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Down to Earth

A residential area eclipsed

By A S M Nurunnabi

Dhanmondi used to be a select residential area before other residential areas like Gulshan, Baridhara, Banani came into being. The character of Dhanmondi Residential Area as such has, however, changed rapidly over the past few years. Within a decade of its existence, Dhanmondi began to lose many of its unique characteristics.

During the days of Dhanmondi's glorious past, most of the houses in that area were single or double-storied houses and looked spic and span with large grassy lawns, verdant gardens and select trees. It had a tranquil environment. That scenario is now a thing of the past only to be looked back at with nostalgia.

The area, originally intended for residential purposes, now appears to have turned into a mainly commercial area with numerous schools, clinics, fast food shops, banks, community centres and other commercial establishments. Even a pharmaceutical industry is operating on a big chunk of land in that area. During the last two years, its commercial character has become more prominent by the growth of big shopping malls, proliferation of medical diagnostic centres, computer training centres and related businesses and also many government and NGO offices. On account of these manifold commercial activities, the area may well be described as Dhanmondi commercial area.

The former image of the place is now lost as low-rise buildings has now been replaced with high-rise apartment buildings with no symmetry with surrounding structures, giving it the look of a concrete jungle.

Dhanmondi has different looks at different times of a day. During morning and afternoon, normal

life in the area becomes severely affected by the horrendous vehicular traffic as they converge on the numerous schools every morning and afterwards the same process is repeated in the afternoon. The consequent traffic jams which occur this way is a regular feature of life in this area. The existence of many community centres in the area adds to the tribulations of its dwellers as invitees to various functions at such centres park their cars on the roads outside creating traffic jam. The numerous fast food shops, kabab and halim joints become the centres of unruly behaviours of some undisciplined young elements hurling obscenities at female passers-by, which disturb the peace of the neighbouring residents.

The Dhanmondi lake beautification project is nearing completion. The beauty of the lake has been enhanced in some respects with provision of ceramic and concrete seating arrangements at convenient spots along the banks. This, however, provides questionable haunts for anti-social elements which tends to vitiate the environment, particularly after the evening hours. Incidents of mugging are frequent along the paths leading to the lake. Public utility services like water supply, sewerage, electricity are facing increasing problems of proper management. The municipal dustbins adjoining the existing clinics overflow with hospital wastes creating public health hazards.

The exclusive character of the area as a residential zone has steadily eroded since independence under heavy pressure of population growth and the housing needs. This has given rise to a proliferation of apartment complexes in the area. Simultaneously its commercial character is becoming increasingly prominent, making it look more like a commercial area.

Poor maintenance behind shabby Biman Airbus

By Shehab Ahmed

The three Airbus A-310 of Bangladesh Biman are frequently running into trouble due to sloppy maintenance leading to huge spending and constant bickering between pilots and engineers, sources said.

"It is costing money in terms of maintenance at foreign airports where engineers and technicians of other airlines have to be called in and causing sufferings to passengers," one source said.

Citing three incidents, two taking place in the last week and one in the last month, they said there were clear signs of sloppy maintenance on which the aircraft were released by the authorities.

The incidents involved two of the newly-purchased Airbus aircraft, which joined Biman fleet in the middle of 1996. The other aircraft, manufactured in 1987, was inducted into the fleet from Singapore Airlines recently on dry lease.

The first incident took place on way from London to Sylhet when the aircraft suddenly suffered decompression in cabin pressure when Oxygen masks automatically fell down, forcing the pilot to make an emergency landing in Frankfurt.

It was taken back to London where the aircraft had to be fixed with spares brought from Atlanta, USA, and a huge amount of money had to be splashed out.

The passengers had to be cared for in hotel and dispatched back home in groups on other flights, causing sufferings not only to them but also to others who could not catch the flight.

"The bleed system of the aircraft was found to be faulty that led to the loss of air pressure in the cabin. It was put on HIL (Hold Item List) in Dhaka before the aircraft was cleared for onwards flight to London on October by the engineers," one source alleged.

HIL means that certain part is in need of repair but could be put on hold.

Another flight from London made an emergency landing at the Hungarian capital of Budapest earlier this month when its fuel pump system malfunctioned.

"When an engineer was summoned from Sabena, the Belgian Airlines, he was surprised to see that it was due to sheer negligence in See page 11 col 3

Private-public partnership can boost Bangladesh

ICC secretary-general tells The Daily Star

Star Report

Maria Livanos Cattaui, Secretary-General of International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), feels that a private-public partnership is important to help Bangladesh adapt modern marketing methods and boost the country's image.

It is a credible partner for the United Nations, which represents all types of companies. So, this guide will reduce the information gap that exists about Bangladesh. For image improvement, both local businessmen

and the government have to work together.

Regarding ICC's role in negotiating crucial issues in the WTO, she said her organisation has been insisting that the WTO implement all the agreements on time.

"We have shown concerns about the abusive use of anti-dumping measures, not only by the developed world, but also by the developing countries. We are also concerned at non-tariff barriers," Cattaui said.

