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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, rickshawpullers, 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, madrasahs 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 to buy 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 Karnaparakhal 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 metropolises.

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 the killing of two Israeli soldiers.

The press release said these daring 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.

Opposition's 'grand' rally at Dinajpur today

The four-party opposition alliance will hold a 'grand' public rally at Dinajpur town today at 3 pm as part of their countrywide mass contact programme to drum up support for one-point demand, reports BSS.

BNP Chairperson and leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleida Zia will address the rally as the chief guest. Jatiya Party chief H M Ershad, Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh Ameer Prof Golam Azam and IOJ chief Moulana Azizul Haque will also address the rally.

Sacked Ansars demand reinstatement

A group of Ansars sacked in 1994 have demanded their reinstatement as they have been proved innocent by a court verdict, reports BSS.

They will submit a memorandum to the Home Minister on October 15 in this regard, a press release said.

The sacked members of the Bangladesh Ansar held a rally in the capital yesterday under the banner of Dhaka city unit of Battalion Ansar Service Reinstatement Committee to press home their demands.

Among others, Muhammad Ruhul Amin, Iar Uddin Sardar, Muzammel Haque, Abdur Rob and Shahzahan Gazi addressed the rally, the release said.

Huge quantity of liquor seized in N'ganj

From Our Correspondent
NARAYANGANJ, Oct 13: A special team of the district Detective Branch (DB) recovered a huge quantity of foreign liquor from two underground stores in a house on Sher-e-Bangla road in Masdar at 1:30 p.m. today. Three people including a woman were arrested in this connection.

Earlier, acting on a tip-off, police arrested Ripon (20) from Sher-e-Bangla road on Thursday night and recovered 60 bottles of beer from his possession. According to Ripon's confessional statement, police raided the house of Gul Mohammad today and discovered two basement stores under his bedroom. Police seized 587 cans of beer, 45 bottles of whisky and 24 bottles of phensidyl from the cellars.

Gul has been selling alcohol from his house for the last two years. Police arrested his wife Poppy (22) and younger brother Abdul Jalil (22) during the raid. Gul Mohammad however managed to escape.

A case was filed with Narayanganj thana in this connection.

Spurious and sub-standard drugs flood market

By Naimul Haq

Spurious and sub-standard drugs have flooded markets and their production in the country is rising alarmingly with the Drug Administration 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 Bangladesh 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 producers. 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 companies include analgesic, aspirin, vitamins, cough syrup, glucose, saline, ferrous and sodium sulphate, furosemide, prednisolone, diazepam tablets and dextrose fluid, the Samity sources claimed.

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 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 the 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

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India captain Saurav Ganguly executing a check-drive during their ICC KnockOut Trophy semifinal against South Africa at the Nairobi Gymkhana yesterday. —AFP photo

Women and children repression 30000 cases pending: 35 more special tribunals soon

Star Report

The government will soon set up 35 more special tribunals under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, adding that some 30,000 such cases were now pending with different courts across the country.

"Burdened with thousands of cases in their own courts, the district and sessions judges cannot pay proper attention to

the cases filed under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act," a Law Ministry official said, adding that some 30,000 such cases were now pending with different courts across the country.

At present, only 10 special tribunals in 10 districts are dealing with cases under the Act since its introduction in January last.

The district and session judges are now running the specialised courts in addition to their regular duties, slowing down the speed of trial in the cases of both kinds.

The new tribunals will be set up in Dhaka, Tangail, Chittagong, Narayanganj, Kishoreganj, Jamalpur, Rajbari, Faridpur, Gopalganj, Chandpur, See page 11 col 7

Part of mugged money recovered

By Staff Correspondent

Gulshan police have recovered Tk three lakh out of five lakh mugged from a garments factory official at Rasulpur in Mahakhali area of the city on Tuesday and arrested two persons in this connection.

