

DOWN TO EARTH

Rehabilitation of Released Women Prisoners

By A S M Nurunnabi

The largest concentration of women prisoners is in the Dhaka Central Jail. When the women prisoners are released after serving their terms, they are looked down upon in our society. As a result, it is difficult for them to re-settle in the society without any external help. Practically no chance of normal rehabilitation exists in our society. Their relatives in most cases, refuse to give them shelter and food.

Since there are no separate jails for women convicts, including those of lower age group, are lodged together with veteran female prisoners. Since on their release the women prisoners are not easily accepted by their relatives they can be easily won over to engage in various anti-social activities with offers of small remuneration. On account of their unhappy experience in jail in most cases, they, by and large, lose faith in good norms of human behaviour and become hardened towards good human relation, and develop irrational behaviour. Since most of them lose contact with their families and become shelterless, they live a life of uncertainties like other rootless people. From sheer necessity of living they roam about in residential and commercial areas and become a source of pollution of social environs in the hands of a class of touts and mastans. Although the number of the released destitute women prisoners is comparatively small, they nevertheless, pose a threat to society.

In the western countries, there are private organisations which provide various types of facilities to ex-convicts of both sexes, such as finding accommodations giving some financial help, finding employment, etc. Since there is neither any such organisation (except for some isolated help from some NGOs) nor any government institution in our country to render necessary help to female inmates on their release, it is felt worthwhile if government develops a well-organised care service whose aim will be to reintegrate an ex-female con-

vict into society as a useful citizen. Without organising proper care, it would be futile to think of rehabilitation of women prisoners. To make the programme of care and rehabilitation a success, it would be necessary to provide suitable training to inmates while they are inside the prison.

The non-government organisations may also play an important part on the issue of rehabilitation. The main objectives of the government as well as private social organisations in this behalf may be as follows:

(1) To provide temporary residential accommodation with free food and health care.

(2) To provide counselling and family-treatment in order to help the ex-convicts to regain self-confidence required to be self-reliant.

(3) To provide basic literacy and numeral so that they can write and count.

(4) To provide skill training to all of them according to their aptitudes and abilities before rehabilitation.

The bottomline is that without proper and permanent rehabilitation, these distressed women may be forced to take to prostitution and other anti-social activities. To get them rehabilitated in society, they may need, in some cases, to undergo correction service treatment by psychologists so that they regain self-confidence and begin to believe that they have a right to live in society as normal citizens. The aim of the after-care organisations, both under government and private management, should be to help these distressed women to get rehabilitated back to the mainstream of society.

The moment of release which every prisoner looks forward to with great eagerness and expectation must be seized properly with promise of after-care service. The private sector in this respect may get a boost if government make some grants to deserving social organisations. If people come forward to organise such service, they may be able to attract donations from generous members of the public as well as international agencies.

II. Tribulations of City's Women Bus Passengers

The tribulations of female passengers of public transports in the city know no bounds. As it is at present, the city's public transport system is a shambles. On account of the enormous rise in the number of commuters without corresponding increase in the number of public transports, travel in a public bus in the city is a nightmarish experience because of suffocating atmosphere that prevails there. Add to it the general pattern of rough behaviour of the conductors and jostling and pushing attitude of co-passengers, you get a chaotic picture which any sensible person, unless driven by sheer necessity, will try to avoid.

The women passengers are the worst sufferers in this near bedlam situation. The number of working women has been steadily increasing in the city. Those working women whose work place is situated at some distance generally use public buses. Here they encounter a lot of unhappy situations.

Though there are some limited seats for women in a bus, they are often occupied by men.

Moreover, the women passengers are sometimes subject to objectionable remarks and unmanly behaviour of some male passengers.

