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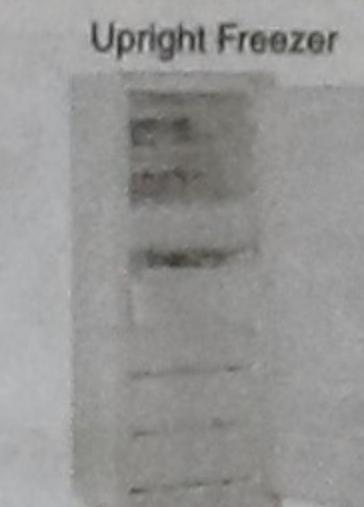
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Down to Earth**Contrasting life at Kamrangir Char and Savar**

By A S M Nurunnabi

The Kamrangir Char is a city enclave with multifaceted character. The enclave has steadily grown over the years with diverse population. It is now home to five to six lakh people mainly of low-income groups comprising day labourers, rickshaw pullers, garment workers, small traders, and a sundry group of men engaged in other minor professions. A makeshift bridge connects the char to the mainland. Besides, other char dwellers commute between the char and the city by a good number of ferry boats. As the char is located near the heart of the city, it exerts a strong pull on poor sections of people.

Concomitant with the rise in the price of land in the city, the land price in the char area is also reported to have escalated substantially. A katha of land on the char now sells at prices varying from one and a half lakh to three lakh. Many houses on the char are kutcha structures with tin roofs and brick walls. Some of the low-rent kutcha structures providing shelter to day labourers, boatmen, and other lower income groups are built on wooden poles sunk in the char bed. In this big expanse of land, there are schools, madrassahs and even a police outpost.

Local people say they experience no difficulty in commuting to the mainland because of easy availability of small boats till late at night. At the crack of dawn, thousands of people use the makeshift bridge and the many ferry boats to come to the city for work.

There are, of course, allega-

tions that some anti-social elements use the char as their hideouts indulging in various criminal activities including large-scale drug trafficking. The establishment of the police outpost serves to control law and order situation in the area.

The Kamrangir Char is a growing suburb with rising business activities of various kinds including small-scale cottage industries. It was understood that gas pipelines have already been laid in the area and gas supply is expected soon. The unplanned growth of the char area however requires that planned civic amenities be provided in the interest of the char dwellers.

In contrast, life in the suburban Savar has been greatly progressing. The favourable factors helping such progress include the availability of high land, particularly in the western part of the area, easy access to electricity, gas and water supply, satisfactory road communications all contributing to a steady growth in density of population, and quickening the process of urbanisation. This has also led to a spurt in construction of houses, though mostly unplanned, and setting up of new mills, factories and other industries. The development of the area got a boost with the establishment of Jahangirnagar University, the National Memorial for martyrs, the Savar Cantonment and dairy farm. With the construction of new buildings for government and non-government organisations, high-rise shopping centres are also

coming up. All these activities help bring new arrivals to the char.

The manifold activities have already turned the suburb into a small town. The location of the Tongi-Ashulia Road providing easy access to the natural beauty of Ashulia with its promise as a recreational spot has added to the importance of the place as a city suburb. This has created an impetus for sales of housing plots on a large scale by various real estate agencies in the private sector. This has set a trend for attracting people from the Dhaka city and outside with suburban lands.

The on-going building spree in the suburb has been creating problems though. Many of the houses in that place have been built without proper approval from the pourashava or the RAJUK. The roadside spaces beside the Dhaka-Aricha highway have already become victims of encroachment in some areas by hawkers. Some of the new industries that have come up at that place are said to be causing environmental pollution by spilling their toxic wastes into nearby water bodies. The pollution of Karna Parkhal is said to be such a case.

A city suburb with such a high potential for growth needs to be developed along well-planned lines so that it may play a useful part in diverting some load from the heavily congested Dhaka city. In this context, similar diversion to other city suburbs has assumed great urgency to ease population pressure on the metropolis.

Dhaka condemns attacks on Palestinians

Bangladesh has strongly condemned the Israeli attacks on the unarmed and innocent civilians of Palestine, reports UNB.

A Foreign Ministry release yesterday said Bangladesh is deeply dismayed that the residence of Yasser Arafat was also attacked.

Israeli forces launched rocket attacks on the Palestinians at Ramallah and Gaza Strip on Thursday following killing of two Israeli soldiers.

The press release said these dastardly attacks are reprehensible and must be stopped forthwith.

Bangladesh urges the international community to do all in its power to put the peace process back on the track immediately.

Bangladesh once again reaffirms its total support to the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to establish an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital.

Many other items like corticosteroid eye drop, skin ointments, dialy-

sis fluid, folic acid, plasma substitute, glycerin suppository, tincture iodine and sulphadiazine, produced by them are often found to be iodine and sulphadiazine, produced by them are often found to be

spurious and sub-standard, they said.

Rural areas are good markets for such drugs", an official of the Samity said.

They are continuing their illegal business with the help of a section of doctors and DA officials.

The companies invest huge amounts of money on doctors for prescribing their products. Besides cash amount, they offer even residential apartments and household goods to doctors", he said.

Sources in DA said 10 to 15 per cent of drug samples tested at its two laboratories are found to be sub-standard or spurious.

About three years ago, factories of a number of small companies in Barisal and Dhaka divisions were "raided" by DA supervisors. That was all. Nothing happened to them", a source in DA said.

