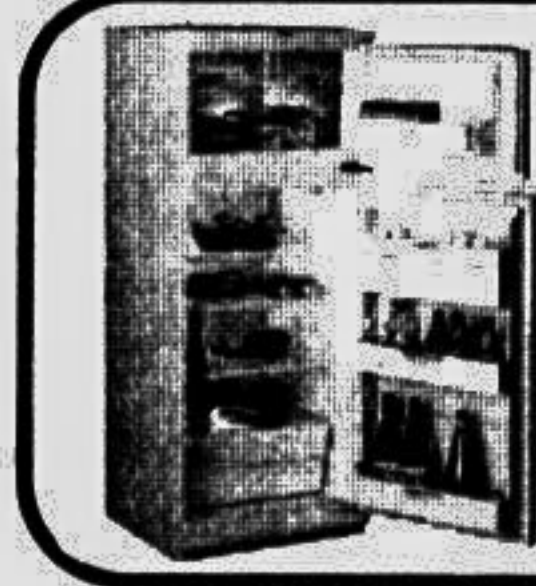


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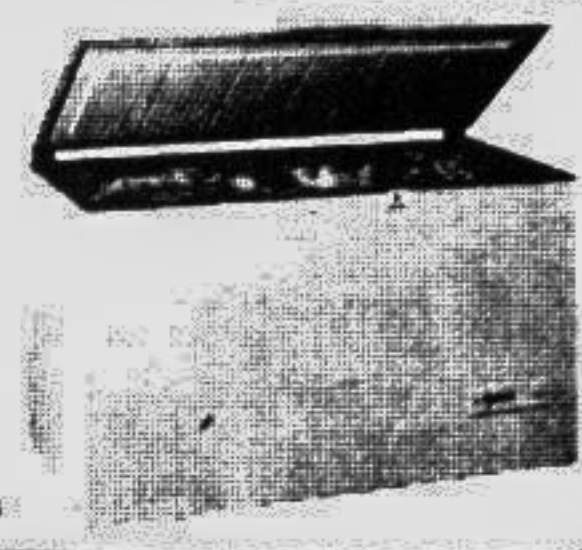


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Down to Earth Agenda With A Difference

By A S M Nurunnabi

In the fast changing social life of our country, girls from the economically vulnerable sections of society fall easy victims to sexual exploitation by unscrupulous elements. Because of grinding poverty they are forced to take any job available to them in the urban centres. One of the most serious consequences of exploitation of the gullible village girls taking jobs in the cities and towns is the phenomenon of unmarried mothers.

The young women who become pregnant due to sexual exploitation pass through extreme mental agony, financial distress and social alienation. Recently, we read a report about a non-government organisation which is working to relieve, as far as possible within its limited means, the distress and suffering of such unmarried mothers. There is no doubt that such a welfare organisation fulfils and urgent need for alleviating the suffering of young women and girls who are victims of a society in transition.

Located in the heart of the city, the Centre for Rehabilitation of Destitute Women looks after only the helpless, distressed and destitute unmarried pregnant girls. Of course for obvious reasons, the shelter and care provided by this organisation are limited for a specific period. During this period, care is given for the physi-

cal and mental health of the would be mothers. And for their eventual rehabilitation, it arranges job training in garments factory or other suitable trade befitting their skills.

In view of the social prejudice in respect of unwed mothers, their rehabilitation with a job assumes supreme importance as it restores to them some measures of self-respect. After childbirth, they are allowed to retain their offspring with the help of a day-care centre managed by the organisation or leave them to institutional care as abandoned children.

Many of the unmarried pregnant girls seeking shelter in this organisation are victims of rape, deserted by their husbands or lovers, or sexually exploited at their work places or in organised brothels. All these categories of women find shelter in the place provided by this organisation. It is said that the aim of the organisation is to rehabilitate 10 such mothers every six months.

Two or three months before delivery, these women are provided with accommodation, food and clothing, besides medical check-up. At the same time, some elementary education is imparted to them. When it is time for childbirth, an escort provided by the organisation

takes them to a government hospital. After delivery, they

are allowed necessary rest and care along with the baby. Normally for eight to 15 days such new mothers are spared from the routine of training.

