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Down to Earth

Growing Menace from
Touts in City

By A S M Nurunnabi

In general, there is no ambiguity in people's mind about the meaning of tout. A tout is a low fellow who stoops to deviate means to make improper financial gains. In Dhaka city, touts are a growing phenomenon in every field of activity of government, semi-government and autonomous organisations. As they perform the role of middlemen, they tend to create a distance between the concerned people and officials of relevant authorities who are competent to deliver the goods, and thereby make improper gains. In fact, it is alleged that people concerned with activities in government offices and courts are virtually regulated by these touts.

The Bangladesh Secretariat is said to be a favourite haunt of certain classes of touts. It is alleged that it is difficult to detect their modus operandi. Various kinds of deals are conducted here through the agency of touts. In all such deals there is obviously a linkage with various facades of corruption. It is also reported that in their methodology, some clever touts use subtle techniques to clinch their deals. There were reports that in their operations some veteran touts make use of hidden mini-tape recorders, so that negotiations for surreptitious deals with interested parties could be recorded and the parties due to receive favours in lieu of arranged considerations could not back out of the agreements reached. This gadget is, therefore, said to play an important part in black-mailing their intended victims.

The fields of activities of touts are said to cover a wide range — banks, customs de-

partment, income tax offices and other areas where there are prospects of illegal gains.

The touts always use new-fangled ideas to exploit their victims. Lately, there were reports that some touts, on the basis of fake notices of acquisition of private lands, approached the affected parties with promises of early realisation of compensation money for such land from government and initially received payment of some amount pretending to have good connection with the relevant government employees. The affected people were easily taken in by the pretensions of the touts, but on contacting the concerned offices, they found out, to their dismay, that such acquisition notices were fake and the touts who had already taken some money from them could nowhere be traced. There were also instances of sales of fake postal stamps, court fee stamps, company share certificates and valakatnamas made through the agency of touts. Though such fraudulent activities were often detected by law-enforcing agencies, and criminal proceedings started; yet such illegal activities continue some way or other.

Among other fields where touts are found active in large numbers are the T&T office and the passport office in the city, where organised racketeers operate in return for the so-called "speed money". According to some sources, 80 to 90 per cent of the work connected with issue of passports is carried on through the agency of touts, and their incomes from these shady deals are said to be quite considerable. In the T&T depart-

ment also, touts are said to operate freely in the matter of issue of demand notes for new telephone connections and other related work in connection with some employees.

Another important centre for doing organised touting business is said to be the area around the office of the Export Promotion Bureau. This business is said to have been operating from all-furnished offices in the area for a long time.

The office of the Assistant Director of the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) at Section 13, Mirpur is another important centre for touts for the purposes like making new transport licence, getting registration and fitness certificates, etc. The total number of such touts is said to exceed five hundred at that centre and they mostly take advantage of the illiteracy and ignorance about rules of the transport operators. As a result, they fall easy victims of the touts who shrewdly hand out false certificates bearing fake signatures and seals of authorised officials. Such false documents are easily detected, yet the fraudulent practices are not easy to control on account of collusion of the touts with dishonest elements in that office.

The horizon of activities of the city touts has been steadily expanding. In short, in the matters like purchase of land, houses, getting new connections for electricity, gas and water supply, the role of touts is so predominant that none can get anything done easily without the agency of touts. Their omnipresence is an ominous fact of city life.

Confce on child
labour in city
March 23-25

A Future Search Conference on Child Labour opens at the East-West University in the city tomorrow, says a press release.

With support from UNICEF, the three-day conference will explore the past, present and future of the situation of working children in Bangladesh and identify a common platform for action to eliminate child labour.

This gathering will bring together working children, employers, media, development partners, policy makers, corporate leaders to child specialists who will examine the deep-rooted causes of child labour, develop an understanding of the complexities of the problems and key issues, and identify ways to move forward in responding to both challenges and opportunities.

Energy seminar

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in 1947 following partition of the Sub-continent ending the 200-year British rule.

President Farooq Ahmed Khan Leghari of Pakistan will inaugurate the ceremonial conference of the heads of state and government of the 51-member OIC at the newly constructed Convention Centre in Islamabad.

The summit, to be split into the sessions, will adopt the Islamabad Declaration focussing on problems facing the Muslim Ummah.

Earlier, heads of the delegations and members of their entourages will attend the Pakistan National Day parade.

