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Down to Earth

City's proliferating pavement eateries

By ASM Nurunnabi

A common feature of Dhaka city's life is the profusion of pavement snack stalls patronised by a cross section of city dwellers with the main component comprising small traders, manual workers, rickshaw-pullers and other low-income earners.

These pavement stalls are mainly set up on four-wheel mobile vans which have the advantage of ready movement from one place to another, whenever necessity dictates. Such necessity may arise whenever the law enforcing authorities decide to clear a crowded area on account of congestion created by such snack-eating vans.

That such pavement stalls, be they stationary or mobile, enjoy some sort of protection from certain dubious quarters may be guessed. Here there is no question of taking any licence from the City Corporation or making them subject to any controlling authority. This has encouraged the profusion of such snack stalls all over the city, only because there is a high demand for the food items supplied by these stalls for the low-income groups of city dwellers.

Such snacks stalls are mainly located at busy road intersections where bus, rickshaw and pedestrian traffic predominates and also along some main roads of the city.

If such locations enjoy the cool of shady trees, this constitutes an added attraction for concentration of actual and potential customers at such places.

This is particularly true in summertime. In the light of such natural advantage, concentration of a large number of clients of various grades can be seen, for examples, at places near the Jigatola bus stand, by the side of the Tophkhana Road near the corporate branch of the Sonali Bank, in the shade

provided by the tall buildings along Rajuk Avenue, etc. Such concentration of clients at these locations naturally means brisk business for the owners of the mobile snack stalls.

It has been observed that the main items of snacks, other than the main food items, as provided by these stalls consist of small loaves of bread and banana, supplemented by tea drinks.

Soft drinks are not generally preferred, because they are comparatively cost more. On the other hand, a couple of small loaves of bread taken with a couple of banana and a cup of tea are more economical and stomach-filling. The secret of greater consumption of these items of snacks lies in the evidence of favouritism for such snacks items is abundantly clear on each and every stall catering to the food needs of the low-income earners of the city.

In summer, the seasonal fruits also occupy an important place in the business of the roadside stalls.

Though most of our people with low income, by and large, are hard pressed for extra money to spend, beyond their essential needs, on fruits, they seem to have a definite craving for the native seasonal fruits. Various types of fruits, according to our seasons, are sold from mobile snack stalls. To make these wares easily accessible to customers with small means, the fruits with some size are cut into small pieces carrying low price tags. A cursory view of this business carried on in some areas suggests that depending on the seasons, the favourite fruit items are cucumber, water melons, pine-apples, papayas, green coconut, etc.

When the temperature rises in summer, the items mainly offered are sugarcane juice, water melons, iced sherbat, ice

cream, green coconut, black berries and sweet hog plums (amra), etc.

As in the case of the mainly bread and banana selling stalls, the fruit selling mobile stalls extend from one end of Baitul Mukarram to the old railway station site across Gulistan and Dhaka Stadium areas, besides numerous other areas across the city.

The hospital areas in the city also provide suitable locations for the fruit stalls. In the old part of the city, the Sadarghat area, the Moulvibazar area and the district court areas play dominant roles in this fruit trade.

It is a stark reality of urban food consumption that, when considered against the background of the vast segment of the city population hard put to fend for even two meals a day, there is no place for fruits of any kind in their menu.

An important question, connected with the sale of snacks and fruits through the numerous food stalls of which the city's low-income groups appear to be the major consumers, is how far such foods are safe from health point of view, particularly in the case of cut fruits.

It has been often observed that they are sprinkled with water which is not free from pollution. Here lies the risk for common people who take such unhygienic foods. The sellers in the fruits and snacks stalls are mostly lacking in knowledge of hygiene and sanitation.

In this situation, it is believed that the City Corporation authority will be alert and play a more effective role through its public health department, in ensuring harmless sales of foods through the mobile snacks stalls with particular attention for checking substandard food ingredients and safe food handling practices.

BNP protests 'conspiracy to stop madrassah edn'

Main opposition BNP yesterday called upon the people to launch a united movement to topple what it said the anti-Islamic Awami League government, reports UNB.

As part of the countrywide programme by the opposition alliance, BNP held a rally followed by a procession protesting against the "holy Quran and conspiracy to stop madrassah education."

