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Down to Earth

Booming Residential Hotels in City

By A S M Nurunnabi

The growing metropolitan life has lately assumed new dimensions in some spheres which were previously never thought of before. The spurt in development activities which has been taking place particularly since independence has introduced new concepts in urban living. For example, we may note the disintegration of joint family system in our urban society giving place to nucleus family consisting of husband, wife and children only. The concept of community living has acquired new ramifications with the inception of living in flats/apartments either in government-owned residential complex or under private enterprise.

The concept of residential hotels operating on a comparatively larger scale in the city is a recent phenomenon. This is mainly due to the steady surge of city population in recent times. Previously there was a limited number of residential hotels in the city to cater to the demands which were not so large at those times. The situation has now completely changed with the manifold increase in the number of new arrivals in the city, many of whom look for temporary accommodation during their stay here for various purposes. This has given rise to the existence of many residential hotels in the city.

According to Dhaka City Corporation sources, the number of licensed residential hotels in the city is about three hundred fifty, but the number of the unapproved ones is said to exceed one thousand. These hotels are mainly of three types: hotels with low standard, medium standard and a fairly tolerable standard.

The low-standard hotels are mainly located near bus termi-

nals, railway station and wholesale market areas. The room rate is said to be low in such hotels: one can get a small room (without toilet facility) for only taka 50/60 per night. Such low-standard hotels are mainly located in Kamalapur, Jatrabari, Saidabad, Fakirapool, Sadarghat, Islampur, Gulistan and Wabapur areas. The boarders of these hotels mainly consist of transport drivers, small traders, applicants for foreign jobs, and new arrivals of youths with low education and small means from outside looking for job opportunities. The over-all environment in such hotels is said to be extremely squalid dingy and bad smelling ones with cramped living space. The beds, pillows and quilts (made available in winter) are all old, shabby and filled with bugs.

The hotels of medium standard fetch a higher rent ranging generally from Taka two hundred to taka five hundred per day. These hotels are located at Motijheel, Rajarbagh, Malibagh, Topkhana Road, Bijoy-nagar, Mohakhali and Farm Gate areas. But the service offered by these hotels is said to be not commensurate with the amount of rent realised from their boarders. Though mostly middle class people with a modicum of good taste form the bulk of their clients, some such hotels have a large number of boarders who are professional 'dalals' for arranging passports, jobs abroad through recruiting agencies and getting some pending work done at government offices. In some of these hotels, there is a limited number of semi-permanent boarders who stay for months together, as the arrangements there suit them well. They are either well-off businessmen,

contractors, professional 'tabdir' -mangers with links with concerned quarters.

It has been observed that most of the medium standard hotels remain occupied to the full almost all the time. The low-standard hotels generally do not enjoy this advantage, but they reportedly make up their deficiency in custom by being parties to various illegal activities, such as gold and drug smuggling, sex trade, etc. They form a constant headache for the law-enforcing agencies.

There are some good hotels in the city which charge a high tariff. They have all good locations. Evidently, their environment, food and service facilities are better, although from time to time we hear reports of drug and gold smugglers operating from their bases at these hotels. On this account, keeping vigilance on such establishments by the intelligence operatives is a normal function of the law-enforcing agencies.

There are only a few top class hotels in the city deserving graduation on the basis of their standard of accommodation, cuisine and service facilities, as per time-honoured yardsticks in marking them as 2, 3 or 4 stars. More of such hotels are being planned to encourage foreign tourism.

Observers feel that all the unapproved hotels with poor standard need be brought under the control of the City Corporation which should enforce fulfilment of the minimum standard requirement for residential hotels. At the same time, due vigilance need be exercised by law-enforcing agencies for curbing illegal activities from any source in the hotels. For a healthy growth of hotel industry in the city, such requirements seem to be a must.

300 activists of Khulna city BNP resign

From Staff Correspondent KHULNA, May 26: Three hundred activists of city BNP from Ward No. 21 resigned en masse today.

They have stated in their resignation letter that the party is yet to expel Ershad Shikder who has already been awarded death sentence in three murder cases.

