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Down to Earth

City's Open-air Eating Houses

By A S M Nurunnabi

Open-air eating houses have become an inseparable part of our city life. They are typical not only of Dhaka alone. In several countries in South East Asia, such as Bangkok and Singapore, their presence is also noticeable, but there a more hygienic and organised system operates.

Mushrooming of such eating houses has now become a major public health hazard. Every day thousands of customers visit these way-side eating places. The clientele mostly include day labourers, menials and clerical staff of different offices, street urchins and other low-income earning people.

More socio-economic factors play an important role in their growing presence. Due to the steady pace of urbanisation and industrialisation, people are becoming more and more busy with their jobs which leave them very little time to prepare food at home. Many of the customers of these way-side eating spots are migrants from rural areas who have settled down under extremely poor conditions in urban slums or squatter settlements where basic services are non-existent or limited at best. The lack of water and electricity, lack of facilities to prepare food at home, the distance between home and work place and time constraint and above all the cheapness and convenience of street foods — all these factors contribute to making the way-side food outlets a steadily growing phenomenon of the city life.

Rice, curry, 'dal', 'chapati roti' are the principal food

items sold at these places. In most cases, sellers cook food stuffs at their slum dwellings and carry them in bowls, pots, buckets and other utensils to the selling points on roads. Uncleaned mats are spread out for the customers to sit on, while plastic sheets or old pieces of cloth are hung overhead for shelter.

There are other kinds of eating houses dotted over the city where left-over foods — mostly *biriani* and *polao* — are sold to some classes of customers. It is understood that left-over foods are procured from community centres, Chinese restaurants and at times from top hotels in the metropolis. In Kawran Bazar area, such left-over food-shops are found in plenty. The shopkeepers selling left-over foods sit on the open roads at Kawran Bazar with polythene sheets fixed overhead with ropes. Since there is little movement of heavy vehicles here, such food sellers find it easy to run their establishments without much interruption except from some mastans who use to realise, 'tolls' regularly from them.

The scenario at Kamalapur Railway station site is said to be different. More to the eating houses sell *kichuri*, an amalgam of rice and pulse cooked together with certain spices and pieces of low-quality meat. Customers at Kamalapur are mostly station coolies, poor passengers, day labourers and beggars.

Most customers at these eating houses are unaware of the hazards involved in eating foodstuffs from these way-side

shops, where minimum requirement of health and hygiene are totally absent. The same situation can be observed in other locations of the city, such as Motijheel, Dilkusha, Sadarghat, Tejgaon, and many other busy places like bus stops, launch ghats, etc. The fast-spreading eating houses pose challenge to proper maintenance of public health.

In spite of this, there is no denying that street foods have come to stay. In this context, the FAO has recognised that they are an important economic activity in relation to modern urban life. Keeping this in view, the street foods business, as conducted at present, need be changed with firm guidance. It seems urgently necessary to stop uncontrolled sales of unhygienic and sub-standard items of food in the interest of public health. With a view to raising them to a healthy standard, the health authorities should initiate actions including, among things, strict quality control measures, provision of clean water, and use of safe raw materials for preparation of such foods. In this manner, it may be possible to convert the attending problems into opportunities for dependable food retailing outlets for the vast numbers of urban people mainly with low income. The examples of street foods retailing with comparatively high standard of hygiene and food quality as observed in cities like Bangkok and Singapore can be suitable models for emulation in the Dhaka city.

Six-day JS session

From Page 1

modities, problems in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and the country's economic crisis in general, sources in the BNP standing committee said.

The parliamentary wing of the Jatiya Party is scheduled to meet at 2.00 pm today.

UNB added: Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked her party MPs to expose various moves by a certain political party to create artificial crisis in the country.

"Unveiled those who are trying to create an artificial political crisis through falsehood and subversive activities in the country," she told the MPs at the ALPP meeting in Sangsad Bhaban.

The Prime Minister said the ruling MPs should not be in parliament the activities of a political party which is trying to take political advantage capitalising on the sufferings of the people through "subversive acts" in the power sector.

Briefing newsmen Suranjit Sengupta, Prime Minister's Parliamentary Affairs Advisor quoted Hasina as saying that the situation in power sector had improved due to emergency steps taken by the government.

The Prime Minister told the meeting that the complex situation in the power sector had been overcome after taking

rapid actions, and the situation will improve further soon.

Reiterating her government's commitment to making Parliament the centre point of all activities, Hasina said the amendments to the Rules of Procedures would be passed in the fourth session of the parliament.

The PM sought cooperation from all parliament members for passing the amendments and forming the parliamentary standing committees to be headed by MPs.

She also requested them to project the achievements of the government with facts and figures to make the people understand the activities of the government as well as to expose the "evil efforts" of a political party engaged in tarnishing the country's image through false propaganda.

