like flutes, drums, bagpipes, etc. The members of such band party would wear colourful uniforms and headgears, presenting an attractive spectacle on any ceremonial occasion. The growing urbanisation has also taken a toll on band party members who are now rarely called upon to perform.

Another professional class which has been steadily decreasing in number is the class of dhoobis or washermen who used to perform useful function in our day-to-day life. In the old days, it was part of lifestyle of many families of the city, according to which such washermen used to visit the homes of their patrons time to time for collecting clothes for washing and ironing.

Such washermen used to get paid for their services on monthly or shorter term basis. This class now seems to be on the wane, as most washermen now work in laundries which seem to be growing up in all areas of the city.

Another professional class which has been gradually suffering in business is the roadside barbers. With the steady growth of the so-called hair-dressing saloons in city areas, some of that class can be seen along roads and near city bazaars, serving a clientele of modest means. The increasing number of hair-dressing saloons is an indication of the decline in the number of road-side barbers in the city.

The decline in numbers of animal and professional classes is perhaps the inevitable result of the progress of urbanisation, marking a change in some age-old scenarios of our social life.



Muslims and Christians gather in front of India's largest mosque, the Jama Masjid in Delhi, before their march to Parliament Friday to protest against the string of violent attacks on Christians across the country at the hands of Hindu militants. Lead by senior clerics, the two groups totalling about 3,000 people, blasted prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and home minister Lal Krishna Advani, for exonerating militant Hindus suspected in the series of attacks including the killing of an Australian missionary and his two young sons.

## Police kill four MQM activists in Lahore

LAHORE, Jan 29: Police have killed four members of an opposition party in the eastern city of Lahore who were arrested earlier this week on alleged charges of terrorism, witnesses and party officials said today, reports AP.

The ethnic Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) — a former ally of Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League — said its members were 'executed' by police late Thursday night in Lahore — the capital of Punjab province.

But the police denied the charge, saying that the MQM members were killed by their own party men who tried to free them.

The four MQM members were wanted in more than 100 cases of terrorism, including the killings of prominent personalities in Karachi, the police said.

The MQM workers were killed when the police party came under attack by gunmen riding a car," said Shoukat Javed, chief of Lahore police. "Police retaliated, but the gunmen escaped," he said.

But witnesses said there had not been an encounter.

"We heard them (the MQM members) shouting and crying for help," said Shahid Ali, 32, a witness. "They were urging people to save their lives saying that the police will kill them."

Ali said the police took the prisoners to a dark lane and shot them dead.

Sheikh Liaquat Hussain, a MQM lawmaker, said his party members were innocent and "brutally" murdered by police.

## Biswa Ijtema

From Page 1

The whole pandal has been divided into 21 parts for the participants of different districts.

The main dais has been erected on the western side of the Ijtema ground where renowned Islamic scholars from India, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Arab countries would deliver sermons.

About two hundred 'Mukabber dais' were erected to offer 'Namaj' properly because Tablig Jamaat doesn't believe in offering 'Namaj' with the help of microphone.

Authorities have constructed a new link road and foot-over bridge near Tongi Bazar while Bangladesh Army set up three Bailey bridges over the river Turag near the Ijtema site.

Sufficient toilets and medical camps have been set up to ensure health facilities and supply of medicines free of cost to the devotees.

## Leather fair

From Page 1

Dhaka Hide and Skin Limited, Australian Exotic Leathers (Pvt) Limited and Samina Tannery won the first, second and third decoration prizes respectively.

Chairman of Bangladesh Finished Leather and Leather Goods Exporters Association M A Satter Bhuiyan at a press briefing said that the first ever International Leather Fair in the country had created much interest among the foreign local buyers.

"More than 300 buyers, importers and agents from 19 countries including India, Pakistan, USA, UK, Italy, Japan and Germany and around 10,000 enthusiastic local people visited the fair," he said.

But Hedayet Hossain, a teacher, firmly denied that the madrasah 'ever played host to any such group or people at any time.'

"We are going to hold a press conference soon to reply to carnards spread against us by certain newspapers," he told The Daily Star on the hilltop madrasah this afternoon.

## Deadly bacteria

From Page 1

three drug regimens for two weeks to eradicate H Pylori. These are Proton pump inhibitor (PPI)-based triple therapy, Histamine H2 receptor antagonist-based triple therapy and Bismuth-based regimens.

Dr Mian Mashud Ahmed, a consultant gastroenterologist at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), said the treatment, including all medical investigations, will cost Tk 20,000 only. But conventional therapy costs as high as Tk 20,000 and that too involves a lot of risks.

Endoscopic examination, blood test and breath test are suggested to detect presence of the bacteria in human body, said Prof Mahmud Hasan who is also the pro-VC of the Bangladesh Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).

"In our country, 12 per cent of total population above 15 years are suffering from duodenal ulcer and 3.5 per cent from gastric ulcer, which are the highest rates in the world," he added.

The infection rate in the developed countries was 80 to 90 per cent some 50 years ago. But it declined gradually with the improving socio-economic condition, said Dr. Mashud Ahmed who is a member of the H. Pylori study group.

