

DOWN TO EARTH

Child Labour in City

By A. S. M. Nurunnabi

It has been lately observed that child labour in the city has been increasing at an alarming rate. The rising population of child labour suggests that the existing state of industrialisation or welfare services has failed to make any reasonable contribution to the wellbeing of a vulnerable segment of our city population.

The growth of child labour at an increasing rate can be attributed to various factors. The important ones include recent demographic changes, creating vastly expanded population of the young, increase in the number of landless labourers, disproportionate urban migration of rural families, overwhelming concentration of rural immigrants in a few industrial centres, underemployment of the adult members of the family, frequent natural as well as man-made calamities, etc.

Whereas the children tend to make available an abundant supply of labour, they are in a weaker position in the labour market and no security of their jobs. They are employed in unskilled work such as assisting a bus or tempo conductor, assisting a mechanic in a repairing shop, serving in hotels and restaurants, etc. They do not have any bargaining capacity.

Child labour in non-organisational setting consists of various public places or the streets where the children do petty manual works for petty remuneration at undefined hours of the day. They can be seen near movie halls and big shopping centres where in return for a small sum they serve as parked car keepers. In market places such children move behind the shoppers to carry their loads for nominal remuneration. Some other typical jobs outside organisational setting which the children do at the roadside or the market corners are shoe polishing, vending, etc.

The work outside organisations knows no code of behaviour and no promise of future. The work conditions are as undefined as the work setting itself.

In the recent past a small survey was conducted in the city in order to understand the

problem of work and living of the child labourers in non-organisational setting. Generally they belong to the categories of minto, shoe shiners, car keepers, cleaners and small vendors. General impressions from that survey suggest that they can be numbered in thousands. They suffer from poor nutrition, lack of sufficient clothing and even a minimum of a shelter. A good many of them are found to take shelter in various places like pavements of railway and ferry terminals, corridors of office buildings, shopping centres and even on the roadside under the open sky.

The children in the slum poor families are the most neglected section of the city population. Most of the children of school going age in such families do not attend any school at all. They contribute to the vicious circle of poverty in the urban sector and to the continuity of generations of poor. A previous field survey of such children who were found working as labourers or as domestic servants observed that the fathers of the most of the children were also unskilled manual labourers, some of the mothers worked outside home to augment income.

Although poverty is the single most important factor pushing the children of young age to accept physical labour as a means of survival, it is unlikely that they can change the situation of poverty in their adult life. Lack of education facilities for such children and lack of necessary support services to enable them to prepare for more gainful vocations can only increase the intensity of their poverty.

It is to be admitted that any appreciable elimination or prevention of child labour is not an easy task perhaps impossible in our society in the near future. Since the root of the problem of child labour is the poverty of the people, it may be possible to achieve some palliative of the problem by measures of poverty alleviation.

Some sociologists suggest that an adequate approach to the problem may consist of services at two levels. First,

there should be rehabilitative and protective services for the existing child labourers and their families. At the second level, the services should take the strategy of family and community development which shall include preventive services for the risk people. That is, potential child labourers may be brought under the scope of social services to provide for their basic requirements. In fact, there are few government or NGO projects concerned with provision of such requirements of the urban poor and their children. NGOs working in the particular field of education of such urban disadvantaged are fewer. However, mention may be made of the activities of one particular NGO namely, Underprivileged Children's Educational Programmes, Bangladesh. This NGO exclusively addresses itself to the educational and social rehabilitation needs of working boys and girls in urban areas.

An important development towards improvement of the lot of the children of the city engaged in garments industries, has taken place, as lately reported, as a result of the proposed Harkins Bill or Child Labour Deterrence Act of the United States. The Bill seeking to ban imports to the United States of goods produced with child labour in any country has prompted Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) to offset the impact of the Bill on the garments industries by setting up schools and medicare centres for the working children of the city shortly in cooperation with the UNICEF, International Labour Organisation (ILO) and a local NGO.

The history of child labour is replete with evidence of the tendency of employers to exploit child workers in the absence of adequate legal regulation. The eradication of the evils resulting from the employment of children is a primary duty of a civilised community. The children are not equipped to defend themselves; they must depend on what is given to them. They are, therefore, victims of circumstances.



The Malibagh Bazar, a vegetable market, now has encroached on both sides of the Biswa Road, a very busy thoroughfare in the city, causing serious traffic problems. Yet the authorities prefer to turn a blind eye. —Star photo

Dr Kamal blames both

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 mise with the fundamentalist, communal and autocratic forces", the GF leader warned.

The ruling party had closed its eyes to the fundamentalists' recent atrocities for 'protecting its throne', he said adding the main opposition party had also become desperate for going to power.

Criticising Awami League's boycott of Parliament session, along with the Jamaat and the JP, Dr Kamal said that the continued boycott had threatened Parliament and the parliamentary democracy and kept the AL hostage to the fundamentalist and autocratic forces.

"They (Awami League) are now silent about the dastardly acts of the fundamentalists, helpless and unable to support the popular demand for Golam Azam's trial as war criminal", Dr Kamal remarked. "In fact, it is not possible to uphold the spirit of democracy, liberation and progress by joining hand with the fundamentalists and the autocrats".

"Those who are speaking of democracy and the spirit of liberation war — despite their association with the autocratic JP and the anti-liberation — Jamaat — are living in the fools' paradise", the GF leader

said. He pledged to launch an agitation against the JP-Jamaat clique and their allies.

Dr Kamal demanded of the Prime Minister and the Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina to implement the four-point accord for the trial of Golam Azam for war crimes.

He also demanded immediate arrest of Golam Azam and formation of a special tribunal to try him.

"Azam's war crimes cannot be overlooked on the plea of restoration of his citizenship. The citizenship issue doesn't matter at all as regards his trial as criminal", Dr Kamal said.

Replying to a question, Dr Kamal said his party would launch an all-out agitation against the fundamentalist and communal forces and would work to forge a greater national unity on the issue.

Responding to another question, he said "I urge the AL to sever its links with the anti-liberation and autocratic forces".

He told another questioner "we would meet shortly to identify the war crime charges against Golam Azam for legal action".

Moudud threatens out-govt agitation

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JAMALPUR, June 24: Jatiya Party leader Moudud Ahmed said opposition parties would launch an out-govt agitation from June 27 if it does not bring a caretaker government bill in Parliament by June 26, reports UNB.

Addressing the biennial conference of the district JP in the Public Hall here today, he said the Opposition would announce the modality of a caretaker government on June 27, a day after the deadline set by them for the governing party for placing in the House such a bill.

"The opposition parties have unanimously decided not to participate in any election under the present government. Moudud said the government had decided to retrench one lakh government employees this year and cautioned all to be alert from now and expedite the planned agitation for fall of the government."

JP president member Maj Gen (ret) Mahmudul Hasan MP, Syeda Rizia Fayez, MA Sattar and Abul Hasnat also spoke at the conference, presided by district JP president M Reza Khan.

NATO warplanes

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the agreement, such as exchanges of war prisoners, have yet to be met.

In a 24-hour period ending Friday, UN monitors reported artillery and mortar exchanges in northeastern Bosnia, around Dobo, Gradacac and in the so-called Posavina corridor, a crucial Serb-held link to Serb holdings in western Bosnia and part of Croatia.

There was similar activity in central Bosnia, southwest of Tuzla and in the extreme northwest around Bihac.

And there were indications that fighting would worsen.

Increases of military activity have been noted around Visoko, 25 kilometers northeast of Sarajevo, as well as around the Serb-held areas of Dobo and Prijedor, according to UN reports.

Government forces, chipping away at Bosnian Serb territorial gains, accepted the cease-fire only reluctantly.

Annink said it appeared they were responsible for most of the violations, with Serb artillery fire usually coming in response to government provocations.

Cease-fire violations will be discussed at a meeting of Serb and Bosnian government and military representatives in Sarajevo on Saturday.

UN officials were hoping that military commanders, including Bosnian Serb.

CU strike

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quired about their treatment.

The VC's planned meeting with the student organisations to ease the situation arising out of Thursday's incident could be held today as BCL leaders refused to attend it.

JCD wins 11 posts in SUCSU polls

From Our Correspondent

SYLHET, June 24: The Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal JCD has bagged eleven seats including the Vice-President, General Secretary and Assistant General Secretary in the election of the central students union of the Shahjalal University of Science & Technology (SUCSU) held yesterday. The Chhatra Oikya, a combine of the Bangladesh Chhatra League (M-I) and Chhatra Union got seven seats while one remained tied up. JCD also won all the 13 seats of the Shahporan Hall union.

Kigali

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ing countries to escape the massacres and civil war in Rwanda could soon reach 1 million, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees said Friday.

Already 514,000 Rwandans have sought refuge in neighbouring countries. But the UN officials estimate that another 2.5 million Rwandans have been displaced within the country, many of whom are trying to cross the border.

Rwanda's total population is about 8 million.

"We have upped our planning figure to 500,000 new refugees mainly because of reports from inside Rwanda of mass movement of people," said UNHCR spokeswoman Sylvana Foa.

EC reforms

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elections. Meanwhile, some of the ministers were opposed to the idea of resigning before the elections since, they thought, it virtually meant accepting the Opposition demand for a caretaker government. They however, did not raise the issue when the BNP high command discussed the bill at a meeting Thursday night with Prime Minister and party chief Begum Khalida Zia in the chair.

Although the draft bill was approved by the party high command at that meeting, the cabinet members who are lawyers, on the advice of Begum Zia, scrutinised it once again yesterday morning at the residence of Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali.

Mexico beat Ireland

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each half and nearly a third on a breakaway that goalkeeper Packie Bonner prevented from going in.

The heat and humidity was intense, with temperatures 44 degrees centigrade (115F) on the field. Tempers also flared among the Irish as the match wore on.

"The Mexicans didn't beat us, the weather did," said Irish coach Jack Charlton.

In the 65th minute, Alberto Garcia Aspe found Garcia wide open in the centre, and from 18 meters out, his low right-foot shot was lethal.

"They scored at crucial times," said Charlton.

The second goal completely cut Ireland's legs and some players, and Charlton, lost their cool, bitterly complaining to officials.

Bonner made a couple of great saves to prevent the game from turning into a rout.

Thousands of Mexican fans in the stands were calling for "Hugo, Hugo," referring to Hugo Sanchez, who was sidelined after having led Mexico's offence for over a decade, when Garcia's goal sent them into a frenzy.

Ireland, boosted by a sea of fans in the 61,219-capacity Citrus Bowl, ran its heart out just like it did during its 1-0 upset Saturday of Italy, but came up short this time. Ireland had been counting on pressure from the air against the small Mexican defence but it rarely materialized.

Charlton had warned the sauna-like conditions would favour the Mexican team and he was right. Mexico had lost 1-0 in its opener Sunday against Norway.

Ireland forward Tommy Coyne missed close in the fifth minute on a break in front of goalkeeper Jorge Campos but otherwise the Irish offence mostly consisted of long passes in the humid Florida weather.

Mexico play Italy next Tuesday and Ireland take on Norway to finish out the group's first-round matches.

Ireland relied on more sporadic counter-attacks and overlapping full back Terry Phelan created a good chance on one such break down the left in the sixth minute.

which striker Tommy Coyne could not quite reach to any purpose.

Irish right back Denis Irwin was booked in the 26th minute for time-wasting and Mexico's Juan Del Olmo followed just before halftime for a foul.

Steve Staunton, in the left, blasted outside the near post in the 34th minute and five minutes later sent a high ball into the area.

Captain Andy Townsend met it with his head and Mexican goalkeeper Jorge Campos did well to turn the ball around his right-hand post for a corner.

TEAMS

IRELAND: 1-Pat Bonner, 2-Denis Irwin, 14-Phil Babb, 5-Paul McGrath, 3-Terry Phelan, 8-Ray Houghton, 7-Andy Townsend, 10-John Sheridan, 6-Roy Keane, 11-Steve Staunton (21-Jason McAttee 67), 15-Tommy Coyne (9-John Aldridge 67).

MEXICO: 1- Jorge Campos, 2-Claudio Suarez, 3-Juan Ramirez Perales, 4-Ignacio Ambriz, 6-Marcelino Bernal, 14-Joaquin Del Olmo, 20-Jorge Rodriguez (21-Raul Gutierrez 80), 10-Luis Garcia, 8-Alberto Garcia Aspe, 7-Carlos Hermosillo (19-Luis Miguel Salvador 80), 11-Luis Alves.

Referee: Kurt Roethlisberger (Switzerland).

Yellow cards: Mexico — Joaquin Del Olmo (45), Jorge Campos (57)

Ireland — Denis Irwin (26), Terry Phelan (70)

UP member shot dead

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, June 24: Union Parishad member and BNP general secretary of Lohalia union of Patuakhali district Kalu Mridha, 55, was shot dead in day light by gunmen at Palpara Hat under Patuakhali Sadar Thana last evening.

Police said, some 8 to 10 armed miscreants shot two rounds of bullet in the abdomen and throat of Mridha in the market place.

Police arrested one Khokan Sikder, 35, today in this connection while cases against 9 others were filed with the Patuakhali thana.

Meanwhile, a member of the BNP standing committee, who is also a minister, told this correspondent yesterday that if the opposition parties wanted a fool proof electoral system, they should positively respond to the bill and return to the House to take part in the discussion on it.

The Midnight File

Korean girl punched in Japan

TOKYO, June 24: A man punched a 14-year-old Korean girl at a train station Friday in the most serious attack yet against Korean residents in Japan following tensions over North Korea's nuclear programme. A police spokesman at Yokohama, just south of Tokyo, said the girl was wearing "chima chogori," a uniform for female students at North Korean schools in Japan, when she was attacked, reports AP.

4 civilians killed, 32 hurt in Yemen fighting

ADEN, Yemen, June 24: Four civilians were killed and 32 people wounded today as Northern troops kept up their blitz of Aden, advancing steadily through southern defences. Katyusha rockets slammed into the districts of Khormaksar close to Aden Airport. Maala-Near the port and Sheikh Osman in the northern suburbs, killing four people and wounding 28 others, hospital officials said. In fierce fighting on the north-west front at Bir Ahmed, 15 kilometers (nine miles) from Aden, four soldiers were wounded, they added, reports AFP.

Moshood Abiola challenges arrest

LAGOS, June 24: Moshood Abiola, the politician who declared himself president of Nigeria, challenged his arrest in a suit filed at the Federal High Court today, the News Agency of Nigeria reported, reports Reuter.

NAN said that, in a motion filed by lawyer Gani Fawehinmi, Abiola asked the court to declare his arrest on Thursday and subsequent detention a violation of his human and political rights.

Abiola, who is widely believed to have won the annulled presidential election a year ago, asked the court to compel the military government to free him.

The application to the court was backed by an affidavit signed by Doyin Abiola, one of the detained politician's wives.

Housing project

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 assistance (PPTA) under which a detailed study for the project will be undertaken. Four experts from ADB along with locals will conduct the study and complete it within six months, officials said.

The project, aimed at providing shelter to the urban poor, mainly slum dwellers, in four metropolitan cities and major towns, is scheduled to be implemented by the end of 1995.

"According to government's policy and the decision, such projects can only be implemented by an organisation like the proposed NHA, but it is yet to be created," officials mentioned.

When contacted, an authoritative source in the Ministry of Housing and Works said the formation of the NHA is now under process. The draft of an Act to create this new organisation has been prepared and is being scrutinised by the officials, said the source adding, "after approval from the Cabinet and vetting from the law ministry, the draft will be placed before Parliament for passage."

Hata faced a growing danger Friday night of being forced to resign or call elections as talks snagged in deadlock. Hata is likely to lose unless he can strike a deal with the Socialists.

WB: Market

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government in late April depriving the ruling coalition of its majority, has yet to make its stand clear about the no-confidence motion.

Hata faced a growing danger Friday night of being forced to resign or call elections as talks snagged in deadlock. Hata is likely to lose unless he can strike a deal with the Socialists.

The bank also felt that imposing hard budget constraints and restructuring the SOEs will vastly improve the portfolios of the NCBs and the two denationalised banks.

Any progress in the financial sector will however, largely depend on the pace at which the economy can overcome the current weakness in aggregate demand, the WB report said.

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