When these mother complete their period of training — generally six months — they are asked to find their own accommodation and work. In case they are unable to find work and accommodation on their own, the organisation's employees try to help them. And at the time of leaving the organisation, each mother is given Tk 800 as living allowance for one month and some gifts.

Sometimes it has been observed that after staying with the organisation for six months, some unwed-mothers leave back their babies by giving written consent. In such cases, the organisation makes arrangement for looking after the babies. The abandoned children are allowed to be adopted by childless couples after they complete the necessary legal formalities.

The efforts by this organisation for rehabilitation of the unwed mothers are indeed laudable. If more such institutions come forward to provide such kind of service, many more young women and girls who bear the brunt of the worst form of exploitation can be saved from the ignominy of spending the rest of their lives on the pavements as social outcasts.

'Modernisation of port facilities must survive in competition'

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, June 19: Deputy Minister for Port and Shipping Saber Hossain Chowdhury today stressed the need for modernisation of port facilities in the country to cope with the global competition in cargo handling operations.

He was addressing the inaugural function of a 2-day 'Stakeholder Dialogue on Initiatives for Modernising Port Operations,' organised by the Asian Development Bank at the office of the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

J B Brooks, Senior Project Implementation Officer of ADB and Md Rezwanul Huque, Chairman, Chittagong Port, Kamaluddin Ahmed president of CCC&I and Dr Ahmed Kamal also addressed the function.

The deputy minister said Chittagong port is lagging far behind in terms of facilities due to lack of long-term policy in the past. We have to modernise facilities to survive in competition, he added.

He urged importers and port users to extend their cooperation in smooth operation of the port by taking timely delivery of cargo.

Chairman of the port authority Rezwanul Haque said a concerted effort of all including port users and labour organisations is a must for bringing back dynamism in operational activities of the port.

JB Brooke said Chittagong Port is a key to all national development and ADB will continue to finance for its development including construction of container terminal.

Winding up the inaugural session of the dialogue President of Chittagong Chamber Kamaluddin Ahmed underlined the importance of ensuring enough storing facility at the port premises.

He urged the government to form a committee comprising members of both public and private sectors in order to stop illegal activities of the employees and labour unions who often interrupt the normal functioning at the port.

Kibria

From Page 1

In this context, he categorically said that the present size of the government would not be extended under any circumstance.

Admitting that the allocation for Annual Development Programme was less this time, he said, "it should not be evaluated on the basis of amount, rather it should be considered on the basis on quality."

Responding to criticisms of various budget proposals, Kibria said that the aim of the proposed budget was to achieve a balanced and sustainable development.

About the inflationary pressure in the economy he said "A non-inflationary growth should be our goal." He attributed the rise in the rate of inflation to seasonal price hike of rice.

MK Anwar criticised the budget proposals for "concealing and distorting" some important information. "The new budget is a cluster of good words aimed at self-satisfaction."

He also criticised the proposed budget for 'ignoring and avoiding' the contribution of the previous government in different sector.

Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud said that the new budget proposals reflected the effort for sustainable economic development, considering the existing socio-economic and political reality. He however noted that budget proposal lacked some important policy-related issues.

Prof Mahmud said the political leadership is facing some important challenges which should be addressed immediately. The challenges are how to control the increasing administrative expenditure of the government, how to build an efficient administration curbing corruption, how to reduce losses in state owned enterprises and how to resist misappropriation of money in financial institutions.

Iqbal Ahmed and Jahurul Islam in their paper appreciated the budget proposals for reflecting 'certain policy thrusts and linking' the budget with the industrial policy.

"This budget deserves appreciation for reflecting certain policy thrusts, one of which is the concern over degradation of environment," the paper said.

Silent invasion of a poisonous plant

By Shehab Ahmed

A poisonous plant, harmful to humans, animals and flora, sighted in south-western region of the country for some time, is causing concern among plant biologists.

They collected some samples of the plant from Manik Mia Avenue area in the city recently after noticing its firms presence in the farms in south-western districts.

'Bishgach', botanically known as 'parthenium hysterophorus', is on display at

the national tree fair at Dhanmondi playground.

