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Down to Earth

Aspects of City Scenario

By A S M Nurunnabi

A city's streets present a kaleidoscopic scenario, the sequences of which may be interesting, funny, strange or poignant. This is perhaps stating the obvious, for life itself is a panorama of endless variety of things.

A few scenes in the city's life may be depicted which are often taken for granted in our day-to-day existence. It is generally thought that our people are fond of political meetings and rallies. This may seem obvious from the large throngs of people who assemble to hear speakers at public meetings. There is another aspect of this interest, though on a much smaller scale. There are some people in the city who consider the price of a newspaper somewhat high for their lean purse. For such people, yet hard-up people keen to read a newspaper, facilities exist, though at different spots in the city in the form of newspapers pasted on walls.

Their existence may be noticed, among other points, at the junction of New Elephant Road and Mirpur Road, near Science Laboratory, Jigatola bus stand, the place near the typists' shade on Tophkhana Road opposite the Press Club, the corner where the informal Dairiki Bangla office stood in Motijheel. You will always find a motley crowd of people in front of such places.

Craning their necks over the shoulders of their fellow-readers, they try to satiate their thirst for daily news. This presents a refreshing picture of a section of inquisitive readers, who, though bereft of the means to buy a newspaper, are unwilling to let their thirst for information. This redeeming feature of some sort in the hectic rush of urban life needs further encouragement from newspaper managements.

Another aspect of city scenario lies in the existence of many so-called community centres in the city. There was a time when social functions like weddings, birthday parties, wedding anniversaries, aklaka, etc. used to be held within the four walls of one's house or in pandals set up in close proximity to home. Where the number of guests is small, such functions still continue indoors. But such occasions are fewer now and the invited guests are large in numbers.

This has given rise to the new phenomenon of hiring community centres. The present trend is to choose any of the community centres dotting the city as venues to hold important social functions. This trend originated not many years ago. Now the number of community centres around the city has proliferated on account of the greater demand for such social gatherings. In many parts of the city most of the centres are owned by private individuals.

In some particular localities, Dhanmondi Residential Area, for example, some well-known centres draw business throughout the month. The peak season is, however, winter and the dull time is the month of Ramadan for obvious reasons. The present trend is to fit the halls of many of the community centres with air-conditioners to attract customers in summer. In a populated city like Dhaka, there is always a steady demand for such places, so much so that it is necessary to book your requirement well in advance particularly in respect of the more popular high-profile venues.

Such places can be booked either for the day or for a night. For functions in the night, the charge is somewhat more because of illuminations. In general, the basic rent for such places ranges from Tk 7,000/- to Tk 10,000/- for a day for the AC-fitted ones. With this is added the charge for hiring furniture, crockery and cutlery, service charge for cooks, bear-

Ershad Shikdar

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ma' Faruk is now hiding in a residential hotel in Calcutta.

DC (South) Mazharul Huq said today a photograph of 'Jama' Faruk would be sent to the Interpol for arresting him abroad.

Shikdar has named another bodyguard, Farid, who is one of the 'eyewitnesses' to several murders. Farid was arrested by Khulna thana police last month from Railway Colony area. He will be taken on remand for interrogation tomorrow, said the DC (South).

Meanwhile, Shikdar has appealed police to oust Shanjida Nahar Shova from 'Swar-nakamol' without any further delay.

Termining Shova as his mistress and not wife he also challenged her to produce document in support of her marriage with him.

"I will confess other murders on condition that Shova is turned out of my house once for all," police officials said quoting Ershad Shikdar during interrogation on Thursday night.

Shova is one of the factors behind my involvement in the killings of 'Toko' Aziz, Akimul and Khalid Hossain. I killed them at her instigation," Ershad told the interrogators.

Shova, on the other hand, disbelieved this statement which police quoted Shikdar as saying.

"Until and unless I am allowed to talk to him, nothing is at all believable," Shova told police.

She is a witch and I want to get rid of her," Shikdar said to DC (South) who is leading the 10 teams of interrogators.

Police officials have taken into serious consideration Shikdar's pre-condition for confessing to more murders.