Ershad Shikder joined BNP in 1991 and switched to Awami League in 1998. But the party has not yet expelled him for joining Awami League.

We can not remain in the party with a professional killer like Shikder and therefore tender our resignation in protest against highhandedness of city BNP secretary Nazrul Islam Manju who is buying time to take action against the top terrorist, the activists further stated in their letter addressed to M Nurul Islam, president of party's city committee.

"We have full confidence in the leadership of Khaleda Zia, but no faith in the present leadership of Khulna city BNP," the activists said.

3 electrocuted in Feni

From Our Correspondent FENI, May 26: Three people were electrocuted at village Alampur in Daganbulyan upazila of the district at about 3 pm today.

The victims Rustam, 25, and Giasuddin, 20, Russel, 20, came in contact with a live electric wire snapped during the storm on Thursday night while they were returning home from Daganbulyan.

Another person, identified as Abul Hossain, 30, of the same village was also injured in the mishap and taken to hospital.

Local people alleged that PDB employees did not repair the torn wire despite repeated request. They blamed the PDB men for the tragedy.

Housewife murdered in city

By Staff Correspondent A pregnant housewife was strangled allegedly by her husband at their residence at East Goran in the city in the small hours of yesterday.

The dead was identified as Aklima Begum, 19, wife of Jaill Hawlader.

Khligan police said neighbours complained to them after hearing the family members crying. Police went to the spot, recovered the body and sent it to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

After interrogating the family members, police became suspicious and arrested Jaill from the house for his alleged involvement with the killing. Mintu, brother-in-law of the victim, filed a case in this regard.

Windies 60/1

ST. JOHN'S, May 26: Opening batsman Sherwin Campbell led a bold West Indies response, but gave his wicket away prior to lunch against Pakistan on the second day of the third and decisive cricket Test on Thursday here, reports AFP.

Campbell was caught at mid-wicket by Pakistan's first innings centurion Yousuf Youhana for 31 pulling the fifth ball of leg-spin bowler Mushtaq Ahmed's first over as West Indies reached 60 for one at lunch, replying to Pakistan's first innings total of 269 at the Antigua Recreation Ground.

Earlier, fast bowler Courtney Walsh ended the Pakistan innings in the first over of the day by capturing the last two wickets to finish with five wickets for 83 runs off 26 overs and extend his world record wicket taking total.



The DMCH Director Brig. Badrul Munir is shown the demonstration of the newly installed CT scan machine. Patients are expected to receive services at a cheaper price from the DMCH. — Star photo

Rafsanjani withdraws from parliament amid row

TEHRAN, May 26: Former Iranian president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the top conservative vote-getter, withdrew from the new parliament on Thursday, heading off allegations of election fraud that threatened Iran's Islamic system, reports Reuters.

Rafsanjani, a reluctant standard-bearer for the right in the February contest, said in a letter read on state television he had acted for the good of the revolution.

