

DOWN TO EARTH

City's Kindergartens and Coaching Centres

By A S M Nurunnabi

The city has been witnessing a boom of kindergartens almost all over but mainly in its posh areas. They are set up under private initiatives with the character of quasi-business entities for earning fabulous incomes from the parents of their pupils.

Indubitably the motive behind these schools are purely commercial. An utter chaos prevails in their educational programmes. In these institutions the syllabi and the method of teaching are followed in an arbitrary manner according to the sweet will of their organisers. The cause of education served by these institutions seems to be largely incidental. There are many instances where an individual or a group of persons have set up more than one kindergarten depending on the business success of their first initiatives.

At these institutions the children are taught to recite parrot-like such verses as 'Humpty Dumpty, Jack and Jill or Ba Ba Black Sheep' which have no relation with their environmental situation. They thus grow up from the very beginning in a different world where pictures of life in America and Europe are presented much more than their national ethos. This leads to the growth of a different outlook, ambitions and perspective on life.

The organisers of kindergartens adopt arbitrary policy in fixing tuition fees and other school dues. Some of them demand donation of substantial amounts as a condition for admission. The fees are increased almost every year. Since the parents who come from fairly well-off sections of society, are keen to arrange good education for their children, many school authorities tend to exploit this sentiment and regularly set school fees at unreasonably high levels. As there is no government control, these institutions seem to function like business enterprises in a free-market environment and engage themselves without any regulatory restraint in wildcat racketeering of fees.

In the arena of education, honesty and self-restraint are expected to govern the operation of these institutions. But in the fierce competition to earn as much profit as possible, these notions are thrown to the winds.

Saifur : Nothing wrong

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rately. He explained that the amount was kept as non-sectoral allocations for ministries and government departments which do not have any allocation from the development budget.

Responding to a question on how he is going to enhance revenue collection when the budget proposed a Tk 350 crore tax and duty cut and increased the collection target by Tk 1,000 crore, he said "I am convinced that we will be able to make it up with improvements in the economy."

Asked how the domestic debt increased to Tk 12,000 crore during the last four years, Rahman said that it was used to make up for the losses of the public sector enterprises. Of the amount, the banks were provided with Tk 4,500 crore, for the on-performing loans owed by the public sector, to strengthen their capital base.

It involved Tk 2,900 crore for the outstanding loans of the Bangladesh Jute Corporation and the Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation and another Tk 2,600 crore for the agricultural loan write-off by the government.

The finance minister was severely critical of the staggering losses incurred by the public sector enterprises, which, he said, has increased from Tk 2,000 to Tk 2,500 crore per year. The amount is almost two per cent of the

provision of easy ways, such as distribution of photo copies of readymade notes and answers. Some go to the length of recording the teacher's lectures on the tape recorder and playing them back to the students as and when necessary.

One of the strong points of objection relating to the coaching centres is that a student's initiative and individual efforts are likely to be eroded when in most cases his problems are solved in a ready-made manner by coaching centres. Whatever be the drawbacks, the system is catching on. Students, by and large, seem to harbour the feeling that if they do not attend coaching classes, their objective of doing well in examinations will not be attained.

There are other coaching centres dealing with post-HSC and post-graduate students. Their courses mainly put emphasis on various disciplines such as medicine, engineering, architecture, etc. Some of the coaching centres at this level enjoy popularity among the students from which it seems that the students find them useful.

To a certain degree, there is a consensus among educationists and guardians that there is some need for the coaching centres in view of the present deplorable situation in the regular educational institutions. The new development poses a number of issues, viz, whether the coaching centres are really needed in the context of the present quality of education, whether there is scope for malpractice in this field and whether the students attending such centres get real benefit or do they attend them just out of a current craze for them.

On account of the high growth of the student population, it has become extremely competitive to get admission in the limited number of good institutions. The coaching centres claim to offer guidelines for doing well in the competitive tests for admission. Most of the coaching centres are manned by teachers of government and private schools and colleges where, it is generally held, they fail to do justice to their duties in the manner expected of them. In some coaching centres, the pressure of students is so heavy that the frequency of the coaching sessions has to be increased to cope with the situation. On this account, it is alleged that some centres resort to im-

In this connection, some observers raise the question that since the kindergartens and coaching centres are run from commercial motives there may be justifications if organisers of these institutions are asked by government to pay taxes. It may be in the fitness of things if fiscal and other regulatory measures as in any other business concerns are put into action to bring discipline at the operational levels of these bodies.

