

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 resettle 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, new female 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 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 convict 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 unmannerly 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 on 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.

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.

Terming the boycott threat for using child labour in the industry as America's new tactics to block entry of Bangladesh's 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 BOMEA, government, ILO and UNICEF to cut short the working hours for children, instead of their retrenchment, and provide them with education and health-care facilities.

Federation leaders Parul Begum, Kazi Ruhul Amin, Mujibur Rahman Pinto, Nur Nahar, Faruk Ahmed, Anwar Hossain, Shaifa Parvin, M Jahangir, Jotsna Begum and Shaifa Akter also addressed the rally.

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

73 killed in 2 Indian train accidents

NEW DELHI, June 2: Seventy-three people have been killed and 335 others injured in two train accidents in eastern India, officials said today adding that they expected the death toll to rise, reports AFP.

At least 58 passengers were killed and 275 injured when a speeding train rammed into a freight train near the mining town of Dhanbad Thursday, overturning scores of cars, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported.

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.

Strike at RU

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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.

The authorities later termed the allegations 'baseless' since no one turned up before the inquiry committee with evidence.

The JCD then called a strike tomorrow while the CSP called a five-day strike from Sunday.

The admission test committee was in an emergency meeting till late last night.

A total of 56,962 students from different parts of the country have applied for 3165 seats in the first year honours classes in 34 departments of the university.

Sources said most of the admission seekers have already arrived on the campus or in the city.

Special meet cancelled

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A senior secretary told The Daily Star yesterday: "Our problem is like that between employee and employer. Since we are having discussions, we are hopeful that some of our demands will be met."

The Daily Star learnt that the issue of Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir's transfer would be settled shortly by restoring his Secretary level position. Besides, the BCS (Admin) Association leaders were assured of necessary steps to fill up many of the vacant administrative posts.

The Association said that there were 120 vacant posts, but the government is learnt to be contemplating filling up half of those shortly.

The appointment of Gias Kamal Chowdhury as Economic Counsellor at the Bangladesh High Commission in London may be changed to give him a non-cadre diplomatic posting, it was also learnt.

Meanwhile, the contents of a memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister, described as "recommendations", were released to the press yesterday by the BCS Association. The 21-point recommendations are mostly related to the welfare of the administrative cadre.

The recommendations were submitted to the Prime Minister by the executives of the Association.

Another recommendation calls for providing increased salary to administrative cadre officials to attract talented people.

The Association also proposed that terms of all government employments and services should be framed by Parliament as per article 133 of the Constitution.

Another recommendation underlines the need for reconstituting the Rules of Business.

The Association also recommended that vehicles of all Secretaries fly a flag. They pointed out that the IG of police has been given this honour.

Govt asks PCJSS to extend truce upto Aug 31

KHAGRACHHARI, June 2: The government has asked the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (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 Chattagram Jogajog 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 Hangaas Dhaja Chakma sent the proposal to the PCJSS today, it was learnt.

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 enforcing 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.

13 offloaded from Biman flight

By Staff Correspondent

The immigration authorities at the Zia International Airport yesterday offloaded 13 passengers from a Kuala Lumpur-bound Bangladesh Biman flight.

The passengers were holding forged passports and documents, sources said.

Earlier, on Tuesday the immigration authorities offloaded 26 passengers who were also headed for Malaysia on the same grounds.

The passengers offloaded yesterday were handed over to the Cantonment police.

EC advice

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tant registration officers and inform them of their particulars.

Nine squads of the EC yesterday started on-the-spot supervision of the registration process in the city. Each squad would cover 10 wards.

The voter registration programme which began on May 25 would continue till June 7 throughout the country.

The EC in a press release yesterday advised the voters to contact district election officers (DEOs) and registration officers (ROs) on the registration issue. A total of 83 ROs has been appointed in 64 districts.

In the city, DEO Bazlur Rahman has been given the responsibility of Lalbagh thana, Begum, Sufia Jahan given responsibility of Kotwali, Sutrapur, Matijheel and Sabujbagh thanas, Mohammad Shah Alam given responsibility of Ramna, Tejgaon, Dhanmondi, Mohammadpur, Cantonment, Gulshan and Uttara thanas and Iskander Ali given responsibility of Mirpur and Pallabi thanas.

The Dhaka district election office is situated at 10/10 Iqbal Road, Mohammadpur, telephone number: 312632, 312640, 312579, 325422.

In Chittagong city, DEO Sarker Ashraf Alam has been given responsibility of Kotwali, Pahartali, Doublemoring and Bandar thanas and Mir Mohammad Hasib given responsibility of Hathazari, Panchlailash and Chandogang thanas.