The arrested are Abul 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 said 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. —Star photo

Intra-party tussle over move to form Pintu-Laltu JCD body

By Rezaul Karim

A strong resentment is prevailing in the rank and file of BNP and its front organisations over a move by BNP hardliners for formation of a new central committee of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) with rivals Pintu and Laltu as its president and general secretary respectively.

JCD is the student front of BNP. The hardliners, failing to implement their 'hasty plans' in recent days, have now become desperate and are creating pressure on the party Chairperson to form the new committee with the two persons, sources said.

Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu is JCD's incumbent general secretary and Shahabuddin Laltu is its Dhaka University unit leader.

Many front ranking leaders of BNP and its front organisations including JCD have threatened to resign if the committee is formed with Pintu and Laltu.

They said their rivalry and other activities have pushed JCD into a 'dead end' and 'almost ruined' it on campuses, particularly the DU.

Earlier, Pintu and Laltu led two rival factions with blessings of their godfathers in BNP.

On July 2, the two factions fought a fierce gun battle on the DU campus that left one activist of Pintu group killed. The Laltu faction also drove out Pintu's supporters from the campus and declared Pintu persona-non-grata at DU.

After the incidents, BNP Chairperson Khaleida Zia suspended all activities of JCD's DU unit and its central committee for an indefinite period, which is still in force.

Khaleida Zia formed a four-member committee comprising some senior BNP leaders to probe the leadership conflict in JCD and to help resolve the crisis.

The committee in its report said both Pintu and Laltu were responsible for internal conflict and grouping and patronised terrorists in the party.

It suggested that regular students of DU, BUET, Jahangirnagar University and Dhaka College should be given priority for vital posts in the central committee, and the main focus should be on DU.

The sources said the party Chairperson ignored the suggestions and gave the responsibility of selecting persons for the committee to hardliners' leader Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain.

They said Dr Mosharraf and with other hardliners including Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Salahuddin Qader Chowdhury, Mirza Abbas, Khaleida Zia's private secretary Mosaddiq Ali and Gasuddin Mamun, a business partner of her son Tarek Rahman, jointly took the initiative to make Pintu and Laltu president and general secretary of the new JCD committee.

This group had a meeting at the office of Salahuddin Qader Chowdhury on Monday, where they arranged a rapprochement between Pintu and Laltu, the sources claimed.

They then met the party Chairperson on the same night and placed the new committee. She apparently agreed to approve the new committee.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, city BNP President Sadek Hossain Khoka and the party's student affairs secretary Amanullah Aman deadily opposed it. Even Khaleida's eldest son, who is now active in the politics, strongly opposed it, the sources said.

The sources said many senior leaders told Khaleida Zia that they would resign if she approves the new committee proposed by the hardliners. Amid protest and resentment, she finally refrained.

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

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.

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



Chhayanaut artistes performing on the premises of the Institute of Fine Arts in the city yesterday to collect funds for flood-hit people. —Star photo

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

JERUSALEM, Oct 13: With Israelis and Palestinians apparently heading for all-out war today, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak announced he will form a "government of national emergency" within days, reports AFP.

US President Bill Clinton launched a furious round of telephone diplomacy to head off an explosion of violence in the Palestinian territories, as the White House announced his readiness to attend a summit meeting proposed by Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak.

In another development, the UN Security Council agreed to delay at least until Monday an emergency meeting on Middle East violence requested by Palestinian officials.

Hours after Israeli helicopter raids on Palestinian targets, Barak held talks with right-wing opposition leader Ariel Sharon

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 a "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 world 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

weeks of violence that escalated Thursday when two Israeli soldiers were mutilated by a mob of enraged Palestinians. Israel responded with combat helicopters that fired rockets at key Palestinian targets, including the residential compound of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

Palestinians declared Friday a "day of rage," said thousands of police were waiting in Jerusalem's Old City as Muslims arrived for midday prayers at the Noble Sanctuary compound, the third holiest site in Islam.

Muslim 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.

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