The MPs should also project the government's steps ensuring the distribution of fertilizer properly, resulting in a bumper harvest in the country.

They should also project the improvement of law and order and steps for establishing rule of law and ensuring security of the public life.

Industries and Commerce Minister Tofael Ahmed, Chief Whip Abul Hasnat Abdullah, Prime Minister's Parliamentary Affairs Advisor Suranjit Sengupta, Abdul Mannan, KM Jahangir, Rahmat Ali, ASM Firoz, Keramat Ali and Saidul Huq also spoke at the meeting.

US co

From Page 1

pany without competition.

However, the US company is still persuading the government to allow it to develop the Shahbazpur gas field, build extensive pipeline to connect the gas field with the main regional grid and to build three power stations having a total capacity of 350 mw. This company formed three subsidiary organisations and submitted proposals outlining an investment of over US \$25 million dollars.

Last month, the investment committee reviewed its proposal and instructed the authorities concerned (the Energy Ministry) to cooperate with this company so that a negotiation could begin.

The high-level five-member investment committee consists of the secretaries of the ERD, Finance, Energy, the Prime Minister's office and the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister.

The sources, however, said that the high powered committee favoured the signing of the agreement in the light of the crisis in gas supply. In addition, this would create a huge investment opportunity. Setting up a gas-based power station at Shahbazpur would also solve the power crisis in Khulna region, they said.

The Shahbazpur gas field in Bhola Island was discovered in November 1995 by Petro-bangla's exploration unit, BAPLEX. It has a proven reserve of 0.40 trillion cubic feet of gas. The US company had provided technical assistance while BAPLEX was drilling the well.

US aid

From Page 1

woman in 1996 to at least 2.8 in 2004, the infant mortality rate from 82 infant deaths per thousand live births in 1996 to at least 70 in 2004, and the child mortality rate from 36 child deaths per thousand live births in 1996 to at least 30 in 2004.

The maternal mortality ratio is also expected to decline, although there is no accurate measurement for this indicator in Bangladesh.

In implementing this plan, NGOs will serve areas with approximately 20,000,000 persons. These NGOs will also provide targeted support to public sector programmes which are expected to benefit another 15,000,000 persons.

In total, both direct and indirect support arising from this agreement will benefit approximately one-quarter of the population of Bangladesh. In addition, mass information programmes including for HIV/AIDS are planned which are expected to reach approximately 40 per cent of the population.

The plan also includes the social marketing of key reproductive health and child health products through the Social Marketing Company, support for the national family planning and maternal child health logistics system, and assistance to the national immunization programme including polio eradication and disease surveillance.

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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Hasina asks party workers

Work for redressing sufferings of people

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called upon the leaders and workers of her party to be commensurate with the griefs and sorrows of the common people and dedicate themselves for redressing the sufferings of the masses, reports BSS.

Addressing the party leaders and workers who came from different districts at her official residence at Ganobhaban to facilitate her on her being elected fourth time the president of the Awami League, Sheikh Hasina said, "Instead of your personal concerns you have to think over the hopes and aspirations of the people." "Your condition will be automatically improved if the socio-economic condition of the people is enhanced," she added.

Sheikh Hasina called upon them to involve themselves in the nation-building activities and project the success of the government in various socio-economic fields of the national life.

Lauding the leaders and workers of the party Sheikh

Prepare for greater movement: BNP

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday asked his partymen to prepare for a greater movement for protecting the interest of the country, reports UNB.

"There is no alternative to launching a mass movement for the sake of protecting the country's independence and sovereignty," he said at a meeting with leaders and workers of BNP and its front organisations of Gulshan thana at party's central office in the afternoon.

Bhuiyan accused the ruling party of hatching a conspiracy to make the country a vassal of India. "We have to stand against this conspiracy," he said.

The BNP secretary general said, if needed, his party leaders and workers would foil the plot against the country's interest at the cost of their lives.

He criticised the government for its failure to face the crises of electricity, water and gas as well as its bid to make Bangladesh a market for India.

Hasina said, "I have firm faith, deep respect and highest confidence in you."

Turning back of her ten-month old government, the Prime Minister said that because of appropriate and timely decisions and smooth running of the government the image of the country had been enhanced all over the world.

Only on the other day, she said, Bangladesh was elected member of the United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) securing 51 votes out of 54. In the same UN floor Bangladesh was miserably defeated by bagging only two votes in the FAO election during the past regime which had tarnished the image of the country. Bangladesh has also been elected to the UNESCO executive committee and UN Peace Committee, she added.

Boy chopped to death in Pabna

PABNA, May 9: A teenage boy was chopped to death in front of his father by some miscreants at a village in Sadar thana last night, reports UNB.

Mahfuzur Rahman, 13, son of one Khabiruddin Pramanik of Zahirpur village, came under attack by about 12 men when he and his father were returning home from a neighbouring house after watching television.

