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Down to Earth Consumers' plight continues unabated

By A S M Nurunnabi

The plight of consumers at present shows no signs of easing. The plight is compounded by four factors — lack of proper quality control of consumer items, the price differences for the same kinds of such items, the absence of the relevant authorities in enforcing power for price control and the widespread rackets in adulteration practices covering the entire gamut of consumer articles.

The end result is that the entire body of consumers, leaving aside those sections which are easily vulnerable due to illiteracy and the associated simplicity of rural folks, find little credibility for the claims of purity made by the makers of consumer products.

Apart from the almost pervasive adulteration culture, a galling aspect of the trade in consumer items is the phenomenon of their price differences. The common experience of consumers is that the same product with the same quality has different price tags from one shop to another in the same area, even if such shops are located side by side. Such price differences are often explained away by the sellers that their supplies were obtained at higher rates. There are, of course, some posh areas in the city where consumer items, particularly if they are imported, command a higher price even though the same products may be available at lesser important shopping outlets. Such higher prices in exclusive centres are quite normal in every big city of the world. In the light of this trend, higher prices for certain kinds of consumer items like garments, cosmetics, shoes, winter clothes, etc prevail in elite shopping centres like New Elephant Road, and other posh shopping complex at Maghbazar, Sonargaon Road, Gulshan and Banani which are frequented by the affluent classes of society.

Peoples in moderate income groups are flabbergasted by dif-

ferences in respect of the more common items of consumption which are found prevailing from one shop to another in the same area. As a result, many conscious customers, before buying anything tend to spend some time and energy comparing prices of commodities which are intended to be purchased. But such verifying practices are not easy to follow when there are time constraints for customers and particularly during rush hours at times of big festivals.

Coupled with such price differences, consumers always suffer under the threat of rampant adulteration as not to above. It is quite well-known that even within the city, there are some notorious centres where adulteration practices are followed almost with impunity. In this context, many talk of the Zirzira area on the other side of Buriganga, where it is alleged, there is hardly any item of consumption which does not enjoy quick financial gain through ingenuous means of adulteration.

Such adulterated products, it is said, are mostly marketed in mofussil and outlying areas. Similarly, sub-standard drugs and medicines are marketed in profusion not only in urban areas but also outside them, so much so that it is well-nigh impossible for many to distinguish them from genuine ones. Sometimes concerned authorities launch drives against such spurious drugs and medicines and also other adulterated consumer articles.

But their effectiveness is largely circumscribed by the sheer magnitude of the problem and the persistent endeavours of the wicked elements of society to revert to their evil practices whenever the controlling authorities slacken their vigilance and preventive actions.

There is another aspect of the evil of profiteering when some mischievous quarters resort to it by hoarding of particu-

Basu calls on Hasina

Visiting West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu yesterday called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her official Gonobhaban residence, reports UNB.

During the meeting, they discussed matters of mutual interest.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria, political advisor to the Prime Minister Dr SA Malek, Communications Minister Anwar Hossain, State Minister for Planning Dr Md. Aliuddin Khan Alamgir, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hassan Chowdhury and foreign secretary Shafi Sami were present.

Jyoti Basu was accompanied by Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka Dev Mukharjee.

Later, Sheikh Hasina hosted a dinner in honour of the West Bengal Chief Minister at Gonobhaban. Ministers, senior Awami League leaders and elite attended the party.

5 killed as bus, truck collide in Faridpur

FARIDPUR, June 18: Five people were killed and 20 injured when a truck collided with a bus in Madhukhali Thana on Dhaka-Khulna highway today, reports UNB.

Police said bus driver and three passengers died on the spot as the Jessore-bound bus from Boalmari was hit by the truck coming from opposition direction near Arkandi bridge at about 2 pm.

The injured were rushed to Madhukhali Thana Health Complex where a minor boy died. Five of them were later shifted to Faridpur Medical College Hospital in critical condition.

Police seized both the vehicles.

Vajpayee

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to discuss a number of substantive economic issues including port and transit facilities, resumption of train communication and geo-political matters of common concern during exclusive te-te-tete with Sheikh Hasina at the Ganabhaban, highly placed sources said.

The Indian side is also likely to show interest in gas purchase through pipeline.

Bangladesh side will insist on obtaining zero tariff facility on all its export items, the sources added.

The talks will be held this afternoon when Vajpayee calls on Hasina at the Ganabhaban.

