

Ailing Health Sector

A bill seeking imposition of punishment like imprisonment for maximum two years or a fine amounting upto Tk one lakh or both for medical malpractices and their promotion was placed in the Jatiya Sangsad by the health and family welfare minister. When our aim should be to bring the whole nation under a modern and scientific healthcare system, some self-proclaimed healers of various descriptions are trying to divert common and unsuspecting people's attention to the opposite direction. Advertisements, hand bills brochures, etc. full of objectionable and indecent language and outlandish claims are being circulated indiscriminately and crudely just to draw people's attention. Even national dailies are found to have carried such rubbish.

So, there is need for reining in activities of the fake healers. We welcome the move. But we also feel that the indigenous medical knowledge that draws its strength from centuries of experience of and close contact with nature and is based on medicinal qualities of herbs, shrubs and plants must not be affected by the proposed law. We would like to see that the concerns raised by an opposition MP at the time of the placing of the bill get properly addressed. In the proposed amendment to section 21 of the Drugs (control) Ordinance of 1982 a new provision for severe punishment has been proposed; but without amending section 22 the exercise will just prove futile because the latter does not take the crimes under discussion into cognizance and can at best be referred to the drug court. This means that the provision of section 21 could be cancelled out by section 22.

The question of medical malpractices, we strongly feel, should not be confined to just the fake healing points. What about the government hospitals and private health centres where various irregularities, corruption and lack of management or proper equipment or facilities deprive patients of the treatment and care they deserve? It has to be admitted that poor service and too much of commercialisation of the medical profession and facilities have to a large extent been responsible for opening opportunities for the fake healers to stay in business. Had the graduates from the country's medical colleges done their job properly, such quackery would hardly have had any wind to its sail. When representatives of modern healthcare are found to be at fault, they must be meted out even a severer punishment. Only then order can be restored in the health sector.

Bad Plan, Bad Execution

Right on July 1 Bangladesh's generation of electric power will be augmented by one-third of what the nation is at present consuming. Unfortunately, although that will mean that the Chittagong power district will have on that date a surplus of a fantastic quantum of 466 mw, the whole nation's problem would stay exactly where it is now. For want of transmission lines to the national power grid system, the 466 mw power would remain unutilised. Not for a day or two or even a few months. The nation will, as things are, have to suffer from power shortage till November, 1998 although in 11 days' time it will have the capacity to do so.

A 230 kv Chittagong-Comilla transmission line was slated to be completed in time to carry this surplus power to the national grid. Whereas the 210 mw second unit of the Raozan Power Plant is all ready to be commissioned in less than two weeks' time, the 230kv line will need another 16 months to be able to carry the Raozan surplus. Work on the transmission line has dangerously been delayed.

We do not simply accept that this will take that long. What happened to the Ashuganj-Bakhrabad gas line? Nationwide blackout forced the energy-wallahs to go into an overdrive and complete the thing in double-quick fashion. We demand the government put all its strength to string that 230kv line by the end of this year and not the next. We believe this is possible if the government puts its heart into the matter. A matter of another overdrive only. It nevertheless will also be a test for the government's seriousness about the power situation.

The CPD report which laid bare this unpleasant scenario had also some harsh observations on the siting of the 210mw plant at Raozan. It was technically wrong and economically sinful, it said. That amounts to saying that unsound considerations made the then government to set up the plant there. This is unfortunate and must be avoided in all future decisions involving core national enterprises and facilities.

A Test of Sincerity

We never suspected that 237 persons were killed in road accidents every month since June, '96. This beats our imagination. But it is true coming as it does from Communications Minister Anwar Hussain. If this is astounding the other fact he enlightened the Jatiya Sangsad on Tuesday is even more so. There were 4721 road accidents in the past eleven months starting June, 1996 but the route permit of none of the vehicles involved was cancelled. Strange! Because of some peculiarity of the automobile act, it is difficult to get a tough sentence out of the court for even the most negligent driving causing multiple death. But why should transport authorities suffer from the same limitation?

The question can be broadened to ask if ever any kind of punitive action has been taken against any vehicle and its owner and his company involved in road killings known as accidents. If the transport operators have any part in this massive killing by the thousand the government seems to have had a bigger part in this stunning undiminishing continuing death toll. We have on our part been maintaining, time and again, that most of these accidents are not accidents at all. The operators give a damn to the road regulations — they overload and overspeed their death-traps, long past their road-worthy years and driven by young novices and goons who have just not learnt to value other people's lives patently because they do not value their own. If a defective machine whizzes out at 70 kph with a load of 100 passengers and tons of goods besides on a tortuous road, its brake leaking or tyrod acting weirdly — you cannot call it an accident if it hits the bridge rails or another bus or truck. If governments had only cared, only fit vehicles would be there on the roads, driven by genuine and capable drivers knowing the road regulations as good as the driving manual.

Contributions of Army to Development: Possibilities and Prospects

A very important and useful function they carry out is the one in times of natural calamities. They are disciplined, dedicated and have developed a system which promptly brings welcome relief and succour to the people in distress.

THE Prime Minister recently called upon the Armed Forces to take due part in country's development process. It is a welcome statement, though made in general fashion without specifics. Nevertheless, it does manifest the wishes and hopes underlying her thoughts and these are shared by many. The thoughts are noble. One needs to assess how far it is practicable to translate these thoughts into reality.

The idea is not novel and does naturally come to one's mind from time to time. In some countries, the Armed Forces do play a significant role in their development activities. However, in the major part of the industrial world, the practice is to maintain a relatively small standing army. They rely mostly on the calling up of reserved forces, conscripting in times of need those who had undergone compulsory military training and service. The question of putting in substantial input by these well-trained men-in-uniform having acquired expertise in the use of sophisticated weaponry, to non-combat civilian activities does not generally arise. Yet, to cite an example, the Walter Reed Military Hospital in Washington DC treats civilian patients in peacetime. The possibility of deploying armed forces personnel in development work, therefore, can be better explored in other countries with substantial

initial personnel in uniform whose time and energy could be partly spared for further use.

President Zia, during his state visit to China in 1980 while I was assigned there, was impressed with the Chinese system and wondered about introducing it in Bangladesh. The Red Army in those days were deeply involved in nation-building activities. The Army had three functions to carry out. Firstly, its primary duty was to train and prepare itself as an alert combat force. Secondly, it channelised a good segment of its activities to productivity. And finally, the Army partly provided the source of labour in various sectors of the nation.

The present Chinese Red Army had been engaged in multimodal activities and acted, in many areas, in collaboration with and supplementary to civilian authorities. They were in the forefront of building roads, highways and bridges. They worked in close concert with government engineers and common folks in building dams, constructing factories and even erecting residential buildings. To remain available for security duty and to render prompt services in the event of natural calamities were among their prime responsibilities.

The responsibility of the up-keep of cantonments includes establishment and maintenance of various facilities that are needed by the troops living in the Cantonment itself. These variously took the shape of clothes and shoe factories, dairy, fishery, poultry, duckery, pigsty, etc. They grew orchards and timber producing plants. They even produced foodgrains

which the General who is none other than the Army Chief himself. I think I was prudent. It then dawned on me that President Zia could not have introduced a system relating to the Army without the consent of the Chief of Army Staff.

The Bangladesh Army does

not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.

The example set by one or more countries can provoke ideas to the people of another country so that the latter can tailor their attire in keeping with their needs, resources and priorities.

During a visit to Dhaka on home leave or on consultation,

one does not have to copy entirely from the methods employed in a particular country.