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DOWN TO EARTH

New Horizon For Disabled In City

By A S M Nurunnabi

Disability in a person may have various aspects. Some may be blind, others may be deaf or dumb. There may be also others who are physically handicapped. In our current thinking, we find a new concept of the potentialities of such disabled persons which is designated as ability in a different way. In the light of the new definition, those disabled persons are no longer regarded as a burden on society; they are rather regarded as equal partners who can make not only significant contribution to socio-economic development, but also lead a respectable, decent life. The new generation of the disabled of our country are proving this in various ways.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), at least 10 per cent of our people are suffering from some sort of disability. In the light of this estimate, the total number of disabled children is about 30 lakh, out of which the blind account for 10 lakh. There are reportedly more than 50 NGOs working for the welfare of the disabled. The more important among them are noted below.

The Centre for Rehabilitation of the Paralysed (CRP) has been doing laudable work. Initially started in the compound of the Shaheed Suhrawardy hospital in October, 1979, the Centre later shifted with expanded programme to Chapain, Savar. The Centre runs its activities in the following areas: specialised medical and nursing care, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, social welfare aftercare and follow-up. It has been the policy of the centre to recycle items and to create income generating activities (IGA) wherever possible. Through a variety of IGA, such as manufacture of wheel mobility aids, sale of handicrafts, milk, eggs, chickens, etc., the staff of the centre are able to cover part of their yearly expenditure. The centre has built up a network for itself among both government hospitals and non-government organisations. Many of these links are concerned with voluntary consultants/professors taking part in the training courses at CRP and

students having practical placements in the government and private hospitals across the country.

A large centre for training and rehabilitation known as Employment Rehabilitation for the Physically Handicapped is located at Tongi. The centre was set up in 1987 and it functions with the financial assistance of the Swedish Development Agency. It imparts training to its inmates in seven trades, such as mechanical trade, live stock care, tailoring, carpentry, nursery, bamboo and cane handicrafts and mobility course for the blind. The duration of the training course is six months to one year.

Boarding and lodging are free for the inmates. At the end of the training, each inmate is given a grant of Taka 4000. Besides, there is a placement officer at the centre who helps the trained inmates in securing employment in various organisations.

During the last seven years, more than 900 disabled persons were given training at this centre. While a good number of them work in various organisations, the majority are engaged in self-employment projects. The only Braille press of the country is located at this centre. The centre also runs a modern plastic manufacturing unit which is entirely manned by the disabled. There are other industrial units outside, such as the Aromatic industry and the Jamuna Group of Industries at Joydevpur, where there is a good number of disabled workers. The performance of the disabled employees in such industries is reportedly very satisfactory.

A laudable role for the welfare of the disabled is also played by another organisation known as Social Assistance and Rehabilitation for the Physically Vulnerable (SARPV) aiming at equality for disabled persons in 1988. As a social product, SARPV came into being with their involvement in community level activities in 1991. Its goals and objectives include creation of awareness about disability issues, promotion of social rehabilitation of the people with disabilities, provision of skill training to disabled people and exploration of opportunities for betterment of socially disadvantaged and vulnerable people.

It is a matter of pride for Bangladesh that even disabled persons, when properly trained and groomed in the field of sports, can achieve laurels for the country in international competitions. In the special Olympic for disabled persons held last year at Connecticut in New Haven, USA, at which 7100 athletes from 140 countries participated, the Bangladeshi contingent comprising 15 disabled athletes won 5 gold, 6 silver and 6 bronze medals.

In the light of the present socio-political and economic conditions, special steps are called for to cope with the typical problems of the physically handicapped. In this context, a national policy for the disabled needs to be framed which will cover all relevant aspects of care, education and rehabilitation in the light of their special needs.

Compensation from US demanded

Ankara will respect territorial integrity of Iraq, says Ciller

LONDON, Sept 6: Turkish Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller said today she wanted compensation from the United States for losses incurred by her country's backing for the allied effort against Iraq, reports Reuter.

"It's about time the United States proved they also stand by Turkey — these losses have to be compensated," Ciller told BBR world television. "We only want a certain portion of our losses to be compensated economically."

Ciller said Turkey was working with US officials on "the economic losses.... and how that can be compensated."

