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### Down to Earth

## Increasing Shopping Malls in the City

By A S M Nurunnabi

Lately we have been observing a high tide of advertisements in print media inviting bookings for space in a good number of shopping malls either under construction or at planning stage. Judging from the prominence of such advertisements given in newspapers, it seems that shopping malls have become a craze in metropolitan life.

Some of these advertisements introduce exotic features in their projects, such as theme park, fitness centre, food court, multi-screen cinema, etc. Some of these projects also called commercial complexes are meant for catering to requirements of professionals like doctors, engineers, architects, dentists, Internet operators, and other business executives.

It is apparent that the real estate developers in the city have been taking advantage of the current trend of building multi-storied shopping malls. These shopping complexes with modern facilities enable customers to find all their requirements in one place. The early trend setters in modern shopping facilities were the Eastern Plaza at Hatipool and the Century Arcade at Maghbazar, where escalators and central air-conditioning facilities were first introduced.

The shopping areas of the city are already under heavy strain owing to paucity of adequate parking space. When the large number of new shopping malls start functioning on completion, parking space, if not already provided for in the approved plans, may create added problem. It is learnt that owners of many commercial structures who got their building plans approved with adequate parking provisions, did not comply with the requirement except for a few. The existing shopping arcades of the city have grown haphazardly over the last two decades. The number of shoppers and their vehicles have already registered a phenomenal rise contributing

to acute traffic jams in and around the shopping malls. On completion of the projected shopping malls, the traffic chaos may further worsen even if such projects make some provisions for parking within their premises, the facilities are likely to be limited.

What are the main reasons for the present trend of fast growing sophisticated shopping malls? The big investments that are made in building up these facilities may have come from various sources, such as bank loans, advances made by parties interested in allotment of commercial space in prime locations, remittances from abroad from parties interested in lucrative investments either as owners or partners. Some quarters also allege diversion of black money into such projects.

According to some observers, the earlier boom in building high-rise apartment blocks has given place to the current trend of building extravagant shopping complexes in all important areas of the city, such as Dhanmondi, Elephant Road, Mohakhali, besides posh areas like Gulshan, Banani, Baridhara, Uttara, etc.

The concept of lavish shopping malls are said to arise from open market economic policies and the wider horizon in commercial fields made possible in the present satellite age. The shopping malls existing in western cities and also in eastern cities like Tokyo, Singapore, Bangkok, Manila serve as models in our city.

The important question is remains, how far these high-profile shopping establishments are viable in the present state of our economy. Of course, the consumer psychology is found to be changing significantly. This change has been mainly brought about by an enrichment in quality wide range of varied consumer products, both imported and indigenous. In the garments sector, in particular, progress has been reported to be so significant that our gar-

ments have been enjoying wide market in the United States, for example.

As for the price structure of local products, it is generally felt that they carry different price tags at different establishments. It is obvious that customers at shops in posh areas and also at the high-profile establishments in other important areas belong, in general, to a stratum of society with considerable financial clout. To them, any differences in price, even on the high side, may not matter much. But it is a reality that there are many other customers not accustomed to free-style spending of the financially affluent. Yet they are eager to get the right quality products at the right price, and might feel confused about their selection in the face of such price differences.

A large number of smaller shops exist in the city where price levels of goods, even those imported, are not so distinctly different. In all big city areas of the world, such as, for example, in Ginza area of Tokyo, Oxford Circus area of London or Fifth Avenue of New York, high price levels rule in selected shopping localities. In Dhaka also, there are some exclusive areas of this nature, such as Elephant Road, where higher prices of commodities rule. In juxtaposition, we may cite Banga Bazar as a place where the price position may seem downright convenient, provided one is equipped with proper bargaining ability.

Economists wonder whether the present spurt in the growth of shopping malls in the city has any rationale linked to the strength of the economy of the country. Leaving aside this debatable issue, the present reality is that the shopping malls of the city are opening up a specific trend in the real estate sector of the country, as much as they are reflections of inexorable modernisation of the country.