Addressing the rally at Palata Maidan in the afternoon, BNP standing committee member Abdul Matin Chowdhury said a Jihad (holy war) will have to be declared against the "monafiq" government which, he alleged, had dishonoured the Quran.

Referring to the incident of abandoning the Quran in a dustbin and discouraging madrassah education, he said it indicated that the Awami League government was serving the interest of their mentors who brought the party in power.

BNP joint secretary general Abdullah Al Noman said the government has hurt the sentiment of the religious minded people showing such disregard to holy Quran.

He said: "The anti-Islamic government must have to be removed from power to protect Islamic values and sovereignty of the country."

Former Army Chief Lt Gen Mahbubur Rahman accused the Awami League of ruling the country like the "Aiyame Jahe-lla" (the days of darkness).

The government will have to face punishment as it hurt the religious sentiment of Muslims," he said.

Chaired by City BNP convenor Sadek Hossain Khoka MP, who has been accused with other party leaders of killing a police constable in the city, warned the Home Minister that the city dwellers would build a resistance against his excesses.

Three City Corporation commissioners belonging to BNP, whose movable property were attached by police in connection with the police murder case spoke at the rally.

Later, a procession paraded the city streets.

Mannan's letters to foreign missions

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan has written letters to foreign missions in Dhaka describing recent "repressive measures" against Opposition leaders and activists by the government.

Sources said the BNP secretary general in his letter sent to heads of diplomatic missions alleged that the government resorted to "unprecedented repression" against BNP men through filing "false cases" against the killing of police constable Farhad in the city.

BNP started sending the letters on Thursday, the sources said.

In his letters, Bhuiyan stated that the BNP torch procession on July 7 did not touch the spot where the constable was killed in a bomb explosion. The torch procession was terminated at a place far away from the spot, much earlier the explosion took place, he said.

The government filed cases against nearly two hundreds BNP leaders and activists including its city unit Convenor Sadek Hossain Khoka, who is a party nominee for the upcoming city corporation election, he said.

Ananda Mohan College students go on rampage

MYMENSINGH, July 16: Agitated students of Government Ananda Mohan College went on a rampage at midnight Thursday night and damaged some property of the college protesting toll collection by the outsiders, reports UNB.

Campus sources said some outsiders severely beat up a student of the college in front of the principal's office Thursday afternoon for not paying toll.

They said the outsiders have been collecting tolls from the resident students of the college for the last few days. But the college authorities failed to take any action against the extortionists.

The resident students brought out a protest procession on the campus at midnight and demanded immediate action against the extortionists.

Some of the agitated students entered the students union's office by breaking open the door and damaged furniture of the rooms of VP and GS. They also damaged a college bus.

The procession then marched toward staff quarters and broke the lock of the collapsible gate. But the agitated students return back when the family members started screaming out of panic.

Fresh areas flooded

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The Ganges continued their slide, improving the flood situation, reports received in Dhaka said.

The Ganges still in spate due to the heavy rains in the upstream - Himalayan foothills in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Nepal - kept its pressure downstream, leaving the Meghna erode the vulnerable points at Chandpur, including the Meghna-Dhanagoda Project at Haimchar.

Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak along with minister without portfolio Rafiqul Islam and State Minister for Shipping Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya visited the erosion sites at Haimchar, Moycepur, Darshani, Ekhlashpur and Amirabad. Razzak asked Water Development Board officials to take steps to protect these areas and the Project from erosion.

He also inspected the Tk five crore bund to save Haimchar from Meghna erosion with Dutch aid, an official handout said.

Our correspondent reported from Kushtia that both the Ganges and the Gorai continued

their rise inundating more low-lying areas and crop fields, leaving at least 100,000 people affected in Bheramara and Daulatpur thanas. Prices of essentials have shot up in the areas, making their life more difficult.

Meanwhile, with fine weather continuing, water logging in Kushtia town improved.

The Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) said yesterday that the Brahmaputra-Jamuna marked further fall in the upstream but the Ganges continued to rise at all points. Almost all the rivers in the Meghna basin and all the rivers in the South Eastern Hill basin marked further fall. The rivers would fall further but the Ganges would continue its rise. The Meghna is likely to rise by 1 cm at Bhairab bazar point today.

A less active monsoon contributed to light rains at one or two places over the Brahmaputra and the South Eastern Hill basins, light to moderate rainfall at many places over the Meghna basin during the 24 hours ending at 9 a.m. yesterday.