Turning to the security zone Turkey plans to create in northern Iraq, Ciller said it was a must for Turkey following the recent upheaval in northern Iraq. Turkey would "definitely" observe the territorial integrity of Iraq, she said.

"It (the buffer zone) is not taking advantage of anything and if it is seen as such it will be the worst mistake that anyone can make," Ciller said.

"(It) means a fence strip right next to our borders has to be looked at as a security area which will deter penetration. It is going to be temporary kind of activity."

Earlier, Turkey spelled out limited military goals inside northern Iraq.

United Nations officials and Kurdish guerrilla forces said today the border with Turkey was quiet, with no evidence that Turkish troops or aircraft had struck at Kurdish separatist camps inside northern Iraq.

"All we have heard are rumours and news reports. We have not sighted any Turkish troops on the ground and we have seen no airplanes," said a UN official in this border town.

Iraq summoned a senior Turkish diplomat in Baghdad to complain about Ankara's military build-up along the border with Kurdish-held northern Iraq.

Baghdad newspapers said today Foreign Minister Mohammed Saeed al-Sahaf summoned Turkish acting Charge

d'Afaires at midnight on Thursday over "Turkey's attitude vis-a-vis recent developments in northern Iraq."

AP adds: More defiant in words than in actions, Iraq stayed out of fighting in Kurdish areas and has avoided challenging US planes patrolling 'no fly zones' within its borders.

For the first time since Saturday, no fighting was reported anywhere in Iraq today.

However, the situation remained volatile. The United States and its allies plan to continue their flight over the no-fly zones in northern and southern Iraq, and Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has vowed to target the aircraft.

A Taliban spokesman in Pakistan, quoted by a private Afghan news service, said Logar province's Azra district, south-east of Kabul, had fallen early today after overnight fighting.

Taliban forces now control all of Azra district including its central town of the same name, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) quoted spokesman Maulvi Ahmad Jan as saying in the northwestern Pakistani town of Peshawar.

There was no independent confirmation of the report. AIP said the government had sent reinforcements, including tanks, to the area on Thursday night and on Friday from Kabul and the eastern town of Sarobi in an apparent move to block the Taliban advance.

A neutral administration in adjoining Nangarhar province also has sent forces to strengthen its positions on the provincial border to check any Taliban encroachment, it said.

US intelligence reports

Thursday indicated Saddam's troops and tanks were withdrawing from northern Iraq.

"We are seeing the withdrawal of the mechanized and

armoured units from the Kurdish territories in northern Iraq back to their garrisons fairly systematically. We find that most of the units are returning and there is compliance with the change in the no-fly zone," said CIA Director John Deutch.

Gujral's entourage includes CPM leader, Somnath Chatterjee, MP, Chitta Bose MP, of forward block and Geta Mukherjee, MP.

The other members of his entourage are columnist Bhabani Sen Gupta, Editor of the mainstream Nikhil Chakrabarty and former irrigation secretary R Iyer and high officials.

When pointed out that CPA itself is a customer, an official said, "it cannot yet be said firmly that the trucks have performed badly."

The source said that the truck had developed a major fault within eight months of commissioning. He added that some of the trucks had been facing problems in hydraulic systems a few months after commissioning.

The source said that the trucks had been developed by capturing polling centres like forcible occupation of land. On the other hand, BNP workers, who protested the injustice, were beaten up, fired at and arrested.

The BNP secretary general further alleged that local officials ignored the demand of party candidate Barrister Moudud Ahmed to postpone the election in 17 centres due to terrorism.

"Even bombs were exploded at a centre in presence of the Chief Election Commissioner," he said.

He made similar allegations about Chittagong-13, Bagerhat-1 and Kurigram-3 constituencies. "Not more than 10 per cent voters cast their votes in Bagerhat," he claimed.

The President conveyed his sympathy with the bereaved family members of Prof Norman and Salman and prayed to the Almighty for the eternal peace of the departed soul.

Mirersharai

From Page 1

of the party agents and voters at Mirersharai.

Talking to this correspondent BNP leader Amir Khsru Mahmud Chowdhury MP said that as part of the movement, his party would hold a protest rally at Laldighi Maidan tomorrow afternoon and bring out a procession. Further action programmes will be announced at the rally, party sources said.

