

# Down to Earth

## Tribulations of Parents at School Premises

By ASM Nurunnabi

Children of schools in lower classes in the city, in most cases, are required to be escorted to their schools and back home. This sometimes creates a problem. In this situation, a guardian be it the mother, father or some authorised person has to go regularly to the child's school as an escort. If the father acts as the escort, his duty in this respect may end in the morning after escorting the child to school. This duty resumes when the child's classes are over. Where the father remains busy outside with his own activities at that time, the chore of escorting the child back home is done either by the mother or by any other authorised person. This is the usual picture of family life in most homes of the city.

Problems arise where the school is situated some distance away from the child's residence. In some cases, the mother or her representative cannot afford to return home after the child reaches school. Because of distance, a second trip to the school, when the child's classes are over for return home, may not be possible mainly because of the conveyance cost and the time factor. In such circumstances, the mother or her proxy prefers to remain near the school premises throughout the school hours. The tribulation of the mother or of her representative usually stems from that compelling situation.

In most cases, it is seen, with a few exceptions, that there are no waiting rooms in the schools for guardians who are required to wait out the entire school hours of their children or wards. In such situations, the waiting escorts are left to their own devices. The resultant picture is not happy. Some of the waiting mothers, take to the nearest footpath under the shade of trees, while others seek out their suitable shelters nearby.

This daily routine, except on holidays, goes on interminably. To break the monotony of their vigil, some of the waiting mothers or their representatives are found to display resourcefulness. They spread out plastic sheets and taking their places thereon, engage themselves in end-less sessions of gossiping on all subjects under the sun. Some others come equipped with pocket radios or flasks of tea or other drinks to while away the time of waiting. An atmosphere of bonhomie develops among the waiting members of the same sex, irrespective of considerations of their age, education or social backgrounds.

The dark side of the situation emerges during inclement weather. Driving rain or gusty winds send them to the nearest places of refuge. When the inclement weather conditions remain for short spells, it may seem pleasant that exiting to the waiting groups but when the duration of such unfavourable conditions becomes longer, they along with their wards suffer.

Talks with some mothers who regularly do such vigils reveal tales of silent suffering under adverse conditions. Mrs. Baker is a resident of Mirpur. Her daughter is a student of a lower class of a good school in the Dhanmndi Residential Area. At present, in view of inordinate competition for admission in a good school, it was considered as a stroke of good luck when her daughter qualified for admission in her present school, even though it was situated some miles away from her place of residence. As the girl is of tender age, she can't be left alone, without escort, to go to her school and

come back. Her mother, therefore, bears with fortitude the daily grind of taking her daughter to school. Because of the distance and the high cost of conveyance involved, she cannot afford multiple trips to and from her daughter's school. Hence the need for her to keep vigil outside the school precincts till the end of the school hours of her daughter. A similar story was told by one Mrs. Alim who lives at Khilgaon. She comes with her minor son reading at a school at Nikhet.

School buses are nowadays operated by some school authorities. That provides some sense of security to the guardians of the students using such bus service. But that system is limited in use. Hence the worry of guardians for their minor school going wards is understandable.

Lately, a crop of private schools, particularly so-called kindergarten schools for small children have come up in most localities. But, regrettably, in most cases such schools are housed within limited space which precludes the provision of facility for the guardians who are required to wait for their wards. It is, however, felt by observers that the schools in the city, both in the public and private sectors, should give serious consideration to the question of provision of facility for waiting guardians. At present it is seen that some schools provide some benches under the open sky outside the school premises for the waiting guardians in the midst of a crowd of waiting rickshaws and cars. Such practice does not seem to be in good taste and certainly not conducive to the dignity of the waiting guardians, most of whom belong to the fair sex.