Rescue workers at the site of an Indian train accident near the Taj Mahal city of Agra yesterday. The accident killed at least 18 people. — AFP photo

'Godmother' bags six Indian nat'l awards

NEW DELHI, July 16: Controversial Hindi film 'Godmother' today swept six national awards, including best actress for Shabana Azmi, reports PTI.

Bollywood hero Ajay Devgan and Malayalam superstar Mammootty shared the best actor award for their films 'Zakhm' and 'Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar' respectively and Shyam Benegal's 'Samar' bagged the best film citation in the 46th National Film Awards announced here today.

The best Director award went to Rajeev Ravi for the Malayalam film 'Janani'.

The award for the best popular film providing wholesome entertainment has gone to Karan Johar's Superhit 'Kuch Kuch Hota Hai', which also brought Alka Yagnik the best female playback singer award for its title song.

The best non-feature film award went to Sanjay Kak's 'In The Forest Hangs a Bridge' (English) while the award for the best first non-feature film went to Rajeev Rai's 'Repentance' (Malayalam).

Gunshots at DU hall

Two rounds of gunshot were fired at a dormitory of the Dhaka University yesterday over an internal feud between the activists of the ruling party's student wing, Bangladesh Chhatra League, reports UNB.

Hall sources said a group of youths fired gunshots inside F Rahman Hall at 12:30 pm centring seat allotment of a student.

Later, police raided two rooms of the hall but could not recover anything from the rooms.

APBN: Probe

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law. APBN is an important force among 16 branches of the police, whose members do tough jobs of storm-troopers in the hills and on the plains.

Members of the remaining 15 branches can get transferred from one branch to another, but the APBN men are not entitled to it. Some members were transferred to district police in 1991, but later the system was stopped.

Sources said on Wednesday night some members of the APBN made a bid to bring out a procession, but they refrained for high regard for Home Minister's assurances.

Train crash kills 18 in Uttar Pradesh

MATHURA, India, July 16: At least 18 people were killed and 209 injured today when a passenger train rammed a derailed goods train in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, officials said, reports Reuters.

The force of the impact hurled the front cars of the New Delhi-bound passenger train on top of the rear carriages of the goods train, loaded with wheat.

The GT-Express, coming from the southern city of Madras, collided with the goods train at 2:15 am (2045 GMT), about 165 km (100 miles) from the Indian capital.

The accident occurred about three minutes after the goods train came off the rails, witnesses said.

"We were sleeping and suddenly there was a big bang," said Upama Chaturvedi, a 50-year-

old woman, who was taking her daughter to New Delhi for heart surgery.

Authorities began relief and rescue operations. The injured have been admitted to three hospitals nearby.

Eight bodies have been identified.

"We have admitted 45 people injured in the accident. At least four of them are in a serious condition," said SB Gupta, chief medical superintendent of the Agra Civil Hospital.

Doctors said most of the injuries were severe fractures.

"I was going to Delhi and never expected this to happen," said Haji Abdul Hakim, who had a bandage over his eyes.

Traffic was blocked on the central track between the tourist city of Agra and Mathura. Relief trains had been sent from New Delhi.

Landslides kill 8 in Bombay

BOMBAY, July 16: Heavy rain swept mud and rocks on to huts in northern Bombay today, killing eight people, police said, reports AP.

Two women and four young girls were among seven killed in Bhandup, a northeastern neighbourhood of Bombay, when sections of a hill collapsed on makeshift huts of plastic and tin. One person was killed and four others injured in another landslide in Vikhroli in northeastern Bombay.

Police said incessant monsoon rains since Thursday could have loosened the rocks.

Two highways connecting Bombay to Pune, 160 kilometers south as a precautionary measure, Police said heavy rainfall could trigger landslides on the range of hills overlooking the highway.

Sylhet BNP

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will elect the new leadership. The names of sitting President MA Haque and sitting Senior Vice-president Nurul Haque are being discussed for the post of President while there are four aspirants for the post of General Secretary. The four are sitting General Secretary Anifur Haque Chowdhury, former general secretaries MA Gaffar and MA Kahir Chowdhury and Juba Dal leader Falaquzzaman Chowdhury Jaglu. The three probable candidates for the post of Organising Secretary are former JCD leaders Badruzzaman Selim, Shamsuzzaman and Abul Kaheer Shamim.

