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# Down to Earth

## City's Biggest Govt Housing Estate Falls on Bad Times

By A S M Nurunnabi

The government's residential complex for its functionaries is known as the Azimpur Estate. Spread over an area of more than 50 acres of land, the estate came into existence more than four decades ago as a novel experiment in community living. Thus with its long history, the estate has evolved through a number of phases.

Originally, the residential complex for the government employees had about 50 residential units, classified into a couple of categories. Later, the residential complex expanded northwards.

Overall, the total number of housing units covering the entire area, where some more additional units are in the process of construction may exceed 150 comprising some main categories.

When the residential quarters first came into existence, there was adequate open space in between the different units and also a number of playgrounds for the children. The whole scenario began to change after Liberation when the rapid growth of the number of government employees seeking residential accommodation necessitated the construction of additional units within the available land in the estate.

The momentum of additional requirement of accommodation for the government employees gained a steady pace over the years that now the vacant spaces that used to exist between the previously constructed buildings began to

disappear. Even the open spaces and playgrounds, which served as lungs for the residents, were not spared. The craze for additional construction of residential units took such a desperate turn that even parts of small tanks within the periphery of the estate compound were filled up for the purpose.

As a result of these unbridled construction activities, the whole residential complex has already acquired the look of a sort of urban slum with severe congestion. The environment of awful congestion has been compounded by an increasing number of shops of various kinds along its internal sidewalks and also a growing kitchen market along the pavements in a part of the estate.

The choking congestion within the estate is aggravated by other factors. There are two girls' schools in the heart of the residential area, one of which has since been upgraded into college. The number of students of these schools and college run into several thousands when the schools and the college classes start and close down, the huge number of students and vehicles using the inner routes create such staggering traffic tangles that they take hours to clear up. This is a daily occurrence within the estate when the educational institutions remain open.

The residents of the residential complex point out certain unhappy aspects of the present community life there. A Community Centre has been in existence there for a long time even before independence. It has an auditorium which is let out for marriage ceremonies and other social functions at concessional rates. Previously there was a good library to which accessions of new books were a regular feature every year. Daily newspapers and journals were also in adequate supply for the reading room in the library. All these are now in a moribund state.

Some of the regular members of the community centre used to play tennis, badminton and other games on suitably paved areas. A music school and tailoring and sewing teaching unit also used to function on the premises of the centre. All these social welfare activities are no longer in existence. The premise of the centre reportedly becomes haunts of groups of anti-social elements which sometimes pose security risks for the residents of the estate.

Except for the newly-constructed buildings, the old ones suffer from lack of proper maintenance and repair. As the complaints in this regard to the relevant authority produce no results on most occasions, the aggrieved residents are sometimes compelled to undertake necessary repairs at their own costs.

All in all, considering the different aspects of the community life at Azimpur estate, the residents of the place are facing bad days in their day-to-day life, so much so that it provides an example of growing slum-like identity.

## Road barricade protesting one-way system

By Staff Correspondent

Students of Dhaka College and small traders in the area yesterday put up a barricade on Mirpur road protesting the newly introduced one-way traffic system in the area.

They brought out a procession and put up the barricade after a book trader, identified as Azizul Haq, was hit by a speeding minibus in front of Dhaka College.

The injured trader was sent to the Delta Clinic where the attending doctor stated his condition to be critical.

The agitating students and traders blocked traffic on Mirpur road for more than half an hour. Later police went there and removed barricade after discussion with the students and traders.

## 10-MW gas-based power plant to be set up in Ctg

CHITTAGONG, Apr 28: Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) will install a 10-MW gas-based power plant at Nasirabad in the city, reports UNB.

The project was approved in a high-powered meeting here Wednesday with Energy and Mineral Resources Secretary Dr Toufique Elahi Chowdhury in the chair.

City Corporation Mayor A B M Mohiuddin Chowdhury told the news agency that the project proposal involving about Tk 100 crore was submitted to the government last October.

Cultimax Energy Limited, an Indonesian company, will provide financial and technical assistance for the project. Cultimax would get 60 per cent profit while City Corporation 40 per cent.

The power plant will be set up on five acres of land in Panchlaish thana of the city. Bakhra Gas authorities have agreed to supply gas to the power plant.

Eighteen industrial institutions have already signed an agreement with the City Corporation for buying electricity from the power plant.

Demand for power in the metropolis and its adjoining areas is 230 MW against the present supply of 160 MW.

## Pressure groups active again to thwart ban on polythene

By Shehab Ahmed

The government has decided to form a five-member task force to examine the pros and cons of banning the use of black polythene as shopping bags and food-wrappers, which are posing problems in disposing of materials that pose health hazards.

