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Down to Earth

Fake Cure Practices in City

By A S M Nurunnabi

When we stand on the threshold of 21st century, tremendous efforts are being made in research studies to find cures for some intractable diseases in many developed countries. These researches, when successful, are expected to bring about a revolution in curative therapies for those diseases. Against the background of these bright prospects, we seem to be grovelling in a world of superstitions, ignorance, exploitation which are taken advantage of by unscrupulous people. Their malpractices take diverse forms.

We are sometimes appalled at the ways the print media are cleverly utilised by these evil elements to advance their nefarious interests. We come across a kind of advertisements on some obviously quack medicines in some newspapers and periodicals which are downright in bad taste and in some cases blatantly obscene in their contents. The print media are relatively extensive in their reach and as such the potentialities for harmful influence such objectionable advertisements carry are wide-ranging. Whatever preventive laws are there in the matter, it is plain that such laws, if not backed by conscientious public opinion, may not carry us far. Another deterring factor may be the exercise of self-censorship as regards apparently odious advertisements carried by such newspapers, whatever financial sacrifice it may entail in order to check any possible adverse impact on our society.

Another aspect of the prevailing harmful situation is the extensive sway quack doctors

hold in the villages. In the urban areas and even in a metropolitan city like Dhaka, their sway is no less considerable. The greatest tool of their trade is their gift of gab. This enables them to easily draw an audience at any place. With the oratorical qualities of a Demosthenes, the quack doctor describes the remedial qualities of his medicines for any conceivable illness under the sun from stomach upset to cancer. Their prescriptions for myriad maladies are made attractive by assured cure and money refund guarantee, although the victims of their spell don't know for sure how the guarantee given by these quacks would be honoured in view of their constant movement from one place to another.

Though they can easily draw an audience at any location, some of their favourite haunts are any open space at Sadarghat, Motijheel, Dhaka Stadium, New Market, and other areas.

Lately, they have adapted for their purpose with great success the electronic media of cassette recorders, with which they record their orations and play them back as needed. The new gadget has spared them the physical strain of repeating their taped address which is couched in such a way as to exercise maximum impact on their audience. The portability of the gadget provided them with greater mobility and access to larger audiences at several places during a day. Some of them seek to enhance their crowd-drawing power by playing popular songs.

There is another dimension to the fake cure practices as currently adopted in the city. Astrologers and palmists, fear-some tantrics, so-called snake-charmers, precious stone specialists and others defying all attempts at professional description seem to have captured the mind of millions in the city. There is nothing that they can't do to effect cure of any disease, of course on payment of a fee. And incredible seems to be the faith that such clients repose in them.

There is still another big organised fraud in the city. The big nature or herbal cure houses, while flaunting dubious scientific and medical pretensions, sometimes make a claim of having divine power. And these powerful people generally use fear and blackmail as an instrument for pursuing their parasitic existence.

If we go through certain media reports, we may come across the whole range of them, and they do nothing on the sly or on stealth. It is apparent that the success of their multi-dimensional trades is largely due to the gullibility, illiteracy, and superstitions of their clients. There is no easy way of checking this hazard to public health, unless the illiterate people at large are assured the light of proper education and easy access to more facilities for scientific treatment. Government intervention through appropriate legislation may greatly help in checking this widespread menace to society. Our life is already bedevilled with numerous ills and we do not need these kinds of fake cure practices compounding the health hazards for our simple and easily gullible people.

Historic March 7 observed

The historic March 7 commemorating the epoch-making speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founding father of Bangladesh, was officially observed yesterday for the first time after more than two decades, reports BSS.

The day was observed across the country through holding of rallies, meetings, and seminars and by releasing commemorative postal stamps on the speech of Bangabandhu, made on this day 26 years ago at Suhrawardy Uddyan.

Newspapers brought out supplements while special programmes were put up by Bangladesh Betar and Bangladesh Television.

On this day in 1971, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delivered his landmark speech at the Race Course Maidan, now Suhrawardy Uddyan, calling upon the freedom-loving people of the then East Pakistan to wage struggle for emancipation from the exploitation and tyranny of Pakistani rulers. The historic speech had influenced the entire nation to take up arms against the occupation forces.

President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gave separate messages on the eve of the day.

The hallmark of the observance of the day was the inauguration of a torch rally at Suhrawardy Uddyan by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at 10 am. After a grand fire country torch to the rally will end on March 26, the Independence Day, there at the same place.

