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DOWN TO EARTH Sidewalk Eatables Sideline Public Health

By A S M Nurunnabi

There are innumerable spots on sidewalks in the Dhaka city where seasonal fruits are sold from mobile or makeshift stalls. The vendors seem to do a brisk business particularly in areas where people gather in large numbers, such as railway stations, bus stations, shopping areas and steamer ghats. They are almost an inseparable part of our city life.

Our country is blessed with a variety of fruits, some of them to the point of abundance. No wonder a section of citizens, even those at the lower financial ladder also harbour a definite liking for the seasonal fruits, whatever strain it may cause to their lean purse strings. Otherwise, how can one explain the existence of the plethora of fruit vendors on sidewalks?

To make their wares easily accessible to customers with small means, some of the fruits are cut into small pieces carrying low price tags. It seems that most vendors specialise in selling only one type of seasonal fruits, although the whole gamut includes papaya, pineapple, green coconut, cucumber, sweet hog plum (Amra) and the like. The all-time favourites seem to be papaya, green coconut, cucumber and sweet hog plum. The scenario, however, undergoes a change during summer days when sugarcane juice, watermelons, green coconut become hot favourites.

We find something undesirable about this trade from the hygienic point of view. Most of the fruits offered for sale either peeled off in whole or cut pieces are kept without any cover. Many of the customers

may not make any fuss about the unhygienic condition, but it is plain that this poses a health hazard to consumers. It behoves the City Corporation health authority to be vigilant in the matter and ensure that the cut fruits are sold under hygienic conditions, protected from flies and free of dust.

On the other hand, we find another sight in which the elementary rules of hygiene are found to be observed by and large. This may be seen towards the evening at many important crossroads and in the vicinity of some bazars. The vendors in this case deal in liquid milk, regarded generally as health food.

The tools of trade of these vendors are a big iron cauldron and a kerosene stove. The cauldron is filled with milk. The content is allowed to simmer over a slow fire which helps to thicken the milk, enhancing its colour and taste. Beside the sizzling cauldron sits the vendor on a low stool with a small pile of sliced bread on a platter.

Most of the customers are rickshawpullers who tend to believe that a glass of that hot drink with pieces of bread dipped in it will help them recoup their strength and energy lost in their physical labour. There are also customers from other walks of life imbued with a similar attitude.

The cut fruit vendors may learn a lesson from the milk vendors who ply their trade in a neat and clean manner with their cauldron of simmering milk well covered.

Another common street scene is that of practitioners of quack medicines. None can avoid their eye-catching

trade practices. Most of them spread out sheets of cloth or plastic on which are arranged an assortment of bottles, big and small, containing preserved specimens of human and animal organs. Also spread out are various kinds of twigs and botanical specimens. The striking thing about the whole show is the magnetism of the oratory of these practitioners.

They explain the efficacy of their potions for every malady under the sun from stomach pain to cancer. They can easily draw a crowd wherever they choose. In the Dhaka city, their favourite haunts are, among others, any open space near New Market, Balaka Cinema Hall, Kawran Bazar wholesale market, Sadar Ghat, Stadium Gate, Motijheel CA. The technique of their address to an audience has lately undergone a change. Previously they used loudspeakers which have now given way to pre-recorded cassette on players. The innovation has given them the freedom to carefully choose their words to create the maximum impact on their audience. The attraction of their potions for their customers is enhanced when money refund guarantee is offered in case of no result. The low price coupled with the refund guarantee make their offer highly attractive. It is, however, open to doubt whether these peddlers ever feel the necessity of honouring their guarantee in case of unsatisfactory result reported by any customer.

There is no question that the operation of these quacks poses a hazard to public health. Yet we find no evidence of any effective step to curb their activities.



A colourful procession to celebrate the Eid-e-Miladunnabi in the city yesterday. Story on Metro page - Star photo

Students beat JU Shibir activists, recover arms

By JU Correspondent

The students of Jahangirnagar University Wednesday launched a massive attack on the activists of Islami Chhatra Shibir, who were continuing their political activities secretly flouting the embargo on their politics by the Sarbadalio Chhatra Oikya. Sarbadalio Chhatra Oikya banned the politics of Shibir more than one year ago after killing of an activist of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) by the Shibir workers. Some students of the university came to know about the secret activities of ICS Wednesday evening when a Shibir worker Jahangir who came from outside, was looking for some of the leaders of the organisation.