From left, President Boris Yeltsin of Russia, Askar Akayev of Kyrgyzstan, Emomate Rakhmanov of Tajikistan, Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan and Jiang Zemin of China clasp hands after signing a regional security treaty in Shanghai yesterday. — AFP/UNB photo

## 70 lakh children under 14 engaged in jobs

About 70 lakh Bangladeshi children, nearly one fifth of the population under 14, are engaged in a variety of jobs ranging from agricultural farms to chemical factories in violation of both national and international conventions, a team advocating children's right claimed in Dhaka yesterday, reports BSS.

Leaders of the Liaison Committee for Workers International, the advocacy group told a press conference that around 30 per cent of these child labourers are employed in several hazardous jobs like welding, vehicle repair and match factories.

Tofazzal Hussain, a trade union leader and bureau member of the committee, called for creating greater public awareness about the health hazards of the children — who are being deprived of their childhood due to the exploitation of heartless greedy entrepreneurs.

He said had the parents of these children been employed, there would have been no need for them to look for job at a time when they should be in schools. He regretted that his wife Raushan Ershad yesterday failed to meet him in Dhaka Central Jail, his counsel said, reports BSS.

Raushan Ershad, two children and Ershad's two sisters were to meet Ershad under prior permission of the jail authorities. But a deadlock developed when members of Ershad were told that the interview will be held through intercom.

## Raushan fails to meet Ershad in jail

The family members of former President Hussain Muhammad Ershad including his wife Raushan Ershad yesterday failed to meet him in Dhaka Central Jail, his counsel said, reports BSS.

Raushan Ershad, two children and Ershad's two sisters were to meet Ershad under prior permission of the jail authorities. But a deadlock developed when members of Ershad were told that the interview will be held through intercom.

## Bonus for garments workers demanded

The Bangladesh Garments Workers and Employers Federation (BGWAEF) has warned that non-payment of Eid bonus and other dues to garments workers will have serious consequences on the country's lucrative ready-made garments industry, says a press release.

At a meeting of its members yesterday in the city, the Federation's president, Abul Hossain said that the workers have been facing hardships due to non-payment of wages in some garments factories for the last three months.

He urged factory owners to settle the workers dues, including Eid bonuses, immediately to avoid a labour unrest which will greatly harm garments production and exports.

Hossain called upon the government and banks to bail-out small and medium-sized garments units through soft loans.

The Federation president also accused some political parties of being indifferent to the workers' plight, saying that the workers were in dire straits today because they had responded to the call of those parties during recent political movements.

## BNP shameless sycophant of India: Jamaat

Prof Golam Azam, Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh yesterday called upon the people to extend support to the party in the coming elections for establishing parliament based on Muslim nationalism, reports BSS.

He said independence is the name of spirit and 'La ilaha illallahu' was the basis of the independence of Bangladesh.

Prof Azam was speaking as the chief guest at a function held at the Al-Falah auditorium here under the aegis of Dhaka city Jamaat. City ameer ATM Azharul Islam presided.

## Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid, Advocate Jamshuddin Sarkar spoke on the occasion.

Criticising the BNP, he said the party which is known as the shameless sycophant of India is now asking for votes for safeguarding national independence.

He said while in power they could not realise a drop of water from any rivers including the Teesta, Surma, Ganges and Farakka. He said the party which is subservient to India, would allow India to use the Chittagong Port, give transit facilities and supply gas to India if goes to power once again. "So country's independence is not safe at their hand," he said.

Prof. Golam Azam said that those who had come to power through unconstitutional means and later formed civilian party are now shedding crocodile tears for democracy.

## Ershad's candidature in polls

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"It is not the question of serving the sentence. This will depend on finding of the guilt by the highest court," he added.

Another leading constitutional expert, talking on condition of anonymity put forward some precedences from decision of the then East Pakistan High Court and Indian Courts.

Clarifying he said, "there is a decision of the then High Court of East Pakistan to the effect that filing of an appeal against the conviction reopens the entire matter and until the appeal is disposed of the disqualification on the ground of conviction is not attracted."

