

# DOWN TO EARTH

## School Admission Trials

By A S M Nurunnabi

Now that the new year has begun, a stupendous problem now faces parents/guardians of children in need of school admission. This is an ever-recurring problem every year to which no satisfactory solution could yet be found. By this time, for the government schools the programme for admission tests has been finalised. For some of the non-government schools also, such programme may have been made final. At this stage, guardians are in a state of tension and anxiety about the fate of their wards.

Our previous experience indicates that the pressure of admission seekers is much greater on those schools both government and private which carry a good name and in those schools the number of vacant seats is much less than the number of candidates seeking admission. For some standard schools the number of admission seekers turns out many times more than the number of vacancies in a class.

There are 16 government boys' and 8 girls' schools in Dhaka. For obvious reasons, they bear the brunt of the admission pressure. To cope with such pressure, the Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board takes some measures, though they may seem to be palliative in nature. As in last year, it has instructed all government schools under it to admit 10 per cent more students than last year. Last year it also gave instructions to introduce, where possible, double shifts in some schools. It, how-

ever, seems that the periodic increase in the roll strength which is marginal in nature, will merely touch the fringe of the problem. Moreover, because of limitations of infrastructural facilities, there is a limit to allowing such yearly increase in roll strength, however marginal it may be.

Those private schools which enjoy reputation for good performance also face stiff pressure for admission. By and large, it is felt that some private schools lack in satisfactory standard. In this context, it may contribute to the easing of pressure on the good schools if the existing gap, if there be any, in the standard among the schools can be bridged over as far as possible with recruitment of suitable teachers and provision of necessary facilities.

Government perhaps has not much control over private schools in admission matters. It, however, seems they will be well-advised if, as in the case of the government schools, they also allow as much higher percentage of additional seats as their facilities make it possible.

As regards primary education, in view of the government decision to introduce compulsory primary education in the country, there should be no problem, in principle, of admission in government primary schools, as they are under obligation to accept all students seeking admission. There is, however, one snag here. All government primary schools are not of the same standard. Those primary schools which enjoy a better name face a greater admission pressure. Those

schools may not find it possible to accommodate all students seeking admission. On the other hand, there are other primary schools where, because of reported poor quality, vacant seats are available. There is another complicating factor. There is a general impression that government primary schools are mostly attended by students of poor classes. This class distinction tends to compound the problem of admission in the lower classes of the high schools, both government and private.

The proliferating kindergarten schools in the city offer little help in relieving the situation in this respect. The main obstacle is the tuition fees they charge, besides a substantial amount of donation beyond the capacity of ordinary people. Only the people whose children are born with silver spoon in their mouth can afford to meet their demand.

In the opinion of observers, to meet the challenge of the needs of the burgeoning student population, long-term planning for building educational infrastructure is necessary. That, however, involves considerable financial outlay and the time factor. It is, however, felt that in the short-term the private schools should be encouraged to play a greater role in tackling admission problems, keeping educational fees at a reasonable level and upgrading the standard of those schools lagging behind, so that no situation arises where there are vacant seats in some private schools and an inordinate pressure on others.



### NEWS DIGEST

#### Assef in Uzbekistan

TASHKENT (Uzbekistan), Jan 7 (Reuters): Pakistan's Foreign Minister Assef Ahmad Ali arrived in Uzbekistan today, starting a tour of Central Asia designed to breathe new life into bilateral relations. His visit is the first by a senior Pakistani official since Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto formed a new government last year. It comes only days after Uzbek President Islam Karimov returned from India.

#### Private tribute

HOT SPRINGS, Jan 7 (AP): President Clinton, home to Arkansas for a funeral for the third time in a year, paid private tribute to his deceased mother, Virginia Kelley, late Thursday. Clinton spent about an hour with his stepfather and other close family members at the funeral home where a public viewing would be held on Friday. Spokesman Jeff Eller said Clinton intended to keep his schedule for his upcoming 10-day, five-nation European trip that calls for him to leave Washington for Brussels late Saturday night.

