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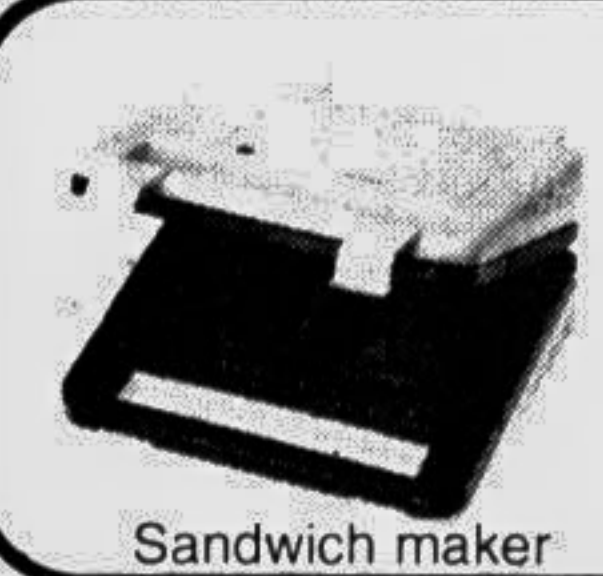
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## Down to Earth

### Day Care Centres for Children

By A S M Nurunnabi

The concept of day care centres for children is comparatively new in our society. This new development has emerged, particularly in urban areas, because of the steadily growing number of women working in various occupations. Such women need to work outside their homes under economic compulsions. But on the other hand, no satisfactory facility has developed to look after their children. In this context, the need for setting up children's day care centres has arisen. This need is sought to be met by efforts both in the public sector under government initiative and in the private sector.

In recent years, the government has taken steps for setting up daycare centres in various parts of the city to help working mothers. At present, there are eight day care centres in Dhaka city. They are located at Azampur, Kalyanpur, Mohammadpur, Maghbazar, Rampura, Jatrahari, Faridabad and the Bangladesh Secretariat.

The capacity of each centre is 80 children except the one at the Secretariat where the capacity is 50. Children aged six months to six years are allowed in these centres. The average cost of running each centre ranges from Tk 40,000 to Tk 45,000. In addition, the government grants a subsidy of Tk 800 for each child per month.

The services offered by the day care centres include pre-

school education, primary health care, provision for balanced food and arrangement for indoor games. The centres are kept open from 8 am to 5 pm while the centre at the Secretariat remains open from 9 am to 5:30 pm. The female officers and employees whose children are looked after at the Secretariat centre pay a monthly charge of Tk 300 per child, whereas the working mothers at other centres pay a charge of Tk 30 for each child. There are also proposals for setting up five more centres including one at Azampur Colony and another at AGB Colony.

This is the overall picture of the operation of the city's day-care centres under government management. It is the general opinion of observers that these centres represent quite limited government endeavour to provide welfare measures for children. It is, however, said that these limited efforts at present cost government an outlay which is seven times more than in the past.

Lately, private initiatives to provide day care facilities have become evident, though on a small scale. In the city, there are at present five to six daycare centres set up under private initiative, which are considered too inadequate for meeting the demands of working mothers.

A different picture may be seen in many foreign countries, where, as a result of the widely

prevalent day care system, a large number of women can manage to work outside their homes. If this trend catches on in this country, it may open up new employment opportunities for women.

There are many educated women who do not make use of their educational aptitudes but remain confined at home. There are also other qualified women who are unemployed. For such women, development of a professional attitude in setting up a day care centre singly or jointly can help them a great deal not only financially, but also give a job satisfaction that they are fulfilling a social need. In this context, the culture of baby-sitting widely in vogue in Western countries may be profitably used in our country. This does not need much capital but a professional orientation, good-will and sincerity.

Of course, such day care centre under private initiatives will be a little expensive as compared with the government-managed ones. But there is no denying that since day care centres are expected to provide better environment, care and security, there will be no less demand for such centres. In this context, the private day care centres are expected to open up a new horizon of employment for educated women in congenial atmosphere, given the required professional attitude in the performance of their work.



NTIL organised a fashion show at Sheraton Hotel in the city yesterday.

— Star photo

## Chakma refugees

From Page 1

by minister without portfolio Kalpa Ranjan Chakma.

Decorated with colourful banners and festoons, the entire area wore a festive look and the people were in joyous mood.

A function was held at a field bordering Tabalchhari village with Chittagong Divisional Commissioner Sakawat Hossain in the chair.