In the eighties, the Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) introduced service exclusively for women with some buses on some routes. But unfortunately, for unexplained circumstances and apparently for lack of appropriate planning, the service fizzled out. In view of the large increase in women passengers, it is felt necessary that the BRTC consider re-introduction of the bus service exclusively for women on some important routes. The private sector also may look into this matter. If the public transport system is improved in the lines observed in some more developed Asian countries, it will meet the long-felt need of the general public including the city's women passengers.

Local officials were quoted as saying that rescuers had extricated 33 bodies from the wreckage. Some 125 people were hospitalised.

Newspapers said rescue work was hampered because of heavy rains.

Fifteen others were killed and 60 injured when three cars of another train derailed Thursday in the coastal state of Orissa and rolled down into a gorge, officials said. The cause of the accident was not known.

Forty of the injured passengers were said to be in critical condition.

Garments workers blast CLC campaign

A trade union stage a rally in Dhaka yesterday in protest against the move for retrenchment of child workers and the US 'conspiracy' against Bangladesh's garments industry in the name of child labour, reports UNB.

"Child labour in Bangladesh is a reality and the result of poverty," Amirul Haq Amin, General Secretary of the National Garments Workers' Federation, told the rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club.

The federation leaders alleged that oppression perpetrated by the developed and capitalist countries, including the United States, and unfair trade in favour of them are mainly to blame for Bangladesh's poverty.

Thousands of children in Bangladesh are doing the job of brick-breaking, working in hotel and restaurants, garage and workshops and even in rail stations as porter, they pointed out.

Later, the federation brought out a procession that paraded Topkhana, Paltan, Baitul Mukarram, Gulistan, Fulbaria and GPO areas of the city.

Terminating the boycott threat for using child labour in the industry as America's new tac-

tics to block entry of Bangladeshi garments there, Amin said the question of child rights is nothing but a hoax.

Criticising the Child Labour Coalition (CLC), the federation leaders said the CLC should consult with the trade unions in Bangladesh before launching a general boycott call. They called upon the CLC to stop such campaign against the garments industry.

The rally urged the BGMEA, government, ILO and UNICEF to cut short the working hours for children, instead of their retrenchment, and provide them with education and healthcare facilities.

Federation leaders Parul Begum, Kazi Ruhul Amin, Muhibur Rahman Pinto, Nur Nahar, Faruk Ahmed, Arwar Hussain, Shafiq Parvin, M Jahangir, Jotsna Begum and Shafiq Akter also addressed the rally.

The government also offered to hold a sub-committee level meeting here on July 12.

In the letter, the government said that it had already freed five Shantibahini insurgents who were captured by the law enforcement agencies during the ceasefire period for their involvement in illegal activities.

It further said that necessary measures would be taken to free other Shantibahini prisoners by June 30.

Govt asks PCJSS to extend truce upto Aug 31

KHAGRAKHARI, June 2: The government has asked the Parbatya Chittagong Jana Sanghati Samiti (PCJSS), the political wing of the Shantibahini, to extend the cease fire in Chittagong Hill Tracts up to August 31, reports UNB.

A government letter of proposal to this effect was handed to the Parbatya Chittagong Jagoraj Committee on Thursday in reply to a letter from the PCJSS delivered on May 22 offering extension of the truce till June 16.

Convenor of the committee Hengsa Dhaja Chakna sent the proposal to the PCJSS to day, it was learnt.

The government also of

The Midnight File

7 killed in Karachi battles

KARACHI, June 2: At least seven people were killed in gunbattles between security forces and masked armed men and in incidents of sniper fire in different parts of Karachi, officials and hospital sources said today. A Saudi student, identified as Mohammad Shoab, was shot dead by unidentified gunmen in the city's south, while snipers killed two people in eastern Karachi, police said, reports AFP.

Fund for Nazi victims

VIENNA, Austria, June 2: Austria has created a 500-million schilling (50 million dollars) fund for Nazi victims, a new step in confronting its World War II past. Parliament passed legislation creating the fund Thursday night, and lawmakers said it shows Austrians were finally facing up to a chapter of their history many have been trying to forget. Nazi Germany annexed Austria on March 13, 1938. An estimated 200,000 Austrian Jews fled the Nazis or perished in concentration camps, reports AP.

US fighter downed

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ders presidential aides said.

The move caused French Armed Forces Chief of Staff Admiral Jacques Lanxade to resign, although his resignation was refused.

Chirac took office May 17, becoming the ultimate chief of the armed forces. He has taken personal control of the French role in Bosnia, ordering his officers to retaliate directly against Bosnian Serb provocations, without waiting for orders from the many-layered United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), according to presidential aides.

Some 120 UN peacekeepers were to be based to Yugoslavia via Zvornik, on the Bosnian border, later today, other sources in Pale said, on condition they not be named.

The Bosnian Serbs had demanded promises of no new NATO airstrikes in return for the hostages, but the West had remained steadfast in its refusal to negotiate their release.

Meanwhile, Bosnian Serbs have promised to free all of the 377 UN peacekeepers held

PM: Opposition

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essionalism of Chapainawabganj district led by Pourasara Chairman Abdul Mannan Sentu joined the BNP last night expressing allegiance to her leadership.

Welcoming the freshers, the BNP chairperson said leaders and workers from different political parties are joining her party as they believe that only the BNP could ensure development of the country.

Referring to the long cherished Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge, the Prime Minister said her government was hopeful of completing the bridge within the stipulated time. The bridge is scheduled to be completed by December 15, 1997.

She alleged that the opposition parties were creating obstacles in implementing the multi-million dollar bridge project through various anti-development programmes. "In fact they (Opposition) do not want the Jamuna bridge."

Chapainawabganj Pourasara Chairman Abdul Mannan Sentu said they were joining the BNP when the opposition parties hatched a conspiracy to jeopardise the sojourn of democracy and present trend of development initiated by the BNP government.

State Minister for Establishment Barrister Aminul Huq, Shahjahan Siraj MP, Syed Manjur Hossain MP, Chapainawabganj BNP leader Golam Zakaria also spoke on the occasion.

The party leaders at a protest meeting in front of the local press club in the afternoon blamed the JCD activists for the killing and demanded immediate arrest and trial of the killers.

Two local MPs of the ruling party Mirza Muraduzzaman and TMA Mannan in a joint statement today condemned the killing of Nazmul and said he was killed by his own bomb.

Meanwhile, the Namaj-e-Janaza for Nazmul was held at Khan Saheb maldan in the town after Zohr prayers and later he was buried at Rahmatganj graveyard.

A tense situation was still prevailing in the town.

Additional police and para-military BDR were deployed in the town to avoid further trouble.

Benazir

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MQM claimed responsibility for a powerful car bomb that exploded Thursday in Karachi. It shattered windows at the residence of the maid Rukhsana Chowdhury alias Mahinuda and her teenage daughter Sharmin Chowdhury alias Farah are now in Dhaka Central Jail, facing trial on charge of murder.

Besides, a group of youths kidnapped and killed a four-year-old child — Miraj — by drowning him in a ditch near the Botanical Garden at Mirpur. Police investigation revealed that Miraj was killed as his father Abdur Aziz Bepari of Buxnagar, Mirpur, failed to pay a ransom of Taka two lakh for Miraj's release.

A Chinese citizen was killed in a hotel at Nawabpur road in the old part of the city and muggers stabbed to death a leather trader, Sharif Jinnah, and snatched Taka eight lakh from him in the Shishu Academy area in broad daylight.

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) had deployed around 2500 policemen in different parts of the city to check muggings on the Eid-ul-Azha.

Meanwhile, a special squad of the DMP — Speed Enforcement Squad — assigned to check muggings and other crimes on the city roads, started functioning on June 1.

The MQM, which represents Indian Muslims who settled in Pakistan after the two countries gained their independence in 1947, accuses Benazir of discrimination.