20 hurt in N'ganj

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, June 16: At least 20 people were injured in a clash between two rival groups at village Deuripara of Bandar thana here this afternoon.

The clash erupted when a group reportedly led by one Salahuddin raided the residence of one Salam, the leader of other group, said witnesses.

Floods

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ter from the garo hill across the border triggered off flash flood in Durgapur thana of Netrokona district, official sources said today.

They said that many areas of Durgapur thana have been submerged by the flood water and the ground floor of Durgapur thana parishad office is now under tow to three feet water.

Health sector

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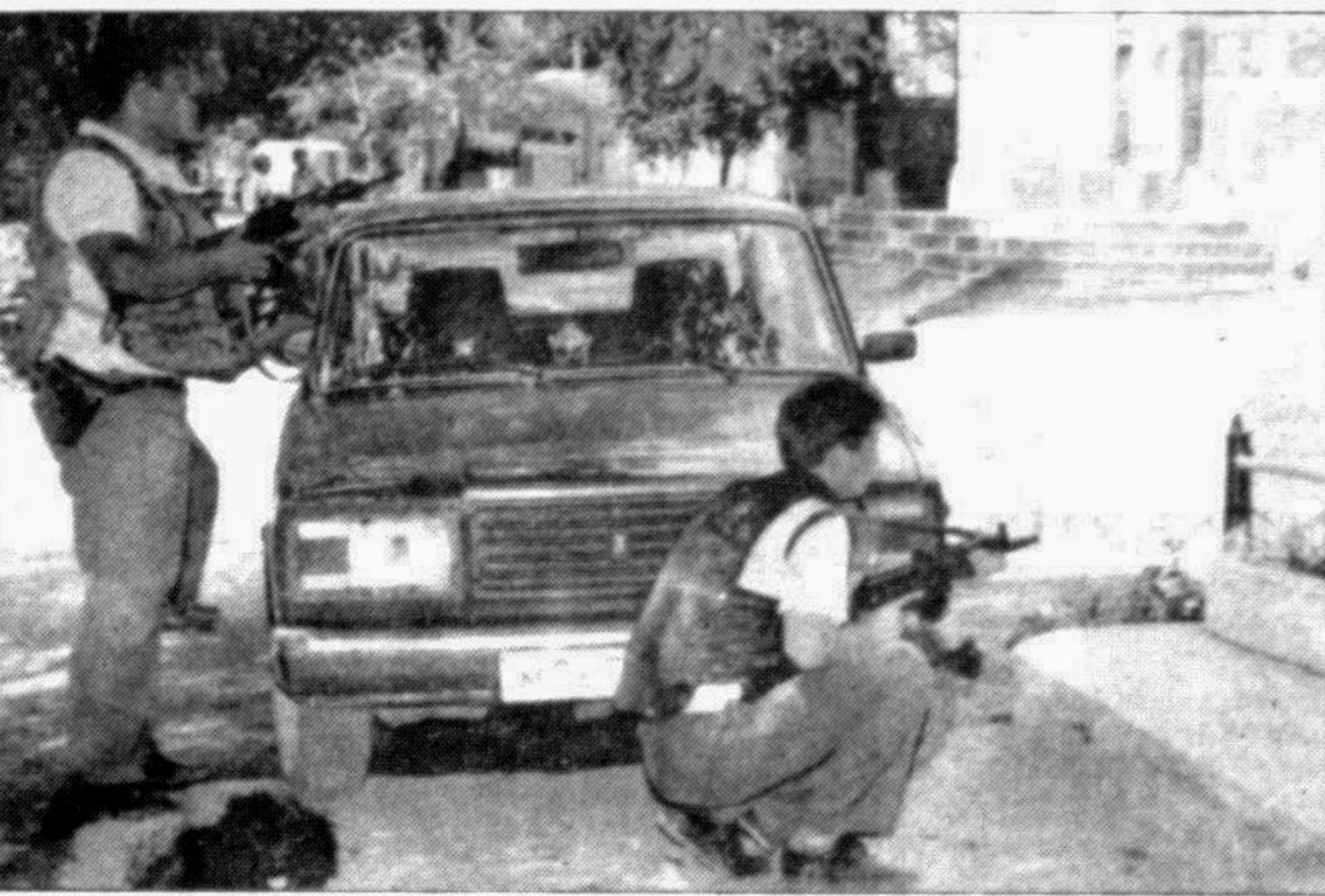
government has set up a number of new medical colleges and private medical colleges for reaching the treatment facilities at the door step of every people.