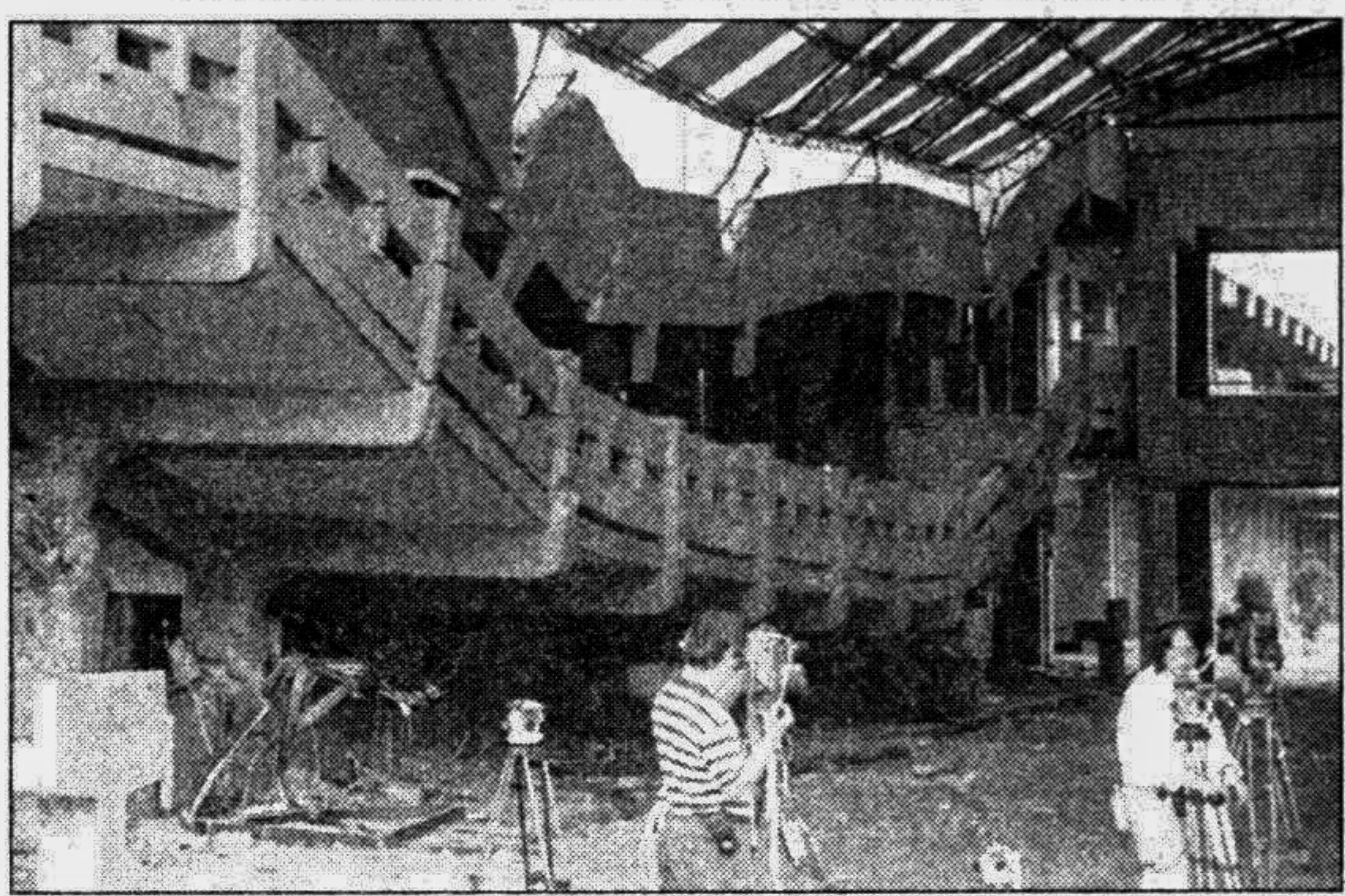
"We shall meet Shova to ask her to produce 'Kabin Nama' (registration) of her marriage with Shikdar. If she really falls, then Shova won't be spared from being out of police custody as Shikdar has named her as one of witnesses to three murders, police said.