The Chittagong district election office is situated at 35 Sagor Manjil, Jamaikhana Road, telephone: 615022, 615119, 615085.

DEO of A K Ziauddin Ahmed (phone: 21540) has been given responsibility of Khulna city, while Syed Mohammad Musa (phone: 5821) is working for Rajshahi city.

Troops pound LTTE hideout, kill 50

COLOMBO, June 2: Government troops killed about 50 Tamil Tiger guerrillas in fierce jungle fighting in eastern Sri Lanka today, military sources said.

Pry education

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sued separate message on the occasion.

President Bismas, in his message emphasised the need for taking initiative to educate the children to ensure national progress and social welfare.

In a message the Prime Minister called upon all irrespective of party affiliation and opinion to take united efforts to develop the sector.

According to a government announcement recently a national level competition for the primary school children will start today at the Primary Education Academy in Mymensingh. The competition will close on June 6. The Prime Minister will distribute prizes among the winners on June 7.

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 Shoaib, 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-lagged United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), according to presidential aides.

Meanwhile, Bosnian Serbs have promised to free all of the 377 UN peacekeepers held hostage, the international Red Cross said today.

Lucie Sternthal, deputy chief of the Red Cross mission in Pale, the Bosnian Serb stronghold, said 'from the highest authority in Pale, we have been informed that either today or by tomorrow all UNPROFOR personnel would be released.'

Some 120 UN peacekeepers were to be bused 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.

Instead, Britain began dispatching the first of a threatened 6,000 new troops to Bosnia, while France and the United States positioned crack military units in the Adriatic in a show of force.

Meanwhile, fighting was reported today near Orasje in northern Bosnia, near the Serbs' crucial supply corridor.

The Belgrade news agency Tanjug said about 700 civilians had fled other fighting in north-central Bosnia, where government forces have been battling for high ground in the Mount Ozren range. Fighting there was intense Thursday, when more than 2,500 explosions were recorded.

Another report says, Bosnia's ambassador to the United Nations was named foreign minister Thursday to replace Irfan Ljubijankic, who was killed when rebel Serbs shot down his helicopter last weekend.

Mohamed Sacirbey, 38, a Sarajevo-born US citizen, is perhaps the best-known voice of the Bosnian government worldwide.

Sirajganj

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between the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and the Chhatra League (S-P) over a post election dispute of the Students Union of Sirajganj University College.

Activists of the Awami League and its students wing brought out a mourning procession in the town in the afternoon wearing black badges.

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 maidan 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 paramilitary 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 60-year-old colonial-style provincial Parliament building, but caused no injuries.

Security has been stepped up in Karachi, which already is patrolled by thousands of police and paramilitary rangers.

The Mohajir Rights Movement sent messages to newspapers threatening to kill several senior politicians, including Benazir.

"These splinter groups are beginning to emerge and they are beyond the control of the main factions of the MQM," said Aynal Dhevi, editor of the Urdu-language newspaper Aman, or Peace.

They have also introduced more sophisticated weapons, like rocket propelled grenade launchers," he said.

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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curried 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, Abul Kalam Azad 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 Dal, dead.

The death of Zainul, a labour leader and supporter of commissioner 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 parties continue to remain sanctuaries of the mastans," says a young lecturer of the Azam Khan Commerce College. There appears to exist an all-out competition among the political parties as to which party can recruit how many mastans.

"Following the release of those accused of CPB leader Ratan Sen's murder — one of whom was identified in test identification parade — the political killings have escalated," says Advocate Feroz Ahmed, president of the Khulna City unit of the CPB.

About the inaction of the police, Nurul Alam Chowdhury, Deputy Police Commissioner of Khulna Metropolitan Police says "it is not possible to check premeditated killings. As witnesses fear to turn up before the court, they go unpunished, he adds.

"Seldom have we given thought to the fact that 2000-strong police force has to maintain law and order in this city of 12 lakh inhabitants," Chowdhury added.

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.

The volume leader of the week was Beximco Pharma which sold 92130 shares. The Annual General Meeting of this company will be held on June 18 and a dividend of 10 per cent has been proposed. Unlike many other shares, the price of its shares gained and it increased to 90.79 from the previous week's 87.86.

Share price of Beximco's Shine Pukur Holding declined further to Tk 89.43 from the previous week's 96.55. It sold over 21,000 shares.

Other volume leaders of the week were Ashraf Textiles 68,370, BOC (Bangladesh) 26,353, Eastern Housing 27,120, Apex Weaving over 20,000 and Apex Tannery over 22,000.

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 Swarnivara area of Sadar thana.

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

The diplomats will stay at Bandaranattona and return to Dhaka tomorrow.

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