Comparing it with that of an Indian court's dispensation, he said there is a distinction between a candidate in an election and a person who has already been elected.

Elaborating the Indian court's dispensation he said, "a person who has already been elected prior to conviction will not be disqualified to remain as a member of parliament, if an appeal against such conviction is pending."

"So far, with respect to a candidate for election a conviction attracts disqualification in India, even though appeal is

## Prayer for Dudayev

The heroic contributions and supreme sacrifice of Chechen leader Dzhokhar Dudayev for the cause of the independence of Chechnya were recalled at the Jumma prayers, at the national Baitul Mokarram Mosque in the city yesterday, reports BSS.

Leading the prayer, after the Khatib of the mosque, Maulana Obaidul Haque paid rich tributes to the memory of Dudayev for his role in realising the independence of Chechnya from the clutches of Russia.

Earlier in a brief speech, former chief of staff of Bangladesh Army, Lt. Gen (Retd) Nooruddin Khan gave a resume of the courageous role and bold leadership of Dudayev for the causes of the emancipation of the oppressed Chechen Muslims.

They observed that the supreme sacrifices of Dudayev would remain as a source of inspiration for all freedom loving people, particularly in Kashmir, Lebanon, and Bosnia.

## Russia, China, 3 central Asian states sign border treaty

SHANGHAI, Apr 26 The presidents of Russia, China and three central Asian republics today signed a treaty aimed at reducing border tensions, in a ceremony carried live on state television, reports Reuters.

President Boris Yeltsin and Chinese President Jiang Zemin joined the leaders of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in the signing.

The live signed in the Soviet-designed Shanghai exhibition centre. The treaty stipulates that military forces of the five neighbours do not attack each other, diplomats said.

It also bans the countries from conducting military exercises aimed against each other and requires them to inform each other of the scope of exercises and set up friendly ties.

Border disputes between the signatories, particularly China and Russia, are longstanding, but basic agreement on demarcation of the Sino-Russian border was finally reached in 1991.

## Salam

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He was critical of the Election Commission for extending the time limit for registration of voters for three times and said that the Chief Election Commissioner during a meeting with the BNP leaders on April 21 informed that a total of 30,000 eligible voters applied for registration across the country till that day.

"Then how come 14,000 voters from a single city like Khulna can get registration by-passing the normal rules," he posed the question and alleged that without physical verification, some particular persons were submitting 100 to 500 voters name each which was totally against the regulations.

He said that his party had lodged formal complaints with the Election Commission office of the respective areas for cancelling the fake names from the voters' list for ensuring a neutral, free and fair elections.

Replying to a question regarding the campaigning of two mayors of Dhaka and Chittagong using the status of minister and state minister, national flag and government vehicles for party purposes, the BNP secretary general said it was totally unethical in the context of the caretaker government's commitment for holding a free and fair elections.

BNP Joint Secretary Generals Abdullah Al Noman, Abdul Mannan Buiyan, Vice Chairman Tariqul Islam, Office Secretary Nazrul Islam Khan, Ihsanul Kabir assisted the BNP secretary general.

## Share prices

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Trading surged last week because the floor is going to be closed for five consecutive days in the next week due to government holidays for Eid-ul-Azha, May day and Buddha Purnima, a member of the DSE said. He said, investors bought a large number of shares expecting that the prices would go up further when it reopens after about one week.

More than 12 lakh 69 thousand shares and debentures worth about Tk 30.39 crores exchanged hands during the past week.

The volume leaders of the week were Beximco Pharma (1,96,450), Chic Tex (1,36,500), Reckitt and Colman (89,450), BOC Bangladesh (58,366), GQ Ball Pen (26,590), Eastern Housing (23,400).

