

DOWN TO EARTH

Bane of Illegal Toll Collection in City

By A S M Nurunnabi

Illegal toll collection is rather a post-independence phenomenon. It takes many forms which adversely affect the ethos of our economic life. The factors helping its growth are many, the predominant of which is a general erosion of values for a disciplined way of life, coupled with organised groupings of evil elements of society to make easy money by way of exactions, extortions and other forms of forced gains. The agencies of law and order are sometimes found to be helpless in the face of the baneful growth of this phenomenon.

The evil is not confined to any particular area. According to a recent news report, the businessmen and industrialists in the Motijheel and Dilkusha Commercial areas are frequently subject to harassment and threats of violence by groups of illegal toll collectors. They force their entry into different commercial offices in those areas demanding subscriptions in the names of various organisations and purposes.

It was reported by some businessmen of those areas that activities of such elements have alarmingly increased lately with their usual demands for money for various political parties, social organisations and cultural groups. Sometimes names of notable personalities are used for such illegal purposes. The amounts of such money demands are in most cases not small. Some businessmen in their anxiety to avoid unpleasant situations sometimes give in to their pressure. Others who hesitate or refuse are subjected to threats of harassment and violence.

This is the normal pattern of illegal toll collection which afflicts other areas also. This malaise has become a regular practice with anti-social elements. People, mainly business classes suffered from this from time to time in the past. When any resistance occurs, it sometimes leads to problems of law and order.

Some typical examples of illegal toll collection are presented in the following lines.

It is reported that approximately three hundred trucks carrying cattle for sale enter the city every day. Each truck carries a load of 15 to 25 cows and bullocks. Such convoys of trucks begin their journey from Aricha Ghat where there are reportedly several sheds used as transit camps for the cattle collected from the northern and southern regions of the country. These heads of cattle are carried to Aricha Ghat either by boats or trucks using ferry services. This Ghat is said to be the assembly point for such heads of cattle which number a total average of ten thousand each day. They are distributed in trucks to different areas of the country including Dhaka through a corridor passing through Gabtali terminal.

All cattle-carrying trucks are forced to stop at Gabtali, where organised groups are said to operate for the purpose. The amount of illegal tolls exacted here by these groups varies from Tk. 200 to Tk. 500 for each head of cattle, depending on its size and physical condition. It is reportedly impossible to pass through this barrier at Gabtali without making payment of



Ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party activists brought out a procession in the city yesterday urging people to attend today's ground rally at the Manik Mia Avenue. — Star photo

WB, IMF policies hinder economy: Oxfam

LONDON, Sept 30: British aid agency Oxfam castigated the IMF and World Bank on Thursday for what it called their failure to alleviate poverty in Latin America and said their policies had in fact made existing inequalities worse, reports Reuter.

Oxfam, in a report on International Monetary Fund-World Bank policies in Latin America over the past decade, said it did not question the need for realistic economic policies in developing countries facing chronic trade and financial problems.

But it added: "Oxfam believes that current World Bank-IMF approaches are actually jeopardising prospects for sustainable economic recovery and poverty reduction."

The report, due to be released in full on Thursday in Madrid to coincide with the annual IMF-World Bank meeting there, said the number of people living in poverty in Latin America had increased from 62 million to 93 million between 1980 and 1990.

In Chile, it said, minimum wages were 20 per cent lower

Cuban leader meets Hasina, seeks support against US sanctions

The visiting Cuban Communist Party leader Ramon Fernandez yesterday met the country's opposition leaders including Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina to secure opinion against American economic sanctions imposed on his country.

Fernandez is scheduled to meet the ruling BNP leader and Deputy Leader of Parliament Prof. Badruddoza Chowdhury this afternoon.

Accompanied by Delhi-based Cuban counsellor Victor Baminez, the communist leader met Sheikh Hasina yesterday evening and requested her to support the Cuban cause through registering protest against the 'unjust' economic sanctions imposed by the United States.

During the meeting with Hasina, the Cuban leader informed her that 88 member states of the United Nations had last month voted against the US imposed sanctions while only three states, including the US, supported the sanctions. Those who had supported the US cause included Israel and Paraguay, Bangladesh, however, abstained from voting.

The Cuban leader also invited Sheikh Hasina to an international solidarity gathering to be held in the Cuban capital Havana next month.

Sheikh Hasina is learnt to have expressed her solidarity with the Cuban people and promised to attend the Havana gathering if the political situation in Bangladesh at the time permits.

The Cuban leader also met the leaders of the country's Left Democratic Front (LDF) and sought their active sympathy.

The visiting Cubans also attended two separate receptions hosted by the Bangladesh-Cuba Solidarity Association and the LDF leader Rashed Khan Menon MP.

Leaders of both the ruling and opposition parties attended the functions.

The Midnight File

NATO for more forceful response to Serb violations

SEVILLE, Sept 30: US Defence Secretary William Perry said today that NATO had agreed to call on the United Nations for a much more forceful response to Bosnian Serb violations of UN Security Council resolutions. Speaking at the end of a two-day meeting of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation defence ministers, Perry said: "We reached a consensus that NATO and the UN should use airpower more forcibly," reports AFP.

Delhi frees 2 top Kashmiri leaders

NEW DELHI, Sept 30: Two top Kashmiri leaders, Syed Ali Shah Geelani of the Jamaat-i-Islami and Prof Abdul Ghani Lone, Chairman of the People's Conference were today ordered to be released, an official spokesman here said, reports PTI.

The two leaders had been detained for over a year under the state public safety in the wake of some militants taking sanctuary in the Hazratbal shrine in September last year.