The force will frame a policy recommendation, prepare an update of the industry with a view to determining the number of the polythene manufacturers.

According to Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF) sources, an earlier government decision to discontinue production of black polythene by December 31 is still valid. Influential people, including a ruling party MP from old Dhaka, and business groups are pressing for the withholding the decision, the sources said.

Pressure groups had earlier thwarted a decision to ban plastic shopping bags, to be replaced by jute bags mainly to help the ailing jute industry in 1991.

With the change of governments, the same groups secured new patrons. They are now lobbying hard to revert the decision, again.

To offset their pressure the MOEF decided to form the task force headed by the DG, Department of Environment (DOE) and representatives from NGO and concerned groups. ADAB will represent the NGOs, the sources said.

Besides it would come up with suggestions on how to implement the decision.



A rickshawpuller carrying used polythene bags to market from where those will be collected for recycling. — Star photo by Sk Enamul Haq

## DPRK Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs in city: Talks today

Bangladesh and Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) will hold official talks here today for improving their relations through institutional means, reports BSS.

Pak Kil Youn, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of DPRK arrived here yesterday afternoon on a four-day visit to lead his country to the talks to be held in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Foreign Secretary CM Shafi Sami received Pak at the airport when he arrived from Delhi leading a three-member delegation.

The talks on "institutional consultation" is likely to be followed by signing of a protocol between the two countries, Foreign Secretary told the news agency.

The DPRK Minister, during his stay here, will call on Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad and State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Abul Hasan Chowdhury. He will also visit Bangabandhu Museum.

## Flag meeting

Nasaka agrees not to use water of Tumburu canal

COX'S BAZAR, Apr 28: The Nasaka authorities of Myanmar have agreed not to use the water of Tumburu canal entering Bangladesh territory, reports UNB.

The agreement was reached at a flag meeting between Bangladesh Rifles and Nasaka forces at Moundgu town in Myanmar on Thursday.

The members of Myanmar border force have been using the water of the canal that runs along Naikhangchhari and Ukha thanas of the district.

Although the canal divides the territories of the two countries, it recently moved into Bangladesh territory due to erosion.

The local BDR has protested the use of the canal-water by Nasaka forces.

Acting Sector Commander of BDR Lt Col Khairul Alam and Director of Border Immigration Department of Myanmar U Thet Haat led their respective sides in the meeting.

In the meeting, U Thet assured of taking necessary steps to release 31 fishermen of St Martin Islands caught by Myanmar.

None arrested yet for murder at Karwanbazar

By Staff Correspondent

None was arrested in connection with the killing of Jubo League leader Abdul Khaleque who was shot dead in front of the party office at Karwanbazar at around 6:30 pm on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, police arrested three people for their alleged involvement in ransacking vehicles in and around Karwanbazar area. They are Delwar Hossain, Jahangir Hossain and Mahbubur Rahman. They were shown arrested under Public Safety Act.

More than two platoons of police were deployed in and around Karwanbazar area following the incident.

The body of Khaleque, who was also a UP member in Chandpur sadar thana, was sent to his village Ram Dasdi, Puranbazar, Chandpur after namaje-e-janaza at Ambarsha Mosque at Karwanbazar.

Sources said Khaleque had a conflict with a leader who wanted to become the general secretary of Karwanbazar wholesale fish market.

Supporters of the two leaders clashed over control of the market two months ago. The murder of Khaleque was a sequel to the rivalry, sources added.

## Khaleda asks partymen to prepare for tougher movement

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday asked her partymen to get prepared for a massive movement to dislodge the Awami League government for the sake of public security, reports UNB.

"People are looking at you since there is no security of their life and property. The ruling party is busy grabbing others' property," she said.

The BNP Chairperson was addressing leaders and workers of Mohammadpur Thana BNP at her 29 Minto Road official residence in the evening. Convener of new Thana BNP committee Aftabul Haq and its members were present.

The opposition leader said security of public life and property will be ensured if the Awami League government is removed from power. "Our unity will remain intact," she told her party followers.

To strengthen the organisation at grassroots level, she directed the partymen to involve the people in the current movement. She said tougher programme would be announced soon.

She urged them to make the April 30 joint public meeting of the four-party alliance at Pallatan Maidan a success.

## NE India a safe haven for ISI agents: Sonia

GUWAHATI, Apr 28: Indian opposition leader Sonia Gandhi accused the government today of failing to curb cross-border infiltration by Pakistani intelligence agents in the country's insurgency-torn northeast, reports AFP.

