

Sisters share in South Asian solidarity



New IT wizard on the block



Jubilee Road turns into dustbin

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DHAKA WEDNESDAY MAY 21, 2003

Louis Kahn's vision ignored



Architects express concern over National Assembly Complex.

MORSHED ALI KHAN

For city dwellers, Sunday's decision of the Division Bench of the High Court was a historic one. The High Court ordered the government to uphold the whole of Louis H Kahn's 1973 Master Plan on the Sher-e-Bangla Nagar. The court also asked the government to immediately stop the Tk 3 crore construction of housing units for the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, and to take steps to declare the entire 600-acre National Assembly Complex both a National Heritage and World Heritage Site.

The High Court order did not reach the workers at the site until Monday afternoon however and the work continued in full swing. The first floor of the red-brick building has already been completed with extra manpower working round the clock. Billal Hossain, the site engineer said that the construction company, Shakil Enterprise is facing enormous loss due to frequent stoppage of work on the project since October last year.

Architects and environmentalists, who had protested against the government's tampering with Kahn's Master Plan, said they were happy with the court order but they were still concerned about the remaining areas of the complex.

The government has under-

taken another project on the Crescent Lake and around the grave of the late President Ziaur Rahman. Violating laws of the land the project envisages construction of a modern looking bridge across the lake and a mausoleum on the grave. The Zia Uddyan as it has been renamed, will also have a mosque and a conference hall. The decision to build such a complex was taken without consulting any expert, it is alleged.

Architect Mubasshar Hussain, President of the Institute of Architects, Bangladesh (IAB) told Star City that Kahn's Sangshad Bhaban is as popular as the Taj Mahal among architects and town planners throughout the world.

"Whenever someone wants to change the landscape of the area with any new project, there must be a thorough consultation with the experts because this is a property of the people," said Hussain.

Planners and architects also blamed the immediate past government for distorting the landscape of the area by constructing the NAM buildings across from Sangshad Bhaban.

Hundreds of people from home and abroad seek permission from the parliament secretariat for visiting the complex, said another architect, requesting anonymity.

"We house one of the architectural marvels of the world, it is our responsibility to protect it," he said.

Illegal construction of Speakers' quarters continues despite court order.

Most hotels are a hotbed of vice



Prostitutes huddled in a police station after a recent raid in the Malibagh area.

SOHEL ISLAM

Hotels of Dhaka city often hog headlines in newspapers because of their links to antisocial activities. For long, the hotels have been hotspots of prostitution and drug peddling -- one supplementing the

other. So far, they have also been shelters for killers to hide in.

But the killing of two detectives -- an inspector and a sub-inspector -- in a residential hotel in Malibagh on the night of May 14 came as an eye-opener.

The hotels at Purana Paltan,

Gulistan, Mohakhali, Farmgate, Bangla Motor, Moghbazar and Malibagh -- to name just a few -- have become the regular haunts of sex workers.

Prostitution dominates the earning of the hotels that have sprouted without legal documents over the years. "If hoteliers stop prostitution, they have to lower their expectations for earnings," says Mukit, a long-time hotel frequenter.

Hotel owners get the highest share of the earning from prostitution. Next come sex workers, pimps and police by the way of sharing money.

"If a sex worker earns Tk 300, the woman will get Tk 100, the hotel owner Tk 130, the pimp Tk 20 and police Tk 50," said a source close to the business.

But the hotels look innocent of any illegal activities to outsiders. Hotel managers will never admit that they run the illegal business. To dig out information one has to seek help from sex workers' clients acquainted with pimps and hotel managers, said Bablu, another hotel frequenter.

Prostitution dominates the earning of the hotels that have sprouted without legal documents over the years.

The women living on the margins of society venture into the ancient profession for money -- for survival to be precise. "I knew a woman whose husband took her to a hotel in the morning and back home in the evening," said Bablu.

"A sex worker can earn upto Tk 20,000 a month. Some women seek easy ways to earn money and end up in prostitution. They think hotels safe," he says.

The drugs are an accompaniment to prostitution to add pleasure. Some hotels sell drugs, including the banned Phenidyl, and beers that sell at slightly higher price.

Only 143 registered hotels are operating in the city. At least 500 hotels without any legal document are in the illegal business. The result is a loss of huge revenues for the government, said an official involved in hotel registration, preferring anonymity.

However, the government has taken an initiative to find out how many hotels are operating in Dhaka city, he said. "In a few days, the government will come up with the exact data on the city's hotels."

Stranded no more

Second generation refugees finally get voting rights

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

The quest for identity is an integral part of human existence and young people like Mohammed Hasan or Kulsum Sharmin are no exception.