Minister without portfolio Kalpa Ranjan Chakma, MP, Dipankar Talukder MP, Bir Bahadur MP, Chairman of Khagrachari Local Government Council Samiran Dewan, Deputy Commissioner of Khagrachari AKM Zaifur Hossain and DG (Special Affairs) Moidul Islam addressed the meeting from Bangladesh side.

From Indian side, Energy and Power Minister of Tripura Keshab Majumder and Principal Secretary of Tripura Sudhir Sharma spoke on the occasion.

Uppendra Lal Chakma also spoke as the representative of the repatriated tribal refugees.

Addressing the meeting, Kalpa Ranjan Chakma said a new horizon was created with the repatriation of the Chakma refugees.

He called upon all to work devotedly in nation-building activities and hoped that all the problems of the hill districts would be sorted out for a permanent peace in the region.

From the Indian side, Minister Keshab Majumder said, "We had been waiting for this day... it has become possible for the goodwill of the present government."

## BNP MPs made ministers

From Page 1

ple issues like illegality of a military takeover or general elections under a non-party caretaker government to ensure people's right to vote freely, Manju said. "But repeated surrender of an elected government to opposition pressure, specially when the BNP demands have nothing to do with any constitutional issue, is bound to affect the parliamentary system itself."

The JP leader said, "with the on-going boycott of parliament sessions by the BNP, Sheikh Hasina was left with two options: succumbing to the unreasonable BNP pressure or making efforts to make the parliament complete its five-year term. Hasina, who seems to be a 'pro-active politician', has visibly opted for the second."

On the allegation that by taking the BNP members in the council of ministers, the Prime Minister has violated the spirit of Article 70 of the Constitution that barred floor crossing by parliament members, Manju said: "In my view, the principles of Article 70 are inconsistent with the fundamental rights of the legislators. It is not fair that an MP cannot act according to the dictates of his conscience."

In this regard, the JP secretary general also recalled that a section of military leaders in the country had encouraged desertion of politicians en bloc to legitimize their seizure of power in the past.

Requested to comment on

the reported internecine conflict in the JP, especially over his position in the government of Sheikh Hasina, Manju said: "The reasons behind some JP leaders' opposition to my presence in the government are best known to them."

"But what I can say is that some JP leaders, especially its chief HM Ershad, are the greatest beneficiaries of the political changeover that took place on June 23, 1996."

"With AL's taking over of power, lives of many JP leaders and activists have been saved. General Ershad was transferred to a residential house turned sub-jail in the Jatiya Sangsad premises and allowed to attend to parliament sessions."

The communications minister further said that all the JP leaders had consented, on record, to his induction into the cabinet of Sheikh Hasina. "I do not know what has prompted Mirzaur Rahman Chowdhury to oppose this 13 months after I was made a minister. The party chief responded to Chowdhury's contention a month later."

Asked whether there was any possibility of any other JP lawmaker being inducted into the cabinet, Manju said: "I do not see any."

Asserting the need for peace and stability, Manju said that all the three major parties in the country had experience of running the affairs of the state. "I wish, all of them behave reasonably at least for the sake of the nation," the country.

## Roundtable

From Page 1

Criticising the government, Anam said there was no transparency in the government activities.

"We don't need to know everything of the government's working procedures, but we have to know the structure of the policy which the government is following," he said.

He pointed out that people are yet to know under what guidelines the government is dealing with the foreign investors in gas and mineral resources sector.

State Minister for Planning, Science and Technology Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir pointed out that power sector is the main obstacle to industrial growth and said the government has undertaken steps to remove the problem.

"We have the capacity to generate only 2,200 MW electricity against the requirement of 4,000 MW for industrialisation," he said.

He said private sector did not come forward to invest in this sector although certain conditions were fulfilled.

## Shell

From Page 1

Later the joint venture indicated that it might talk with Tullow over partnership.

"But there is hardly any chance of Shell's involvement in Block 9," said a source. "Indeed it had submitted proposals for six blocks in the bidding but the government has so far offered them only two. The government never responded to Shell's proposals regarding Block 9."

Instead, Shell, the world's largest oil company, has been suggested by the government to talk with US company Triton about a partnership in Block 7. Triton was offered this block in November last.

BSS adds: The Shell executives yesterday met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and lauded the investment policy of the government and expressed their willingness to invest in Bangladesh.

They also expressed their eagerness to jointly invest in various projects particularly in the gas sector.

