

# DOWN TO EARTH

## Dearth Of Playgrounds For City's Children

By A S M Nurunnabi

One of the deplorable aspects of the rapid urbanisation of Dhaka has been the increasing depletion of playing fields for the city's children. At present we have in the city a handful of parks and limited open spaces in isolated pockets. Their number, however, is grossly inadequate, compared to the needs of the growing children population. Because of the dearth of sufficient open spaces in most areas of the city, children are often seen playing on the open streets. This normally entails hazards, but children being what they are, they hardly care to listen to the counsel of caution. School children also suffer greatly on account of absence of playgrounds in their premises in most cases.

In the city, a good number of kindergarten schools have come up, but most of them are housed in such limited space that provision of playground for their students is out of question. This constraint overlooks the need for children's outdoor games for their physical and mental developments.

Previously there were many public playgrounds in the city where children from adjoining areas used to play. Such open spaces have either been taken over by the City Corporation for construction for shopping complex or by the government for allotment to others. In many areas of the city also, there were small open space where the children of the neighbourhood used to play. Such open spaces are no longer in existence, as they have been built upon their owners. As a result of these developments, children have become prisoners in their own homes.

In this respect, the old part of the city suffers the most. Here the paucity of open spaces is very acute. There is only a handful of parks such as the Armatola Maidan, the Bahadur Shah Park and the Sirajdowla Park. At these places encroachment in one form or another is always present. The concrete benches there shelter beggars and vagabonds making the environment unfit for children's games.

Sometimes ago, in some of the wards of the City Corporation, small parks for children were laid out. Most of these parks are now in a deplorable state so much so that they have become an apology for parks. The equipment for the children's games such as swings, seesaws, etc. which were initially installed are now either nonexistent or unusable. These places are now filled with weeds and become haunts of undesirable elements. It behoves the City Corporation to save these parks from the poor state of maintenance and also find out spaces for opening up new children's parks in such wards which lack them.

As compared with the old part of the city, the situation of open spaces in the new part of the city is a little better. This is mainly due, among other things, to the existence of Osmany Uddyan, Ramna Park, Suhrawardy Uddyan, Shishu Park and the open spaces in the Sher-e-Bangla Nagar area. Most of these open spaces are hardly considered fit for the children's recreational use. The Ramna Park and the Suhrawardy Uddyan have become haunts of dubious elements. The Shishu Park is an attractive place for children, but its attraction is greatly eroded by the presence of too many elders and overcrowding. Sometimes the mechanical playing equipment are said to remain inoperative. The Sher-e-Bangla Nagar area, though attractive for the children's use, are not free from the presence of anti-social elements. In this respect, the newly established private park at Shymoli for children is better managed.

Even in a planned residential area like the Dhanmondi Residential Area, there are few suitable spaces for children's games. Two large chunks of open space in that area are occupied by sporting clubs which offer little scope to the children of that area to play their games. There are some open spaces on the banks of the Dhanmondi Lake. Since that lake has now become a reservoir of toxic wastes through infiltrations from connecting sewerage lines, most people including children to avoid that place for any outdoor activity. Even the small park near Road No. 4 of that residential area has lost its usefulness as a park because it is overgrown with weeds and a grazing ground for stray cattle. In Azimpur Govt Estate, some pre-existing open spaces in that congested areas have lately been taken up for construction of additional flats in total disregard of the necessity for open space.

The proliferation of high-rise buildings in the city has accentuated the problems of children residing in the apartments of those buildings. The children of those places lead a cooped up life within the four walls of their apartments. In the forest of such tall buildings, we find provisions for such facilities as security arrangement, car parking space, standby electric generator, etc. but rarely some open space for children's playing activities.

The school children of the city will greatly benefited if government follows a policy as far as possible under which wherever in the city there is vacant government land adjacent to any educational institution, such land will be kept free for use for students of those institutions as playgrounds without allotting it for any other purpose.

According to observers, we may expect some improvement in the existing state of things if appropriate measures are adopted to keep the existing open spaces free from encroachment and it is ensured that the atmosphere in these places is not vitiated through the presence of undesirable elements. This can be possible if the law-enforcing agencies, the City Corporation and the RAJUK remain alert and active in their respective spheres. The existing dilapidated city parks in the different wards of the Corporation and elsewhere under management of other authorities may be rehabilitated for proper use by replacing the missing or disused playing equipments. What is more important is that sustained efforts need be made by local communities to display more civic sense and responsibility to maintain the restored facility for the children in their respective areas with due care and vigilance.

