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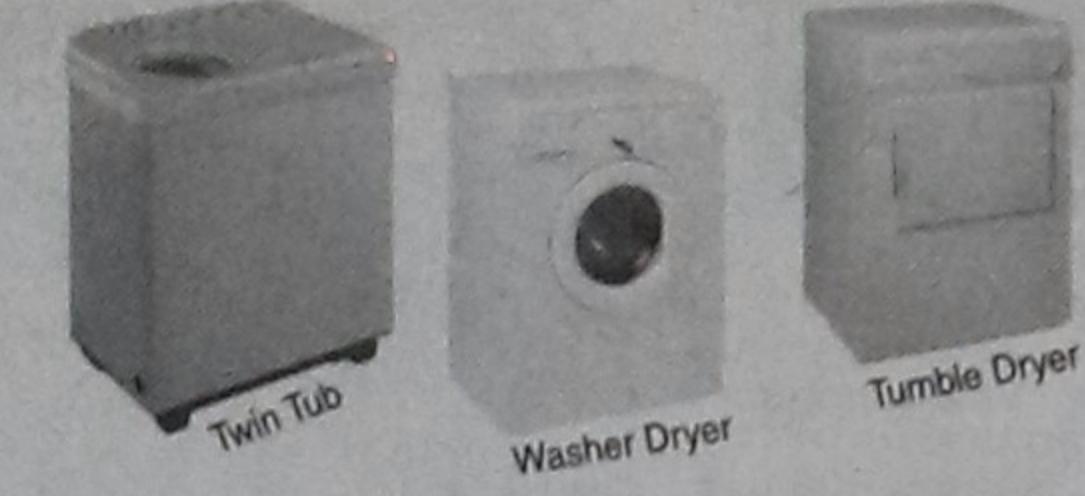
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Down to Earth

Impromptu bazars near city offices

By A S M Nurunnabi

It has become the current trend that a *kutcha* bazar can be set up anywhere in the city to meet the needs of a local area. For this purpose, no formal permission or authorisation from the concerned quarter seems needed. On this account, impromptu bazars have become a ubiquitous phenomenon, particularly near city offices, where such bazars even spill over to adjacent roadside pavements, creating difficulties of passage for pedestrians. In some areas of the city, the proclivity to set up such bazars near office complexes of government, semi-government and other important agencies has grown into a characteristic feature of city life. In consequence, the helpless pedestrians are sometimes forced to forsake the comparative safety of movement on roadside pavements and thrown into the hazards of vehicular traffic on the open roads.

These bazars appear to conduct a thriving business mostly during the period of operation of these offices. Besides the normal merchandise sold in a *kutcha* bazar, such as vegetables, fruits, meat, and fish, a wide variety of commodities required for normal living including dress materials, *lungis*, *vests*, *sarees* and ready-made garments are available here. One main reason for attraction of these bazars is that the nu-

merous employees of the offices localised in these areas find the easy accessibility of these bazars quite a boon. During lunch breaks or at the end of office hours, many of those employees fan out into these bazars to make purchases of things needed for their families in a comparatively less congested environment without going through the hustle and bustle of regular bazars.

Other causes of attraction for these bazars are reportedly the availability of the daily essential commodities at prices much lower than those at regular bazars, the reason being that in many cases, the growers of agricultural commodities in particular, themselves come down to the city areas to sell their wares without going through intermediaries. The lower prices of many commodities at these places constitute an incentive for many employees of the nearby offices to buy their requirements here. Because of the price advantages at these places, many people from other areas of the city also throng these bazars to make their purchases.

There are some well-known office-based *kutcha* bazars in city areas. We may cite, for example, the areas in front of the office of the Accountant-General and the double-phased office complexes at Segunbagicha, the areas adjacent to the

Conservatively pro-active

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bank borrowing.

ADP

Dr Bhattacharya contradicted the figures given in the proposed budget about the domestic financing of the Annual Development Programme (ADP). He said it was shown in the budget that the domestic financing of ADP for the next fiscal will be 50.2 per cent and funding from foreign source will be 49.8 per cent.