People from all walks of life including women and children attended the function. Cabinet ministers, chiefs of three services and high civil and military officials were present.

Earlier in the morning, the Prime Minister along with members of her cabinet and Awami League leaders garlanded the portrait of Bangabandhu at the Bangabandhu Museum on the occasion of March 7. She and other leaders stood there in a solemn silence for a while.

The Prime Minister formally released a commemorative postage stamp of Taka four denomination at her official residence to mark the day. A First Day Cover valued at Taka six and a special canceller were also released.

Meanwhile, speakers at a discussion at Bangla Academy said the speech of Bangabandhu on March 7, 1971 inspired the people to wage freedom struggle. They said the historic speech of March 7 contained the guidelines for our liberation struggle.

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Philippine President Fidel Ramos being seen off by President Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at Zia International Airport yesterday. — Star photo

Body to preserve memories of Keraniganj martyrs

By Staff Correspondent

The Keraniganj Ganahitya Smriti Sangrakhan Committee has taken up a programme to preserve the memories of Keraniganj genocide in which several thousand people were killed by the Pakistan military forces on April 2, 1971 in the area.

The committee has urged the people concerned to provide information about the genocide victims to the committee office at 3/3B Bijoynagar (Tel: 842759).

At a recent meeting held in the city, the 51-member committee, headed by journalist Wahidul Huq, has decided to build a memorial in Keraniganj in memory of the martyrs.

The committee has also decided to observe April 2 as the mourning day in Keraniganj.

Labour leader shot in Khulna

By Staff Correspondent

Khulna, Mar 7: A labour leader received bullet wounds in an attack by a gang of hoodlums in the metropolis on Thursday night, reports UNB.

Police said about 10 armed men attacked Nazim Sadar, 45, a leader of Baikali Bahumukhi Byabsa Samity, at its office in Boyra Junction area at 9:30 pm.

They said the miscreants entered the area by a microbus and fired 12 rounds of shots injuring him seriously. They also blasted about 50 bombs before leaving the area.

Nazim, who is accused in some 20 cases was first admitted to Khulna Medical College Hospital and then sent to Dhaka in serious condition.

Ramos

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trouble developed in its engine. Later, it took off at 3 pm.

AFP from Islamabad adds: President Ramos arrived in Islamabad yesterday on a two-day visit aimed at expanding relations with Pakistan, officials said.

During the visit the two countries will sign four agreements, including one for cooperation in the peaceful use of atomic energy, Filipino sources said.

Other accords to be initiated include mutual assistance on criminal justice, an extradition treaty and establishment of annual policy consultations between the two countries, they said.

Sylhet pourea commissioner arrested

From Staff Correspondent

Sylhet, Mar 7: Kotwali police arrested Mohammad Kamal Miah, commissioner of Ward No 8 of Sylhet pourashava and former leader of the Jatiyatadabi Chhatra Dal (JCD) last night.

Police said he was being wanted in a number of cases. He was arrested from the Housing Estate area.

Sylhet district unit of the JCD brought out a procession and held a meeting to protest the arrest this afternoon.

Meanwhile, M A Haque and Abdul Kahir Chowdhury, president and secretary of district BNP respectively and Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury and Abdul Wash Chowdhury, president and secretary of district JCD in a joint statement condemned the arrest and demanded Kamal Miah's immediate release.

Armed attack on farmer's house in Narsingdi: 10 hurt

NARSINGDI, Mar 7: At least ten people were wounded when a gang of armed youths attacked a farmer's residence at Kacmarkandi in Raipura thana of the district today, villagers and police said, reports UNB.

The youths, backed by the local UP Chairman, attacked the residence of one Mejbahuddin at 3 pm and looted some valuables from the house. Mejbah was victimised as he did not allow the UP chairman to use his irrigation pump.

Women's Day

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President Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gave separate messages on the occasion expressing their satisfaction over the observance of the day and wishing its complete success.

Some 26 women's and other development organisations have formed 'International Women's Day Observance Committee' to observe the day.

The Committee held a meeting at the Dhamondi ground yesterday and brought out a torch procession in the city.

Sammilita Nari Samaj will bring out a procession at 3 pm today. The procession will start from Shahab National Museum and end at TSC. Amnesty International will hold a seminar at the National Press Club at 4 pm on March 14. United Nations Associations of Bangladesh (UNAB) has arranged a discussion meeting at its Dilkusha office at 4:30 pm today. Narigrantha Prabartana will organise a musical programme in its office at 4 pm today. It will also hold a discussion at its book fair stall at 4 pm in the Bangla Academy premises. ADAB will hold a seminar on 'Women Repression: Role of Police and Law Reforms' at the BMDC auditorium at 4 pm.