As for the future, it is understood that a number of new housing projects and satellite town schemes near Dhaka are due to be taken up soon in Enayetganj, Keraniganj and DND areas. It is hoped that in the plans for these projects, the needs of the children will receive equal priority with other community needs so that children in these areas can have proper facilities for health growth and development.



Awami League president Sheikh Hasina is flanked by party leaders who received her at Zia International airport on her return home from the US yesterday. — Star photo

## Political stalemate

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pressed their keenness to invest in the energy and telecommunication sectors, Salman said.

"There is absolutely no reason why we should have political instability here because there is no ethnic problem. Unlike in India, Sri Lanka or Pakistan, Bangladesh has a homogeneous society. This is our strength and we should be able to agree on political issues," Salman said, expressing his frustration over the political deadlock.

He called upon the opposition to come forward saying "opposition as well as the government has the responsibility for bringing about economic development in the country."

Salman said that the FBCCI team tried to dispel the negative aspects by projecting the positive macro-economic fundamentals and growth of private sector. The team also explained the constitution provisions, human rights condition and the socio-cultural scenario in Bangladesh.

Foreign investors and Bangladeshi expatriates held a negative view regarding labour unrest and corruption in the bureaucracy in Bangladesh, he said. "But we told them, Bangladeshi workers are very much disciplined. Only the public sector workers, which constitute less than one per cent of the total, were disturbing due to their leadership which is highly politicised. Labour unrest is very negligible in private sector participation to remove congestion problem in Chittagong port."

Salman disclosed that the FBCCI was considering setting up a non-residential Bangladeshi investment cell like the Board of Investment or the Export Promotion Bureau to help and guide interested expatriate investors.

FBCCI Vice President Khandker Rashiduzzaman Dudu, members of the trade mission and FBCCI executive committee members were present at the press conference.

## Hasina

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ment had tarnished the image of the country abroad through its undemocratic activities.

On her return home, Hasina was received by her party colleagues including Abdu Samad Azad, Abdur Razzak, Amir Hossain Amu, Sajeda Chowdhury, Abdul Jallil and Mayor of Dhaka and President of the city AL Mohammad Hanif.

## Rayer Bazar

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A gang of about 30 armed *mastaans* attacked a police patrol of Rayer Bazar outpost of Mohammadpur thana when they picked up an alleged extortionist from a market at around 2:30 pm Thursday.

Mohammadpur police made several raids in Rayer Bazar and adjoining areas in a bid to pick up members of the 'organised' gang who are mostly teenagers and young men, police officials said.

Two cases have been lodged with Mohammadpur police in this connection.

## DDT: Dried fish

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timely enters the food cycle through fish and crops. Scientists say that the concentration of DDT in humans in Bangladesh is 12.5 parts per million (PPM) which is at least five times higher than that in the UK.

Reports say that DDT which is smuggled into Bangladesh from India is still found in abundance. The government had stopped local production of DDT, but Indian DDT remains as a serious threat. DDT is abundantly produced in India.

DDT was banned in Bangladesh some 13 years back. But the insecticide was being produced and used in the country until recently. The Industries Ministry decided to stop DDT production last year.

Bangladesh has only one DDT producing plant in the Chittagong Chemical Complex at Barak Kunda in Chittagong. The Industries Ministry reportedly decided to convert the DDT plant into one producing less harmful pesticides like Diazinon.

The government owned DDT plant was set up in 1966 by the then East Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation (EPIDC) basically to support the massive malaria eradication drive of that time. DDT was also used for controlling pest attack on agricultural crops.

Reliable sources at the plant level informed that two warehouses adjacent to the plant has been sealed with 224 tons of locally produced DDT stored.

The DDT plant which was set up with an installed capacity of 1,800 tons a year has now become a worn out one. Its production capacity reportedly came down to 400 tons a year in 1989-90.

## Salman may contest polls

By Staff Correspondent

President of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) Salman F Rahman yesterday said he may contest the next general election.