Though there is grouping within the party here, central leader Saifur Rahman has considerable influence on them. Those backed by him seem to be in an advantageous position.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury will be the chief guest at the inaugural session of the Council to be held at the Registry Maidan at 10 am. Saifur Rahman will inaugurate the council while central leaders Oli Ahmed, Sadeque Hossain Khoka and Mashur Rahman will be present as special guests.

B. Chy

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applied for and got plots at that time."

However, the BNP leader thanked the Prime Minister for indirectly acknowledging that Kafiluddin Chowdhury was not an Awami League minister in the Jukta Front government. "He was the Vice President of Krishak Dal."

Barak

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Thursday at the White House. The prime minister pledged to "inject new momentum into the peace process and to put it back on all tracks" — with Syria, Lebanon and the Palestinians. Clinton assured him "America will walk with you."

Sharif's bid to rebuild battered image

GILGIT, (Pakistan) July 16:

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif began trying to rebuild his battered image today, meeting with troops based near the border with India and promising aid to families of soldiers slain in a 2-month-old conflict, reports AP.

Significantly, three of the four stops on his whirlwind agenda involved boosting troops morale. While there have been no signs of a rift between Sharif and the powerful military over his decision to ask Islamic militants to pull out of Indian Kashmir, he obviously is taking no chances.

The indiscriminate artillery fire and bombing by Indian troops have failed to lower the spirit and enthusiasm of our people and soldiers," Sharif said in one of two major addresses.

"We want peace, but our valiant soldiers are fully prepared to defend the country if war is imposed upon us."

Sharif has been the target of protests around the country since the Mujahadeen began withdrawing Sunday from the peaks they controlled overlooking India's main supply road in the region.

The insurgents claim that while they have withdrawn some fighters, they do not feel bound by a peace agreement between Pakistan and India because they were not party to the negotiations. They claim they will continue fighting — perhaps in other parts of Kashmir — and will launch suicide attacks.

Sharif flew with Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz and other top officials to the Pakistani side of the so-called Line of Control that divides Kashmir into Pakistani and Indian sectors.

At the village of Pion, about 16 kilometres from the line and reachable only by dirt road or helicopter, he was greeted with enthusiastic applause by light infantry, artillery and commando troops who shouted in unison "God is great!" and "Nawaz Sharif, we are with you!"

He then went to Bunji village, site of a monument to war "martyrs" that was built in 1995. With Himalayan peaks providing a breathtaking backdrop, he laid a wreath and met briefly with families of troops who died in the recent conflict.

Their tears mixed with sweat on a hot, sunny day as they heard each family will get compensation of 500,000 rupees for a slain soldier and 100,000 rupees for those who were wounded.

"I salute the mothers and sisters of the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the country," he said. "As a result, the Kashmir dispute has become the focus of international attention. The world has realised the Kashmir problem is a flashpoint."

A young man was allegedly drowned by police in Bashaboo Jheel in the city on March 15 after being tortured.

A young contractor, Ripon, was chopped to death by a gang of youths at Kalabagan in the city on April 21.

Businessman Harunur Rashid was shot dead by some unidentified gunmen in front of Badda Club in the city May 7.

In Chittagong city, the most sensational incident was the double murder at Shahid Mirza Lane on January 11. One Milon and his cousin Imam were shot dead while they were asleep in their house.

Tribal insurgent surrenders

RANGAMATI, July 16: A tribal insurgent has laid down arms to security forces here recently, reports UNB.

Police said Laxmi Baran Chakma, 22, son of Rajani Chakma in Lebuchhari and a member of armed tribal group, surrendered with a local-made gun and some ammunition at Yangrichhari range, Longadu.

918 held, arms recovered

A total of 918 persons were arrested and 14 fire arms, 48 rounds of bullet and 18 explosives were seized on the 83rd day of the countrywide combining operation by police, BDR and Ansar, reports BSS.

Safety measures

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quate fire extinguishers and alternative ladders in garments factories despite its repeated commitments. Many workers have lost their lives due to lack of safety measures in garments factories, they mentioned.

The forum leaders urged the owners of Rose Knitting and Riders Shoe factory in which two workers were killed to pay Tk one lakh each to their families and Tk 50,000 to the injured as compensation.



Low-lying areas in the city are still under water. This picture was taken from Nandipara yesterday.

— Star photo

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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