BNP leaders here may also tag to their movement the 28-point demand earlier announced by Chittagong City Corporation Mayor Mohiuddin Chowdhury during the tenure of BNP government, for the development of Chittagong, sources said.

BNP insiders said "we will announce programmes to force the government to fulfil the 28-point demand as the city Mayor Mohiuddin made these being a local Awami League leader."

Later at a press conference this evening at the Chittagong Press Club, chief election agent of AL Mirersharai Ataur Rahman Kaisar said that the allegations raised by BNP were "false and baseless".

UMIC has initiated an agreement for exploration in Block-21 covering part of the Bay of the Sunderbans.

He said that election at Mirersharai was held peacefully.

Health policy

From Page 1

government's plan for setting up one health centre at every union of the country.

Health and Family Welfare

Minister Salauddin Yusuf.

State Minister for Social Wel-

fare, Women and Children's

Affairs Dr Moazzam Hossain,

literateur Shawkat Osman,

Diabetic Association general

secretary Dr Fasliuddin Mahtab

and Dr Jobaida Hannan also

spoke at the meeting chaired by association president Dr Wahid

Uddin Ahmed.

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4 opposition leaders held for taking bribes from Rao

NEW DELHI, Sept 6: Four Indian opposition politicians have been arrested on charges of taking bribes to help prop up former Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao three years ago, their lawyer said today, reports AFP.

Advocate A K Aggarwal said Shibu Soren and Shailendra Mahato, both MPs, and Suraj Mandal and Simon Mirandi, who lost their seats earlier this year, were arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

The CBI has accused them of taking bribes from Rao in 1993 to back his Congress (I) Party government in New Delhi, following an opposition bid to unseat him. Rao, the current Congress president has denied the charges.

All four, arrested on Thursday and today, belong to the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, a regional party. They have denied the charges.

Aggarwal said the arrests were "coercive and unwarranted" because the four had been cooperating with the CBI. He said he would seek bail.

Rao has been implicated in a series of recent corruption scandals including a 21-million-dollar bribe-for-favour scam involving a New Delhi businessman, Surendra Jain.

That controversy resurfaced today when Hindu nationalist Lal Kishan Advani, president of India's main opposition the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), was accused of taking bribes from Jain.

One magistrate told this correspondent that he had caught at least two underaged persons who came to cast "false votes." They were caught and kept sitting for a couple of hours, said the magistrate adding that the immediate punishment discouraged others from doing the same.

Some personnel of law enforcement agencies admitted that they had helped voters reach some polling centres either driving out or destroying the elements creating obstructions to the voters.

But the District commissioner Iman Ali said "Election in the constituency was held in a free and fair atmosphere and none was arrested in connection with false voting or obstructing voters to reach the polling station."

However under the existing rules the authorities concerned are sufficiently empowered to take actions against those violating the election rules.

The Representation of People's Order (RPO) clearly states: Creating any obstruction to the voter while obstructing to the polling station for voting and false voting — are offences of undue influence and illegal practice respectively and punishable with imprisonment of maximum of seven years and minimum of two years and also with fine.

He added, "in that spirit, India wants to discuss all issues with its neighbours, including Bangladesh."

Responding to a question if the issue transit was linked with the water-sharing problem, Gujral replied, "I am not expecting anything in exchange."

The Indian minister said he is carrying a letter from Prime Minister Deve Gowda for his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina. He is expected to hand over the letter when he calls on her tomorrow.

Gujral will also meet with Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak, Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed and Finance Minister SAMS Kibria.

The Indian minister, who is accompanied by his wife Sheila Gujral was received at the airport by Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad and Begum Azad and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury.

Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Farooq Sobhan and Indian External Affairs Secretary Salman Haider, who arrived earlier in the day, were also present.

Gujral's entourage includes CPM leader, Somnath Chatterjee, MP, Chitta Bose MP, of forward block and Geta Mukherjee, MP.

The other members of his entourage are columnist Bhabani Sen Gupta, Editor of the mainstream Nikhil Chakrabarty and former irrigation secretary R Iyer and high officials.

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