Thankfully for Hasan, Kulsum and eight others, the unhappy quest for identity is finally over. These members of stranded Pakistani families were awarded voting rights through a court ruling, which effectively recognised them as Bangladeshi citizens.

Twenty-two year old Kulsum could still recall those nightmarish childhood days.

"Our classmates at school never played with us. Even the teachers used say we were from an inferior race, the Bihari Jaat."

Like Kulsum, others too had

similar rough experiences to tell.

The new citizens of Bangladesh believe that they should have gained recognition much earlier.

"We are born and brought up here. We are the sons of this soil. Our generation never saw Pakistan or even India," said Kulsum.

At least 2 lakh 80 thousand youths are believed members of stranded Pakistani families who have reached voting age. But their fate hangs in the balance as they still have not got voting rights.

Mohammed Hasan (23), convenor of the Association of Young Generation of Urdu Speaking Community stated the circumstances that led them to form such an organisation.

"My great grandfather was born in India's Uttar Pradesh

and my father in Kolkata. They should've stayed in India but as they fostered a fateful dream they thought of going to Pakistan. We can't commit the same mistake by abandoning our birthplace," said Hasan.

The ten narrated how their parents or the older generation tried to mould them during childhood by saying that they belonged to a different community. But being born in Bangladesh they totally adopted the local culture.

"We cannot even speak Urdu properly these days," Hasan said. He added the new generation is strongly against repatriation.

"How can we survive when we do not know anyone in Pakistan," he said.

The youngsters are very passionate about Bangladesh and vowed their total allegiance.

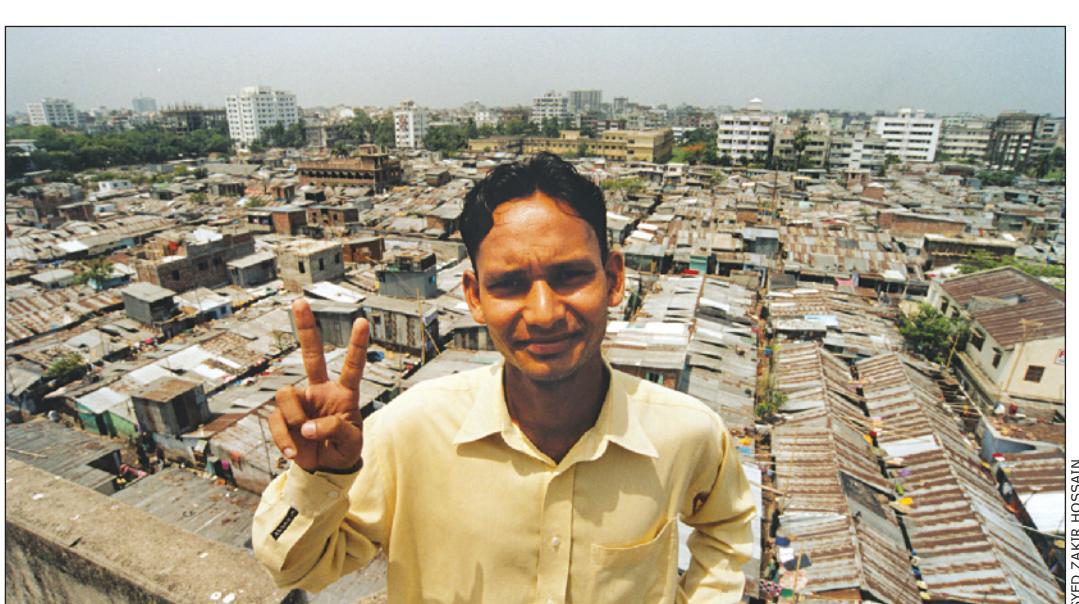
"The feeling of being Bangladeshi is now a part of our psyche," Mohammed Hasan said. Kulsum went further saying: "If now there is a war between Bangladesh and Pakistan, I will support my own country Bangladesh".

The achievement of the ten 'Biharis' have drawn a mixed reaction. The younger generation is extremely enthusiastic and looking forward to becoming citizens of Bangladesh. However, the veterans are not very happy since they still nurture the hope of being repatriated to Pakistan.

But the new voters, want to look forward rather than sticking to old memories.

"We will go to Supreme Court, if the government challenges the verdict," Hasan vowed.

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Today's tips
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0171-000992
Roads to avoid
Green Road
Digging by DCC underway
North Mugda
BTB installing phone lines
Mohakhali to Banani Highway
Flyover under construction
Khilgaon Crossing
Flyover under construction



Md Hassan, one of the lucky ten to find recognition as a Bangladeshi citizen at long last.

SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN