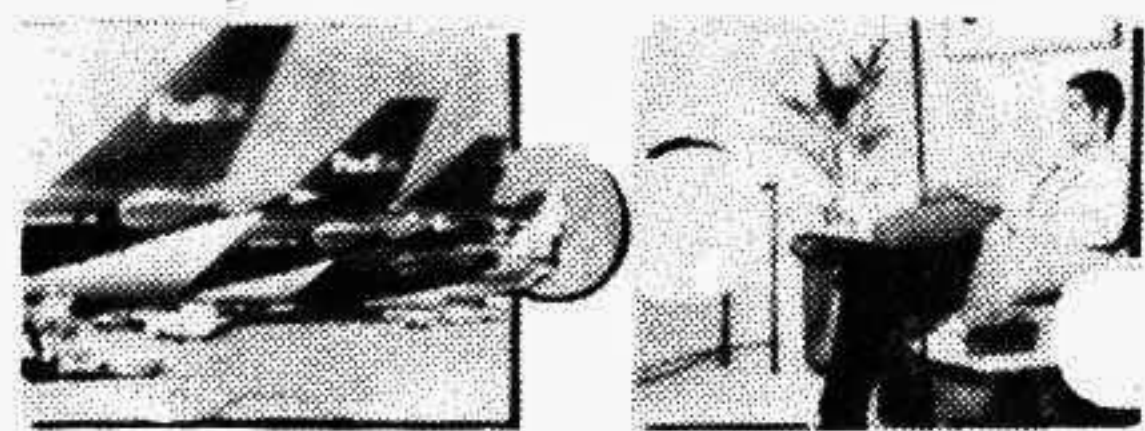


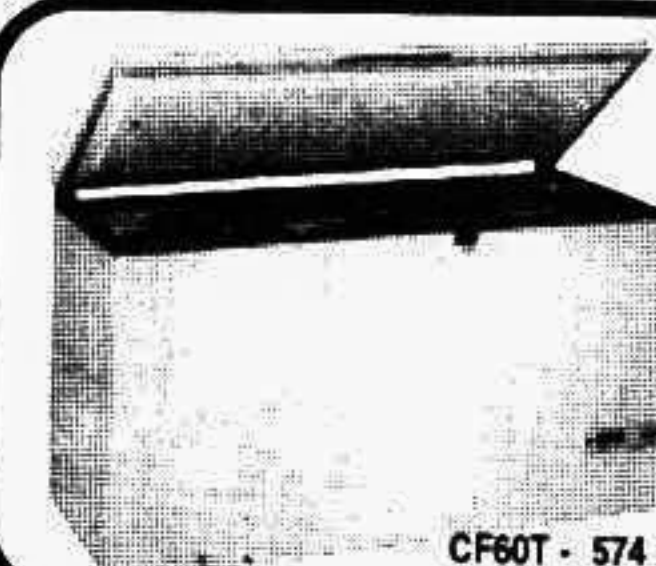
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ART290 - 265 Litres

## Down to Earth Of City's Bottled Drinks

By A S M Nurunnabi

Lately concern has been expressed in some quarters over the quality of bottled water marketed by several companies. Consumption of bottled water is a new fad among many city dwellers.

Worry over the quality of such bottled water was highlighted by a recent example when a government minister found some alien substance in a sealed bottle of a fairly well-known company.

It is generally felt that the dignitary was not the only person to have the creeps at the unexpected presence of alien substance in containers of water, advertised as pure. There were quite a few reports of such confidence shattering experience before. They all go to show how much more exposed public health today is to the threat of spurious content in bottled water.

It was understood that despite repeated instructions, the suppliers of bottled water failed to reach the standard to the annoyance of the authorities which are said to be contemplating to take punitive action against them.

According to the Department of Environment no company had clearance of that Department to produce bottled water, which was mandatory under the Environment Protection Act of 1995 and the Environment Preservation Policy, 1997. It was reported that review and examination of standard of the companies are in the final stage. Action to ensure standard would begin soon, as reported.

Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institute reportedly carried out a random survey and examined samples of bottled waters of 10 companies. The test revealed that there was no existence of the minerals mentioned in the labels of the bottles. Besides, the examination found that levels of some parameter were higher than

that which should be in pure drinking water.