"But it is still too early for me to comment further until the current political crisis resolves."

"If I contest the election, I will run independently — not from any party platform," he said at a press conference where he also explained the outcome of the FBCCI trade promotion mission in Europe and the USA.

"I definitely would like to go to the parliament because I will get an exposure. I will do it to gain some experience, not to have the taste of power," Salman said.

"Businessmen have roles to play in the society and by becoming MPs, they can play these roles," he pointed out. He dismissed a claim by certain quarters that the FBCCI would sponsor a group of candidates in the next elections. "The FBCCI's constitution does not allow that. The FBCCI is not a political platform."

## Jamaat to observe 'caretaker day'

Aug 7

Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Maulana Matur Rahman Nizami yesterday said there is no alternative to the Opposition's formula for a caretaker government to ensure free and fair polls, reports UNB.

He said the present political crisis can only be resolved if the government dissolves the parliament and paves the way for the formation of a caretaker government on the basis of the Opposition's formula to hold the next election.

Responding to a query about Barrister Ishraq's caretaker government's formula, Nizami said Opposition parties have been demanding resignation of the Prime Minister 90 days ahead of the election and a judge of the Appellate Division will head the caretaker government.

Jamaat will observe 'Caretaker Day' on August 7 as a step towards launching a renewed agitation to force the government to meet what he called the people's demand for a caretaker government.

## Croat offensive

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Knin, possibly targeting a communications tower, said Col. Andrew Leslie, commander of UN troops in Knin. He reported a second air attack further north, near Gospić.

UN observation posts came under Croatian fire. A Danish peacekeeper, Sgt. Claus Gamburg, 23, was killed when a shell fired by Croats hit his observation post after the peacekeepers manning the post turned down a Croat demand to abandon it, UN officials said. Two Polish peacekeepers were wounded elsewhere.

Radio contact was lost with peacekeepers at other observation posts.

Separatist fighters reportedly hit back, raining shells down on several Croatian cities and towns, while Bosnian Serbs also responded to the attack on their Croatian brethren by shelling Croat sectors of the town of Mostar in southern Bosnia-Herzegovina.

World governments feared the fighting could inflame a wider war in the Balkan region although official condemnation of Croatia's action was mild.

US Defence Secretary William Perry gave limited support to the offensive but Russia, Britain, France and Germany demanded a halt to fighting.

They urged negotiations on a late offer from the Krajina Serbs to negotiate their reintegration with Croatia.

NATO threatened air strikes to protect UN peacekeepers after a Danish soldier was killed and two Polish troops were wounded by deliberate Croatian tank fire on UN posts.

The European Union, meanwhile, suspended trade talks with Croatia and froze an aid programme to penalize the Balkan nation for launching an assault on rebel Serbs.

## Hacked to death

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Fatally injured Sattar was rushed to the Arahazar health complex where the doctors pronounced him dead.

A case has been filed with the Arahazar thana. However, no one was arrested.

## Two stabbed

In another incident, a group of armed dacoits stabbed two persons and looted cash and goods worth about Tk 1.7 lakh from a house in Shamsul Al Amin Cotton Mills staff quarters in Bandar thana area early yesterday.

Seriously injured Nagendra, an employee of the cotton mills, and his son Uttam were admitted to a local clinic.

The gang of about 20 people entered into Nagendra's house at about 1:30 am and looted gold ornaments, electronic goods and cash.

## Sylhet polytech reopens Aug 12

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Aug 4: Sylhet Polytechnic Institute will reopen on August 12 after an unscheduled closure of about three and a half months.

The decision was taken at a meeting of teachers, political leaders and elite of the town with the Deputy Commissioner in the chair.

The institute was closed sine die following a series of armed clashes between the activists of the Islami Chhatra Shibir and the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal on April 23.

The meeting decided to suspend all political activities on the campus for six months till January 31.

## Road accidents

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Another report from Sherpur says: A student leader of Nalitabari was killed in an accident on the Sherpur-Nalitabari road at Jalgao in Jhenaigati thana of the district yesterday.

Fazlul Haq Badan, 24, Convener of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) of Nalitabari thana met with the tragic end while he was going to the district headquarters by a motor-cycle.