She said a huge number of people go abroad every year for getting better treatment. Begum Zia urged the doctors to take necessary measures for ensuring treatment of complex diseases.

Deputy Leader of the House Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury, Health and Family Welfare Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibn Yusuf, Prof Kamruzzaman MP, DAB president Prof Abdur Rashid, DAB secretary general A K M Azizul Huq and a number of doctors also spoke on the occasion.

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Soldiers of Russian special forces yesterday took position in front of the hospital of Budenovsk where Chechen terrorists holding more than 1500 hostages. — AFP photo

CPA for withdrawal of congestion surcharge

From Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG, June 16:

The Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) has called for withdrawal of the decision taken by shipping lines to impose 'port congestion surcharge' on containers as the situation created recently has now eased substantially.

In a letter issued on Wednesday the CPA requested the Bangladesh Steamer Agents Association to prevail upon the concerned shipping lines through their organisation the IPB (India-Pakistan-Bangladesh) Conference to do away with the penal section of 'congestion surcharge' port sources said today.

The CPA's request has been communicated to the shipping lines but there was no reply till yesterday, the association said.

The IPB Conference earlier took the decision to impose congestion surcharge of 100 dollars for a 40 feet container and 50 dollars for a 20 feet container.

A senior port official talking to this correspondent said there was a 'temporary dislocation' due to arrival of more foodgrain carrying ships but it is now over.

outer anchorage now as four berths have been kept reserved for container ships.

In support of its claim the CPA also furnished in the letter a favourable comparative statement about container vessels' turn-round period particularly in the months of January and June this year.

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Birendra's decision challenged in court

KATHMANDU, June 16:

Two prominent Nepali Congress leaders on Friday filed petitions in a court challenging the King's decision to dissolve parliament and hold fresh elections, reports AP.

They said the minority Marxist government wanted to escape a no-confidence motion in parliament and instead asked the constitutional monarch to dissolve the House. That prevented an alternative government being set up.

Leader of the main opposition, Sher Bahadur Deuba and his colleague, Chiranjeebi Wagle, filed separate petitions in the Supreme Court. The court has set June 21 for the hearing.

The 205-member House of Representatives was dissolved Tuesday after the government said opposition parties had reneged on their promise to support the Marxist party.

Businessmen, economists on budget

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MCCI

President of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) M Anis Ud Dowla said the new budget is a bold step towards removing the prevailing mismatch between macroeconomic stability and comparative stagnation at micro level.

"The budget is clearly addressed to accelerating the rate of country's economic growth and improving administration," the MCCI president said in a press statement yesterday. Low tariff like that on agriculture machinery shows that the government is keen to provide fiscal support to productive economic activities. This will boost investment.

But the disappointing aspect is the conspicuous absence of any measure to reduce the losses in the public sector enterprises, he said.

DCCI

The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) hailed continuation of tax holiday for a period of 5 to 7 years, mobilisation of more domestic resources for the Annual Development Programme and significant increase in the allocation for transport and communication sector.

A meeting of DCCI's directors and members yesterday expressed satisfaction at the higher allocation up to 26 per cent for the physical infrastructure sector which include road, water resource, irrigation and telecommunication.

Reduction of corporate tax by 2.5 per cent is an encouraging step for investment and rapid industrialisation but reduction of bonded warehouse facilities from existing two years to one year will cause enormous loss to the export sector specially readymade garments as it is very difficult to complete necessary formalities in such a short time, the DCCI observed.