Sonia said the region had become a safe haven for Pakistani ISI operatives seeking to foment the half-dozen tribal and separatist insurgencies being fought there.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's BJP party has "totally failed to check the ISI agents from entering India through the northeastern states with a view to destabilising the country's security," Sonia said.

"The central government lacks clear cut policy in tackling the ISI menace which has assumed alarming proportions," she added.

Sonia was speaking to reporters in the capital of Assam state, Guwahati, where she was attending a regional meeting of her Congress Party workers.

"It is a well known fact that a number of militant groups in the northeast are being aided by the ISI. But despite that nothing has been done to curb this menace," she said.

Since the BJP came to power "the region has witnessed all types of problems, the most serious being the growth of the ISI which has the potential to tear apart India's unity and integrity."

Sonia also warned that minority Muslims and Christians in Assam, who constitute about 35 per cent of the total 22 million population, were in danger of losing their identity.

"The minority communities are under threat from the ruling regional government in the state and the BJP government at the Centre, both trying to suppress the rights and privileges," Gandhi said.

## Fishing in Bay 20 Lankan fishermen held in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Apr 28: Twenty fishermen of Sri Lanka were arrested this morning on charge of illegal fishing in Bangladesh territorial water, police said. Three fishing boats, were also seized.

They were sent to jail after police produced them in the court.

## BIMST-EC for free trade among member states

NEW DELHI, Apr 28: Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand have decided to work towards establishing a free trade area among them to boost trade and investment in the region.

The concept paper for the free trade area will be ready within six months. The paper outlining approaches to the setting up of the free trade area will be prepared by an inter-governmental group comprising officials dealing with international trade.

These decisions were taken at the second ministerial meeting of the five countries which constitute BIMST-EC (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand-Economic Cooperation). The commerce ministers of those countries attended the one-day meeting here on Thursday.

The move to set up the free trade area is in keeping with the "shared vision of prosperity" through increased trade and economic cooperation, the chairman of the meeting and Indian Commerce Minister Murasoli Maran said.

He said the meeting also decided to go ahead with the proposal to establish proper transport links between the BIMST countries through a project known as Southern Corridor of the Trans Asian Railways and Asian Highways Project.

Bangladesh Commerce Minister Mohammad Abdul Jalil had yesterday said BIMST could serve as a bridge between SAARC and ASEAN.

BSS ads: BIMST-EC also decided to provide visa free movement facilities to top businessmen within the region.

Abdul Jalil told newsmen at ZIA that 20 businessmen from each country will be entitled to enjoy these facilities.

He said the respective governments of the five countries would select the businessmen on the basis of their performance as exporters and investors.

He said it has been decided to ensure fast track service to businessmen for getting visas for their quick movement in the region.

The commerce minister, who termed the meeting as "successful", said it has identified some sectors for development of the region and each country has specific responsibility to achieve that.

He said Bangladesh would play a leading role in trade and investment, India in technology, transport and communication, Myanmar in energy sector, Sri Lanka in tourism and Thailand in fisheries.

He said the meeting also agreed to closely involve the private sectors in the member countries for implementation of the action agenda formulated by the senior trade-economic



Police stopped activists of Islami Shashantantra Andolon at the Dainik Bangla Crossing when they moved to lay siege to the headquarters of peer of Dewanbagh in the city's Arambagh yesterday. — Star photo

## US to help monitor child labour activities in garment factories

By Staff Correspondent

A delegation of US Labour Department assured the BGMEA of all out cooperation in child labour monitoring activities in garment factories here.

The delegation led by Andrew Samet discussed the issue with Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) on Wednesday at a city hotel.

US Ambassador John C Holzman and other high officials of the embassy were present during the discussion.

BGMEA delegation was led by its vice-president Anisul Haq, says a press release.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for eliminating child labour was signed between BGMEA, ILO and UNICEF. US Dhaka mission and Bangladesh government provided support to implement the MOU.

The tenure of the existing MOU would end in June this year, Anisul Haq said.

He said the BGMEA is interested to continue the activities in the future. He sought US cooperation to continue the programme.

The BGMEA leaders also held a meeting with Sonali Bank officials to resolve various problems facing the garment factories.

The meeting decided to hold two meetings a month between the bank officials and BGMEA leaders.

## Proposal soon for setting up Bheramara power plant

By Sharier Khan

The Power Development Board (PDB) is likely to place a proposal before the ECNEC soon for setting up of a gas-based 450 MW power plant at Bheramara, Kushtia to cater the future power needs of the country's south-western region.

The proposal is, however, not backed by any feasibility study although a pre-ECNEC meeting earlier asked PDB to submit a study along with it. Moreover, the main raw material for the proposed plant - natural gas - is not available in the region now. PDB intends to set up the plant by 2002-2003.