The students detained him in a room and after a long interrogation collected 20 names out of about 150 activists of ICS, working in the university secretly.

On the basis of the list of 20 Shibir workers the students launched a drive in all the

residential halls of the university and detained 11 persons. They also recovered cock-tails and other weapons from their rooms.

The detained activists of Chhatra Shibir were beaten up severely and later in the early hours of Thursday was handed over to Savar Police along with the recovered weapons.

The name of the 11 students includes, Aminul, Ashraf, Sabuj, Tuhin, Mokhles, Abu, Bashar and Romel.

Sylhet MC College VP arrested

From Our Correspondent

SYLHET, Sept 11: Kotwali police Thursday arrested the vice-president of Sylhet M C College for his alleged involvement in a shoot-out in which a police constable was killed.

Order to arrest 121 MQM men

ISLAMABAD, Sept 11:

Pakistan authorities have ordered the arrests of 121 members of the Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) party for involvement in running torture cells in southern Sindh province, MQM officials said today, reports Reuter.

A four-month army crackdown in troubled Sindh has uncovered 21 torture chambers allegedly used by the locally powerful MQM to deal with dissidents within the party and opponents, parliamentary Interior Secretary Bargees Tahir told the National Assembly (Lower House) on Thursday.

Extortionists kill 1

By DMCH Correspondent

An auto-rickshaw driver was killed at Mirpur in the city when he refused to give money to extortionists early Friday.

Hanif Mia was going to his Shyamoli residence from Mirpur by a rickshaw, he was waylaid by five muggers at Mirpur Mazar Road at around 4 am Friday.

The Midnight File

Tajikistan under influence of Islamic militants: Nabiye

KHADZHEN (Tajikistan), Sept 11: Former Tajik President Rakhmon Nabiye declared today his resignation this week was forced from him at gunpoint and charged Tajikistan was now under the influence of Islamic militants. Nabiye, speaking publicly for the first time since he resigned on Monday and took refuge in his northern stronghold, the Leninabad region, said he still hoped he could be restored to power, reports Reuter.

Pressure on Yeltsin to soften policies

MOSCOW, Sept 11: The chief of Russia's state factory association appealed Friday for slower reforms and more say over economic policy, putting pressure on President Boris Yeltsin to soften some of his policies. But Yeltsin reiterated the need to cut all subsidies, and said the Central Bank should be taken from legislative control and made independent or subordinate to him. The bank has been criticised for letting the rouble's value fall and giving easy credit to state factories, reports UNB.

AL not out to destabilise

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opportune time because Khaleda was a very shaky government," the Bangladesh Opposition leader said. But she laughingly added, "My relations with Begum Zia, on a woman-to-woman level, was not bad."

She was here to attend a seminar on the role of the Opposition in the SAARC countries. The seminar was organised by the Leader of the Opposition in Pakistan, Ma Benazir Bhutto.

But Hasina accused Begum Zia's government of not performing its role in a democratic manner. "Neither it is following the norms which could help strengthen democratic traditions in Bangladesh," she said. She did not cite specific instances but said during Gen Ershad's martial law regime, whenever she went abroad the "Bangladesh diplomatic missions in foreign countries would co-operate with us and extend the protocol which the leader of the Opposition deserved," and alleged that the Deputy High Commissioner of Bangladesh "had not turned up anywhere in Karachi during my stay."

She said she did not want to discuss in a foreign country what the Dhaka government was doing to the workers of her party.

Hasina said there had been no long-term planning in Bangladesh since the assassination of her father.

Nepali team

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"Such meeting will help attain understanding and cooperation among countries and help find solutions to outstanding problems", he added.

Describing the visit of the delegation as 'very fruitful', Bhat said it helped members understand politics and problems of friendly Bangladesh. The occasion gave them opportunity to hold talks with leaders of both position and opposition.

In reply to a question, the leader of the delegation said we found most of the rules and procedures of two parliaments almost similar with some minor variations. He admitted that Bangladeshi parliament members enjoy much more physical facilities than their Nepali counterparts in the form of housing, telephone, transport and travel to constituencies. "We also do not have the facility to import duty free cars as is the case in Bangladesh," he added.

Describing the existing relations between Dhaka and Kathmandu as 'very good' the Nepali parliamentary leader said there should be more exchange of visits in political and cultural fields to solidify our relationship.