They apprised the Prime Minister that they would take up different projects for multipurpose use of gas in the country.

## Parley

From Page 1

in which JP Secretary General Anwar Hossain Manju and JSD chief ASM Abdur Rob are ministers.

The JP is now reeling under a schism between two camps within the party. One camp is favouring a more pro-opposition stance, distancing itself from the government and the other is supporting JP's continued partnership in the government of consensus, party insiders said.

Reports about a possible constitutional amendment have prompted a section of BNP and JP leaders to go for talks to prevent, what they said, the ruling party's bid for mustering two-third majority in the Jatiya Sangsad, needed for amending the Constitution.

Mid level leaders of the BNP and the JP, who have direct access to their respective party high commands, are conducting the talks.

Meanwhile, JP chief HM Ershad, who is now abroad, is likely to return home soon.

## Visitors at trade fair

From Page 1

mand," he said.

Tanvir Ahmed Sattar, a silk manufacturer said, Bangladesh silk sarees could be popularised in European and other countries if the government came up with an aggressive market diversifying mechanism. Bangladesh silk products are popular in India, UK and USA, he added.

Mohiuddin Ahmed, a sales executive of Manola, a cosmetics company said its products were being exported to UAE and Saudi Arabia. "Queries from India and Nepal were also being made," he said. Bishnu Chandra Vattacharya, an executive of Sajeeb Corporation said he was expecting huge orders for Tang, a soft drink.

A good number of companies are offering the customers special discounts, gift items and lottery tickets on the occasion of the month-long fair.

Different utility services of the government including Power Development Board (PDB), Bangladesh Telephone and Telegraph Board (BTB), Water Development Board and Dhaka Electric Supply Authority have also set up temporary offices at the fair for providing services.

The T & T Board set up a cen-

tre for providing fax and telephone facilities to the participants and visitors.

An Iranian participant alleged that they were not given enough "duty passes" by the Export Promotion Bureau. He said they needed 15 passes but were given only 10. "As a result five salesmen are to buy tickets every day," he said.

Entrepreneurs of 19 foreign countries have opened 97 stalls and local companies 270.

The participating countries and number of stalls are: Australia-2, Bhutan-2, China-5, Denmark-1, Hongkong-4, India-15, Iran-11, Italy-2, Japan-4, Malaysia-2, Pakistan-26, Korea-4, Singapore-3, Spain-2, Taiwan-4, Thailand-3, United Arab Emirates-2, UK-4 and USA-1.

## Taxi cab

From Page 1

Fare of the air conditioned MTCS has been fixed at Tk 20 for the first 2 km, Tk 8 for next one km and Tk 2 for quarter km or less.

For the economic MTCS, the fare will be Tk 15 for the first two km, Tk 6 for next one km, and Tk 1.50 for a quarter km or less.

## 106 BNP MPs protest 'misbehaviour' of Dhamrai TNO with Ziaur Rahman Khan

Deputy leader of the Opposition in Parliament Prof AGM Badruddoza Chowdhury and 106 other MPs of BNP yesterday protested the 'misbehaviour' of a TNO with Barrister Ziaur Rahman Khan MP, attack on him by "hired goons" and police harassment, reports UNB.

In a joint statement, the opposition legislators demanded immediate removal and punishment of the TNO of Dhamrai.

They accused the government of destroying democracy by resorting to repression on political opponents and endangering the life of opposition MPs.

They said a few days back another BNP lawmaker from Chittagong, Amir Khashru Mahmud Chowdhury, was attacked by terrorists backed by the ruling party.

The BNP MPs alleged that the government is harassing many MPs by filing false cases against them. They demanded immediate arrest and exemplary punishment to the persons responsible.

The signatories to the statement included M Saifur Rahman, Oli Ahmed, Khandaker Delwar Hossain, Dr Khandaker Mosarrat Hossain, KM Obaidur Rahman, Sheikh Razzak Ali, Akbar Hossain, Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, Najmul Huda, M Shamsul Islam, Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, MK Anwar, Jamiruddin Sirker, M Morshed Khan, Shamsul Islam Khan, Sadek Hossain, Fazlur Rahman and Amanullah Aman.

## Motor vehicle parts worth Tk 3.7 lakh looted

By Staff Correspondent

A gang of youths looted parts of motor vehicles worth about Tk 3.74 lakh from a motor garage at Kazzpara under Mirpur thana in the city early yesterday.

According to police, only one security guard was on duty when the gang swooped on the National Motor Garage at about 3 am.