Bangladesh College-University Teachers Association brought out a procession in the city yesterday demanding 100 per cent salary from public exchequer.

## A dozen ministers

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turned the going tough for him. The silent challenge from the widow has forced Amu to move from door to door, backed by the entire party machinery. Even his wife, other family members and relatives are involved in the campaign.

About 100 vehicles, scores of motor bikes and boats are carrying the campaigners to remote areas of the constituency for the last two weeks in this full moon.

As the campaigners and many others concerned with the election arrived in this small town with the Election Commission preparing in full gear for the July 31 polls, accommodation has become a problem. Hotels and boardings are packed.

The district administration has requisitioned schools and madrasahs to accommodate the poll officials and law keepers.

Elen Bhutto is making a low profile campaign with his kins, visiting houses to knock sympathy votes.

She has so far made 16 complaints of violation of election rules by her rival, Amu also lodged three complaints against her.

The Election Commission has warned the minister to stick to rules, which also prompted him to shun official protocol.

But the visits of the ministers continued. DC of Jhalakati Bimal Kumar Kundu told The Daily Star he is not providing any protocol to the visitors. "Even the ministers are not getting any protocol," he said, dismissing allegations that police escort was provided during campaigning by Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad yesterday.

Two burnt alive at ship breaking yard in Sitakunda

From Staff Correspondent CHITTAGONG, July 28: Two workers at Sitakunda ship breaking yard were roasted alive when a fire broke out at the time of scrapping an old ship last night, police said.

The dead were identified as Shah Alam, 27, and Abdul Mannan, 28, police said.

The accident occurred at Sitalpur ship breaking yard, owned by Shawkat Ali at around 11 pm, police said.

In another accident at Sitakunda ship breaking yard on May 31, at least 12 workers were killed and many others injured.

## Non-govt school teachers to go on strike from Aug 5

The teachers and employees of non-government secondary schools will begin an indefinite strike from August 5 to press home their five-point demand, reports UNB.

The strike programme was announced from a meeting of the central executive council of Bangladesh Teachers' Association (BTA) held at Sena Kalyan auditorium here yesterday with Principal Quamruzzaman in the chair.

However, the strike programme would be put off on August 14-16 for paying respect to the memory of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The demands include 100 per cent salary from public exchequer and house rent, festival bonus and other allowances like government teachers and employees.

Hena Das, Chowdhury Kurshid Alam, Awal Siddiqui, Abdul Halim, Mia Matiar Rahman, Kamal Hasan and Joyal Abedin, among others, addressed the meeting.

Meanwhile, a meeting of Bangladesh Federation of Teachers' Association (BFTA) will be held tomorrow at 10:00 am at Abuzor Gifari College to decide next course of action programme, said a press release.

Leaders of Bangladesh Teachers Association, Bangladesh College Teachers Association and Bangladesh Educational Institutes Employees Union Council, a platform of non-government school, college and madrasah employees will attend the meeting.

Teachers and employees of non-government educational institutions went on strike for an indefinite period from July 10 to press home their demand for 100 per cent salary from government exchequer, promotion and service condition.

## Launch mishap: No body found Reckless race of vessels, authorities' indifference make journey risky

Star Report

Indiscriminate movement of small launches, trawlers and engine boats and reckless race among long-route vessels on the Buriganga river by the city make passengers' life risky.

Besides, there is the authorities' indifference to controlling the recklessness movement of vessels.

This was observed during a five-hour visit to Fatulla launch terminal yesterday by this correspondent.

Taking the risk of collision, a large number of small launches plying in short routes, engine boats, trawlers and country boats move indiscriminately on the river near the launch terminal.

Many engine boats and country boats were seen hitting each other, with passengers screaming out of fear. Sometimes, boats narrowly escape collision with launches or trawlers.

About seven people were killed when an engine boat carrying a bridal party was hit by a sand loaded trawler near the terminal last year, local people and police said.

