

DOWN TO EARTH

An Altruistic Institution with a Difference

By A S M Nurunnabi

It is no easy task to set up an institution with private initiative and funds in the service sector. Though in Bangladesh such institutions are rare, the Bangladesh Protibondhi Foundation is such an institution, situated at Maghbazar in Dhaka. It is dedicated to the services of disabled children of Bangladesh. Set up in 1977 on the initiative, drive and commitment of Sultana S Zarhan, a senior psychologist and Professor and Chairman, Department of Special Education, Institute of Education and Research, University of Dhaka, with a group of similarly dedicated personages, the Foundation offers a number of core programmes and some supportive services to help disabled children in the functioning and development of their limited faculties.

The three important aims and objectives of the Foundation include, among others, the promotion, co-ordination and sponsoring of activities for the well-being of the mentally and developmentally disabled in Bangladesh. The core programmes of the Foundation cover a wide range of activities. Following are some of the highlights of such activities.

The Foundation runs a diagnostic clinic for screening all types of childhood disabilities. The clinic comprises a medical assessment unit, conducted by a qualified paediatrician, a psychology unit conducted in the light of the prevailing theories of intelligence tests as adapted for Bangladesh, and a physical assessment unit for individual observation of such physical aspects as posture of the child, reflexes, deformities, if any, muscle tone, etc.

Based on all the assessment results, the professional staff of the clinic come to a consensus and make the final decision about the diagnosis and advice

for the management of the patient.

Children diagnosed as intellectually disabled and living in Dhaka city are enrolled in the special school known as Kalyani. The age range of the children of this school is 4 years to 17 years. The children are placed in different classes according to their age and ability. Each class is named after local flowers, such as Kamal Koli, Champa Koli, Karabi and Madhab.

According to the needs of students in each class as per age group, the curricula are specially designed with emphasis on developing appropriate behaviour and social skills and basic survival skills (such as eating, toileting, dressing and community living skill) so that they can be self-reliant in their adult life. In the classes for the higher age group, the handicapped children are trained in functional academic skills such as reading, writing, counting which are related to every day living skill.

In addition to all the training imparted to the age group 13 to 17 years, each and every student is given training in some vocational and pre-vocational skills.

Besides, the Foundation runs a regular class for the cerebral Palsy children. The children in this class are mainly given physiotherapy, training in communicative and cognitive skills according to the requirement of the children.

The Foundation also offers a home-centre based training for the parents/ caregivers of the disabled children residing in the areas where no services for the disabled children exist. This programme known as the Distance Training Package Programme offers such services as physiotherapy, speech therapy, cognitive and academic skill training and social and self-help training. This

training programme is conducted through trained physiotherapist and special education teachers.

Another important aspect of the Foundation's programmes is sheltered workshop known as Karukor. Here the physically disabled adults who are awarded a school leaving certificate are employed in the sheltered workshop under trained supervisors who teach woodwork, craft work and ceramics.

The Foundation runs a variety of support services to help the existing programmes of the Foundation. In this respect, an important function is that it serves as resource centre for other organisations such as FCIPS, DCH and students of the Institute of Post Graduate Medicine and Research (IPGMR). Children's Hospital and National Institute of Preventive and Social Medicine (NIPSON) and give opportunity to conduct research in the area of Intellectual Disability and other Disabilities.

The Foundation represents pioneering efforts dedicated to the service development for the disabled children and adults and running programmes at different levels for various types of professionals for other organisations. It is learnt that the contribution of donor agencies, local and foreign, in building up this institution is no less significant. The Foundation has been largely successful in creating awareness that the professional development in the area of disability is a must without which no rehabilitation of the handicapped can adequately take place. The Foundation's work is particularly laudable in the context that it provides simple and low-cost methods of case identification and treatment, estimates of prevalence and identification of risk factors.

Adhikary

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were not met.

The home secretary or any other senior officials of the Home Ministry could not be contacted for comments. The Home Minister is presently abroad.

The Director General of the Ansars was also not available for comments last night.