#### Zimmerman resigns

WASHINGTON, Jan 7 (Reuters): Warren Zimmerman, a respected career diplomat who was once Ambassador to Yugoslavia and now directs US Refugee Programmes, has resigned in what Congressional sources said Thursday was another sign of dissatisfaction with US policy on Bosnia.

#### 20 sailors killed

BANGKOK, Jan 7 (Reuters): At least 20 sailors were killed today when a truck crushed the van they were travelling in east of Bangkok, police said. The dead were all new navy recruits on their way back to their base at Sattahip, south of the capital, after a training course, police said. The accident happened in Chonburi province, about 160 km (100 miles) east of Bangkok.

## Hasina: Ganges waters

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Bangladesh to India. "BNP must realise at least 44,000 cusecs of water ... People will not accept anything less than that," Hasina said. "Prove that you are not serving the interest of India by realising the just share of the Ganges waters."

The Awami League chief, now on a three-day organisational tour to some northern districts, bitterly criticised the rule of the BNP and said the hard-won democracy is threatened due to inefficient governance by the BNP. "In last three years, the ruling party has failed to do any well-being for the common people, she said adding that 'corruption, smuggling, starvation, terrorism, politicisation and economic stagnation are the salient features of Begum Zia's government.'"

Referring to the economic condition, the Awami League chief said the national economy is now on the verge of collapse. There was no investment, nor any industrial units set up during the rule of the BNP.

She expressed concern at the 'grim situation in the agricultural' where growers are deprived of fair prices for their produce and said the present government has increased fertilizer prices four times but failed to procure rice and raddy at the fixed prices, throwing farmers into utter economic hardship.

Accusing the BNP of reneging on its pledges, Hasina said the ruling party has betrayed with agreements with workers' unions, 10-point demand of the student community, joint declaration of the three alliances, autonomy to the radio and television and the 4-point accord concerning the trial of 'war criminal' Golam Azam.

Giving comparative statistics, Hasina said the number of landless has increased from 37 per cent in 1973 to 70 per cent now. Likewise, poverty increased to 80 per cent from 50 per cent while the literacy rate

remained static at 26 per cent in the last 18 years.

In the war-ravaged country, she said, the Bangladesh government established 11,000 primary schools and absorbed 44,000 primary school teachers in government services. But not even 1,000 new primary schools were set up in the post-75 era, she said.

She said defeated forces assassinated Bangabandhu at a time when he announced the economic programme to attain a self-reliant economy and reach the fruits of independence to the common people.

Earlier, on her way to Thakurgaon from Panchagarh, thousands of men, women and children lined up the two sides of road and greeted Hasina by showering petals and shouting slogans. A number of arches were also erected on the route to welcome her.

### Ahmedia Jamaat slates Baitul Mukarram Khatib

Ahmedia Muslim Jamaat, Bangladesh has criticised the chief of Tahfuze Khatme Nabuwat and Khatib of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque Maulana Obaidul Haque for what it called maligning the Ahmedia community, reports UNB.

Secretary for Audio-Video of Ahmedia Muslim Jamaat A K Rezaul Karim yesterday alleged that the Maulana had told a Friday congregation at the Baitul Mukarram Mosque that the Ahmedia community in Dhaka enjoyed obscene movies through dish antenna in their central mosque.

He was addressing a function at the office of the organisation here on the occasion of the inauguration of a 12-hour transmission of Muslim TV Ahmedia including a one-hour programme in Bangla yesterday evening.

Referring to the agitation against the community by the newly floated organisation, Tahfuze Khatme Nabuwat, Rezaul Karim said that the Ahmedia community believed in 'Khatme Nabuwat', and works for the spread of the message of Islam.