Most of the companies also don't mention the manufacturing and expiry dates. The BSTI further observed the Dhaka-based companies use WASA or ground water as source of their bottled water.

Though the level of caustic form germ in water of the samples provided by the companies for examination was found satisfactory by BSTI, the plate count level in samples provided by some of the companies was not found satisfactory, compared to the standard of FAO.

Official sources said the Department of Environment had already asked 25 mineral water manufacturing companies to submit reports about their water processing systems along with lists of machinery used for disinfecting process. The required reports have not yet been received by the Dept from all the companies, as reported.

It is felt that, apart from telling the companies to take steps that will make things difficult for spurious bottlers, the government should improve its own market intelligence system.

Bottled water was a novelty when it entered people's consciousness some years back. Now with the increasing paucity of drinking water from the traditional sources, it has turned into a necessity in certain circumstances.

Observers feel that the government has to do something immediately to resist the unscrupulous people from making this changed reality a source of health hazard.

There is similar scope for misgiving about the quality of some well-known brands of soft drinks and the so-called fruit juice packs. There were isolated reports of similar presence of alien substances in some bottles of soft drinks of popular brands.

These reports give rise to the

question whether, as in the case of bottled water, there is need for adequate quality control during processes of manufacturing and bottling.

As regards fruit juice packs, it is open to question whether these really contain genuine fruit juice, as claimed in the labels showing composition of such fruit drinks. In most cases, artificial fruit flavouring agents are used in such drinks.

Here also the question remains whether such artificially flavoured drinks are safe from the health point of view. This issue seems worthy of urgent consideration because the children are found to be the most fervent consumers of such so-called fruit drinks.

In view of understandable misgiving, as noted above, in respect of quality of bottled drinks, an interesting trend is noticeable in the growing preference of some people for green coconuts as pleasant alternative drink to bottled ones.

For example, on one side of the Satmasjid Road at Dhanmondi, one may not miss the spectacle of rows of green coconuts arranged for sale at short distances from one selling point to another.

The concentration of selling points for green coconuts along this road gives rise to the question whether people are showing greater preference for this natural drink over the bottled ones. There is no indication of competition between the natural drink and the soft drinks but who knows! At times people turn to natural things with a patronising attitude.

Price-wise, this natural drink seems to have an edge over the soft drinks and the so-called mineral water. The roadside vendors of coconuts supply also straws for the benefit of their customers. The preference for coconut drink is not confined to a particular locality alone. As always, this natural drink enjoys universal appeal.



Hundreds joined Terry Fox Run in the city yesterday. The run was organised by the Canadian High Commission to show respect to the Canadian youth, Terry Fox, who died of cancer in 1981. Terry Fox ran for 144 days in 1980 to create awareness about cancer.

### Indian Cong team meets PM, praises dev efforts

A four-member delegation of Indian Congress Party called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday and exchanged views with her on different bilateral issues, reports UNB.

During the meeting at Ganabhaban, the delegation, led by former Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukharjee, praised the Bangladesh government's development efforts.

Pranab Mukharjee lauded the efforts of the government in tackling the devastating flood in 1998 and management system of relief distribution.

The Prime Minister told the Congress leaders that the government took measures on war footing to combat the devastating flood with the help of people, the administration and the party leaders and workers.

She said the administration and Awami League leaders and workers worked hard to distribute relief during and after the floods.

The other members of the delegation are Prasanta Chatterjee, Indrani Chatterjee and Shusil Kumar Shinde MP.

### RUTA polls today

RAJSHAHI, Feb 19: Election to the Rajshahi University Teachers Association (RUTA) for the year 1999 will be held tomorrow, reports APB.

A total of 30 teachers from two panels — Yellow and White — are contesting for 15 posts of the RUTA executive committee.

### Laid to rest

From Page 1  
Meanwhile, a mourning rally was held at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday afternoon. Water Resources Minister Abdul Razzak presided over the rally.

Hundreds of people attended the rally in which the speakers raised their voices against the killers of Kazi Aref Ahmed and appealed to the government to ban communal politics in the country.

### Language Movement

From Page 1  
get February 21 which is drenched in the blood of my brother, tuned by martyred lyricist Alauddin Mahmood and written by Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury.