The attackers tied up the guard and then removed some valuable parts of two vehicles. Later, they escaped with the parts.

A case has been lodged with Mirpur thana.

## Admission tests for DU (Hons) classes in May

By DU Correspondent

Admission tests for first year honours classes of the Dhaka University for the session 1997-98 will begin in the first week of May, varsity sources said yesterday.

Admission forms will be distributed in the third week of March. This year, Tk 200 will be charged for each form.

for all the four units — Ka (Science Group), Kha (Humanities Group), Ga (Commerce Group) and Gha (Combined Group) — the tests will be held under MCQ system like in the previous year.

The first year honours classes will begin in July, sources said.

## Scores of Indian politicians are 'little better than criminals'

NEW DELHI, Feb 27: Just how corrupt are India's politicians? If you believe the national press, scores of them are little better than criminals, reports AFP.

The February-March national elections has been peppered with key figures, including the country's president and prime minister, appealing to political parties to shun shady candidates.

India's autonomous Election Commission joined the chorus after announcing that nearly 1,500 of 13,952 contestants in 1996 elections had criminal records. Of those, 39 were elected.

A leading news magazine this month published the names of around 70 candidates who, it argued, were "unsuitable" because of criminal records or pending charges.

"You can imagine the magnitude of the problem," says Election Commissioner GVG Krishnamurthy. "It will be a catastrophe for India if timely measures are not taken to halt the cancer of criminalisation of politics."

Arun Gawli might have made the 'unsuitable' list in the Outlook magazine but for one reason — he was back in jail and unable to stand as a candidate.

Jailed for six years in Bombay in connection with 23 cases of murder, extortion and kidnapping and accused of mafia links, he has never been found guilty.

Last year, acquitted and released from jail, he launched his own political party.

Many other candidates,

meanwhile, are free to stand simply because they still await trial.

India's slow-moving legal system takes much of the blame.

Under Indian law, a person sentenced to more than two years in prison cannot fight elections. But in case of an appeal, the person can contest. And appeals often drag on for more than a decade.

Outgoing prime minister Inder Kumar Gujral, a politician respected for his integrity, lamented recently that "people who are awaiting trials in cases of murder are being made ministers."

A panel of judges recently suggested India should change the rule and debar anyone facing criminal charges from elections.

They argued many of the country's most colourful politicians remained in positions of influence by lodging one appeal after another, thus delaying sentencing.

That is not the case, however, with PV Narasimha Rao, India's prime minister between 1991 and 1996.

Currently appealing corruption charges, the 76-year-old's hopes of returning to parliament were ended when the Congress Party dropped him as a candidate.

Laloo Prasad Yadav, was not dropped by his party in the eastern state of Bihar. But then, he is the party president.

Yadav, a former close associate of prime minister Gujral, is currently out on bail after being charged in connection with a massive embezzlement scam.

dal. His wife, who cannot read or write, has been installed in his place as a rather reluctant Bihar Chief Minister.

Jayalitha Jayaram, meanwhile, a former chief minister of the southern state of Tamil Nadu, is also a candidate with a corruption trial pending.

When her home was raided in 1996, police uncovered 1,000 sarees, around 26 kilograms gold, hundreds of pairs of shoes and enough documents to help police begin corruption investigations.

Like Yadav, she denies all charges. Like Yadav, she remains a key political figure in her region.

A recent magazine article here put India eighth on the list of the world's most corrupt societies.

New Delhi-based sociologist Ashish Nandi believes it is a recent phenomenon and argues the bad example of the politicians has infected all social strata.

"At one time, India was known for being less corrupt than such regions as Latin America, Africa and Eastern Europe. In the last 15 years this change has taken place," he argues.

He traces the advent of political corruption and "slush funds" back to the region of Indira Gandhi, much admired as a great leader but who, he says, turned political patronage into a "personalised affair."

"That's the tragic part of the story, that it has become a part of everyday life," he added. "You can't just go back to the old system."

## Chevron-Texaco rejects

From Page 1

per cent for Tullow and 10 per cent for BAPEX. Later it revised the proposal suggesting 30 per cent for each of the three foreign companies and 10 per cent for BAPEX.

The joint venture in a letter Wednesday categorically said that it could not accept the equity sharing proposal of the government.

It further noted that it would discontinue negotiations if the government disregarded its formula of equity sharing under which all foreign companies would get equal share and BAPEX, 10 per cent.