In order to bridge the yawning trade gap, which is in Delhi's favour, Dhaka is likely to insist on setting up of joint venture industries in Bangladesh with 'buy-back arrangements'. Earlier, Foreign Secretary Shafi Sami had told newsmen that the talks would be held with an open ended agenda and it would not be 'structured'.

Hasina and Vajpayee will jointly receive two Indian buses, carrying nearly 80 passengers including journalists and officials, when the vehicles arrive in Dhaka from Calcutta at around 5.30 pm today.

West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu, who arrived in the city by air yesterday morning from Calcutta, will also be present at the bus service inaugural ceremony.

A previously scheduled meeting of the Joint Economic Commission (JEC), which is usually co-chaired by foreign ministers of the two countries, now stands cancelled because of preoccupation of the Indian External Affairs Minister. The last JEC meeting was held in December 1997 in New Delhi.

Foreign ministry officials in Dhaka described the trip of Vajpayee, who is now caretaker prime minister, as 'a good will visit'. 'There will, therefore, be no official or formal talks but a te-te-tete,' an official said without elaborating.

The agreement on Dhaka-Calcutta bus service was signed on Thursday at the conference room of the Ministry of Communications. Earlier, trial bus run from Dhaka to Calcutta took place on April 6 and from Calcutta to Dhaka on April 8.

On his arrival, Vajpayee will be taken in a motorcade to state guest house Jamuna where he will be lodged. He will pay a courtesy call on President Shabuddin Ahmed this afternoon. The President will host a luncheon in honour of the visiting dignitary.

Vajpayee will call on Hasina at 3.40 pm at the Ganabhaban where they will have a te-te-tete. After the inauguration of bus service, Hasina will host a banquet for him at the refurbished Winter Garden Hall of Dhaka Sheraton. A cultural programme will also be held later, participated by some renowned artists.

Tomorrow, the two premiers are likely to witness the signing of a MOU of cooperation between the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). Vajpayee will lay wreaths at the National Memorial at Savar tomorrow morning and address a joint press conference before his departure.

The Indian premier is due to leave Dhaka tomorrow afternoon.

Bill for resident status for Bangladeshis in US

Congressman Benjamin Gilman formulated the bill after the American Bangladesh Friendship Society (ABFS) persuaded him.

Kazi Abu Taher, an expatriate Bangladeshi and publicity secretary of (ABFS) told BSS that the bill proposed that the Bangladeshis shall not be considered to have failed to maintain continuous physical presence by reason of an absence in the United States for any period in the aggregate not exceeding 180 days.

Taher is now in Bangladesh to make liaison with the quarters concerned to have them aware of the bill.

DD to telecast live bus service opening

NEW DELHI, June 18: Dooddarshan will telecast live Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's visit to Dhaka and inauguration of the Calcutta-Dhaka bus service tomorrow, reports PTI.

The telecast will be from 1630 hours to 1900 hours on the primary channel (DD-1), according to an official release here today.

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A view from the Gully

From Page 1

the Australia jinx. Cronje must have had his homework right as he put the Aussies in to bat and restricted the strong batting lineup within a reasonable limit. This definite advantage was frittered away by their top order batsmen as they not only handled Warne in an amateurish manner but helped set in panic in the dressing room and then made another mistake by allowing less time to their most dangerous and at the same time most innovative batsman Kallis. They were also unlucky when umpire David Shepherd, normally an astute judge, gave his controversial nod against Cronje that was of vital importance for both the teams.

The Aussies in their turn made a number of mistakes that almost took the match away from them. It was a great day for the two South African fast bowlers Shaun Pollock and Alan Donald, bowling almost on their home track struck early blows

in the Super Six match.

Sources at Sotheby's said while responding a telephone call that the Untitled Kibria did not draw collectors' interest.

Zainul

From Page 1

tion of the 1943 famine in Bengal in ink and brush pulled 12500 pound sterling (Tk 9,62,500) while the *Boats*, masterfully done in watercolour, sold for 6000 pound sterling (Tk 4,62,000).

It was a great day for the two South African fast bowlers Shaun Pollock and Alan Donald, bowling almost on their home track struck early blows

tended by thousands.

In Punjab, Pakistan's main province, authorities were trying to persuade people in border villages not to leave their homes because of tensions with India.

Reuters adds: Indian warplanes targeted Pakistani-backed infiltrators on its side of the Kashmir ceasefire line today, but officials ruled out a full-blown war over the disputed Himalayan region.

"Our planes are carrying enough ammunition to expend on the targets," Group Captain D. N. Ganesh told a news conference in Delhi.