"We are showing it to draw people's attention", said Ms BM Reza, an official of the National Harbortum, while talking to The Daily Star.

The harbortum has a stall at the fair, displaying a number of disappearing species, to focus interest on the plants which have medicinal and commercial qualities.

Ms Reza said 'Bishgach' is causing enough concern among the farmers, watching their crops and plants and animals.

It grows fast, the pollen carried by wind spreads it around, she said about the troublesome plant.

The plant was first sighted by two Bangladeshi plant scientists, Dr Salar Khan and Dr Abul Hasan of Dhaka University, at a place two km from the city's Saidabad bus stand in 1990.

The West Bengal state government in India, worried over the invasion of Parthenium had ordered burning it in 1985.

A native of Jamaica, the plant belonging to the Asteraceae family, was first identified by Linnaeus in 1753, a plant scientist noted.

Growing straight up to about one and a half metre the plant, its flower and pollen cause skin allergy in humans, and rash and diarrhoea in animals eating the plant, which could also be fatal to them.

During the dry season, Parthenium is more dangerous as its pollen becomes far more lethal.

"Unless we identify and check its growth, there is a real danger that the innocuous looking plant could spread all over, National Harbortum's field worker Ali Hossain said.

He said during his trips to the south-western region, he found that the plant was growing alongside the crops.

Ms Reza said before the plant spreads fast all over the country, it must be destroyed. For that public awareness must be created through the media.

Charges to be framed to impeach Yeltsin

MOSCOW, June 19: The lower house of parliament voted today to begin preparing an impeachment motion against president Boris Yeltsin but gave itself one and half years to launch it, signalling the effort would probably fade away like previous such attempts, reports AP.

Pro-government deputy speaker Vladimir Ryzhkov said that Yeltsin's foes understand they have little chance to oust the president and simply want the panel as an "instrument of blackmail and pressure against the government."

The Communist-initiated vote signalled the first time that the State Duma has managed to set up a panel to prepare a formal indictment. Several attempts since 1994 have collapsed.

The Duma voted 331-5 today to set up a parliamentary commission, which would draw up formal charges against Yeltsin that would serve as a legal foundation for impeachment.

However, Communists and their allies have left themselves ample room for backpedalling.

Transport strike in Meherpur called off

MEHERPUR, June 19: The indefinite transport strike in the district was called off after five days today following fruitful talks between the administration and transport workers' leaders, reports UNB.

The south-western Sramik Federation had enforced the strike on June 14 demanding release of three transport workers.

replied in the negative but said, "In the tender schedule it was mentioned that changes may be made in design if necessary and I proceeded as per instruction from PWD."

To this point KJRC DG Dr Ahmad said, "As per the agreement, KJRC will not bear any expenditure which is in excess of the specified amount. However, the Kuwaiti embassy here will make all additional payment if claimed by the contractor and approved by engineers. However, the extra bill claimed is not acceptable as those have no basis."

According to a document signed by Nour Hossain and a sub-divisional engineer of the PWD, a cheque for Tk 8,29,45,317.17 (American Express Bank cheque number 93751885) was received by Nour Hossain himself against the bill.

"According to the agreement, the contractor is supposed to handover the building within 15 months from the date of

more deep tubewells will be set up under the revenue head.

The four tubewells awaiting completion soon is under the interim project-3. Six tubewells have already went into operation recently under the same project.

At present, Dhaka WASA supply waters from its 235 deep tubewells and two water treatment plants in Chadnighat and Godnail.

Dhaka WASA has already invited tenders for installing 100 generators in its different tubewell sites to cope with the power supply situation. The generators will cost WASA about Tk 20 crore, the sources said.

Meanwhile, evaluation of bids for construction of the much expected fourth Dhaka water supply project is going on. The biggest ever WASA project, popularly known as Saidabad water treatment plant, is expected to be completed by the year 2001. The Tk 750-crore plant, financed by the World Bank, Japan and the Bangladesh government, is expected to give 22.05 crore litre water per day when completed, the sources said.