Police suspected that the killing was the sequel to a land dispute between Pramanik and his rivals.

A case was filed with Sadar police.

Storm hits two thanas in Pabna

PABNA, May 9: A man was killed and 15 were injured in a norwester that swept over 15 unions of Aigharia and Chalmor thanas last night, reports UNB.

District administration sources said Munser Ali, 27, of Kushtipara in Aigharia thana died when a house collapsed on him during the storm that lasted one and a half hours from 12 noon.

About 500 kutcha houses were razed to the ground and crops on vast tracts of land damaged.



A Baisakh Mela organised by the BSCIC began at the Dhanmondi field yesterday. — Star photo

Macro-economic management

From Page 1

(ADP) has already been lowered to Tk 12000 crore and may need to be slashed further. It is unlikely the shortfall in external financing of the ADP can be met by raising more domestic resources since the government's domestic borrowing is already too high.

Dr Mahmud said, "In view of the resource shortfall in the ADP, the government's best course of action for the current and the coming fiscal would be to restrict the number of new projects, improve the quality of project implementation and initiate steps for reducing resource wastage and leakage."

The government's domestic borrowing from the banking system increased alarmingly during the last fiscal year and similar trends are continuing this year. It increased by Tk 1179.80 crore or 18 per cent during July-February this year as compared to the rise of Tk 785.50 crore or 15.98 per cent during the same period last year, Bangladesh Bank statistics showed.

The government's borrowing so far has not been stabilising because of the modest expansion in private sector credit. Up to February of the current fiscal, the net expansion of credit to private sector has been Tk 22 billion, implying only about seven per cent increase in the outstanding amount of credit to private sector.

However, the government's borrowing from non-banking sources are considerably lower this year compared to that in the previous year. The fiscal balances started deteriorating in 1994-95 and the situation has not improved this year. Any inflationary pressure

created due to over borrowing by the government has been negated by lower credit expansion. But it is felt that if private credit demand picks up, borrowing from the banks by the government will not be sustainable, analysts say.

The budgetary deficit has been created by the government's expenditure for food procurement to give price support, increased subsidisation to fertilizer, and interest payment on past bonds. Added to these, there was a shortfall by Tk 323 crore in revenue during July-February period this year, particularly in non-tax revenue due to lower profit by Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation and higher losses by the state owned enterprises, Bangladesh Bank documents show.

External sector balance remains a major cause for anxiety although the depletion of the external reserve has slowed down in recent months. The level of reserves is now fluctuating around 1.7 billion to 1.8 billion dollars.

The reserve position has been stabilised by a sharp fall in import growth rather than by an acceleration in export growth. Recent estimates of exports show that the annual growth rate may reach about 10 per cent which is about the same in the last fiscal. But it will be much lower than the annual average growth of 20 to 25 per cent in the previous years of the early 90s.

It shows that the exports are yet to recover fully from the adverse effect of political unrest and dislocation of early 1996. Comparison of the first half of the current fiscal with the same period of the previous fiscal

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Let's make things better.
PHILIPS



Police lobbing teargas shells to disperse rival student groups on the Dhaka University campus yesterday. — Star photo

Gunshots

From Page 1

ter taking shelter at the TSC, the witnesses said.

Police lobbed some five rounds of tear gas shell to bring the situation under control. The JCS activists, most of whom were outsiders, fired shots in presence of police, witnesses said.

Police picked up five persons in connection with the incident. But their identity could not be known.

Official sources later told this correspondent that a probe committee would be formed to investigate into the incident.

All the students organisations brought out processions and held rallies on the campus yesterday to welcome the freshers.

In another incident, Selimuzzaman Selim, a joint convener of the JCD DU unit was reportedly beaten up by some activists of the BCL. The JCD activists then chased the BCL workers to the Proctor office. Police restored to baton charge injuring three or four persons.

During the incident, two gunshots were heard from the Maal area police said the gunshots were fired by the BCL activists.

Vice-Chancellor and Proctor of the university visited the spot just after the incidents. The VC blamed the police officials there for his "failure" to control the situation. He also went to the Madhu's canteen.

Bangladesh Chhatra Union, Samajtantrik Chhatra Front, Bangladesh Chhatra League (JSD) condemned the incidents and demanded punishment for those responsible.

2 held on charge of trafficking 2 children

COX'S BAZAR, May 9: Police arrested two people, including a foreigner, for their alleged involvement in child-trafficking and rescued two children from a hotel here last night, reports UNB.

The arrested were identified as Dil Mohammad of Tekhnaf and Abdus Shakur, a Myanmar citizen. The rescued boys are: Nurul Alam, 10 and Abul Bashar, 7.

A case was filed with the Cox's Bazar police.