He suggested direct road linkage between the two countries, which, he observed, would help develop economic relations further for the mutual advantage of both countries.

The delegation which included members from opposition-CPN-Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist Party and United Peoples Front Party, had meetings with Law Minister, Deputy Leader of the House and Deputy Leader of the Opposition. They also attended a briefing on parliamentary activities. The delegation included two members from ruling Nepali Congress which has 113 members in 205 members in the House of Representatives.

The five-day visit to Bangladesh was the first leg of the delegation's four-country visit which will take them to Sri Lanka, Pakistan and finally India.

nation of her father. Most of the \$25 billion received in foreign aid had gone to the unproductive sector, she said and added that in the matter of alleviation of the people's economic lot her party was trying to support the government and was not competing with it. "But the party in power has not cared to implement even its own programme" of freeing the people from the clutches of poverty.

She agreed with the Dawn reporter that women leaders were proving better leaders than men, at least in the Third World countries. But she added that in the Third World countries women leaders had emerged as consequences of tragedies. "They have sacrificed more and can organise much better." About the trial of the assassins of her father, Hasina said by not repealing the indemnity clause incorporated into the country's Constitution during the Zia regime, Begum Zia was subverting the process of justice. "We will continue to build pressure for meeting the requirements of justice."

On her first visit to Pakistan since the establishment of Bangladesh in which her father played the major role and at the invitation of Benazir whose father was the main adversary of Sheikh Mujib at that time, Hasina was pleased with the warm hospitality she had been received with. "I don't pretend that the past has completely been obliterated, but it would be unfair if I did not mention the warm hospitality of the PPP leaders," she added.

She said she noticed a similarity in the assassination of the popular leaders in Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka. "These were not just isolated incidents," she remarked.

She said that opposition parties had played a vital role in establishing democracy in Pakistan and Bangladesh. She attributed her party's failure to win the 1990 elections in Bangladesh to 'the invisible alliance' of the BNP, the Jamaat-e-Islam and the Jatiya Party, although she said her party's subsequent alliance with the Jatiya Party was a parliamentary expedient. She blamed the military bureaucracy for much of the problems of her country and remarked the BNP was born in a cantonment.

Shah Moazzem

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first considered Rajia Foyez, but had abandoned the idea fearing that a woman might not get easy acceptance.

The problem with Sheikh Shaheed is that he has the Awami League background as has the acting party chief.

The case of Kazi Zafar was dropped at the initial stage on health grounds.

Answering to a question that Ershad's leadership was threatened on the issue of Shah Moazzem, the source said "Ershad's decision is still final on any matter."

"Minus Ershad the Jatiya Party is a big zero," he added.

The JP source said, Moazzem wanted that the decision on secretary general should be taken by the councilors but most of the leaders believe that there could be a chance of split if the matter was put to vote.

"So the selection, as desired by the party chief, will be the best solution," the source also said.

SAARC opposition

From Page 1 Col 7 source and "we need not to be dependant on the developed countries, had the resources could be properly utilised for the benefit of the people."

In reply to a question, Hasina said a Secretariat of the SAARC opposition leaders will be set up in Karachi. The opposition SAARC leaders will meet periodically and exchange information to implement the programmes as envisaged in the Karachi Joint Declaration.

Asked whether the next conference of SAARC opposition leaders will be held in Dhaka, a smiling Hasina said she had invited the opposition leaders who participated in the Karachi conference and they accepted the invitation.

Replying to a question on bilateral issues with Pakistan, Hasina said in her speech at the conference she demanded settlement of bilateral disputes including the sharing of assets through discussion.

She also requested the Pakistan government to send back hapless Bangladeshi women detained in different jails in Pakistan.

"All outstanding issues should be resolved as soon as possible" for better cooperation and understanding for the development of SAARC countries, she added.

Hasina said she also demanded immediate release of Burmese leader Aung San Suu Kyi in the interest of democratic rule against the military regime.

On the cancellation of her scheduled call on with President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, she told a questioner that inclement weather forced the scheduled flights from Karachi to Islamabad cancelled. Besides, she could not stay there more because of her party's council in Dhaka.

"My heart was filled with joy and pain when I landed at

Karachi airport", said Hasina expressing her reaction on her visit to Pakistan.

Hasina told "newsmen at the airport that she had pangs and pain of the past, but at the same time she was overwhelmed by warm and cordial hospitality of the people of Pakistan.