Water supply

From Page 1

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WC: Nigeria

From Page 1

yellow card of the tournament. A cheer went up in the 68th minute when midfielder Nwankwo Kanu replaced Amokachi, coming on for a World Cup debut that would have been unthinkable 18 months ago when he underwent heart surgery that threatened to end his career.

He showed his strength by ripping in a dangerous shot in the 77th that Zdravkov pushed out for a corner.

Some quotable quotes after today's match: Victor Ikpeba: "It's a big compliment to African football that we have qualified for the Second Round."

"You can still be Olympic champions and lose friendlies. It was a little bit tense within the squad before the Spain match but after beating them it all dissolved."

"I was delighted to score my first goal in the World Cup but it was a team effort and the credit for the win should go to the team."

Hristo Bonev, coach of Bulgaria, said: "At least it was closer than last time."

"We should have taken the chances that came our way but we still have a chance of qualifying for the next round if we beat Spain next Wednesday."

"If we create as many chances as we did today then we can beat the Spanish, there's no question of that."

BJMB

From Page 1

kilometre long BJMB, the eleventh largest bridge in the world.

Other foreign dignitaries expected to attend the inaugural ceremony include the regional representatives of various donor agencies, the sources added.

The BJMB is expected to be handed over to the government today. The Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Authority will take over the bridge on behalf of the government from the construction contractors on the day.

The bridge, however, will be opened for traffic movement after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina officially inaugurates it on June 23.

It will remain toll-free for a few hours after the inauguration. Toll collection from vehicles will start from 6:00 pm on the day.

Once the bridge is handed over to the government, the Jamuna Operations and Maintenance Contractors (JOMAC) will take over toll collection and traffic management on the bridge, the sources mentioned.

Inter Toll of South Africa and its local counterpart Abdul Munaim and associates have been awarded contract for maintenance and operation of the BJMB.

Block bidding 'shelved'

From Page 1

The schedule was changed to December 15. But the government's enthusiasm gradually started to fade away in January last due to various reasons and now, the bidding process has been 'temporarily shelved,' the sources said.

The bidding process was criticised by experts and observers for its 'lack of transparency, lack of direction and lack of achievement,' the sources said.

The government has now realised that opening up all the blocks for exploration was a wrong idea as the economy would not be able to sustain the pressure of a dozen oil companies trying to sell gas to the government all at once in the future," said an expert.

The pressure became evident when Petrobangla made a calculation of the cost of purchasing gas from Sangu, developed by British company Cairn. In the calculation, it was found that the government would lose 4 million US dollars per month if it purchases 160 million cubic feet of gas from Sangu field because of the difference between its high purchase price and cheaper sales rate in the internal market.

In order to make foreign investment "more meaningful" in the gas sector, the government had also planned to increase gas price by 60 per cent in the internal market. However, considering its long term negative impact on the economy as well as on the image of the government, this decision has also been shelved temporarily.

At the same time, the government has started considering gas export to avert the "economic pressure to be caused by participation of foreign oil companies."

Although energy experts vehemently oppose the idea of gas export as it would not be economically profitable for Bangladesh in the long run, the government has given "enough signal" to Cairn and US company Occidental to find their buyers abroad, sources said.

CHT confce

From Page 1

mittee on CHT will function as a coordinating body for all development works in the region till a 'Regional Council' is elected as envisaged in the peace accord signed between the NC-CHT and the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) on December 2 last year. It is widely speculated that Shantu Larma will head the planned interim committee.

On May 25 last, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had a high-level meeting at her office on the formation of the planned Interim Committee on CHT. Later on, separate lists of names for the committee were proposed and forwarded to the Chief Whip by the PCJSS and local units of Awami League in the three hill districts.

A ruling party source involved in formation of the Interim Committee, told The Daily Star yesterday that the process of finalising the committee was nearing completion.

Truck barricade on Dhaka-Aricha highway

MANIKGANJ, June 19: District Bus-Truck Drivers' Association put up barricade on the Dhaka-Aricha highway leading to a 12-kilometre-long jam today to protest the death of a truck driver in jail, reports UNB.

Witnesses said drivers parked their trucks at the local bus stand haphazardly blocking the highway for two hours demanding punishment to those responsible for the death of Abdul Rahim, 45, in the district sub-jail yesterday.