"The developing countries should not be afraid of a new round of trade talks. But at the same time, it is absolutely important for the South countries to get themselves prepared for the next round. But we have to be careful that what has already been accomplished should not be harmed."

She strongly felt that issues like human rights, labour standards and environment should be kept out of the purview of WTO and should be matters of appropriate international forums and organisations. This will help reduce the burden of WTO.

Talking to a select group of journalists yesterday, Cattaui agreed that Bangladesh has an attractive investment policy and incentive regime.

"But what it now needs is to put these to practice. This would require diminishing of unnecessary measures for doing business in the country. For example, bureaucracy is a difficulty here. It needs to make sure that the judiciary is updated and not overloaded," she said.

"But the most difficult investment barrier is probably infrastructure like telecommunication, energy, power and port."

The ICC is also working

Maria L Cattaui



Different deal... vegetables vendors at a city market wait for customers yesterday. Recent floods in south-western districts and untimely heavy shower across the country have seriously damaged early winter vegetables leading to shortage of supply and high prices. -- Star photo

Floods, untimely rain push vegetable price up

By Raziur Rahman

The recent floods in south-western districts and untimely heavy shower across the country have seriously damaged early winter vegetables, resulting in shortage of supply and high prices.

Officials of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) said production target of winter vegetables this year was fixed at 65 lakh tons in 3.25 lakh hectares of land. They, however, failed to give

any estimate of damage of vegetables due to the floods.

According to a government estimate, the loss in agriculture sector in the 16 flood hit districts stood at Tk 578.76 crore.

The 16 districts, mostly in south-western region of the country, remained flooded affected for about a month since late September. Vegetables cultivated for supply in the early winter were completely damaged in the floods, officials pointed out.

Besides, heavy shower across the country due to a depression in the Bay of Bengal in the last week of October damaged vegetables.

While visiting a number markets in the city yesterday, it was found that vegetables including bean, cauliflower and cabbage were selling at prices much higher than that in the previous years. Traders attributed this to inadequate supply.

A wholesale tomato trader in a

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Anti-viral therapy can cure liver cirrhosis

By Staff Correspondent

Researches have shown that liver cirrhosis can be successfully treated with anti-viral therapy and patients with even an advanced stage of the disease may not require transplantation any more.

Tests carried out for two years with a five-year follow-up study in USA showed that after two years of Lamivudine treatment (removal of small portion of tissue), biopsy of liver from 128 out of a total of 236 chronic hepatitis B patients showed significant improvements.

The results of the study were disclosed at a seminar on 'Lamivudine therapy in Chronic Hepatitis B' at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel yesterday. The seminar was organised by Association for the Study of the Liver sponsored by GlaxoWellcome, Bangladesh.

The tests demonstrated a withdrawal in cirrhosis (severe scarring of the liver) in 64 per cent of patients with pre-existing cirrhosis after two or more years of treatment with Lamivudine.

Over the same period of treatment, 51 per cent of patients also experienced improvement in bridging fibrosis (a precursor to cirrhosis).

This indicates that extended treatment with Lamivudine may not only stop further damage caused by the hepatitis B virus, but also allows the body to regenerate healthy liver tissue and repair preexisting damage.

Reduction in liver inflammation and improvement in liver scarring was observed in 52 per cent of patients with a variant form of the hepatitis B virus.

Professor Eugene Schiff of University of Miami, Florida, and the main researcher of the study (he was not present at the seminar) said, "Until now advanced fibrosis and cirrhosis were considered to be irreversible and we had limited options to interrupt the progression of liver disease with many patients developing liver failure and requiring liver transplantation."

He said the fact that treatment with Lamivudine can improve the conditions in many case signals a significant breakthrough in our management of chronic hepatitis B.