President Abdur Rahman Biswas giving away certificates to the surgeons at the first convocation '94 of the International College of Surgeons, Bangladesh at a hotel in the city yesterday. — PID photo

## Delhi postpones 'Agni' launching

NEW DELHI, Jan 7: India postponed test firing a medium-range, surface-to-surface ballistic missile on Friday that is a showcase of the country's missile development programme, reports AP.

The Agni missile, with a maximum range of 2,500 kilometres (1,550 miles), was to be launched from a military range in Chandipur in the eastern state of Orissa.

"We just received information that the launch has been postponed," said P S Bhatnagar, chief spokesman of the Defence Ministry in New Delhi. No new date was given.

Press Trust of India news agency said a technical snag in the missile forced the postponement. The agency did not elaborate.

The planned launch is important because it follows instruction from the Clinton administration on India to either reduce or abort its medium-range ballistic missile programme.

"Despite international pressure to withhold its ongoing missile experiment programme, India is poised to achieve yet another milestone," the Press Trust of India news agency said in a report Friday shortly before the launch was aborted.

The launch also was scheduled shortly after India salvaged a controversial deal to purchase Cryogenic rockets from Russia.

## United States an 'evil power': Saddam

BAGHDAD, Jan 7: Iraqi President Saddam Hussein lashed out at the United States today, branding it an 'evil power' bound to collapse, reports Reuters.

"The Americans always make mistakes. They went wrong in their 30-state aggression (the 1991 Gulf war). They went wrong in Somalia. They will keep on making mistakes," Saddam said in remarks published in Friday's Baghdad newspapers.

"If someone is evil and arrogant, he will inevitably fall on his head," Saddam said in his toughest attack on US in months.

Saddam's remarks were made on Thursday when his Gulf War commanders and other top generals visited him to commemorate the founding of the Iraqi armed forces.

He told them not to be misled by foreign propaganda and believe they lost the war over Kuwait. "The Iraqi army is the victory," Saddam said.

## BJP demands dissolution of Manipur assembly

IMPHAL, Jan 7: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) today demanded the dissolution of the Manipur legislative assembly and holding of fresh elections after normalisation of the law and order situation, reports PTI.

## One killed, 2 hurt in city, N'ganj

DMCH Correspondent

One person was killed and two others were injured in Dhaka and Narayanganj yesterday.

One Molin Sirker, 22, was killed when he slipped off the roof of a running bus at the Satrasta crossing at Tejgaon in the city yesterday morning.

Molin was seriously injured and admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where he succumbed to his injuries.

Son of Sadhu Charan Sirker, Molin was going for a picnic from Tanti Bazar to Shaifpur. The body was sent to the DMCH morgue for autopsy.

In another incident, a college student was stabbed by a group of thugs at Khilgaon in the city yesterday.

The victim, Mohammed Mojibur Rahman, 22, a second year student of the Tejgaon College alleged that a group of five *mastaans* kidnapped him from his residence at Khilgaon to the Nawabpur High School at about 6 am yesterday. The bullies severely assaulted him and then brought him to the Jahan Boarding at Khilgaon and stabbed him grievously.

He was admitted to the DMCH for treatment.

Shafiqur Rahman, 28, a fish monger was stabbed, allegedly by his younger brother Nizamuddin, at Kalagachia, Narayanganj at about 2 pm yesterday.

The victim claimed his brother stabbed him in a clash over land.

Shafiq was admitted to the DMCH.

## Koreas to exchange envoys on N-issue

SEOUL, Jan 7: South and North Korea are expected to exchange special envoys soon to discuss the denuclearisation of their divided peninsula, government officials said Friday, reports AP.

The exchange would be a re-opening of inter-Korea dialogue, cut in 1992 because of nuclear tensions. It could take place within the next several weeks, said the officials from the Foreign Ministry and the National Unification Board.

Chang Jae-ryong, director-general of the Foreign Ministry's America Bureau, confirmed the exchange of special envoys but declined to disclose details.

He said, however, that the exchange should take place before the United States reopens higher-level talks with Communist North Korea on normalising relations.