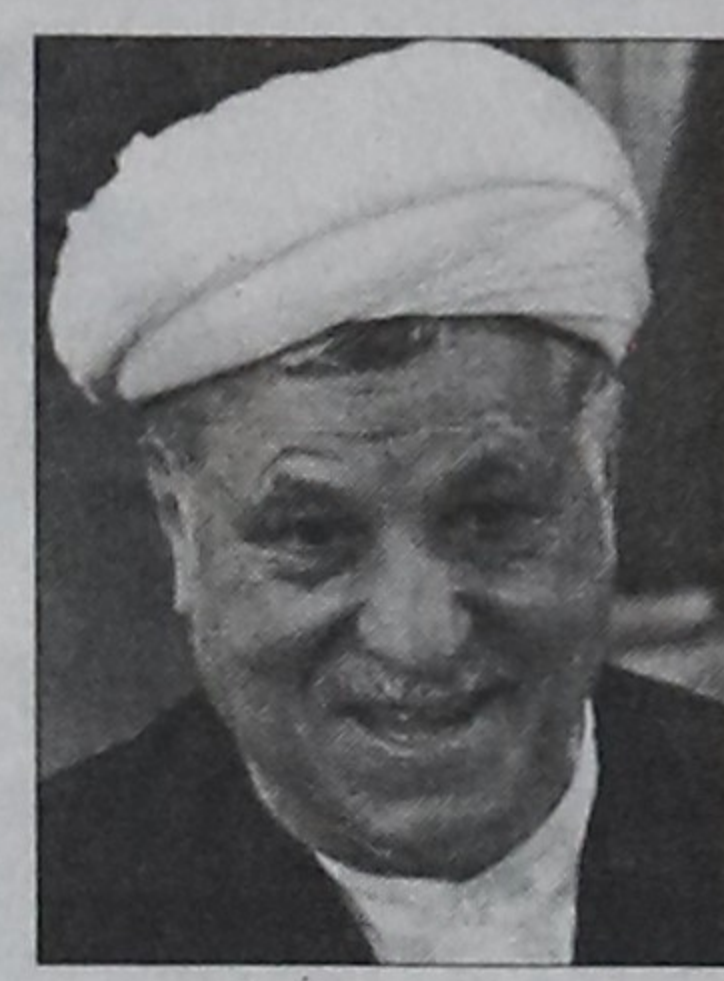
"A heavy dose of adverse and poisonous propaganda by enemies created an ambiguous and doubtful atmosphere and there are still ambiguities (about election results) which could be used by internal and foreign enemies against the system."

"I withdraw with all due respect to those who voted for or against me and forgive those who engaged in propaganda against me."

The resignation, urged on him by some of his closest allies, clears the way for an orderly transition from the conservative-led outgoing parliament to a new legislature dominated by supporters of moderate President Mohammad Khatami.

Conservatives had looked to Rafsanjani, a veteran revolutionary cleric, to mount a strong challenge for the post of speaker of parliament — or at least to rein in the powerful reformist bloc in the legislature, which convenes on Saturday.

But in recent days, Rafsanjani's position had become increasingly untenable, as rival



Rafsanjani

politicians and the public at large questioned official results that showed him taking the 20th to 30 seats from the Tehran constituency.

Preliminary results released right after the vote had the former president just clinging to the last slot, and it was only when the conservative-led Guardian Council annulled 726,000 ballots that he finally strengthened his grip on a seat.

"With all actions taken in favour of Rafsanjani, I do not know how he could be effective (in parliament)," leading reformist Rafsanjani critic, said earlier this week. "With friends like these, Rafsanjani does not need opponents or critics."

Despite his withdrawal, Rafsanjani was sure to remain a powerful presence on the politi-

cal landscape.

He remains the head of the Expediency Council, which has the final say in disputes over new laws between the parliament and the watchdog Guardian Council. And his grip on a powerful network of political patronage appears as sure as ever.

Mystery shrouds death of servant at Kalabagan

By Staff Correspondent Mystery shrouds the death of a domestic help at his employer's house at Lake Circus in the city's Kalabagan area Thursday night.

The dead was identified as Russel, 14, son of Inu Mian.

The landlord, Anisur Rahman, in an FIR lodged with Dhanmondi police station said a gang of dacoits entered his house, between 7:30 and 9:30 pm on Thursday and looted 12 grams of gold ornaments and cash.

The gang also strangled Russel, the FIR said. It was not, however, mentioned why the gang killed the minor boy even after taking away valuables and money.

A 'gamchha' was found fastened around his neck.

Police recovered the body and sent it to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy. Police said a case was filed in this regard and they were waiting for the autopsy report.

Bangladesh a fascinating land: Paolo

By Special Correspondent Italian adventurer Paolo Brovalli finds Bangladesh a fascinating land just as legendary Marco Polo from the same country had found in the 14th century.

"After journeying through dry and rough terrains and one of the most treacherous deserts and high Tibetan plateau, I find rains in Bangladesh quite fascinating", Paolo said.

Paolo and his wife were at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday to narrate their experience about Bangladesh.

"We were awed by the natural beauty at Kuakata beach (in Barisal)", he said. "The beauty of the vast expanse of rivers on way to the Bay of Bengal is simply charming". They had a trip aboard the Rocket steamer and travelled up to the tip of the Sundarbans.