Referring to the research findings, Schiff also mentioned that

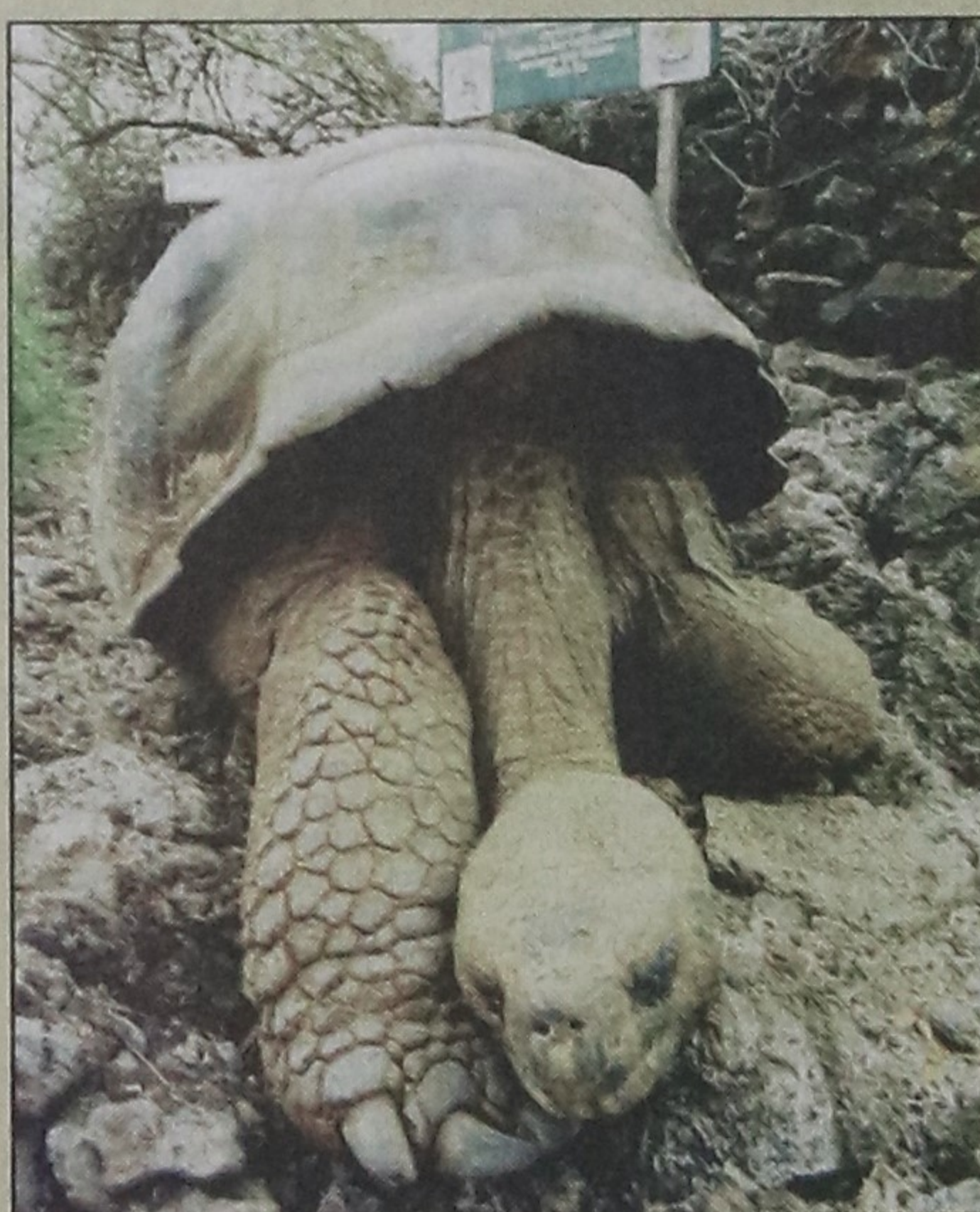
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144 gold bars seized at ZIA

The airport customs officials seized 144 gold bars worth Tk 93,60,000 from an incoming flight of Bangladesh Biman-BG-030 from Dubai yesterday morning, a customs press release of Zia International Airport said, reports BSS.

The gold bars, each weighing 10 tolas and tightly wrapped with a black cloth, were concealed into the ceiling of the toilet.


Tyrannical tourism



An AFP photo taken on September 27 this year shows a giant Galapagos turtle walking through the Charles Darwin Station in Ayora Port in the Galapagos Archipelago. The Galapagos, which total 7,964 square kilometres, has seen a 700 per cent increase in tourism over the last 20 years, and conservationists are calling for restrictions for the number of tourists to the archipelago. British evolutionist Charles Darwin spent five weeks in the Galapagos in 1835, 24 years before he wrote *The Evolution of the Species*.

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9 Indian trawlers with 105 fishermen detained

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Nov 10: Members of the Task Force of Bangladesh Navy detained 105 Indian fishermen and seized nine trawlers for illegal fishing near fairway bouya of Bay of Bengal during the last two days.

The fishermen were handed over to Mongla thana on Thursday night and sent to Bagerhat district Jail today.

A case was recorded with Mongla thana in this connection.

According to police, navy ship, BNS Shaheed Farid chased the Indian fishing trawlers on

November 8 and 9 and detained 9 trawlers along with 105 fishermen most of whom hail from the district of 24 Parganas of West Bengal.

The seized Indian trawlers now in the custody of Navy at Digraj have been identified as Sabyashachi, Ma Kali, Luxmi Narayan, Maer Daan, Babaar Ashirbad, Rahmania-1, Ma-Ujali, Rahmania-2 and Ma Mongol Chandli.

Mongla thana police said this is the highest number of Indians detained at a time since liberation.

Barisal Medical College students continue agitation

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Nov 10: Students at the Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College continued their agitation for the 12th day today demanding immediate appointment of teachers to the vacant posts.

The ruling party-backed BCL activists brought out a procession and ransacked 12 rooms reportedly belonging to Chhatra

Boral murder: Another held

BAGERHAT, Nov 10: Another suspect was arrested at Barobarita village in Chitalmari upazila early today in connection with the killing of Awami League leader Kalidas Boral, reports UNB.

He was identified as Quamrul Sheikh, 24, of the same village. Quamrul is number 21 among those accused in the case.

Acting on a tip-off, police raided the house of Quamrul's elder sister at about 5am and arrested him.

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