The bacteria affects people belonging to people who live in unhygienic condition and overcrowded rooms.

Presently, in Bangladesh, as many as 80 per cent children below five years of age and 90 per cent of the adults are infected with the H. Pylori, said Prof Mahmud Hasan.

A recent survey conducted at DMCH and Rajshahi Medical College Hospital revealed that 20 to 25 per cent of the patients treated at the hospitals suffered from GI Tract and liver-related diseases, 7 to 8 per cent from heart-related diseases, 3 to 4 per cent from kidney-related diseases and 2 to 3 per cent from neurological diseases.

Although the rate of the GI tract- and liver-related diseases are alarmingly high, these cannot be properly treated due to lack of facilities, Azad Khan said. Specialised treatment of the diseases are offered only at BSMMU and BIRDEM hospitals, he informed.

Discovered in 1982, the bacteria has been estimated to have infected nearly 60 per cent of world population. Once infected, a person carries the bacteria throughout his or her life unless eradicated and in most cases it does not result in any clinical disease.

## Impeachment trial

From Page 1

pointed Republican 'managers' have said they want to call live witnesses, many Senate Republicans said they would oppose the move in the absence of "explosive testimony" in the closed-door depositions.

"If it's not explosive testimony, I'm going to vote against it," Republican Senator Richard Shelby said, adding "I'm going to be shocked" if anything new emerges.

And Republicans will have the opportunity to make a motion that would, in effect, say the president is guilty of the perjury and obstruction of justice charges against him but would not carry the weight of a verdict.

That 'finding of fact' motion would require a simple majority, while the final verdict would require a two-thirds majority to make Clinton the first US president thus ousted.

But Shelby hinted there was Republican opposition to the plan. And asked whether the initiative was alive, and whether he supported it, he smiled and said "I think it's alive, but I hope it's not breathing very well."

Thursday's vote came a day after the Republicans — and a lone Democratic defector — crushed a Democrat-sponsored dismissal motion by a 56-44

## 5 bank accounts used for transfer of Harkatuz Jihad fund

By Staff Correspondent

At least five bank accounts of different people and organisations in and outside Dhaka were used for transferring the fund of Harkat-Uz-Jihad from abroad, officials of the Joints Investigation Cell (JIC) said.

Eighteen people have so far been arrested regarding the attempt on poet Shamsur Rahman at his Shyamoli residence on January 18. Seventeen of the arrested are now under a five-day remand.

The rest, identified as Ifkhar Haider alias Rinku, is likely to be brought to Dhaka from Barisal with in a couple of days.

The remanded persons told the JIC officials that there are some other extremists organisations active in different parts of the country under different banners.

JIC officials were interrogating the arrested at the city's CID office till last night. Investigators are trying to find out the specific sources that were funding the extremist organisation from in and outside the country.

## PM unhappy

From Page 1

enormous amount of wealth that they are powerful enough to do things from advancing further.

Urging newsmen to hammer on this point time and again, the prime minister said, people should be more vocal about trial of those plundering public money.

Hasina, however, disagreed to a reporter's view that the weakness in governance was responsible for non-holding of trials against corrupt people even after two and a half years of her rule.

She asserted that administration became prone to corrupt practices due to bad governance that the country experienced for long 21 years till AL came to power in June 1996. "Now, they (people in administration) are also coming out of the legacy of corruption and are understanding it well that our government is not of that type."

Hasina grumbled over the fact that criminals were getting quick trials but said she would not like to comment on the functioning of the judiciary. "But you have to look into the matter seriously that it takes only two days for criminals to get bail whereas policemen have to risk their life to catch them."

When her attention was drawn to repeated failures from the Attorney General's part in defending the state in cases against former president HM Ershad, the prime minister said, "I'll look into it. Law must take its own course."

## 'Legitimisation of prostitution protects pimps, procurers'

By Staff Correspondent

Women rights activists from around the world yesterday resolved to decriminalise women in prostitution and pressure their governments to exert political will to solve the socio-economic, religious and cultural problems that breed prostitution and "sex trafficking in women and children".

"Prostitution and sex trafficking are not universal and inevitable aspects of human condition. It is a violation of a woman's human rights and a form of violence against women," Aurora Javate de Dios, president of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), said at the concluding ceremony of a three-day global conference in the city.

The conference theme was Organising Against Sexual Exploitation Regionally and Globally.

"We are working for establishing a society free from hunger and poverty — specially a safe society for women and children," said leader of the opposition in parliament and former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia while addressing the concluding session as chief guest.

Khaleda Zia underscored the need for a strong socio-cultural and political movement all over the world to eliminate prostitution and child abuse.

The conference in a declaration said, "Legitimising prostitution as work only awards legal protection to pimps and procurers and provides them with a marketing environment conducive to the violation and commodification of women's bodies. It gives them legal impunity and invisibility as exploiters."

"In countries that have legalised and regulated prostitution as work, even larger numbers of women are lured into the sex industry from both foreign and local markets," it said.