The Dhaka University authorities, which supervise the Shaheed Day programmes at Central Shaheed Minar every year, have taken up elaborate programmes on the occasion.

As per the programmes drawn up by the Central Coordination Committee, President Shahabuddin Ahmed will be the first to offer place wreath at the Shaheed Minar at one minute past midnight Saturday night.

The President will be followed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her cabinet colleagues. Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia will place wreath in the morning.

After the prime minister, DU Vice Chancellor Prof AK Azad Chowdhury along with Syndicate members will place wreath followed by Dhaka University Teachers Association leaders and the participants in the Language Movement.

The Shaheed Minar and its surroundings have already been given a facelift. Members of the law enforcing agencies have been asked to maintain law and order along the routes leading to the Shaheed Minar.

A joint procession of members of DU Senate and Syndicate, teachers, students and employees led by the VC will start

### Sagarmoy Ghosh

From Page 1  
took to journalism after graduating from a city college and as editor of 'Desh', he made it an undisputed icon of Bengali culture helping many aspiring writers to make their mark in the world of letters. His knack for spotting literary talent was legendary.

He wrote four books — *Sampadaker Baithaka*, *Ekti Peroker Kahini*, *Param Ramanya* and *Hier Nakshab*. He also edited the *Desh* golden jubilee anthologies of poems, short stories and essays.

from Aparajeya Bangla at 6:30 am to pay respect to the martyrs at the Azampur graveyard and then lay wreaths at the Central Shaheed Minar.

Representatives of foreign missions in Dhaka will place wreaths at Shaheed Minar from 10 to 11 am. The Day will also be observed by Bangladesh missions abroad.

Bangladesh Television and Bangladesh Betar will broadcast special programmes while newspapers will bring out special supplements highlighting the significance of the Shaheed Day.

Bangla Academy is holding a three-week long book fair on its premises. Various other functions like drama, painting exhibitions, lectures, musical soiree, recitation and photo exhibitions began at the Central Shaheed Minar on February 1. The book fair began on February 5.

Different political, socio-cultural and professional organisations have chalked out elaborate programmes, which includes placing of wreaths, cultural functions and discussions. Similar programmes will be observed at district and thana headquarters.

At a press briefing yesterday evening, Anar Ekushey observance committee urged the people to maintain sanctity of the day.

The committee also sought cooperation of all in maintaining discipline at the Shaheed Minar during placing of wreaths.

Security will also be beefed up during Khaleda Zia's visit to the Shaheed Minar.

A 'security zone' will be created at the Shaheed Minar and its adjoining areas from 7 pm today to 2 pm on February 21. None will be allowed to enter the premises of the Shaheed Minar through TSC, Doel Chatter and Chankharpool areas. The DU authorities have imposed a ban on rallies and processions in the area from 7 pm today.

The authorities have also imposed ban on putting up pictures or portraits at the Central Shaheed Minar.

### 3 Ishwardi BNP men expelled for participating in municipal polls

ISHWARDI, Feb 19: Opposition BNP expelled three party-men here Thursday for participating in the upcoming pourasava polls, reports APB.

They are: Poura BNP joint secretary Rafiqul Islam Kusum, a chairman candidate, poura BNP member and commissioner candidate Rabiul Alam Rabi and another commissioner candidate Sayedur Rahman, said a party release.

Meanwhile, Ishwardi police Thursday arrested a businessman and a Jubo League leader on charge of violating election code of conduct ahead of pourasava elections.

### Bus trip

From Page 1  
Shourie, president of the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) Rajesh Shah, president of SAARC chamber Kranti Kumar Poddar, dancer Vina Nayyar and artist Satish Gajral.

AP adds: Vajpayee rides a bus to Pakistan tomorrow, but ordinary passengers will have to wait until first week of next month before regular operations begin. Delhi State Transport Minister Parvez Hashmi said today.

Today, clerks at the New Delhi station from where the bus would have left said they had turned away scores of people who wanted tickets for the historic ride.

Once it starts, the four-trip-a-week service will be operated by the Delhi transport ministry's bus service corporation and the Pakistani Ministry of Communications.

Thursday night, a golden brown bus dubbed 'Sada-e-Sarhad' or 'Call of the Border' left New Delhi on a 400-kilometre journey to the Indian border city of Amritsar.