# The Midnight File

## Clinton approves budget

WASHINGTON, Apr 26: President Bill Clinton today signed into law a long-overdue budget for the current fiscal year, ending a prolonged battle that twice caused government shutdowns, the White House said. White House spokesman Mike McCurry said Clinton had also signed some waivers "necessary to keep...damaging environmental riders (in the bill) from taking effect," reports Reuters.

## I am not afraid of Imran's political threat: Benazir

ISLAMABAD, Apr 26: Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto dismissed the political threat posed by former cricket captain Imran Khan, newspapers reported today, says Reuters.

Benazir told reporters on her aircraft while returning from a visit to Syria on Thursday night that she welcomed Imran's entry into politics and was not afraid of it.

Imran, who called the launch of his Tehreek-e-Insaaf (justice movement) on Thursday the beginning of the battle against corruption and injustice, has not yet announced any plans to contest the next parliamentary elections due in 1998.

A political party needs at least 109 (of the 217-seat) National Assembly (lower house) seats to form a government," the Daily News quoted Benazir as saying. "But can Imran Khan win so many seats in the elections?"

Imran told a news conference on Thursday he would turn his movement into a political party after gauging people's support for it.

But for the moment he said he would set up committees to advise on improvement in areas including justice, human rights, health, education, economy, youth affairs and joblessness, women's affairs and the environment.

Benazir said Imran was welcome in politics "provided he does not indulge in ball-tampering, which the former fast bowler admits he did once in an English country cricket match in 1981."

Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the main opposition Pakistan Muslim League (PML) of ex-prime minister Nawaz Sharif do not perceive Imran's movement as a threat to their political standings. The Nation newspaper said on Friday.

Imran said on Thursday he was launching the movement because he found Pakistan "on the brink of disaster" half a century after its creation from the partition of the Indian sub-continent at independence from Britain in 1947.

"We are dissatisfied with politicians and the political system and we are announcing this movement to bring change," he said. "Today marks the beginning of the battle against corruption and injustice."

## LDF concerned at EC's move

The central steering committee of the Left Democratic Front (LDF) at a meeting in the city yesterday expressed its concern over what it said initiative of the Election Commission to delete the clause prohibiting the use of the places of worship for election propaganda, from the code of conduct, reports BSS.

The meeting said the Election Commission in its draft code of conduct incorporated a clause prohibiting the use of mosques, temples, churches and other places of worship for election propaganda at a time when the political parties were demanding prohibition on exploiting religion and places of worship for election propaganda. The Election Commission took initiative to drop that particular clause while finalising the code of conduct succumbing to the pressure of certain communal parties, the meeting said.

The meeting made it clear that such a move of the Election Commission would not be acceptable to the people, according to an LDF press release.

The meeting was of the view that the provision permitting the use of the places of worship for election purpose would make the role of the caretaker government controversial in holding the election freely and impartially.

## Sher-e-Bangla

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sage, said the late leader set a unique example by freeing the exploited farmers and tenants from the clutches of zamindar-mahajans and by introducing the Bengal Tenancy Act and the Rint Shalishi (debt settlement) Bill.

"The people call him Sher-e-Bangla (tiger of Bengal) as a mark of respect for his uncompromising struggle against the foreign rulers in achieving the political rights of the toiling masses," he said.

In a separate message, the Chief Adviser described him as a politician who had real love for the people and said the nation will always remember him with gratitude for his invaluable contribution in expediting education, economic emancipation of the poor farmer-tenants and flourishing democratic consciousness.

The proper way to show respect to this great leader will be to work devotedly for the welfare of the people, consolidating democracy in the country, he said.

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina, in her message, paid rich tributes to the memory of Sher-e-Bangla. The party has drawn up a programme to place wreaths and offer fataha at the mazar of the late leader at 7-30 am.

On the occasion, Sher-e-Bangla National Memorial Council and Sher-e-Bangla Jatiya Gabeshana Parishad will place wreaths, hold milad mahfil and Quran Khwani at his mazar.

A discussion meeting will also be held at his mazar premise at 8 am today.