Hasina expressed her gratitude to the people of Pakistan for cordial reception and hospitality extended to her.

"Wherever we had been, people crowded round to get a glimpse of Hasina," Begum Sajeda Chowdhury told reporters at the airport.

She said the jubilant people in Karachi were heard saying, "Here is she (Hasina), the daughter of Sheikh Mujib."

Four days later, she returned home to a great embarrassment.

The following day, on September 6, an angry Begum Zia dissolved the central committee, formed June 16 last, of her party's student wing. The inter-ethnic bickering that dates back years took a sharp turn after the formation of the new central committee.

According to sources, the Prime Minister has directed the Home Ministry and the law enforcing agencies to take stern action against all 'troublemakers'.

Five years ago, Ilias Ali, along with 11 others, had been expelled from the Dhaka University for his alleged involvement in campus terrorism.

The September 17, 1987 order also stripped student-ship of eight other JCD leaders including Sanaul Huq Niru and Golam Faruq Obhi. The three others were from the JSD-backed Bangladesh Chhatra League.

Ilias Ali

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of retaliation by rivals. The September 4 gunbattle was a sequel to August 30 clashes that killed a former student.

Police sources said that the JCD leader was interrogated several times during the last two days (Thursday and Friday). They, however, declined to give details.

After the August 30 gunfight, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, the chairperson of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, intervened to set things right in her party's student wing troubled by factional feuds. The JCD leaders promised that they would keep their house in order and a convinced Prime Minister left for Jakarta to attend the Non-Aligned Summit on September 1.

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Insurance company

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required to deposit Taka 3 crore each with the government.

Presently there are 20 insurance companies operating in the country. Of them, 16 general insurance companies are in the private sector and one is owned by the government. Of the three life insurance companies in operation, two are in the private sector while the other is a public sector corporation.

The total combined annual income from premiums of all the insurance companies stood at Taka 205 crore in 1991-92.



ANC marchers protesting the Ciskei killing in South Africa. - Star TV photo

RRAC calls hartal

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cludes fixing a firm date for the repatriation of the refugees, isolating the camps from the local residents and stopping construction of new camps.

Mahmudul Huq Choudhury, convenor of the RRAC, told a rally in Ukhiya that the refugees were destroying forests, damaging roads and polluting the environment in the area.

He alleged that some government relief officials were acting against the repatriation of the refugees. He said that some foreign organisations were also violating the country's laws in the name of providing relief to the refugees who are now living in 19 camps in the region.

The repatriation of the refugees was earlier scheduled to begin from May 15 but did

not take place as the refugees were unwilling to return to their homes in Myanmar. The refugees insisted that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) be involved in the repatriation process.

A government official, meanwhile, said that efforts were being made to send the refugees back home and a token repatriation might begin soon.

Adamjee clash

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cross-fire. The others were released after first aid. Witnesses said, the clashes ensued at 4 pm at the first gate of the mills when a group of Kashmir's men hurled a number of cocktails on the members of the Rehman group.

During the clashes that lasted for about an hour, the battling groups fired 15-20 rounds of bullets and hurled about a hundred crackers.

The groups were allegedly carrying cut-rifles and pipe guns.

The violence reportedly spread to Kadamtali, Moonlight Cinema Hall, Sona Mia Market and Karim Market areas.

Police fired at least 12 rounds of rubber bullets to bring the situation under control. Witnesses said police also used teargas to disperse the crowd.

De Klerk wants to hold talks with ANC

JOHANNESBURG, Sept 11:

President F W de Klerk on Friday welcomed the ANC's willingness to discuss violence, but the army chief accused the black opposition group of seeking to assassinate a homeland leader whose troops killed 25 protesters, reports AP.

African National Congress and Ciskei security forces accused each other of waging terror in the black homeland since Monday, when Ciskeian troops opened fire on ANC marchers.

The shootings further strained relations between the government and ANC already frozen over chronic violence in black townships. The ANC broke off political negotiations in June to protest the violence.

De Klerk this week requested an urgent meeting with the ANC on how to stop the violence. ANC leaders said Thursday they were willing to meet with de Klerk, but attached conditions that have blocked previous bids to revive talks.

Still, the ANC statement was the closest it has come to agreeing to talks since negotiations were derailed in June.

De Klerk on Friday welcomed the ANC's tentative acceptance and said a summit should be held immediately. The ANC's conditions could be discussed at the meeting, he said. Related Story on Page 5

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