Whenever a big launch crosses, smaller ones and boats take risky turns to escape, sometimes hitting others.

At least 20 people are feared missing after two big launches hit a small launch - MV Ashique - near the terminal Thursday morning. The incident took place soon after the small launch left the terminal and started for Dohar with about 100 passengers.

Movement of small vessels and boats is very risky between the terminal and the river's meander at the south as speeding big launches appear there suddenly, often without blaring horn, boatmen and local people at Fatullah boat ghat said.

MV Ashique was also hit when it took a turn and started moving towards the meander of the river.

When asked, a BIWTA official preferring anonymity admitted that there was no monitoring body to take instant action against reckless racing, which results in serious accidents.

"Whenever we receive any complaint regarding reckless movement of any vessel, we investigate it," he said.

But other sources said BIWTA hardly receives any such complaint unless there is an accident.

Meanwhile, till last night no body was recovered following the capsizing of MV Ashique. Fatullah and Keraniganj police stations said yesterday.

## Dengue in Narsingdi: One dies

NARSINGDI, July 28: Dengue fever claimed one life and attacked four others in the district in last two days, reports UNB.

Identity of the dead could not be known immediately. Physicians here said the patient died in Dhaka on Thursday.

Two of the patients afflicted with dengue fever are MBBS doctors. They are undergoing treatment in Dhaka.

Another was identified as Rima, 13, a class-nine student of Brahmanadi Girls' High School. She is in critical condition in Dhaka Medical College Hospital," family source here said.

## Liaison body

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dence of ruling party MP Mohibur Rahman Manik in Sunamganj unleashing threat and announcing national leaders persona non-grata at Narayaniganj by the local ruling party MP, the liaison committee should think of such incidents before bringing terrorism charges against the opposition.

Terrorists of her own party are not being arrested even after directive given by the Prime Minister. The Home Minister told about curbing terrorism from a meeting presided over by the accused of a murder case," it said.

About her observations regarding granting bail by courts, they said her speech against the judiciary and lawyers were not only contrary to independence of the judiciary, democracy and the rule of law but also provocative against judges and lawyers.

On ban of Jamaat politics, the statement said Prime Minister's comment against a legal and established party goes against the Constitution.

"In democracy there is no scope for banning a political party," the liaison committee said.

## One killed, 3 hurt as AL factions clash in Sandwip

CHITTAGONG, July 28: One person was killed and three others were injured in a gunfight between two factions of ruling party at Kalapania village in Sandwip today, reports UNB.

The dead was identified as Sohrab, 20. The three bullet-hit victims were rushed to local hospital.

Sources said the clash ensued between supporters of a local MP and Thana Awami League President over establishing supremacy in the area.

## 4 BSF men, 8 rebels killed in Kashmir

JAMMU, July 28: Four Border Security Force (BSF) personnel and three top Harkat-ul-Jihad militants were killed in an encounter at Dharamshala area of Rajouri district late last night, official sources said here today, reports PTI.

Five militants and a villager were killed in separate clashes in Rajouri, Kathua and Poonch districts since last night, the sources added.

The sources said an encounter took place when BSF troops launched a search operation in Mathyan village of Dharamshala area of Rajouri district late last night.

In the encounter, which lasted over two hours, two BSF jawans died in militants' firing and three others were injured. BSF also gunned down three Harkat-ul-Jihad militants, the sources said.

Two of the three injured jawans later died in hospital and one was still battling for life, the sources said.

Troops recovered three AK rifles, one rocket launcher, two pistols, seven mines, four pencil bombs and nine grenades, the sources added.

In another encounter between militants and BSF at Kuthiyala forest belt in Rajouri district, two militants were killed on the spot last night, the sources said.

## Former UP member shot dead in Pirojpur

PIROJPUR, July 28: Armed terrorists gunned down a former UP member and injured two others at Shingkhali village in Bhandaria upazila early today, reports UNB.

The dead was identified as Ashutosh Mridha, 70.