Bangladesh Television and Bangladesh Betar will broadcast special programmes highlighting the significance of the day. National newspapers will publish supplements on the occasion.

Human Rights Commission

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level Human Rights Commission, the minister said: "It is the constitutional obligation for the government to protect and promote human rights of the citizens and an independent commission can substantially help uphold the rights of the people."

Replying to a query, the minister said a legislation would be proposed in the Jatiya Sangsad for the formation of the commission.

When asked about the credibility of a government-sponsored Human Rights Commission when it is considered by the NGOs that the state is the biggest violator of human rights in the Third World countries, the Law Minister told The Daily Star that the government would do everything to make it a credible organisation.

Admitting that the non-government human rights organisations have a significant role to play in protecting and promoting human rights, the minister said, "with no executive authority, they could only identify the incidents of human rights violations and recommend measures to ensure the rights of the citizens. But the government sponsored HRC will naturally have some authority to execute its decisions."

He, however, said that the government of Sheikh Hasina believed in working in partnership with the NGOs.

"The HRC we are planning to set up would be an entirely independent institution," the minister said adding that before proposing the legislation the government would discuss the power, composition and jurisdiction of the planned HRC with all sections of people and the ministry would hold workshops on the subject.

Claiming the government's 'absolute commitment' to the human rights issue, the minister said that it was already running a human rights project at the grassroots level. "Besides, we have already initiated a legal aid programme in 61 out of 64 districts under the supervision of the district magistrates," he added.

A 17-member national committee, headed by the Law Minister, is monitoring the legal aid programme since January last.

To substantiate the government's commitment towards ensuring the rights of the citizens, the minister listed a number of initiatives including setting up of a Judicial Training Institute, separation of judiciary from the executive wing of the state and setting up of village courts. The minister said that successful implementation of these programmes would ensure "standard and quality justice", which is a basic human right.

Makeshift office at construction site looted in city

By Staff Correspondent

A group of people looted goods and set fire to the makeshift office at a construction site of a building near New Market in the city late Thursday night.

The gang of about ten young men attacked the office room near Shah Newaj Hostel of the Dhaka University as the land owner refused to pay them Tk three lakh as toll, the owner alleged in a complaint filed with Dhamondi thana.

Breaking the boundary wall at the construction site, the group entered the office room and took away two water pumps and a telephone set. They also ransacked the office where some important documents and about 100 bags of cement were kept.

The group fled the scene after setting fire to the office at about 11 pm. Firefighters from Passey station rushed to the spot following the incident, fire brigade sources said.

A case has been filed with Dhamondi thana. However, none was arrested till last night, police said.

Indo-Pak talks

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In January, 1994.

The two countries, capable of making nuclear weapons, have fought three wars since they became independent in 1947, two of them over Kashmir, a territory now divided between them. Border skirmishes over Kashmir continue.

Both sides agree that improving relations hinges on a settlement of the Kashmir territorial dispute, but neither has so far demonstrated a desire to compromise.

Earlier this week, India's defence minister told Parliament he was prepared "to make any sacrifice" to take over Pakistan's share of Kashmir.

Pakistan wants the people in India's part of Kashmir to be allowed to vote on whether to remain under New Delhi's control.

India accuses Pakistan of arming and training separatist rebels in Indian Kashmir.

Lung cancer

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pieces of a vital organ out of someone," Kato said in a telephone interview. "That alone makes it better than surgery in many cases."

In light therapy, the patient is injected with a drug that circulates through the body but tends to stay longer in cancer tumors.

The chemical, derived from cow's blood, kills the cells around it when exposed to certain wavelengths of bright light. A doctor shines the light directly on the tumor with fiber optic devices.

After the light is gone, the chemical returns to its harmless state within a fraction of a second. Unlike surgeries, the patient can walk away from the treatment, which takes only a few minutes.

In contrast to the trauma of surgery or the harsh side-effects of chemotherapy, PDT requires the patient just avoid direct sunlight for a month or so, since the drug sensitizes the skin.

When lung cancer is detected early, half of the patients who would otherwise need an operation can now be treated successfully with PDT, said Thomas Dougherty, a doctor who has been studying the therapy since the 1970s at Roswell Park Memorial Institute in Buffalo, New York.