UNB adds: Defying an ultimatum to restore order, rebel Ansars sepoys continued their agitation in the Shafipur Academy and Ansars Headquarters in the city yesterday.

Authorities reportedly had given an ultimatum to the rebels to remove barricades from the Dhaka-Tangail highway by 1 pm and deployed huge contingent of police at the academy. The BDR were moved ahead with the guidance of our elder leaders."

He was home minister under Koirala's government, which was defeated in mid-term elections on November 15 by the Nepali Communist Party-United Marxist-Leninist (NCP-UML).

The NCP-UML, under Prime Minister Manmohan Adhikary heads a minority government but has formed a loose coalition with the pro-Indian Nepal Sadhavabana Party and other left-leaning MPs.

Ansars sepoys posted under different police stations to guard important installations in the city joined the rebel Ansars at the Khilgaon Headquarters leaving their respective duties yesterday, the rebels claimed.

He was the head of the liquid propulsion laboratory of the Indian Space Research Organisation.

Police in the southern state of Kerala, where many of the space laboratories are located, began probing the spy ring after arresting Mariam Rasheed, a citizen of the archipelago nation of the Maldives.

The new government must secure the tacit support of either the royalist Rashtra Party (RPP) or the NC to survive a constitutional vote of confidence on December 15.

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Koirala gripped the Khilgaon area and the local people brought out a procession in the afternoon demanding removal of the head office from the residential area and punishment to those responsible for Thursday's attack on them.

The Ansars pelted stones at the processionists from inside the headquarters. The processionists who also turned violent, blasted crackers and tried to break open the gate. They were later dispersed by the police posted in and around the headquarters.

In Lalmonirhat, Ansars brought out sporadic processions yesterday morning and chanted slogans in support of their demands for pay hike and other facilities.

Witnesses said about 300 Ansars shouting their demands took control of the armoury.

Deputy Commissioner Kazi Farid Ahmed and Superintendent of Police Mozammel Haque held discussions with the Ansars but failed to win over the agitators. Tension was prevailing in the town.

In spite of repeated attempts, this correspondent could not contact anyone over telephone at the Ansars headquarters or at the academy.

The sepoys, however, said that all phone lines were disconnected.

The sepoys threatened to go for a fresh programme from December 5 if their demands

No compromise on caretaker govt issue: Nasim

Opposition Chief Whip Mohammad Nasim yesterday said the Awami League will not make any compromise on the question of a neutral non-partisan caretaker government to conduct general elections, reports UNB.

Addressing a rally at Fatullah in Narayanganj in the afternoon, he warned that the people would resist the government's plan to hold another 'vote deacity' election like that of 1988.

The Awami League is ready to make any sacrifice for the interest of the people, Nasim, who is also the Organising Secretary of the Awami League, told the rally.

He said Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina will make an important statement on December 6 on the current agitation for caretaker govt.

Presided over by Fatullah Awami League President Ibrahim Pradhan, the rally was organised to mark the supreme sacrifice made by 140 freedom fighters at Baktabari in Fatullah in 1971 Liberation War.

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STUTTGART (Germany), Dec 2: An SS concentration camp commander serving a life term for killing 650 Jewish slave labourers was indicted Friday on 144 new charges of murder and abetting murder, reports UNB.

Josef Schwammberger, 82, who sicked his dog on inmates and shot a rabbi for refusing to work on a Jewish holiday, was sentenced in May 1992 in the last major Nazi trial in Germany.

Prosecutor Kurt Schrimm said the new indictment stemmed from evidence that had surfaced since Schwammberger's earlier trial.

Indian scientist arrested on espionage charge

NEW DELHI, Dec 2: A rocket scientist involved in India's space programme has been arrested on suspicion of passing on secrets, newspapers reported Friday, reports AP.

Nambi Narayanan was the second space expert to be accused in the spy case that was exposed after the October 20 arrest of a woman who allegedly seduced scientists and blackmailed them to give her designs of rocket engines.

Narayanan, who helped develop engines for India's satellite launch vehicles and defense missiles, was arrested Wednesday in Trivandrum on India's southern coast, the reports said.

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