In another development, the three-member probe committee headed by Director NSI Masudul Huq is expected to return to Khulna on October 28 to verify Shikdar's statements on beneficiaries made during the second round of investigation.

In the first round, from October 7 to 13, the probe body recorded statements of people from various professions, including some government servants to identify beneficiaries of Ershad Shikdar.

Shikdar will be questioned again to verify the statements he and his bodyguard Noor-e-Alam made earlier, said the DC

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A building of the Min Hsiung engineering school collapsed in Chiayi city after a powerful earthquake measuring 6.4 on the Richter scale, hit Taiwan yesterday. Story on Page 5. — AFP photo

Alliance leaders meet IOJ chief

Tougher programme before Ramadan

By Staff Correspondent

The first round of separate meetings between chiefs of four component parties of the Opposition alliance and secretaries general of the parties ended yesterday with the decision to intensify the one-point anti-government movement before the Holy Ramadan.

The secretaries general and members of the Liaison Committee of the alliance met Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) chief Azimul Haq at the party office in the city yesterday. The meeting also discussed strengthening the unity of the alliance. The meeting lasted 45 minutes from 9:40 am.

The BNP-led alliance includes Jamaat-e-Islami, Jatiya Party (Ershad) and IOJ.

The top leaders of the four parties earlier met BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia on Oct 8. JP Chairman HM Ershad on Oct 19 and Jamaat Ameer Golam Azam on Oct 20.

Asked about BNP's plan for a broad-based alliance with all opposition parties including the left, IOJ leader, ARM Abdul Matin said: "There may be discussion and unity with any party to achieve our goal. We will always welcome more parties in our one-point movement."

BNP leaders Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, M Shamsul Islam and Anwar Zahid, JP leaders Nazim Rahman Manjur and ABM Golam Mostafa, Jamaat leaders Matin Rahman Nizami, and ATM Azharul Islam, IOJ leaders Fazlul Haq Amini, ARM Abdul Matin and Muslehuddin Abu Bakar attended the meeting.

3 killed in Pabna road accident

PABNA, Oct 22: Three people were killed and three others injured when a speeding truck hit another parked on roadside at Monohorpur on Pabna-Ishwardi road early today, reports UNB.

Shibir activist

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Police said Ali was fatally injured due to a 'misfire' by a fellow activist during yesterday's clash. But Shibir alleged that he was injured police firing during a clash at Anderkilla yesterday.

Spontaneous clashes at different parts of the city during the hartal left around people injured, 15 of them critically.

Chittagong unit of the opposition alliance has called a dawn-to-dusk hartal on Sunday in greater Chittagong to protest what it said police attack on opposition supporters and Jam-e-Mosque at Anderkilla during yesterday's hartal.

Markazul

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forming their professional duties.

In a statement, it said 12 photo journalists were injured in the attack, two of them seriously. The two are Babul Talukder of the Dinkal and Swapan Sarkar of the Banglar Bani.

Hifazat-e-Khatme-Nabuat Movement also condemned yesterday's police attack on Markazul activists and photo journalists.

It demanded immediate release of Markazul leaders.

Misappropriation detected

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building were included to deliberately inflate the bill, which resulted in an additional payment of Tk 10 lakh to the contractor.

Under the Area Development Project, there was corruption in building the Shaheednagar Community Centre. Cracks have already appeared in all the floors of the recently built centre.

The responsibility of monitoring was given to a so called consulting firm, set up by some 'acquaintances and known faces' of the project's engineers and officials, the report said.

The original documents showed that one consultant firm, DDC, had actually qualified for the work through proper bidding. But later the DDC was 'brought down to the sixth place and the work was awarded to the 'disqualified' firm. The original document was tampered with white correction fluid," the report said.

When asked, Chief Engineer of DCC Shamsul Haque Bhuiyan who was formerly the Project Director told The Daily Star, "The project was hundred per cent successful and there was no corruption at all."

The Chairman of the Public Estimate Committee on the investigation without consulting other members and the allegations he brought are totally unfounded," Bhuiyan claimed.

"These allegations were brought to serve his vested interest. We have already taken this matter to the highest level in the government," he said.