It demanded reduction of VAT to 10 per cent from 15 per cent and regretted that there was no directive to revive the genuinely sick industries.

DSE

Honorary Secretary of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) A H Howlader appreciated the budget proposal to raise the deduction limit of income tax on dividend at source for resident assesses to Tk 10000 from Tk 5000. "Small traders will be directly bene-

fited from this," he said.

Deduction of corporate tax will also greatly benefit the companies which are offering dividends, Howlader said.

But regarding waiving of tax on capital gains in transfer of shares except bonus shares, Howlader said, "similar provision was made in the last budget. But it turned out at the end of the fiscal that it was applicable for primary market only, for which it made no impact. This is an ambitious and unrealistic, unless the minister has other se-

BTMA

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ctivities fails to adequately register the growth rate. But he did not suggest any solution to the problem.

It is also not clear how the

The Midnight File

Heat wave claims 340 in India

NEW DELHI, June 16: A fiery heat wave burning 11 of India's 25 states has left 340 people dead, while the onset of monsoons over the country's east triggered flash floods and disrupted normal life, officials said today. Officials said the highest toll of 135 heat-related deaths have been reported from the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, reports AFP.

Budget : Pros and cons

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NBR will make up for the Tk 350 crore in tax and duty cuts and the Tk 1,000 crore increase in revenue collection target. The finance minister only said it will be recouped by 'administrative measures'.

The budget proposes to increase the foreign exchange retention quota for exporters to 25 per cent of the earnings. But the exporters are reluctant to welcome this move as they are not being allowed to keep the money in interest bearing foreign exchange accounts.

The importers and producers of import-substituting goods are also being allowed a foreign exchange travel quota.

Reduction of duties on a number of consumer goods, including white paper, some vehicles, refrigerators and colour-TV sets have also been proposed. But consumers will not benefit unless it is ensured that the reductions are reflected in the local market price.

Now, the negative aspects.

The fiscal deficit has increased in amount from Tk 8,869

crore in the revised 1994-95 budget to Tk 9,257 crore in the proposed budget.

Another alarming point is that the finance minister, while highlighting the successes of the last four years, emphasised the need for bringing about legal and administrative reforms, without providing any clues about the government's plans on these difficult issues.

He also seemed to have paid only lip-service when he emphasised the need for bringing about legal and administrative reforms, without providing any clues about the government's plans on these difficult issues.

Finally, speaking from his 10-year experience in economic management of the country, the finance minister identified political instability as the biggest hindrance to development.

Saifur Rahman hit the bulls eye on that count, no doubt.

But certainly nobody was expecting any solution from him on this vexing issue.

BNP factions clash

Traffic movement disrupted at Syedabad

By Staff Correspondent

A clash reportedly between two factions of the BNP caused panic and road blockade at the Syedabad bus terminal in the city yesterday morning.

Traffic movement was disrupted for about three hours, from 11 am in the area, sources said several crackers were blasted at that time.

The trouble erupted from a meeting of the BNP at Sham-pur under Demra thana.

A case has been filed with the Demra thana.

Desertification

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utive role with greater wisdom and farsightedness in combatting desertification and resisting its adverse effects.

In a separate message, Prime Minister Begum Zia hoped that the World Desertification Day will succeed in attaining its objective to create awareness worldwide.

She expressed her firm belief that observance of the Day would inspire public representatives, administrators, scientists and planners in implementing their respective work plans to combat the de-

sertification process.

In Rajshahi, the day's programme organised by the Environment and Forest Ministry includes a procession from Saheb Bazar at 7 in the morning.

A rally and discussion meeting will be held at Kakonhat in Rajshahi at 3 pm on the day.

Fertiliser

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urea requirement is 18 lakh MT in the country. A surplus of 3.85 lakh MT urea was produced in the last fiscal.

The aggregate total of the peak production capacity of the six fertiliser factories is 21.91 lakh MT.

In spite of these favourable production figures, Letters of Credit worth 96.18 million US dollars were opened during the last 10 months of the current fiscal for importing 11.79 lakh MT of fertiliser to meet the fertiliser crisis during the last IRRI-Boro season.