President Leghari will host a dinner in honour of them.

The summit will be preceded by a consultation of Foreign Ministers scheduled for today.

During her three-day visit, Hasina will seize the opportunity to have bilateral parleys with some leaders of the OIC countries, including her Pakistan counterpart Nawaz Sharif.

Her entourage will include State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Foreign Secretary Farooq Sohhan, Director General (IO) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Giasuddin and other senior officials.

She is scheduled to return home on Monday.

BNP meet

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The party will bring out a torch procession in the city to support the nationwide eight-hour shutdown called by the party.

The procession will start from in front of the BNP city unit's office at Nawb Yusuf market at 5 pm.

Cultural programme
at Nat'l Stadium
today

Film artists will present a cultural programme at National Stadium-1 today marking the silver jubilee of the country's independence, reports UNB.

Information Ministry and Bangladesh Film Development Corporation have jointly organised the function in collaboration with various associations of film producers, directors, artists and distributors.

The cultural function, based on Liberation War, will remain open to all, said a PID handout yesterday.

Fire fighters brought the fire under control at about 2:30 am. The reason of the fire could not be known.

Slum of DU Class
Four employees
gutted

By DU Correspondent

A fire gutted a slum of class IV employees of the Dhaka University near the Sir A F Rahman Hall at about midnight Thursday night.

The House Tutor's building of A F Rahman Hall was partially affected in the fire, according to DU authorities.

Fire fighters brought the fire under control at about 2:30 am. The reason of the fire could not be known.

Four BNP leaders held

From Page 1
and sent him to Dhaka Central Jail with a 30-day detention under the Special Powers Act.

In a pre-dawn swoop, police picked up the BNP leader, Mosarrat Hossain, from his Mirpur residence under Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

Later, district magistrate allowed a 30-day detention for him as police mentioned that the BNP leader was involved in subversive activities.

Police continued their hunt for, what they said, people involved in subversive activities, mainly disrupting power supply and unleashing violence on educational campuses.

After the Thursday's arrest of four top-ranking BNP leaders, plainclothes and uniformed police raided the residence of Jatiya Ganotantrik Party (JAGPA) chief Shaiful Alah Pradhan in the city early yesterday. But Pradhan was not available.

Police also raided different parts of the city during the day mainly looking for city BNP convenor and former minister Sadek Hossain Khoka MP and another BNP leader, former MP Salahuddin Ahmed.

The two BNP leaders managed to avoid arrest on Thursday as they were not at home during police operation at their residences in Gopibagh and Mirpur respectively.

Moreover, police continued search on Thursday night and early yesterday for some leaders of Freedom Party and Jatiya Judo Command.

The targeted Judo Command leaders were arrested in last Ramadan on similar charges of subversive activities, but later released on bail.

A highly placed source at the Detective Branch told UNB that police kept a close watch on a BNP leader, who was once involved in left politics and later led a fundamentalist movement against late Jahanara Imam before joining BNP last year.

An extremist group of BNP is trying to create a law and order situation in the country in collaboration with Freedom

AL council .

From Page 1
live in peace."

Earlier, the meeting adopted an obituary reference on those national and international figures who expired since the last meeting of the ALCWC.

The sub-committees are:

1). Reception sub-committee: Chairman Anir Hossain Amu and member secretary Begum Ivy Rahman.

2). Finance sub-committee: Convenor H N Ashiqur Rahman MP.

3). Publicity and Publication sub-committee: Convenor Abdul Momin MP and member secretary Mozaffar Hossain Palu.

4). Constitution and Manifesto sub-committee: Convenor Abdul Mannan MP and member secretary A B M Taleb Ali.

5). Office coordination sub-committee: Convenor Abdul Jalil and member secretary Abdul Mannan.

6). Cultural sub-committee: Convenor Shamsur Rahman Khan Shahjahan and member secretary Alamgir Kumku.

7). Podium-sub-committee: Member secretary Motazat Hossain.

8). Food sub-committee: Convenor Mohammad Hanif, Member secretary Molazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya MP.

9). General secretary report preparation sub-committee: Convenor Syed Fazul Haque BSc and member secretary K M Jahangir MP.

10). Election Tribunal: Convenor principal Qamruzzaman.

11). Discipline sub-committee: Awami Shiechasebik League.

Tel Aviv blast

From Page 1
holiday of Purim, was cradled by a police woman and carried to a patrol car. The baby was screaming and holding up his arms, with blood over some of his body.