Witnesses said Badan, a 4th year student of Nalitabari Shahid Nazmul Smriti College, died on the spot when he was run over by a speeding passenger bus at about 4 pm.

Police seized the bus but the driver was absconding.

## Biman flight

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technical snag.

A Biman official at the airlines' city office without identifying himself said that Dhaka had been contacted to send another aircraft at the earliest to ferry the stranded passengers.

According to a late night PTI report, the ordeal of 70 passengers of the Bangladesh Biman's fopper F-27 flight BG-096, who have been stranded at Calcutta airport for more than 31 hours, finally ended when an aircraft from Dhaka picked up the passengers at 2100 hours (IST).

## Natore clash

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lice personnel were also injured during the fight. Police fired two rounds of bullet, he said.

None was arrested in this connection till the filing of this report late tonight.

A big contingent of police was deployed at Lalpur to avert further violence.

## Hazards from unhygienic storing

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in polythene packets which are not properly sealed. This dangerous fungus grows easily, particularly in the west seasons when humidity is high in the atmosphere," he BCSIR scientist said. "Neither the government nor the relevant departments care about the correct storing of food stuff," he alleged.

Scientists at the Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institute (BSTI) said that there are many items in the market which do not conform to their labels.

"One such item is Tomato Ketchup. In most cases the manufacturers use pumpkins and artificial colours to make Tomato Ketchup," said the BSTI scientist. "The artificial colouring can be highly injurious to health. Many countries have banned or restricted use of artificial colouring of consumable items." It is not possible to say whether the producers are using the real food colours, or ordinary dye because there are thousands of items and constant monitoring is very difficult with this manpower and logistic support."

Puffed rice, a very common and traditional Bengali food is being adulterated. "Some producers used urea fertiliser to stir-fry the rice. This makes the puffed rice look much whiter and raises the profit margin."

Scientists and officials at the BSTI said that the quality of butter oil, different sauces, ice cream, marmalades, jam jelly, found in market was 'simply deplorable'. They advised the people to avoid these items.

Many brands of bread found in the market are also 'infested with bacteria' because of abnormally high water content.

In a 'good' bread, the water content must not be more than 40 per cent. Whenever the moisture level is high, bacteria grows, the scientist said.

"Confectioneries and bakeries are virtually untouched by any department. There are thousands everywhere in the country so you can imagine what may be going on in that sector," a high official of the BSTI said.

The official further said that many industries go for expensive and attractive TV advertisements to promote sale of food items but in many cases they do not obtain clearance from the BSTI. "We have found sub-standard foods being promoted in this way," he alleged. "Only law cannot do everything, people should be made aware," he said.

The BSTI field workers sometimes face insult and threats from the unscrupulous manufacturers when they try to stop their malpractice. An official of the department was threatened with abduction recently, an official said.

## The Midnight File

### Trinidad Speaker arrested

TRINIDAD, Aug 4: The government has declared a limited state of emergency and arrested the Speaker of the House who has been accused of lying and thwarted all previous efforts to oust her. The government announced the detention order for Cecilia Seapaul in a brief statement Thursday night. Seapaul blocked an attempt last month to pass a no-confidence motion against her, deeming it unconstitutional, reports AP.

### More US aid for RRF

WASHINGTON, Aug 4: President Clinton approved the release of another \$17 million in US Defense Department assistance supporting the UN peacekeepers' Rapid Reaction Force in former Yugoslavia, reports AP.

## Trading at DSE

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of trading. Shares of Beximco Ltd, Shine Pukur Holdings and Beximco Synthetic were also traded by a significant proportion. Shares of BOC, Maq Paper, Apex Weaving, Bengal Biscuit, Eastern Housing and Bata Shoes were also traded in large volumes.

The daily average value of trading, however, declined by Tk 33 lakh to Tk 2.35 crore last week from Tk 2.68 crore of the previous week.

But the daily average number of trading of shares and debentures last week slightly increased to 1.31 lakh from 1.30 lakh of the previous week.

Of the traded shares and debentures last week, most issues marked gain and a lesser number incurred losses. The average number of issues marking gains increased to 45.50 from 36.50 of the previous week, while the number of loss-making issues declined, in line with the previous week's trend, to 36.50 from 36.83.