Police said the gang, numbering about 15, entered the house of Ashutosh, a former member of Shingkhali UP, and shot him.

The terrorists also chopped Ashutosh's son Babul and grandson Shishir while they tried to resist them.

Police suspected that the killing might be a sequel to previous enmity. A case was filed with police.

## 6 alleged dacoits caught by villagers at Nandaail

MYMENSINGH, July 28: Villagers caught six alleged dacoits along with a microbus from Nandaail and handed them over to police on Thursday night, reports, UNB.

Police said the dacoits in disguise of passengers picked up some passengers in their microbus from Nandaail and snatched their passengers cash and valuables at Nandaail on way to Kishoreganj.

As the passengers cried for help, villagers halted the microbus and caught the dacoits - Hanif, 25, Habibur, 24, Selim, 25, Sapon, 24, Kabir, 23, and Harun, 26 - at about 9 pm.

The group earlier picked up some people from Zia International Airport in Dhaka Thursday afternoon and looted their cash and valuables in a similar way on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway.

## 100 hurt: Police, band show audience clash in Khulna

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, July 28: At least 100 people were injured, nine of them seriously, in a clash between police and audience of a band show on Khulna University campus last night.

The seriously injured were admitted to KMCH.

The band show was arranged marking Rag Day of final year students of all disciplines of the varsity.

James was the main attraction of the open concert where at least five thousand students and outsiders including women were present. James was escorted to safer place by security personnel. But few men of his 'Nagar Baul' band party were among the injured, witnesses said.

Police charged batons, fired several tear gas shells and 23 rounds of blank shots to bring the situation under control, said witnesses and police.

Police said the clash took place when some unruly outsiders pelted brick chips at some girl students of the university just at the time when James started his show.

The clash followed by bomb blasts and blank shots lasted over two hours.

A reliable source at KU said police came under attack by angry students for refusing to tackle the eve teasers who were all outsiders.

Police denied this charge saying that they were not allowed to get into the campus by students for maintaining law and order during the band show.

Strong contingents of riot police have been deployed in and around the varsity.



## Prof Rokeya Kabeer dead

Professor Rokeya Rahman Kabeer, wife of late Feroze Kabeer, died yesterday at 1.30 pm at the Gonoshasthaya Nagar Hospital in the city. She was 75, says a press release.

Professor Kabeer, a leading figure of the progressive movement in the country and dedicated social worker, taught history at Eden College during the 50s and 60s. She founded Saptagram Nari Swanirvar Parishad, a women's development organisation.

She is survived by her only daughter Dr. Nuala Kabeer.

She will be buried after the arrival of her daughter and her brother from abroad.

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The accident occurred at Sitalpur ship breaking yard, owned by Shawkat Ali at around 11 pm, police said.

In another accident at Sitakunda ship breaking yard on May 31, at least 12 workers were killed and many others injured.

## Dengue: 29 more admitted to city clinics, hospitals

By Staff Correspondent

Twenty-nine more people with dengue fever were admitted to different hospitals and clinics in the city yesterday.

According to officials, Dhaka Medical College Hospital admitted 14 patients with dengue fever yesterday while Dhaka Shishu Hospital five.

The Red Crescent Holy Family Hospital reported admitting two patients with dengue fever while BIRDEM reported two new cases.

Bangladesh Medical College Hospital admitted one while Samarita Hospital four.

Official at the health directorate control room, however, regretted that he was unable to provide any information as the government hospitals remained closed due to weekly holiday yesterday.

## US, DPRK hold talks to end hostility

BANGKOK, July 28: The United States and North Korea held their highest-level talks in a half-century of hostility today, signalling an important step in opening up one of the world's most isolated countries, reports AP.

US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright warned to the North Korean foreign minister and held out hope that their meeting in Bangkok could pave the way for a more secure Asia and more normal ties with the United States.

But Albright told reporters that she learned little from Paek Nam Sun about the communist country's reported intentions to curb its ominous missile programme, a major topic at an Asian security forum this week.