When asked about allegations that he owned 19 houses in the city, the Chief Engineer said he was not bound to disclose the number of houses he owned. He said whatever number of houses he owned, he paid taxes for those regularly.

The initial investigation also revealed that the consultant's design provided for construction of six to eight metres wide box culvert on Dholakhal. But the engineers, without carrying out any survey, built a two to three metres wide 'very low quality' box culvert.

Construction of the culvert was undertaken after a feasibility study so that it could be used as a drain to remove the

Sharif's son seeks US intervention to release his father

WASHINGTON, Oct 22: Hasan Nawaz Sharif, son of deposed Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, has sought US intervention to secure the release of his father and family members, under unlawful detention since last week's military coup in the country, reports PTI.

In a letter sent from London to the US House subcommittee on Asia and Pacific, Hasan said no charges have been filed against him (Nawaz Sharif and other family members) and they are illegally detained.

"It is with great fear and trepidation that I submit this statement for inclusion in the record of the hearing on Pakistan. I take this step with faith in the committee members to focus attention on the personal safety and security of my father, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, and of the members of our family."

The Prime Minister was not elected out of office, as is the norm in countries with institutional democratic controls. I write out of the fear that the lack of respect for democratic institutions has extended to the lack of respect for basic and inalienable human rights, he said in his letter.

In Karachi, a Pakistani lawyer filed a petition today in the Sindh province's High Court objecting to the dismissal of the government by the military in a bloodless coup last week, the official APP news agency reported.

Legal sources said the court in the port city Karachi had not admitted the petition for formal hearing and the proceedings today were to see if it was valid and could be admitted.

The petition is an attempt to get a court order determining whether the actions of army chief General Pervez Musharraf, who overthrew Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in the October 12 coup, were legal or not.

They said the petitioner was a lawyer named Sohail Hameed but did not know if he had a political background. They said Musharraf was named as respondent in the petition.

IPS from Washington says,

Wahid under pressure for a 'clean' cabinet

JAKARTA, Oct 22: Less than 48 hours in power, President Abdurrahman Wahid was under pressure today to choose a Cabinet free of corruption and human rights abuses committed during decades of authoritarianism, reports AP.

Wahid, an ailing 59-year-old Muslim intellectual and cleric, was elected on schedule as the world's fourth most-populous nation on Wednesday by Indonesia's highest legislative body. He is expected to name his team with a week or so.

His rival for the top job, Megawati Sukarnoputri, was voted in as vice president on Thursday.

Political commentators said the partnership would bring together moderate Islamic interests, represented by Wahid and his National Awakening Party, and nationalist aspirations championed by the Indonesian Democratic Party for Struggle of Megawati, daughter of founding President Sukarno.

During the past two years, the two have jointly campaigned for greater democracy following Sukarno's rule under former President Suharto, who ruled for 32 years after ousting Sukarno in 1966.

"They have forged a close relationship. Since their parties encompass Muslim and nationalist forces, they will be able to accommodate the interests and aspirations of Indonesia's two major political groups," said Arbi Sanit, a political analyst at the University of Indonesia.

Wahid and Megawati replaced the administration of Suharto's handpicked successor, president B J Habibie.

"I hope the next Cabinet members will be younger and not mere 'yes men' people. They should be more independent and able to do more than just wait for instructions," The Jakarta Post quoted political analyst Soedjatni Djwandono as saying.

Other analysts said the popularity of both the president and vice president would do much to bring social stability to Indonesia, which has been wracked by years of unrest.

"But their credibility will depend on the quality of the Cabinet they form within the next few days," said Arif Arryman, an analyst with Econit, a Jakarta think-tank.

Protests raged soon after Wahid beat Megawati in Wednesday's presidential ballot by the 700-member People's Consultative Assembly. Disillusioned Megawati supporters fought with police and troops in the capital and other cities, as well as on the tourist island of Bali.

The violence subsided after Megawati won the deputy post on Thursday.

Trash can

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to DCC's 'authorised' 1,095 shops and stalls, several 'thousand' unauthorised shops generate daily rubbish without paying any tax whatsoever. Officials suggested that the entire market must be shifted to Aminbazar or elsewhere. They said Aminbazar would be an appropriate site for it.