The treatment, pioneered by researchers including Dougherty and a small Canadian company called OLT Photo Therapeutics Inc, has received limited approval for a few types of cancer from authorities in Japan, Canada, the United States and Europe.

Foreign currencies worth Tk 4 lakh seized at ZIA

By Staff Correspondent

The Detective Branch (DB) of police recovered foreign currencies worth about Tk four lakh from a person at the Zia International Airport (ZIA) Thursday afternoon, police said last night.

Police arrested on Azad alias Sagar, possessor of the currencies, as he failed to show any valid document for carrying those, police said.

The DB team, acting on a tip off, challenged Azad in front of the departure lounge and seized currencies including US Dollar, Malaysian Ringgit, Singapore Dollar, Saudi Riyal and Kuwaiti Dinar from him.

A case has been filed with Cantonment thana.

100 Hindus held from near mosque in India

NEW DELHI, Mar 7: Police arrested about 100 members of a right-wing Hindu group who had gathered near a disputed mosque in northern India today, a local news agency reported, says AP.

Bajrang Dal members gathered in Varanasi, 375 miles (600 kilometers) southeast of New Delhi, near an ancient mosque built by Mogul invaders who tore down a Hindu shrine that existed there many centuries ago, United News of India news agency reported.

Oil exploration

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alone as, they apprehended, that some of the officials concerned might already have links with some of the companies intending to bid.

Twenty-three hydrocarbon exploration blocks were opened for unsolicited negotiation through an international seminar in Houston in September, 1993. Following that seminar and a lengthy process of negotiations, PSCs were signed between the government and Cairn PLC on blocks 15 and 16, with Occidental on blocks 12, 13 and 14, with Rexwood Oakland on blocks 17 and 18 and with UMC on block 21.

Following the discovery of a gas reserve in the Bay of Bengal in January 1996, having a proven reserve of over 1 trillion cubic feet, by British company Cairn, innumerable foreign oil companies have shown interest in investing and exploring in Bangladesh. Many proposals have come to the offices concerned till now.

Khaleda in Jessore

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resorting to corruption. In this context, she said the food for education programme was about to stop.

The BNP Chairperson alleged that the government was causing suffering to the people by intentionally creating load-shedding across the country. "The businessmen have become fed up with extortion by ruling party men," she added.

Begum Zia said the present government makes tall talks on democracy, but does not practise it.

Among others, BNP vice chairman, Tariqul Islam, Khulna City Mayor Sheikh Tayebur Rahman, former whip Ashraf Hossain, Maulana Sakhawati Hossain, M Mansur Ali, Nazim Uddin Al-Azad, Goyeshwar Chandra Roy, Opposition Whip Jainal Abedin Faruk, MPs Amanullah Aman, Moshirur Rahman and Shahidul Islam, JASAS General Secretary Rezabudaula Chowdhury, Jessore district BNP General Secretary Advocate Nazrul Islam and Keshabpur thana BNP General Secretary Abdus Samad Biswas addressed the meeting. Thana BNP president Abu Bakar Abu presided.

Earlier, the BNP Chairperson was received by hundreds of people including party leaders and workers when she arrived at Jessore Airport in the morning.

People from all walks of life standing on both sides of the road welcomed Khaleda Zia chanting slogans 'Khaleda Zia Agomon, Subhechha Sagomon' and showered flower petals on her way to the local circuit house in a motorcade.

Addressing a gathering at the circuit house premises, Begum Zia said it is not true that her party does not want to launch movement. "We are already in a movement. But we do not want to bring suffering to the people."

She said the government has been given time till March 30 to refrain from all anti-people activities like repression. The move to provide transit facility to India, import power from that country and allow it to use Chittagong Port.

"It's a fascist government. It has broken all past records of torture and repression on political activists," Begum Zia said and alleged that the government wanted to turn Bangladesh into a 'bottomless basket' again and restore one-party rule.

Expressing her deep concern at the increasing women repression across the country after the present government assumed power, she said the people wanted tougher programme to get rid of the present 'disastrous' situation.

Transport workers' leader stabbed in city

By DMC Correspondent

A leader of transport workers was stabbed by some unidentified extortionists who also snatched Tk two thousand from him yesterday afternoon from the city's Gulistan area.

The gang attacked Babul Miah, 30, at about 5:30 pm when he reached Gulistan driving a bus from Adamjee. He was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with serious injuries in his back, shoulder and hands, hospital sources said.