"The coalition notes with alarm that pornography and trafficking for prostitution, sex tours and the mail-order bride market have become a pervasive phenomenon throughout the world.

"The organisation warns that sex traffickers are responsible for the commercial development of pornography via the Internet.

"Governments should come forward to monitor and prevent the growing trafficking in children for adoption ... and organ extraction.

"We hope it would also be passed in the senate," she said.

"In Bangladesh the government is considering a law to provide capital punishment for child abuse, specially rape," said a Bangladeshi women rights activist.

"We shall sit soon to decide the venue for the next global conference," said Sigma Huda, Convenor of CATW Bangladesh chapter.

More than 300 women rights activists from around the world began their conference in the capital on Wednesday in their fight to eliminate prostitution and sexual exploitation.

CATW, which represents 50 women's organisations from the Asia-Pacific region, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, was formed in 1988.

Women activists from South Asia held a four-day conference in Dhaka on sexual abuse and human trafficking in June urging governments to crack down on offenders. That conference was also organised by the CATW.

A total of 22 papers on various aspects of sexual abuse, prostitution, women and child trafficking were presented in the three-day conference.

CATW's American chapter donated US \$2,000 to a Bangladeshi NGO Ulka, headed by Momtaz Begum, a survivor of prostitution for rehabilitation of prostitutes in the country.

Khaleda Zia donated a sewing machine to the former sex worker Momtaz Begum.

## Mizan

From Page 1

He said absence of principles, blind political vengeance, obstruction in exercising franchise and overnight shift in political stand by changing sides have created a political wilderness which is a matter of concern for the nation.

Without naming anybody, Chowdhury said some dishonest people who joined politics coming out of army barracks were mainly responsible for the political wilderness and bankruptcy, blocking the way for healthy politics.

He said such politicians often warn the Opposition of "public wrath" which he called "ridiculous."

"They could not realise what the public wrath really is, as they were hurriedly taken to safe custody after being ousted from power. Law could not take its due course against them for different reasons," he said.

## Baghabari power plant

From Page 1

is around 2.75 cents per unit.

In the past, PDB had offered another company, Westmont, liquid fuel free of cost for the first three months. This offer was made as Westmont's barge-mounted plant would be gas-based. During the three months, PDB intended to complete the necessary gas pipeline set-up.

In the case of the first private sector barge-mounted project in the country-Khulna Power Company Ltd- PDB offered duty free fuel till gas supply to that plant in 2000.

None of the country's own barge-mounted power plants are given this type of exemptions and facilities.

Power purchase from the barge-mounted plant in Khulna already appears to be burdening the nation's foreign exchange reserve. The government is sustaining Tk 4 crore loss every month by purchasing around 100 MW of power from the company. The total bill has to be paid in dollars.

The PDB has already favoured NEPC by relaxing the deadline for completion of the project. The agreement for this 100 million dollar plant was signed in July 12, '97 and the plant was supposed to be operational in March-April last year.

NEPC could not proceed with the project due to lack of finance, a cause which was not PDB's concern. As per contract, PDB was supposed to 'penalise NEPC for its failure', the sources said.

Usually, if the contractor

## Agitation plan

From Page 1

in Khulna division.

Earlier in the evening, the programmes were discussed at a meeting of the Seven-Party Alliance, held at the official residence of Begum Zia with BNP Vice-chairman M Shamsul Islam MP in the chair. It was attended by Anwar Zahid, Oli Ahad, Shafiq Alam Prodhan, Anisur Rahman, Shaikh Hawkat Hossain Nilu and Nurul Shaq Majumder.

## Offices on weekly holiday

From Page 1

Turning to the Opposition's demand for resignation of the Chief Election Commissioner, Prime Minister said, "They want a CEC so that they can steal votes but we can't let it happen."

Replying to a question on alleged activities of pro-Laden (Osama Bin Laden) "militants" in Bangladesh, the Prime Minister said, "You know about them. They are terrorists. You are communal forces. You should dig out which political parties here maintain links with them and whether there is any link between the ongoing opposition movement and the terrorists' activities."

She observed that the Opposition programmes should highlight social and economic issues of national interest. This would boost their image before an early general elections in 2000, she added.

"There is no need for movement to change government as we have already developed a system of handing over power to caretaker government. They (Opposition) are out to save the killers. They want to see us out of power so that the verdict of the Bangabandhu murder case can not be executed", she said.

Jyoti Basu has agreed to raise the problems regarding enclaves before their central government.

"I categorically told him (Basu) that no Bangladeshis live in India illegally," she told another questioner.

Asked about reported insurgency by some dissident Shantibahinimen allegedly from inside Indian territory, Sheikh Hasina said it was agreed that the Indian government would not allow its soil to be used for such activities against Bangladesh.

Prime Minister also said that during talks with the Indian foreign minister in Calcutta, she underscored the need for reducing Bangladesh's adverse trade gap with India.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad and Minister of State for Information Prof Abu Sayeed were also present at the press conference.

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