Random sampling of share prices of 17 frequently traded issues showed that prices of 11 issues declined from those of the previous week and six gained.

Of these, the share price of Beximco Pharmaceuticals declined to Tk 80.33 from 81.62. Ashraf Textiles to Tk 28.01 from 31.54, Bangladesh Lamps to Tk 4288 from Tk 4314, Singer to Tk 4762 from 4868.

Beximco Textiles to Tk 127 from 130 and Shine Pukur to Tk 79.77 from Tk 82.

In contrast, share price of Beximco Ltd increased to Tk 51.74 from Tk 48.5, Maq Paper to Tk 152 from Tk 151, BOC to Tk 185 from Tk 176, Apex Weaving to Tk 142 from 141, GQ Ball Pen to Tk 151 from Tk 139 and Reliance Insurance to Tk 330 from Tk 328.

A total of 7,91,627 shares and debentures worth Tk 14 crore 10 lakh 76,480 were traded last week as against 7,85,910 shares and debentures worth Tk 16 crore 10 lakh 88,890.37 of the previous week.

The total number of issues traded last week was 570, with 273 gainers and 219 losers as against 530 with 219 gainers and 221 losers in the previous week.

The volume leader of the week, Beximco Pharma, sold 2,45,650 shares while BOC 40,353, Beximco Textiles over 33,000, Dynamic Textiles over 30,000 and Shine Pukur 20,950.

## BNP meet

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Standing Committee and 15 members of the Chairperson's advisory council.

BNP insiders said party Secretary General Abdus Salam Talukdar is expected to present a report on the political situation and party activities.

The members of the committee will also be briefed on the party position as regards the next general elections.

A party source also said that an open discussions will be encouraged on the position the party should take regarding the next elections in view of the Opposition demand for polls under a caretaker government and vacation of many Opposition seats in Parliament.

## Ozone hole

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into the summer months of January and February.

The hole is unlikely to get much bigger because it is contained by strong winds circulating high in the atmosphere. But even at its present size it covers part of south America and the Falkland (Malvinas) islands in the south Atlantic.

Fellow researcher Anna Jones warned that, despite the introduction of international controls on ozone-depleting CFC gases, the ozone hole was likely to appear each year 'for many years'.

The hole was discovered in 1985 by members of the British Antarctic survey, who have measured ozone levels for nearly 40 years.

Ozone depletion results from the presence of chlorine and bromine in the atmosphere which come from the emissions of human-made chemicals such as CFCs, halon and methyl bromide.

## Pharmaceutical

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and Family Welfare has 'finalised' formation of a committee for the implementation of the CPMP, a source said.

Talking to The Daily Star, Prof Chowdhury Mahmud Hasan said the code has been formulated keeping in view the socio-economic, cultural and healthcare context of the country. The relevant guidelines of the World Health Organisation, the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers' Association and the Association of British Pharmaceutical Industries were also taken into consideration, he added.

Prof Hasan said indecent commercial advertisements made by some of the ayurvedic companies would come under control. The code has been formulated against the backdrop of exaggerated claims and unethical sales promotion activities by some of the pharmaceutical companies, he pointed out.

He also said, "When implemented, it would be the first of its kind in South Asia."

## BSTI monitors

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BSTI before marketing these items.

It is a criminal offence to sell any of these items without the clearance of the department.

But BSTI officials said that most of these food products are being marketed without the slightest respect for the law.

All manufacturers, producers or suppliers are required to obtain clearance certificate from the BSTI before marketing the following food items: pineapple juice, fruits squash, jam, fruit vinegar, fruit jelly, fruit or vegetable juice, fruit syrup, honey, tinned or bottled fruit, fruit cordial, fruit or vegetable sauce, marmalade, tomato paste, tomato juice, pickle, chatney, fruit preserve (morobba), concentrated fruit juice, tomato ketchup, tinned pineapple, powder-milk, butter, baby dairy food, butter oil, ghee, bread, biscuit, lozenge, toffee, packet tea, liquid glucose, dextrose, soft drink, noodles, iodised salt, drinking water, natural mineral water, ice cream, melathione, powder chilli, powder tamaric, bananpati, soyabean oil, mustard oil, coconut oil, palm oil, white flour and wheat starch.