The schedule, Chang said, is part of a broad package deal reached between the United States and North Korea to resolve a longstanding dispute over the North's nuclear facilities.

The deal basically calls for North Korea to open all seven of

its declared nuclear facilities to international inspections in exchange for improvement ties with the United States, one of North Korea's top policy goals.

The United States, closely allied with pro-Western South Korea, has no formal diplomatic relations with the North.

The rival Koreas signed a denuclearisation accord in 1992, but they differed sharply over inspections rules. South Korea demanded unlimited inspections, while the north insisted that military facilities be exempt from inspections.

Reuters says: South and North Korea exchanged secret envoys in 1985 in a failed bid to set up a meeting between Presidents of the divided peninsula, a Seoul newspaper said today.

The Joong-Ang daily news quoted an unidentified government source as saying the two Koreas exchanged visits by Chang Se-Dong, then director of the South's Agency for National Security Planning, and Ho Dam, then secretary of North Korea's ruling Workers' Party.

Presidential aides declined to comment on the reports.



UN peace-keeping officers from Norway and Sweden examining figures cut into the rock in Qana, a south Lebanese village, mentioned by ST John in the New Testament as the site where Jesus Christ turned water into wine in his first miracle. A suggestion to build a mosque on the site has angered the villagers' Shia Muslim majority as well as their Christian compatriots. — AFP photo

## The Midnight File

### Angolan rebels threaten to boycott military talks

LUSAKA (Zambia), Jan 7: Angolan rebels said Friday they would boycott military talks in the West African island nation of Sao Tome and Principe unless outstanding political issues were resolved during peace talks here. The UNITA rebels and Angola's government resumed peace talks Thursday in Lusaka, the Zambian capital, aimed at ending Angola's 18-year civil war, reports AP.

### Five killed in Sarajevo

SARAJEVO, Jan 7: Five people were killed and 25 wounded in fighting between Serbs and Muslims in the Bosnian capital Sarajevo today, hospital sources said. One French UN soldier was also wounded today when a mortar bomb landed in the car park of the French base in Skenderija in the city centre, destroying one truck and damaging an armoured personnel carrier, reports Reuters.

## 4 East European states welcome NATO plan

WARSAW, Jan 7: Defence chiefs of four east European countries today welcomed a NATO plan to offer them closer military links, but called for assurances that it was a step towards membership of the alliance, reports Reuters.

The defence ministers of Poland, Slovakia and Hungary, and the Czech Republic's deputy defence minister, also asked for NATO to state clearly that they can one day become members.

The participants in the meeting attentively discussed (NATO's) partnership for peace initiative," they said in a statement after talks on coordinating a joint strategy before the NATO

summit in Brussels on Monday and Tuesday.

"They believe it is a step in the right direction, favourable to the idea of multilateral security, and leads to a broadening of cooperation between NATO and the states of the central eastern Europe," they said.

But the four sides, known collectively as the Visegrad group, demanded a clear commitment from NATO that it was willing to let them join at some time in the future.

The states of the Visegrad group are convinced that accepting and carrying out the 'partnership for peace' initiative must lead to full membership of NATO," they said in the statement.

## Sindh Governor offers Fateha at Zia's mazar

Governor of the Pakistan province of Sindh Hakim Mohammed Said, now on a visit here, yesterday offered Fateha and laid floral wreaths at the mazar of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman, reports BSS.

Hakim Said, who is also the President of the Hamdard Foundation of Pakistan, later offered Fateha at the mazars of Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy, Khawaja Nazimuddin and Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazul Huq.

Later, the Governor of Sindh inaugurated the annual sales conference of the Hamdard Laboratories (Waqf) Bangladesh at the BIRDEM auditorium.

Hakim Said is a governing body member and life trustee of the Hamdard Foundation of Bangladesh.

Speaking on the occasion, he urged the employees of the Hamdard Bangladesh to raise its sale proceeds through producing and marketing of quality medicines.