Meanwhile, reports from Wagah border said, senior Indian and Pakistani officials were giving final touches to security and other arrangements.

Several rounds of talks have been held between officials of the two countries at Wagah during the last few days.

In Lahore, one thousand activists of Pakistan's Jamaat-e-Islami party staged a protest march today to oppose the visit by Vajpayee. AFP quoting witnesses said.

The marchers, including many veiled women, chanted 'Vajpayee murderer' and 'down with Vajpayee'.

The march, led by Jamaat chief Qazi Hussain Ahmad, dispersed peacefully in the centre of Lahore where the Indian premier will hold talks with Pakistan's prime minister.

Jamaat has vowed to obstruct the visit of Vajpayee. It also called a general strike in the city tomorrow to oppose the visit.

The Jamaat chief warned shopkeepers to keep the shutters down to express sympathy with the people of Kashmir facing Indian 'brutalities'.

Those who tried to open their shops will face the wrath of Jamaat workers, he added.

Jamaat workers will stage a demonstration in front of the Governor's House where Vajpayee will stay before flying back to New Delhi on Sunday, he said.

The authorities have warned that they will not allow any disruption.

Vajpayee's historic journey from Amritsar, Sharif receiving him at Wagah border and the reception to the Indian delegation will be covered live by Doordarshan from 1500 hours (1530 BST), says PTI.

A special programme Jazba-e-Dosti will be telecast at 1430 hours tomorrow, it said.

### MD says IFC to bail out KAFCO

The International Finance Corporation has started moving forward with a financial restructuring of KAFCO to bail it out of the current crisis that annoyed the government.

Managing Director of the largest foreign-investment industry in the country Dr J H Wilson gave the disclosure amid a tangle over its commercial settlement that tends to impose on Bangladesh a financial burden.

The management of the Karnaphuli Fertiliser Company (KAFCO) claims that the giant is now in a good shape while the government is skeptic about its future following its fragile track record of over four years.

Talking to UNB at his office the Managing Director of KAFCO said although the company was in a financial problem, it was now becoming sound in operation.

The industrial unit, a unique joint venture with the largest foreign investment in Bangladesh, located in Chittagong, has been in trouble since the start of its commercial operation in May 1995.

The trouble has deepened further with the government's refusal to accept the commercial settlement of the fertiliser plant recently questioning its economic viability and predicting huge burdens for Bangladesh.

Contradicting the objection, Dr Wilson said: 'We should not judge the company on the basis of its history.' The industry is now operating on high production rates. 'This year the company was closed only 23 days.'

However, the MD agreed that the track record of the industry was not fair, and put much of the blame on its predecessor.

'But, that is not my business. My job is to run the industry better than earlier. It is now at a high production rate, but because of the present low market rates, the company is in financial problem.'

Replying to a question on financial restructuring, Dr Wilson said that the IFC delegation had already visited KAFCO last week.

'They would start discussing next week with the banks who lent money to KAFCO to support the proposed restructuring programme.'

Replying to a query regarding the mechanical stability of the industry he said: 'Now the plant is in good shape. Most of the repairs are done. There is only a scheduled repair work in January 2000.'

'We don't expect any mechanical disturbance till February 2000.' However, Dr Wilson agreed that with any plant, especially one like KAFCO having a bad record of frequent shutdowns because of mechanical faults, there is risk.

### MQM for ferry service between Karachi and Bombay

KARACHI, Feb 19: An ethnic party in Pakistan representing migrants from India called today for the introduction of a ferry service between Karachi and Bombay, reports AFP.

Atab Sheikh, a senator and central leader of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) said divided families needed the ferry link between the two countries badly.

He also called for reopening of an Indian consulate to issue entry visas in Karachi. The consulate was closed in 1994 amid unrest in the city.

The MQM claims to represent millions of Urdu-speaking migrants from India known as Mohajirs, who came to Pakistan after the partition of the Sub-continent in 1947.

'Pakistan and India are both 52 years old, so they should start behaving like mature nations,' said 70-year-old Maseeh-ur-Rehman, who migrated here from New Delhi.

'We have been seen destruction, war and blood, but now we do not need more. If they become friends, then we could see our relatives easily there,' Rehman said.