PDB says, since gas is being made available gradually in the western part of the country, it has become important to set up gas-based power plants there.

The project has been proposed as power-dependent activities in the region will increase in the region with availability of gas, the proposal said.

However, to supply gas to Kushtia from the eastern part of the country through Sirajganj, an investment of Tk 250-300 crore will be required.

PDB Chairman Quamrul Islam Siddique says pipeline project to supply gas to the region will be pursued by Petrobangla while PDB sets up the proposed power plant in Kushtia. "In fact, Petrobangla is now ready set up the pipeline," he said.

The proposal says, the plant will reduce distribution losses by generating power locally, cut imported fuel now used as the main raw material for power generation in that region and develop local manpower through technology transfer.

Due to availability of cheap gas, most of the power plants are located in the eastern part of the country while plants in the western part mainly depend on expensive imported fuel oil.

To justify the location of the plant, the proposal said that considering the forecasts in the Power System Master Plan, the

## BSF man caught with arms by villagers in Netrakona

MYMENSINGH, Apr 28: Villagers caught a BSF man with an SLR loaded with 10 bullets at a frontier village in Netrakona district today, reports UNB.

Quoting villagers, BDR sources said two members of Indian Border Security Force (BSF) from its Shingkaia camp entered Panchgaon village in Kalmakanda thana in the evening.

As they teased women in the house of one Parimal, the inmates shouted for help. The villagers rushed to the spot and chased the armed BSF men.

They caught one BSF man while the other managed to flee.

## BSEHR report False case under PSA against journalist

By Staff Correspondent

Police have filed a false case even against a journalist under the Public Safety Act (PSA), the Bangladesh Society for Enforcement of Human Rights (BSEHR) said in an investigation report on misuse of PSA.

A false case was filed under PSA against Murad, Laxmipur correspondent of Bangla daily Janakantha and three others to hide the misdeeds of SP Khairul Bashar at Bashkipur Dayemnia Siddikul Ulum Madrassah examination centre," the report said.

Another local journalist of a prominent Bangla daily, who is a relative of the SP's wife, played a dubious role in implicating Murad in the case, the report noted.

The BSEHR report said that on March 9, the SP of Laxmipur went to Bashkipur Dayemnia Siddikul Ulum Madrassah centre and behaved indecently with female examinees in the name of searching white Dakhlil examination was going on.

Some policemen accompanying him also took away valuables from bags of female examinees, the report noted.

As the news spread, local people protested and staged a sit-in near the centre. Police fired six blank shots on orders from the SP but without the order of a magistrate, the BSEHR report added. Magistrate Humayun Kabir refused to give shooting order despite the SP's request, the report said.

Then the SP went to Ram Ratan High School centre at Duttapara and ordered police to search female examinees.

When acting headmaster of the school Ramendu Majumder protested, he was arrested. Majumder was however released later.

Murad filed a report to his office in Dhaka on these incidents. When the information reached the SP, he ordered police to produce Murad before him.

When Murad was brought before the SP, he ordered him to withdraw the report. Murad called his Dhaka office over phone and said that he was sitting in front of the SP who was insisting not to publish the report.

At this, the SP became furious and ordered police to arrest Murad and lodge a case against him under the PSA, the BSEHR report said.

A Biman source said that the aircraft took off usually but returned after the pilot detected problems in its hydraulic system.

It was towed to the hangar. After necessary check and servicing, the aircraft left for Calcutta in the evening, the Biman sources added.

## Flight aborted after take-off

By Special Correspondent

A Bangladesh Biman F-28 aircraft had to abort its flight to Chittagong after take-off yesterday afternoon when it developed trouble in its hydraulic system, aviation sources reported.

A Biman source said that the aircraft took off usually but returned after the pilot detected problems in its hydraulic system.

It was towed to the hangar. After necessary check and servicing, the aircraft left for Calcutta in the evening, the Biman sources added.

## Dacoity at a city house

By Staff Correspondent

Dacoits took away gold ornaments, money in cash and other valuables from a residence at Block B in the city's Pallabi area yesterday.

Police said a gang of 12 dacoits entered the house of Abul Hossain and tied up the members of the family at gunpoint. The gang broke open the almirah and took away 75 tolas of gold. Tk 72 thousand in cash, share certificates worth Tk one lakh and a mobile phone set.

The dacoits entered the first and second floor of the residence of Abul Hossain. Chairman of Unofil Textile Mills at Narsingdi at around noon.

A case was filed with Pallabi police station in this connection, but none was arrested till filing of this report last night.

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