"These unscrupulous companies do not use raw materials in correct proportions and violate

By Naimul Haq

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Spurious and sub-standard drugs flood market

Spurious and sub-standard drugs have flooded markets and their production in the country is rising alarmingly with the Drug Adminstration virtually taking no step in this regard.

At least 20 small pharmaceutical companies are producing such drugs within the knowledge of the DA authorities, sources in the Ban-

gladesh Aushad Shilpa Samity claimed.

Ten of the companies were "blacklisted" by the DA in 1998-99 but those continued producing such drugs as there was no follow-up action.

Use of such drugs is causing a serious health hazard and even death to patients, they said.

Sources in DA said they have a list of such drugs and their produc-

ers. But for mysterious reasons, neither the list is disclosed nor any action is being taken against the companies.

The spurious and sub-standard drugs produced by these compa-

nies include analgesic, aspirin, vitamins, cough syrup, glucose, saline, ferrous and sodium sulphate, furosemide, prednisolone, diazepam tablets and dextrose fluid, the Samity sources claimed.

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Review meet on WB environment strategy this week

Government, private sector, civil society, NGOs, donors and development agencies from across the country will meet this week to review the World Bank's environmental strategy, reports UNB.

The three-day consultation aims to initiate a dialogue among participants on the region's major environmental issues.

Discussions will cover the key development challenges relating to pollution and natural resources management, stressing the need for mainstreaming environmental concerns into sector policies and programmes and coordinating with sub-national governments and civil society partners.

The new strategy is designed to align the Bank's environmental work with its central mission of poverty alleviation either through environmental interventions intended to directly benefit the poor, or through changes in governance and public policies that will foster sustainable economic development.

The WB has set three key objectives for the environment strategy: These are: Improve people's health by reducing their exposure to environmental factors such as indoor and urban air pollution, water-borne and vector-borne disease and toxic substances; enhance the livelihoods of people by helping to sustainably manage natural resources - land, water, forests and bio-diversity; and reducing people's vulnerability to environmental risks such as natural disasters, severe weather fluctuations and the impacts of climate change.

Snatchers throw acid on trader at Rajshahi: Two arrested

From Our Correspondent RAJSHAHI, Oct 13: A group of snatchers threw acid on a businessman and took away Tk 3.5 lakh from him at Rajshahi Bus Terminal last night.

People caught two of the snatchers, beat them mercilessly and later handed over them to the police.

Police and witnesses said rice trader Sebana and a Roy Ramprasad alias Biswanath, 40, of Hafrasthmore area in Natore collected taka 3.5 lakh from his customers at Shahab Bazar in the city and went to the Bus Terminal at around 7 pm.

Suddenly a gang of five attacked him and tried to snatch his money. Failing to do it, they threw acid on Biswanath and took away his money.

As Biswanath tried for help people chased the snatchers and caught two of them. They were identified as Shaikh Mohammad and Tajul Islam alias Tarzan.

Biswanath was admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

A case was filed with Boalia thana in this connection.

Part of mugged money recovered

By Staff Correspondent Gulshan police have recovered Tk 3.5 lakh out of five lakh mugged from a garments factory official at Rasulbagh in Mahakhal area of the city on Tuesday and arrested two persons in this connection.

The arrested are Abdul Kalam, a listed criminal, and Abdur Rahim, a supervisor at the factory - Bay Pacific Enterprises - police said.

A team of Gulshan police raided a mess in the area on Thursday night and recovered the money. They raid was conducted on the basis of a confessional statement by Kalam who was arrested on Wednesday night.

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Two of the muggers arrested yesterday with part of the money they snatched from an accountant of a garments factory in the city on Tuesday.

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Ratnasiri sworn in as new Lankan PM

COLOMBO, Oct 13: President Chandrika Kumaratunga swore in a new prime minister Friday after her Peoples' Alliance secured enough support to form a new coalition government, reports UNB.

Ratnasiri Wickremayaka, 67, was sworn in at Kumaratunga's heavily guarded residence, capping a tumultuous, five-week campaign marred by vote-rigging, violence and 71 deaths.

Wickremayaka is a hard-liner who believes the government should continue waging war against Tamil Tiger rebels seeking an independent homeland for the country's ethnic minority Tamils. The 17-year civil war has claimed 63,000 lives since 1983.

Kumaratunga, who lost vision in her right eye after a Tamil Tiger suicide bombing on Dec 18, had campaigned on a pledge to restore government stability and end the war with the rebels by offering the minority Tamils greater autonomy through a new constitution. She hopes to win support of moderate Tamils and sideline the rebels.

Wickremayaka sides with the president on the adoption of a new constitution, but believes the new document should better represent the Buddhist and nationalist Sinhalese.



-Star photo

Barak to form 'govt of national emergency' with Sharon's party

and invited his Likud bloc, the country's second largest political force, to join him.

"Barak informed Sharon of the latest political and security developments and invited the Likud to join his government," Barak's office said in a statement, without giving Sharon's response.

The former army chief and Israel's most decorated soldier had said he planned to set up an emergency government in the next three to four days, describing Sharon as "very important" partner in that venture.

AP adds: "Club-owning Israeli police beat back young Palestinians today outside the Jerusalem mosque that has been a flashpoint for clashes, while white leaders urgently appealed for a halt to some of the worst violence in Palestinian areas in decades.

The mediators have sought, without success, to calm two Palestinian men under 45 were turned back on the reasoning that they would be most likely to participate in rioting. Scuffles broke out as police with clubs hit young Palestinian men attempting to enter the mosque compound, and Palestinians threw stones and bottles. At least two Palestinians were injured.