### Farmers block road in Trishal demanding fertiliser

MYMENSINGH, Feb 19: Traffic remained standstill for four hours on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway due to a road blockade put up by the agitating farmers in Trishal today, reports UNB.

Police said the farmers who went to receive fertiliser at the thana headquarters as scheduled earlier became agitated as they found the godown closed and the dealer missing.

They blocked the road from 7 am to 11 am and damaged several vehicles in protest.

Local MP Ruhul Amin Madani along with Deputy Commissioner, additional district magistrate and police rushed to the spot, opened the godown and arranged distribution of fertiliser.

### \$5m WB project

From Page 1  
fuel producing a cocktail of deadly tune, blamed for presence of lead in the air in major urban areas including Dhaka which is rated as one of the worst polluted cities in the world.

Recent surveys showed that presence of lead in the bodies of children in the city is eight times the level permitted by the World Health Organisation. Every year 15,000 deaths are reported due to diseases related to air pollution.

The WB expert said 'We are also going to organise training and motivation for drivers. It would include street-side autrickshaw clinics to demonstrate how they would benefit from better fuel and engine oil.'

On state-owned buses, he said there should be more investment in cleaner and efficient engines using clean fuel and better maintenance practice. 'We also need to ensure

### Military courts

From Page 1  
nority ethnic group, the Muttahada Qami Movement.

But in his televised address to the nation, Sharif said the court ruling and subsequent dismantling of the courts was bad news for the country, which is mired in lawlessness, religious violence and rampant corruption.

The more dirt you uncover, the more layers you discover,' he said in his Urdu-language speech.

'Terrorist and criminals roam free,' he said. 'Sectarian hatred is at its peak. Muslims are being killed in the name of religion. Mosques and Imam-bargas are stained with the blood of Muslims,' he said.

Before the Supreme Court decision, Sharif had promised to establish military courts throughout Pakistan, a plan he said has been abandoned.

Sharif said the crime rate in Karachi had dropped substantially since the army-court were set up.

The MQM, however, accused Sharif of using the courts to destroy their party workers. Many of those tried by the courts were members of the MQM.

Sharif warned that without the quick and decisive justice handed down by courts like those run by the army, Pakistan risked anarchy.

'Without justice there will be no peace, without peace there will be no economy, without economy there will be no employment and without employment there will be no bread,' said Sharif in his speech.

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### 5 electrocuted in Jessore

JESSORE, Feb 19: Five labourers were electrocuted at Kheparpara Math in Manirampur thana of the district today, reports APB.

Local sources said the accident occurred when the labourers were removing parts of an abandoned deep tubewell at about 1:30 pm.

While they were trying to lift a pipe, it came in contact with a high-voltage overhead power-line and the five were electrocuted.

Three of the victims were identified as Montu, 18, son of Nesar Ali and Krishna, 17, son of Nirapada of Kheparpara, and Rabiul Islam of Parulia in Gopalganj. The identity of two others could not be known immediately.

### Khaleda

From Page 1  
Begum Zia said the current movement of people could not be stopped by repression.

'You (ruling party) could not stay in power resorting to repression,' she said demanding immediate release of the arrested leaders and workers of BNP.

### Trade fair

From Page 1  
The aim of the international fair, since its inception in 1994, has been to introduce foreign machinery and local exports to prospective buyers.

The fair also helps foreign buyers or their agents to make their choices and establish contact with the appropriate exporters. Overseas participants exhibit various kinds of consumer goods and latest technologies at the annual event.

Entrepreneurs from U.S.A, U.K, Germany, France, Denmark, Italy, Australia, Egypt, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, Korea, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkey, Kenya, Malaysia, China, Oman, Iran, United Arab Emirates, Japan, and Russia are participating in this year's fair.

A good number of prospective local firms could not take part in the fair due to space constraints this year.

The DITF can provide space for a huge number of local participants in the fair. Mujibur Rahman, a local businessman said.

'Some of my friends were much interested to take part in the fair, but they could not manage the space,' said one businessman of Egypt.

Visitors at the fair complained that the dust made this year's fair going experience an unpleasant one. The dust is especially a problem in the outdoor fair during the holidays when attendance is higher than normal. It is an inconvenience that can be avoided if the fair is held indoors.

The exposition last year (1998) did business worth Tk 3.0 billion and is expecting even greater sales this year around.