67-member ALCWC

From Page 1

hammad Nasim, Publicity Secretary; Abdul Mannan, Office Secretary; Abdul Mannan Khan, Agriculture Secretary; Begum Matia Chowdhury, Labour Secretary; Rahmat Ullah Chowdhury, Finance and Planning Secretary; Ataur Rahman Kaiser, Education Secretary; Nurul Islam Nahid, Industry and Commerce Secretary; Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury, Information Secretary; Prof Abu Sayeed, Youth and Sports Secretary; Obaidul Qader, Relief and Social Welfare Secretary; Mukul Bose, International Affairs Secretary; Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Law Secretary; Advocate, Shahara Khatun, Health and Population Secretary; Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Cultural Secretary;

JCD calls strike

From Page 1

The programmes were announced at a press conference at the DUCSU building yesterday.

BCL has also announced a programme to hold a rally at the same venue at the same time.

The JCD press conference was addressed by its President Shahiduddin Chowdhury Anney, General Secretary Habibun Nabi Shohel.

They claimed that Jatiya Chhatra Samaj held the rally on the DU campus with the support of the DU administration and the government.

They alleged that the DU administration did not take any action against the BCL activists who captured residential halls. Rather, the activists are frequently seen in the Vice-Chancellor's office, they alleged.

JCD leaders also said that they would not joint the meeting of the DU Paribesh Parishad, scheduled to be held on May 11.

Meanwhile, the Jatiya Party backed Jatiya Chhatra Samaj, at a press conference, blamed JCD for yesterday's violence. The press conference was addressed among other by Kamrul Islam Sajal, Nirmal Das, Kafiluddin Sagar.

DUCSU polls

From Page 1

held in June 1990 in which BNP backed Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) won all the seats.

All student organisations excepting the JCD hailed the decision to dissolve the DUCSU. According to JCD leaders, there is no need to dissolve the DUCSU for holding fresh elections.

A JCD leader who declined to be named said the JCD will contest the DUCSU election although it does not support dissolution of the present committee.

"But the election should be held centrally, in the Arts Faculty building. Before that the atmosphere of the university should be made congenial for the polls, he said.

Bahadur Bepari, DU unit president of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) the student Front of ruling Awami League said that his party would not oppose the idea of holding the election "centrally." That was also our demand, he said.

But the BCL is yet to get any "green signal" from the Awami League high command, an influential leader of BCL central committee said on condition of anonymity. "The AL high command is not yet sure about the success of BCL in the DUCSU election," he said.

As part of its preparations, the JCD is reorganising its university and hall unit committees. It has already formed committee in Fazul Haq Hall and those in Salimullah and AF Rahman halls will be finalised within a week, sources in the JCD said.

Committees in other halls and the university unit committee will be formed within one month, the sources added.

On the other hand, the BCL has no full-fledged committee of its DU unit for last three years. It has no full-fledged committee of any of its hall units. Bahadur Bepari said that the full-fledged DU and hall unit committees would be formed before the elections.

Pakistan 110/3 in 19 overs

Sports Reporter

Pakistan were 110 for three after 19 overs against New Zealand in the inaugural day-night match of the four-nation Independence Cup cricket tournament at Mohali in Chandigarh yesterday.

Earlier, put into bat, the Kiwis plied up a huge 285 in their 50 overs with opening bat Nathan Astle striking 117.

Gas supply

From Page 1

in the capital yesterday and loadshedding across the country was also nominal," Energy Minister Noor Uddin Khan said last night.

He said power generation shot up to 1750 MW and it would increase further in next few days.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to inaugurate the A-B gas pipeline on May 16.

Tea market

From Page 1

and contribute 3.35 per cent in production.

On the other hand, the NTC gardens contribute 10.7 per cent in production although it commands 9.9 per cent of the total allotted land. The private companies command 34.5 per cent land, but their contribution is 25.37 per cent while the gardens under proprietorship command 20.26 per cent of land contributing only 11.10 per cent in the production.

The average yields in the NTC, private and proprietorship gardens are also low compared to those owned by the foreign companies and the BTB. The yield of the sterling companies is 1389 kg per hectare, BTB 1308 kg, NTC 1130 kg, private 914 kg and the proprietors 645 kg.

What is needed in Bangladesh is increased investment in the tea industry, the sources said, hoping that the government would make necessary arrangements of funds for the important export sector.

The Bangladesh Tea Board has proposed an investment of some Tk 150 crore under the Fifth Five Year Plan (FFYP) while it expects a substantial amount from the European Union for the development of the industry.

About the recent deterioration of the law and order situation in the tea growing areas, the sources said the government is actively considering to set up police camps in the adjoining areas of the gardens.

They said a section of outsiders, responsible for illegal felling of trees in the gardens, are creating problems. These people live on the government khas land adjacent to the gardens and enjoy the support of local influential quarters.