Armed officials said that artillery fire was being used to target bases which were being used for maintaining supplies to the infiltrators perched in icy mountain ranges.

But they reiterated that India had no plans of crossing the military Line of Control which divides Indian-administered Kashmir from the Pakistani-ruled part.

Sharif said the G8 leaders, individually and collectively, must play a positive role to resolve the crisis and avert a conflict.

He said Kargil "has underscored the centrality of the Kashmir dispute which has always been recognised as the root cause of tensions and conflicts in South Asia." "Kargil cannot be viewed in isolation from the larger issue, nor dissociated from the record of India's past transgressions to alter the LoC to its advantage," Sharif said referring to the entry of the Indian army on Siachen glacier in 1984.

Pakistan has always "respected" the LoC, he said urging them to call on both sides to respect the "sanctity" of the LoC.

President Muhammad Rafiq Tarar speaking at the National Defence College vowed Pakistani armed forces were fully prepared to give a "tit-for-tat response" to any "aggression."

In the nearby city of Rawalpindi, militants fighting in the Indian held zone of Kashmir warned the Pakistani rulers not to hold any talks with India and instead prepare the nation for a holy war. "Make no compromise over Kashmir, a government that betrays Mujahideen (freedom fighters) will collapse," Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, chief of Lashkar-e-Taiba (legion of the pious) told a public meeting at



Dhaka City BNP brought out a procession yesterday protesting fiscal measures in the proposed budget for 1999-2000.

— Star photo

Social awareness key to protect parks, greenery

By Staff Correspondent

Speakers at an open discussion in the city yesterday stressed the need for more social awareness regarding environment and enactment of a law to protect common property like parks, lakes and greenery of the country.

They were speaking at a discussion organised by 'Movement for saving 11 thousand trees of Osman Udayan' at the Engineers' Institution. It was presided over by Prof. Serajul Islam Chowdhury, convenor of the movement.

Prof Chowdhury termed the Osman Udayan as "lung of the Dhaka city" and said it is the social responsibility of all to save the environment.

He reiterated his demand to save trees of the Udayan for the sake of next generation.

"If we do not come forward to save environment and can not save the greenery of the Udayan, we have to answer to our future generation regarding our re-

sponsibility," he said.

Prof. Muzaffar Ahmed of Dhaka University said time has come to strengthen green movement to save the trees of not only Osman Udayan, but also environment and greenery of the country.

Prof Shamsur Rahman said, "We want to live a life without having any breathing problem as our life span has started to reduce day by day due to different kinds of pollution."

He said not a single tree of the Udayan will be allowed to be felled. He threatened to go for movement to save every single tree.

Architect Shamsul Wares said, "Dhaka city has been expanding in the name of development without any plan and there is not enough room to breath."

Economist Anisur Rahman said a poor country like Bangladesh should not hold Non Alignment Movement

(NAM) summit.

Prof. Shadul Amin said the population density is the highest in capital Dhaka as no prediction for infrastructure development had been set by the government.

"There was no effort to save open space in accordance with the pre-condition of establishments," he said.

Dr. Atiq Rahman, Prof. Abdus Salam, Anu Mohammad and Syed Rejwana Hasan were among others who participated in the discussion while C.R. Abram of Dhaka University conducted the discussion.

The Movement will hold a grand rally on July 10 at the Osman Udayan in protest against the government decision to cut 11,000 trees of the Udayan.

People from all stairs of the society have been requested to participate in the rally and to save the greenery of the capital.

— Star photo

Pakistan seeks G8 role in resolving Kashmir dispute

KISHOREGANJ, JUNE 18: Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, student wing of opposition BNP, began a four-day programme here today demanding expulsion of Akhteruzzaman, MP from BNP, reports UNB.

Local leaders of JCD at a meeting at its office here this evening termed Akhteruzzaman as a collaborator of the ruling Awami League.

Akhteruzzaman came under sharp criticism after he publicly criticised his party for calling hartal soon after the 1999-2000 budget was presented in parliament.

As part of the programme, JCD will stage a token hunger strike in front of Rangamati Cinema Hall tomorrow and hold a rally at party office on Monday.

JCD President Waliullah Rabbani and Mohammad Israfil Mia addressed today's meeting.

Army officials said that artillery fire was being used to target bases which were being used for maintaining supplies to the infiltrators perched in icy mountain ranges.

But they reiterated that India had no plans of crossing the military Line of Control which divides Indian-administered Kashmir from the Pakistani-ruled part.

Sharif said the G8 leaders, individually and collectively, must play a positive role to resolve the crisis and