Hakim Said gave the directive to use the sale proceeds of Hamdard for promotion of education in Bangladesh. He also gave away prizes among the best salesmen of the Hamdard products.

## Hardrock

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Bangladesh as down payment. Bangladesh will also pay in local currency an amount equivalent to 18.49 million dollars for the project besides incurring the expenditure for communication and infrastructure development.

After a two-year grace period, Petrobangla will repay the loan in 13 years with interest at the rate of four per cent. The loan is to be repaid in equal instalments after every six months with interest which should be paid in hard currency.

Sources say, the mode of repayment, as well as other terms and conditions of the draft contract, will need approval of the higher authorities of the government.

The hardrock mine was discovered at Madhyapara in Dinajpur in 1974 while the mining project was approved by the ECNEC in 1978. Later, it was included in the Fourth Five-Year Plan.

About 1.65 million tonnes of hardrock are expected to be extracted from the mine each year for use in the construction of dams, embankments, roads and highways.

## Manzur

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had suggested Manzur lodge GD entries in all the police stations against the violators, Shahjahan added.

The press conference was also attended by convener of the Alliance Committee conducting the election campaign for Manzur, Nirmal Sen and member secretary of the Legal Aid Committee Advocate Idrisur Rahman.

Nirmal Sen specifically said, "The BNP, Awami League, Jatiya Party, Jamaat and other parties have dishonoured the decision of the Election Commission."

"Our candidate Manzurul Ahsan Khan is the only exception," he added.

Idrisur Rahman said, "We have already informed the Election Commission of such activities. We hoped it (the EC) would take action after investigation; but we see no sign of such action."

## Speakers' meet

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be the first meeting of the association.

According to sources in the Jatiya Sangsad secretariat, the conference is expected to discuss, among other things, the ways of setting up of a SAARC Parliament in the region.

Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali proposed such a supra Parliament during the Kathmandu conference of the SAARC Speakers in 1992.

Razzak Ali, while making the proposal, said at the conference that such a regional body of the elected representatives of the people would definitely help the governments take a regional approach to resolving common problems confronting the SAARC nations.

Razzak Ali also referred to the activities of the European Parliament and maintained that the SAARC Parliament, if constituted, could contribute to increasing mutual cooperation in the economic fields of the regional countries.

The Bangladesh-sponsored idea earned appreciation of all the six other SAARC Speakers.

The January 28 meeting would also discuss, in addition to studying the ways of setting up a SAARC Parliament, the legal and technical aspects of conducting Parliament sessions at times of crisis. The Speakers would exchange their views on the issue and narrate their personal experiences in such cases, JS Secretariat sources said.

The conference is also expected to consider some exchange programmes between the member states.

Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali will preside over the meetings during the two-day programme.

## FYP target

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In the FY 94-96 rolling programme, the power and transport sectors have been given the highest amount, each receiving over Tk 1100 crore outlays. The agriculture sector is in the number five position with Tk 716 crore allocation.

The increase in FY 94-96 rolling programme allocation was made on the basis that a 6.2 per cent growth in GDP is now required to achieve the Fourth Five Year Plan's growth target of 5 per cent.

In 1992-93, the economy grew only at the rate of 4.3 per cent.

## Justice Rouf

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enforcing agencies and the local administration in the four cities.

The CEC said the 12-point code of conduct for the candidates was being printed and would be sent to all the political parties and others concerned.

Speaking on the strength and functions of the EC, Justice Rouf said, the manpower of the commission was not sufficient to perform its enormous duties. "The commission could not concentrate on developing the electoral process in the past three years because it had to conduct elections one after another."

The EC had, meantime, suggested to the higher authorities that election offices be set up in each thana and enhance the manpower of the EC for smooth elections.

The CEC, quoting relevant laws, said all government officials, employees and the law-enforcing personnel, while performing election duties, would be on deputation to the Election Commission.