In another incident, a young man was shot by some unidentified persons at Madhya Badda under Gulshan thana in the city yesterday afternoon.

Accept PCJSS demands

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and the PCJSS. PCJSS is the political wing of the Shan-chang which is waging a bus-har since 1973 for self-rule in the 14,200 sq km CHT.

The five-point PCJSS demand includes constitutional guarantee for a regional assembly for the CHT, ensuring traditional land rights to the tribal people, resettlement of non-tribal people 'honourably' elsewhere, gradual withdrawal of the Armed Forces from the CHT, proper settlement of the refugees living in Tripura and internally displaced 'Jumma' people with compensation at their respective places under the aegis of International Red Cross and proper rehabilitation of the tribal and Bengali families displaced by the Kaptai Dam in 1960.

The HPUC statement noted that following the second round of talks between the National Committee and the PCJSS, the committee leader and Chief Whip of Parliament Abul Hasan Abdullah reported progress and expressed optimism about the permanent settlement to the CHT problem. "But we came to learn from different newspapers that there had not been much progress on the rights of tribes people on land in CHT and politically settled non-tribes people," it said.

HPUC expressed its concern at the machinations of what they described as vested groups to derail the peace talks. "The recent spate of violent incidents including killings of police in

DSE trading

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been asked not to transfer their certificates without settlement bill and receipt.

Some kerb market traders staged protests on Tuesday outside the DSE and tried to meet its officials to press withdrawal of the prohibition as they felt, it would cut down their business.

They demanded hawala receipts against share certificates they are holding and transacting.

DSE officials asked them to take up the matter with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

DSE said the action was taken to prevent trading in fake, stolen or lost share certificates.

But kerb market leaders alleged that it was a move to eliminate them from business and make the fate of small investors uncertain.

Transit, trade

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ing of the Joint Economic Commission.

The Joint Economic Commission is expected to discuss all aspects of economic cooperation between the two countries and spell out the modalities of cooperation in various fields.

Foreign Secretary Farooq Sobhan told the press after the formal talks between the two premiers in Dhaka on January 6 that the issue of transit did not figure in the talks and added, "India's interest in this is well known. It is a subject which will be dealt with at an appropriate time."

The meeting of the Joint Economic Commission is also likely to discuss the issue of identifying more areas of "intensified cooperation" in the field of trade and commerce.

At the JEC meeting, Bangladesh is likely to press for lowering of tariff barriers by Delhi and reducing the huge trade deficit that is in India's favour.

Tokyo

From Page 1

stop financing project here if the political situation becomes unstable again, he avoided a direct reply. "Are you going to any place where the people are fighting," he instead questioned.

Motai, however, praised the new government's economic policy and said this government is strong and the targeted rate of economic growth fixed by the government is a realistic one.

Members of the Japanese delegation were present in the press conference.

Torch rally begins

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March 7 address was in fact the theme of independence.

The function began with the National Anthem played by bands drawn from the three services and followed by recitation of the Holy Quran, the Geeta, the Bible and the Torah.

The Prime Minister recalling the address of Bangabandhu said the messages swept across the country and the people swung into action with whatever they had. She said Bangabandhu had indicated the people to start a guerrilla war against the Pakistani Occupation Forces.

She said the unique unity of all starts of life that was forged at that time helped attain the desired independence within nine months. She said the Suhrawardy Uddyan had witnessed the surrender of Occupation Forces to the Allied Forces.

The Prime Minister said that the torch would travel from Teknai to Tetulia and on March 17 the torch will go to Tungipara where Father of the Nation is lying in eternal peace beside the graveyard of his parents.

She said the objective of her government is to meet the basic demands of the people like food, shelter, clothing and education. She said the dream of Bangabandhu can be fulfilled by bringing smile to the faces of the teeming millions.

"Let us take a fresh vow to translate the ideals of Bangabandhu and attain economic emancipation for the people", she added.

As the torch rally, led by the prime minister for a brief period, started its journey for Chittagong, thousands of people raised full throated slogan of *Joi Bangla* as the historic 7th March speech of Bangabandhu was played over the microphone.

Attired in check lungi and white vest, hundreds of freedom fighters carrying national flags, portraits of Bangabandhu and other colourful flags and banners joined the rally.

On March 26, the Prime Minister will formally declare the end of the programme reciting the torch at the Swadhinata Stambha (Independence memorial) at the Suhrawardy Uddyan. There, she will ignite the main torch symbolising the eternal flame of independence.

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