Wounded people were treated on the sidewalk as ambulances raced to the scene. One woman, crying, held up her bloodied hands.

AFP from Tel Aviv adds: The Israeli army sealed the West Bank and Gaza Strip after a suspected Palestinian suicide bomber killed four people including himself, in a Tel Aviv cafe, an army spokesman said.

DU: 37 killed

From Page 1
Hasina was addressing the founding anniversary function of BCL near the TSC crossing in the afternoon.

Moin Hossain Raju, a leader of Bangladesh Chhatra Union was shot while he was leading an anti-terrorism procession near the TSC crossing.

Another student was also killed in that year.

In 1991, four persons including a street urchin were shot dead in armed clashes between the activists of AL-backed BCL and BNP-backed JCD on October 27.

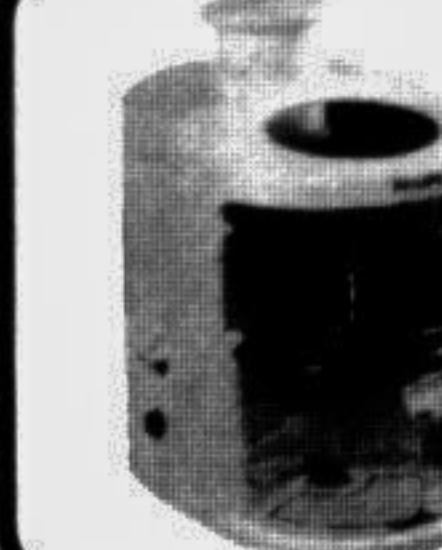
The victims were identified as Mirza Galibur Rahman, Jafrullah Liton, Mizanur Rahman Mizan and street urchin Khokon.

Besides, three others were killed in 1991.

In 1990, BCL leader Shahidul Islam Chunnu was killed in a gunfight allegedly between two factions of the organisation.

In 1989, a brilliant student was killed in a cross-fire during a clash between two rival factions of BCL.

Two were killed in 1977, one each in 1978, 1985 and 1986, three in 1987 and one in 1988.

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Vehicles damaged
BNP denies
involvement
of its activists

By Staff Correspondent

BNP yesterday denied involvement of any of its leaders and workers in damaging vehicles in the city. A press release issued by the party last night said BNP does not believe in destructive activities. None of its leaders or workers was involved in attacking a car shop and damaging vehicles in the city, the press release said.

Question papers

From Page 1

sistant Commissioner at Haluaghat under Mymensingh district, sources concerned said. They have been accused of negligence to duty as regards leakage of English second paper question on the day of examination of the first paper.

The five education boards had earlier announced an award of Tk 250,000 for definitive information leading to the source of leakage of question paper.

There has been not a single claimant of the award money till now," an official said.

The announcement was made against the backdrop of widespread allegations of question paper leakage and postponement of English second paper examinations scheduled for March 15.

BGMEA: Hartal call

From Page 1

ments factories. The garment sector suffers Tk 50 to 75 crore loss per hour due to hartal or power failure. Quddus said replying to a question.

Quddus recalled a remark made earlier Begum Zia at the concluding ceremony of BAT-EXPO '96 where she had said that her party would not give any programme like that of the previous Opposition that might hinder social and economic progress.

Other BGMEA leaders including its Vice president SU Haider, Nurul Haq Shiqdar, and executive committee members Abdul Kasem Haider, Anwar Azim, and Alamgir Rahman were present at the press conference held at the BGMEA office.

Quddus also said that the garment factory owners will have to pay at least Tk 50 crore as air freight due to the recent 5 day's work stoppage at the Chittagong port.

Foreign buyers have already expressed their dissatisfaction over the strike at the port. The country-wide hartal programme will put the garments sector in a disadvantageous position, he said.

In this regard he said that the BGMEA leaders would meet the BNP chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament today and request her to withdraw the programme.

He underscored the need for a consensus among all concerned so that nobody can stop the operation of such an essential sector like sea port. Operation of sea ports should be declared an essential service, he observed.

The clash between the two groups of villagers, most of whom are fishermen, ensued in Chandi village following dispute over distribution of money earned from selling fish. Villagers said that almost all the fishermen in the village catch fish from river Titas together and took the individual share after selling those.

The injured were admitted to Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital and Akhaura Thana Health Complex.

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প্রিয় দেশবাসী,

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