Khulna: Goons with guns

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curred near a police box on February 25 and ended, apparently temporarily, on April 25 after the death of the city unit general secretary of the Jatiya Party, Sheikh Abul Kashem. This time it happened close to a police station in the vicinity of the Picture Palace cinema hall of the city.

On February 26, the day after Moslem's death, Abdul Karim Azam Chowdhury, city general secretary of the Chhatra Dal (JCD), the student wing of the BNP, was shot dead, reportedly by the activists of the Chhatra Shibir, the student wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami.

Soon after, an alleged internal armed clash left Goutam Das, a leader of the Chhatra

Das, a leader of the Chhatra

The death of Zainul, a labour leader and supporter of commission Ershad Ali Sikder, the principal accused of Moslem's murder, took place while he was preparing bombs, according to the Awami League. A case has also been lodged with the police by Ershad Ali's supporters against Taslim Ahmed, brother of Moslem Ali Khan.

On April 25, at 1:45 pm, Sheikh Abul Kashem and his driver were shot dead at point-blank range by unknown gunmen in front of the Picture Palace, adjacent to a police station just in the heart of the city.

Widespread panic now prevails in Khulna town as gun-toting gangs move around almost freely. City residents fear outbreak of clashes at any time as almost everyone has lost faith in the law enforcement agencies.

The attack on the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court and the inaction of the police amply prove that no rule of law prevails in Khulna," says a chamber leader.

Vengeful attitudes of the political parties towards one another and inaction of the law enforcing agencies have led to a situation that forces a leading citizen to wonder if we are drifting toward an age of darkness.

"I really wonder whom I am going to vote for in the next election, if the political par-

A rare apology

MOSCOW, June 2: In a rare apology, Russian President Boris Yeltsin expressed regret today for having snubbed Japan's offer of aid for victims of the Sakhalin Island earthquake, reports AP.

Yeltsin's spokesman called the president's earlier comment, which created a diplomatic stir, a "quite emotional statement."

Japan was among the first to offer assistance after Sunday's devastating earthquake.

Monsoon

Rahman said that monsoon was now visible over north Andaman Sea.

He said that excessive humidity in the air originated from the sultry weather although the temperature is comparatively low. The highest temperature recorded yesterday was 34.5 degree Celsius while the humidity was 77 per cent in the morning and 69 per cent in the evening.

Country's highest temperature was 38.6 degree Celsius in Rajshahi where humidity was 75. According to reports from the northern divisional city, scorching heat disrupted normal life in Rajshahi.

Meanwhile, parts of the country experienced rain yesterday but Met officials said the rainfall was caused by localised thunder storm.

The rainfall recorded yesterday was 14 mm in Teknaf, 7 mm each in Faridpur and Mymensingh, 5 mm in Sitakundu and 4 mm in Sylhet.

Diplomats

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The team included Swedish ambassador Bjorn Sterby, Pakistan High Commissioner Karam Elahi, Ambassador of Iran Mohammad Bayat, Belgian Ambassador Xavier Van Migen, French Ambassador Jean Michel Lacombe, Danish Ambassador KK Nielsen, head of the European Commission Michael Drury and a British diplomat.

The diplomats were accompanied by senior officials of the Foreign Ministry and Special Affairs Division.

The diplomats are learnt to have expressed satisfaction at the rehabilitation programmes taken by the local administration. They talked with several repatriated refugees and enquired about their welfare.

They also visited a rubber plantation project in the Swamirava area of Sadar thana.

Chairman of the local government council Md Ismail briefed the diplomats on the rehabilitation.

The diplomats will stay at Bandarban tonight and return to Dhaka tomorrow.

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Special meet cancelled

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called the strike.

The two student bodies had earlier demanded cancellation of the admission tests alleging leakage of question papers.

They also demanded resignation of the Vice-Chancellor.

In the face of allegations, the university authorities formed a three-member inquiry committee with pro-VC Prof Altaf Hossain as its chief to probe the alleged question leakage.