"My meeting with Foreign Minister Paek constitutes a substantively modest but symbolically historic step away from the sterility and hostility of the past," Albright said. The meeting ran nearly an hour over the allotted 20 minutes.

Paek gave Albright no details of an offer, made recently by North Korean leader Kim Jong

## Dengue infection BRCS to arrange treatment for poor patients

By staff correspondent Bangladesh Red Crescent Society has made arrangements for treatment of dengue patients, particularly poor ones, at Holy Family Hospital in the city.

A separate ward will be opened soon at the hospital for poor dengue patients, a press release said yesterday.

Special arrangement has been made to keep the Moham-madpur blood centre of BRCS open round the clock for supply of blood platelet for dengue patients, the press release said.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Scouts has mobilized its full strength to create public awareness about causes of dengue infection, preventive measures and treatment of the disease.

Boy Scouts and Rover Scouts have started a door to door campaign and distribution of leaflets and posters containing information on dengue infection.

Teachers of different schools in the city and Scout leaders held a meeting on July 26 to discuss the situation and take preventive measures.

## Clinton warns Palestinians Unilateral independence move will be a big mistake

JERUSALEM, July 28: President Bill Clinton says the Palestinians will be making a "big mistake" if they declare independence unilaterally as they have threatened to do, reports AP.

Clinton spoke in an interview with Israel television, to be broadcast later today. Excerpts were broadcast on Israel radio.

"I think it would be a big mistake to take a unilateral action and walk away from the peace process, and if it happens there will inevitably be consequences not just here but throughout the world," Clinton said, when asked directly about the Palestinian threat of declaring independence unilaterally. "I mean, things will happen."

Arafat and others have said that the Palestinians are ready to declare a state on Sept. 13, the deadline for a final peace accord, if no deal is reached by then.

However, in a joint statement at the end of Camp David, the Israelis and Palestinians said they recognised the importance of "avoiding unilateral actions that prejudice the outcome of negotiations." And since Arafat's return, he has not directly answered questions about the Sept. 13 deadline.

In the excerpts, Clinton did not say explicitly whether he would support an initiative in Congress, supported by his wife, Hillary Rodham Clinton, to cut off aid to the Palestinians if they make the unilateral declaration.

Israel has said that if the Palestinians declare independence unilaterally it will have grave consequences for the peace process and that Israel might also take action, such as annexing territory or extending Israeli law to the strategic Jordan Valley.

Clinton also said that if Israel and the Palestinians achieve a peace treaty, he will try to persuade Congress to grant Israel "the maximum amount of (financial) support" for its security needs and other costs arising out of the Israeli handover of territories to the Palestinians.

"If there is an agreement Israel will have further security needs," he said. "There will be human costs involved."

He said there will also have to be an international fund to rehabilitate or compensate the Palestinian refugees.

Clinton also disclosed that at the Camp David summit, the Palestinians supported Israeli demands for compensation for Jews who had to flee from Arab countries as a result of the Arab-Israeli war in 1948.

"Israel is full of people, Jewish people, who lived in other, in Arab, nominally Arab countries," he said. "The Palestinians said they thought those people should be eligible for compensation as well."

At a news conference today, Palestinian spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi said the Sept. 13 deadline for declaring statehood was "not etched in stone."

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**Mufti Hannan**  
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and different airports and entry points including Zia International Airport and Benapole Checkpost.

Police believe that Hannan, a regional leader of the fundamentalist Harkatul Jihad party, masterminded the planting of bombs near the meeting venue of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at Kotallipara in Gopalganj district on July 22.

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## Nilkhet exchange phones being made digital

By Staff Correspondent

Analogous telephones from '500000' to '505000' and '505900' to '509000' under Nilkhet Exchange in the city are being converted into digital phones free of charge, said a press release.

The subscribers have been advised to contact assistant divisional engineer on telephone numbers: 8611001-2 for further information. Subscribers are being informed in advance about their future phone numbers, the press release added.