"It was a welcome break to be soaked by pre-monsoon rains after trekking the Silk route through some of the treacherous trails, deserts and high mountains like the Karakoram and the Tibetan plateau".

The 31-year-old explorer and his friend Martino, 37, an architect, had started their journey from Cabo de Rock in Portugal on April 1998 in a Piaggio APE three wheeler, sometimes using a 50cc scooter. Paolo is associated with Milan University.

They travelled through 19

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First batch of Bangladesh army leaves for Sierra Leone today

The first batch of Bangladesh troops is expected to leave for Sierra Leone today, official sources told BSS last night.

The first contingent of 150 persons including officers will be carried by a UN chartered aircraft.

Bangladesh in response to a request from the United Nations has committed to send troops to restore peace in Sierra Leone.

A total of 780 army personnel, including four Staff Officers, have been selected for the UNAMSIL operation. The sources said, adding the rest will go within next few days as per flight schedule.

Led by Colonel Mohammad Anisur Rahman, Commander of the Infantry Battalion will carry 24 APC (Armoured Personnel Carrier) and all equipment and vehicles required for the battalion.

Dhaka to issue 5-year multiple visa to US investors

WASHINGTON, May 26: The Bangladesh government has decided to issue five-year multiple visa for the US investors and tourists to facilitate their stay in the country, reports BSS.

Home Minister Mohammad Nasim, during a visit to the new Bangladesh chancery building here on Wednesday, gave directive to the foreign minister in this regard when it was brought to his notice that the US investors and tourists face problems getting a visa extension here.

The Ministry of Home has already implemented the minister's directive, officials said.

Talking to BSS yesterday, Home and Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim said the decision of issuing five-year multiple visa was taken to attract more investors and tourists from the United States and ensure their trouble-free stay in Bangladesh.

Gen Musharraf tells Pickering Pakistan 'sincerely' wants dialogue with India

ISLAMABAD, May 26: Pakistan told US Undersecretary of State Thomas Pickering today it sincerely wanted a dialogue with India, and urged Washington to persuade New Delhi to accept the offer, reports AFP.

Pickering, the third-highest ranking US diplomat, met Pakistani military ruler General Pervez Musharraf after a round of talks with Inamul Haq, Pakistan's most senior foreign affairs bureaucrat.

During the meeting Musharraf "emphasized the centrality of the Kashmir dispute to peace and security in South Asia," a Pakistani official statement said.

"The US should prevail upon India to agree to Pakistan's sincere effort on a dialogue to resolve all outstanding problems, particularly the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir," it quoted Musharraf as telling the US official.

Pickering said in New Delhi on Thursday that Pakistan should take "positive steps" to resume talks with India.

No comment was available from US officials on the talks held by Pickering, who is scheduled to meet Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar tomorrow.

The Pakistani statement said Pickering expressed the hope that all outstanding problems between Pakistan and India, particularly Kashmir, would be settled through dialogue in accordance with the wishes of the Kashmiri people.

Pickering appreciated Musharraf's commitment to restore genuine democracy within three years in accordance with the recent verdict of the Pakistani Supreme Court, the statement said.

The US official had been told Pakistan had repeatedly offered a "result-oriented dialogue with

India which the latter had spurned," it added.

Pakistan assured the US official its nuclear policy was based on "restraint and responsibility" and that it was "committed to not exporting nuclear technology to any other country or entity."

One injured while placing signboard

By Staff Correspondent Abdur Rahim, 25, manager of a neon sign company, was injured while trying to place a sign board of The Daily Star yesterday.

He was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital at about 4:00 pm and then shifted to a local clinic in the city, said company sources.

His condition was improving at the time of writing this report last night.



Plastic hands provide a multi-coloured display as volunteers plant 120,000 of them on the lawn of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney yesterday. The hands symbolise non-indigenous support for Aboriginal native title and reconciliation. Corroboree 2000 beginning today is a celebration of reconciliation and will include a People's Walk tomorrow, when 100,000 supporters are expected to walk across the Sydney Harbour Bridge. —AFP photo



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