While, JMR Lone is under treatment in the capital, the Jamaat leader is detained in a jail in Jammu.

Dhaka-Delhi accord on scientific cooperation

NEW DELHI, Sept 30: Bangladesh and India signed here today a two-year working programme of scientific and technological cooperation between the councils of scientific and industrial research of the two countries, reports BSS.

The agreement was signed following four-day talks held between the two countries, Anwarul Islam, Additional Secretary-in-Charge, Ministry of Science and Technology, led the three-member Bangladesh delegation while the Indian side was led by Dr SK Joshi, Secretary, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research,



A crowd gathers outside a pharmacy in the Indian capital New Delhi yesterday to purchase medicine effective against the pneumonic plague after two people died from the disease here and at least 19 others were reported to be infected. — AFP photo

No plague cases

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had recently come from India and entered Bangladesh with out any medical check up to stay at home for seven days as a precautionary self-quarantine.

If any plague symptoms are noticed, the people were advised to immediately contact their local health offices.

In another decision, the National Anti-Plague Committee asked the city corporations to clean the cities of wastes and filth by 5 each afternoon.

People were also advised to dump their garbage in designated dustbins as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, the plague scare has sparked off spontaneous rodent eradication campaigns at many places of the country as one more person suspected of carrying the germ was hospitalised in Chapainawabganj district yesterday.

According to reports received in Dhaka, people in different districts have started killing rats and mice, in a bid to ward off the scourge inching towards the borders of the country.

Sales of mousetraps and pesticides as well as plague-preventive drugs have also increased, the reports said.

A UNB report from Chapainawabganj said yesterday that another Bangladeshi national, who returned from the plague-stricken western Indian township of Surat, was admitted at the Gomastapur Health Centre.

Mizanur Rahman, 26, re-

2 die in Delhi

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Six Gulf countries have cut sea and air links with India along with Egypt, Yemen and Malaysia.

Nepal, Taiwan, China, Bangladesh, The Philippines and Pakistan were among nations slapping varying degrees of curbs on travel to and from India. The United States and Israel have issued advisories to their nationals to avoid plague-hit zones.

Thousands of passengers were stranded in New Delhi and in Bombay due to stalled traffic.

Haiti

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for Friday's events, which began with a morning Mass attended by thousands at the cathedral.

Reuter adds: The Security Council Thursday lifted fuel, trade and arms sanctions against Haiti, beginning the morning after President Jean-Bertrand Aristide returns from three years of exile.

Four of a family

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with a truck coming from the opposite direction.

Joynab Bibi, 40, the wife of one Alhaj Abul Hossain — a businessman of Chandpur — her son Monty, 12, daughter Dipa, 15, and mother Abedunnissa, 65, as well as the car driver, Rafiqul Islam, 25, died on the spot.

Joynab Bibi's eldest son Sumon, also in the car, was seriously hurt and had to be shifted to the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in the capital last night in a most critical condition.

Meanwhile, police and local people rescued the injured passengers of the bus and sent them to nearby hospitals and clinics.

A case was lodged with the Gazaria police station.

BMA

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ment implement the demands we would have done that," Dr Majed said defending the BMA's intransigence.

The government has declared (through a press note) the health services essential and banned all strikes and threatened us with punitive measures if we do not withdraw the strike. Such a press note is reminiscent of that once issued by an autocrat," said secretary general of the doctors' national organisation Dr Gazi Abdul Haq.

The Health Minister and the Deputy Health Minister cannot be spared from the responsibility of preventing the implementation of the demands and resorting to repressive measures and provocative statements," Gazi Abdul Haq added.

Wreck of sunken ferry found

STOCKHOLM, Sept 30: Searchers have found the wreck of the sunken ferry Estonia off the coast of Finland, the Swedish news agency TT reported today, says Reuter.

The wreck of the Estonia, lying in around 80 metres (250 feet) of water in the Baltic Sea and believed to contain the bodies of more than 900 people after it sunk on Wednesday, was discovered by the Finnish rescue vessel Suunia.

Procession

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Saiful Islam, Abdus Samad and others.

The PPPKSP in a press release last night protested the doctors' attack on its procession and demanded their punishment.

Later at a press conference president of BMA Dr M A Majed regretted the incident.

Indian family

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An Indian couple from Calcutta, their two children and a pet dog anxiously wandered all over town from early morning after hotels refused them entry apprehending they might be carrying the plague germ.

Frustrated and exhausted, the family, however, managed to convince the owner of a lesser known hotel in the town just before the sun was about to set.

The names of the members of the family could not be known.

Plague phobia has also gripped Cox's Bazar for the last few days and the sale of mousetraps and rodent killers has increased manifold in the district.

PM: Rupsha bridge

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Begum Zia said her government has already established a university and a medical college in Khulna and measures have been taken to increase the supply of drinking water. A water treatment plant would be built soon, she assured.

She said some 15,000 digital telephone connections will be given in Khulna.

While speaking at the meeting Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali put forward various demands of the local people for the development of Khulna division.

Presided over by district BNP President Nurul Islam, the meeting was also addressed by Post and Telecommunications Minister Tariqul Islam, State Minister for Social Welfare Fazlur Rahman, State Minister for Sports and Youth Sadek Hossain, Khulna City Mayor Sheikh Tayebur Rahman, Whip Ashraf Hossain, Mashuiur Rahman MP, Syeda Nargis Ali MP, Golam Sarwar Jamnadar, Nazrul Islam Manju, Sardar Moinuddin and Syed Shamsul Haq.

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