However, the government has not yet responded to this letter.

Sources said Chevron-Texaco has already lost interest to work in Bangladesh because of the slow negotiation process and lack of decision of the government regarding it.

Its representatives say, if this is how the government handles negotiations, working here will be very tough and slow," an official said quoting some Chevron-Texaco executives.

Although Block-9 was the

first block offered to any foreign company in the second round bidding negotiations which began on October 22, decision had been shifting about getting Tullow a big partner.

Ironically, blocks 9 and 10, the most sought after blocks in the second round bidding, were supposed to be reserved for exploration by BAPEX.

Petrobangla sources quoting pre-bid official documents said that before the bidding announcement, the Energy Ministry had sought advice from Petrobangla regarding block allocation for BAPEX.

The Petrobangla in reply had said that blocks 9 and 10, which were the most prospective among the 15 offered in the bidding, should be included in the bidding as a kind of special attraction for the foreign companies.

The letter clearly said that these blocks should be ultimately given to BAPEX because of the prospects, but they should be included in the bidding to attract maximum number of bidders.

However after the bidding opened, the prospect of BAPEX getting these blocks were reduced to a 10 per cent carried over partnership with Tullow. Before the bidding, BAPEX had found some more structure and suggested that blocks 9, 10 be kept for it. Petrobangla had said that these blocks be kept in the bidding only to make the bidding attractive.

## 3 killed in road accident

MUNSHIGANJ, Feb 27: Three persons were killed and three others seriously injured in a road accident this afternoon on Dhaka-Mawa Highway near Nimali bus stand in Sirajdikhan thana, reports BSS.

The dead were identified as Masuda 30, Bashar 40 and Sagar 8.

## Book Fair concludes today

The Ekushey Book Fair on the Bangla Academy premises concluded today, reports UNB. The fair was inaugurated on February 7 by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Three best decorated stalls of books, out of the 185 participating organisations, will be awarded at the concluding ceremony to be attended by former Chief Advisor Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman and poet Shamsur Rahman.

## No breakthrough yet

From Page 1

said they were still optimistic about a solution when they resume discussions today.

At the talks, the government side tried to concentrate on matters relating to the affairs of the parliament while BNP's bid was to add some other issues outside the parliament, they said.

Emerging from the talks held at the Speaker's chamber, the negotiators on both sides remained tight-lipped to waiting newsmen. They only made brief statements that the talks would continue.

Treasury Bench Whip Abdus Shahid told newsmen that they hoped to reach a fresh agreement with the BNP and that they may come up with a joint communiqué if the talks succeed today.

Chief Whip of the Opposition Khandaker Delwar Hossain when asked said, "We're still discussing the issues.... Had there been a solution today, tomorrow's discussion would have been needless."

Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed, on insistence by newsmen, said, "The BNP is a very responsible opposition party and we hope they will come back to the parliament considering greater interests of the nation."

BNP's top negotiator Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan only said his party will continue the dialogue while the AL counterpart Telecommunication Minister Mohammad Nasim said their discussion was cordial. "It's not possible to disclose anything more," Nasim said.

The Speaker-mediated dialogue was the outcome of a series of backstage parleys between the two parties over the past few days.

After the meeting, representatives of both the parties briefed their respective leaders. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Opposition Leader Khaleda Zia — on the outcome.

Other members in the AL team were Chief Whip of the Jatiya Sangsad Abul Hasnat Abdullah and Prime Minister's parliamentary affairs adviser Suranjit Sengupta. Oli Ahmed and MK Anwar were the two other members of the BNP team.

The Speaker hosted a lunch to the leaders before the meeting. Some others in the two sides said nothing could be said for sure till the current discussions end.

But Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury said, "I found the trend of discussion very positive. I'm very happy that both the sides have finally sat for discussion.... They must sit down for a solution."

He, however, acknowledged differences between the two parties on some of the issues they discussed.

## 3 bomb blasts in Bombay: 4 killed

BOMBAY, Feb 27: Three bomb blasts in the Indian financial hub of Bombay today killed 4 persons and injured at least 20, AP quoting police said.

The early afternoon blasts were scattered along commuter railway tracks in the northern part of the city. Police said one person was killed and 8-10 injured in a small explosion near a school near the tracks in northwest Bombay.

Mala Ved, an office worker who had just gotten off the train when the explosion occurred, worried the target was India's national parliamentary elections. Bombay voters go to the polls Saturday in the staggered balloting.