To mark the death anniversary, an audio cassette with music on Sher-e-Bangla by Poet Mohammad Abdul Khaque will be released after the Eid.

## Indian polls

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The four states which will have partial Lok Sabha elections tomorrow are Tamil Nadu (25 out of 39 seats), Andhra (21 out of 42), Karnataka (17 out of 28) and Rajasthan (15 out of 25 Lok Sabha seats).

The Congress which is the country's ruling party and has been in power for most of time since India's independence in 1947, has fielded the maximum number of 529 candidates and is contesting the polls from all states except Sikkim. It has made electoral alliance with AIADMK in Tamil Nadu and some other parties in a few other places.

The pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the communists with their socialist allies — Samajwadi Party and Janata Dal, described as National Front-Left Front (NFL) are the two other aspirants for power.

The second and third phase of voting on May 2 and May 7 will cover the rest of the constituencies excepting Kashmir, where polls will be held on May 30.

The counting of votes polled in the first and second phases will begin on May 8, except in Madhya Pradesh where it will be taken up together with the elections of third phase on May 9.

The unofficial results of the elections are expected to be available on May 10 while the official results on May 12. Talking to a limited number of newsmen, Election Commissioner M S Gill expected a high rate of voter turnout in tomorrow's polls as there has been repeated media publicity of elections. He, however, frankly admitted that the campaign in India's current elections was at "low key" for restrictions imposed on expenditures of candidates and parties. Gill was hopeful that future elections will witness little bit of colour.

## AL: Nomination

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The ALCWC meeting also took a set of resolutions and decisions regarding latest political situation, said a party press release issued last night.

It reiterated the demand for placing the Defence Ministry under the Chief Adviser.

The meeting also urged the caretaker government to expedite the illegal arms recovery drive and ensure neutrality of the administration for the sake of a congenial atmosphere for the holding of free and fair elections.

Party leaders including Mubtuddin Ahmad, Zillur Rahman, Abdur Razzak, Amir Hossain Amu and Dr Mohammad Selim, among others, attended the meeting.

## Call money rate soars

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main objective remained keeping the inflation low. A commercial bank was reported to be refused re-discount facility despite submission of security papers, the sources added.

A foreign bank had borrowed from the central bank against its foreign exchange deposit in the recent past. But it was also discontinued since many banks lined up in the same queue, they mentioned.

Banks have virtually stopped sanctioning any new loans since cost of fund became too high because they had to borrow from inter-bank at rates much higher than lending rates. Some of the foreign banks even deferred disbursement against commitment, one source said.

## Deployment of army during polls suggested

Speakers at a convention at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday suggested deployment of army during the coming election to ensure free and fair polls, reports UNB.

It also suggested measures for preventing loan defaulters from participating in the election.

National Democratic Foundation organised the 'Nagorik Convention' which was participated by former Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University Dr Maniuzzaman Mian, former Vice-Chancellor of Jahangirnagar University Dr Kazi Saleh Ahmed, Dr KM Mohsin, Dr Osman Haider, former Ambassador Rezaul Karim and joint editor of the Daikin Dinkal Syed Zafar. Foundation President and former JCD president Asaduzzaman Ripon presided.

## UNCTAD forecast

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exports are being further eroded through increased competition from the non-LDC exporters and by the increased use of substitutes for raw materials.

The concentration of private capital in regional trade areas, which comprise mostly the developed countries and the more dynamic developing countries, has intensified with the LDCs facing even greater difficulties in attracting FDI, the UN body says.

"The long-term opportunities of the LDC notwithstanding, some of its agreements pose a number of potential problems for LDCs in the short term, including preference erosion, tariff escalation and higher food-import costs."

The fact that increased competition in global markets poses dangers for LDC economies reflects the very weak supply of capacities in these countries, says the UNCTAD 1996 Report, the 12th such issue focusing on the key development issues confronting the LDCs.

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