The association, however, withdrew the barricade at 4 pm after the Deputy Commissioner had assured it of taking necessary action by Sunday. But it threatened to enforce an indefinite strike if its demand is not met by then.

India beat Lanka by 8 wickets

COLOMBO, June 19: India won the first one-day international against Sri Lanka by eight wickets at the R Premadasa Stadium here today, reports AFP.

India scored 246 for two in 43.4 overs in reply to Sri Lanka's 243 for six in 50 overs.

SA 360 all out

LONDON, June 19: South Africa were all out for 360 in their first innings on the second day of the second Test against England at Lord's today, reports Reuters.

Sarbaharaman killed in intra-party clash

MEHERPUR, June 19: A member of an outlawed party was killed at a village here last night following intra-party conflict, police said, reports UNB.

Manik, 34, was slaughtered at Raghunathpur village under sadar thana allegedly by a rival group of outlawed Sarbahara Party.

On June 5, one Mafiz of Babupura village under the sadar thana was hacked to death by the outlaws.

World Bank

From Page 1

Bank (ADB) and the Japanese Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF), who each contributed 200 million US dollars, represents a major engineering achievement of great technical complexity, the WB noted.

After the inauguration of 4.8-kilometre BJMB over Jamuna river on June 23, the longest bridge in South Asia and the 11th longest bridge in the world, it will take only six hours to travel from the capital to northwestern Bogra district.

"A journey that used to take 12 to 36 hours to travel from Dhaka to Bogra, using road transport and river ferries, will take only six hours after the bridge (BJMB) opens," the Bank observed. "It (the bridge) will also carry railway traffic and tie together Bangladesh's power and gas networks into a national grid."

200-bed hospital lying unutilised

From Page 1

uddin Ahmed, one of the directors of the construction company, Messrs Md Nour Hossain, claimed that he has not been paid the Tk 10.16 crore bill in full.

After failing to realise the unpaid bills, he have filed a money suit with the court of First Sub-Judge, Dhaka on April 6," he said. He also claimed that an additional Tk 1.50 crore was spent for installation of lift, generator pole, a power sub-station and other things as per "changed design"

According to sources, construction of the Kuwait General Hospital was started in 1993 and completed in December 1996.

Director General of KJRC Dr Ahmad Maher Sabik when contacted said, "We have made full payment of Tk 8.29 crore and that is the final amount we owed to the contractor. The balance between Tk 10.16 crore and Tk 8.29 crore is kept as security money and will be re-

Jackfruit is in abundant supply in the city market now.

—Star photo



Jackfruit is in abundant supply in the city market now. —Star photo



Bishgach, a poisonous plant, sighted in south-western region of the country for some time, is causing concern among plant biologists.



Prof Yunus gets prestigious Spanish prize

OVIEDO, Spain, June 19: A Bangladeshi philanthropist and three Spaniards who administer aid programmes in Africa and India won a prestigious Spanish prize today for relieving poverty, reports AP.

Lauding their "struggle against poverty in the world," the Prince of Asturias Prize jury awarded its Concord Prize to Prof Mohammad Yunus of Bangladesh and Spaniards Vicente Ferrer, Nicolas Castellanos and Joaquin Sanz Gadea.

Yunus, 58, was cited for founding the Grameen Bank 20 years ago. Since then, it has loaned 1.5 billion dollars to 2.1 million borrowers in 36,000 villages.

Yunus' bank introduced the concept of 'microloans' to help the poor start small businesses. He also launched a project last year to put at least one cellular phone in each of Bangladesh's 65,000 villages within six years.

Missionaries Ferrer and Castellanos were honoured for their work in India, while Sanz was praised for medical work in several hospitals in Congo.

The Prince of Asturias Prize ranks nearly as high in the Spanish-speaking world as the Nobel Prize. Awards are given in several fields, including science, the arts and sports.

The Concord Prize is the seventh of eight Prince of Asturias prizes being granted this year.

Crown Prince Felipe of Asturias will present the winners 5 million pesetas (34,000 dollars) and a sculpture by Spanish artist Joan Miro during an October ceremony in this northern Spanish city.