"But in fact it will be the other way round." He said the funds from foreign source would be 50.2 per cent and from domestic source 49.8 per cent.

"I like the spirit to finance major portion of the development expenditure from domestic source, but I think people involved in the budget making process have mixed up with the figures."

He also said domestic financing of the ADP also includes bank loan, which will account for 20 per cent. He raised question as to why the government is not trying to utilise the foreign aid worth US\$ 6 billion waiting in the pipeline. He apprehended that foreign loan part in the ADP would be increased instead of aid.

In the revised budget (1999-2000), the portion of foreign aid in the total available resource was 10 per cent and foreign loan 14.5 per cent. But in the coming financial year foreign loan will account for 16.2 per cent and aid 8.3 per cent.

On the pattern of ADP expenditure, Dr Bhattacharya sounded concerned. He said 1.07 per cent of ADP has been kept for non-ADP projects and this is almost double than the usual allocation in the last four years. He said the highest 2.56 per cent was kept for this reason in 1999-96, the last year of BNP government.

Dr Bhattacharya congratulated the government for increasing the allocation in the social sector despite a tight fiscal situation. This year (1999-2000) allocation for the social sector was 22.7 per cent and for the next fiscal the allocation rose to 24.65 per cent. The growth is more than 15 per cent.

"This is a great effort, which won't have been possible without a strong political commitment." He also said the allocation in education sector has increased by 13.7 per cent, which is good.

Revenue

However, Dr Bhattacharya expressed concern over the declining trend of Tax-GDP ratio for the last three years. In 1997-98, the tax-GDP ratio was 7.5 per cent, in 1998-99 7.2 per cent and this year (1999-2000) it is going to be 7.1 per cent.

In the proposed budget, the tax-GDP ratio will be 7.2 per cent, which is very nominal.

But he said there is a positive structural change in the revenue sector this year, which means the share of direct tax has increased. Earlier, the share of

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Followers of the peers of Charmonai and Dewanbagh engaged in violent clash near the Baitul Mokarram mosque yesterday. At least 25 people were injured. —Star photo



German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder (R) shakes hands with French President Jacques Chirac yesterday at the Liebfrauen square before the start of the 75th Franco-German summit. —AFP photo

Sharif's lawyers boycott trial

Karachi.

Musharraf landed safely and arrested Sharif within hours.

After recording the statements of the witnesses Niaz Hussain Siddiqui and Chief pilot Mohammad Zareef, the judge adjourned the proceedings until Saturday.

The court recorded the statements of two prosecution witnesses, both retired army colonels, who said they were involved in the private purchase of a Russian MI-8 helicopter by Sharif in 1993.

Sharif, who was present in the court which met in the 16th century Attock Fort 80 kilometers (50 miles) northwest of Islamabad, refused to cross-examine the witnesses, saying his lawyers had boycotted the trial.

He told judge Farrukh Latif that authorities "brought me forcibly" to the court.

The former prime minister, who was charged with concealment of his assets and tax evasion last week, is being held in a cell at the fort.

His lawyers have boycotted the trial claiming the atmosphere in the high security fort was "not conducive" for the trial.

Sharif, who has called the charges "bogus," told the court today the military government which ousted him in a coup in October last year had already decided his guilt.

But judge Farrukh replied that he would decide the case "on merit."

"I will myself write the judgement," he said.

The case was filed by the army-led National Accountability Bureau, which said Sharif failed to show the helicopter purchase in his tax returns.

Sharif's close aide, Saifur Rahman, has also been arraigned for allegedly helping to arrange the purchase of the helicopter, officials said.

Sharif, 52, was sentenced to life term by a Karachi anti-terrorism court on April 6 on charges of hijacking and terrorism.

He was found guilty of attempting to prevent a flight carrying then-army chief General Pervez Musharraf and 198 passengers from landing at

Panic spread in the nearby area. Police clubbed the rival groups to restore normalcy, witnesses said.

A press release issued by the Islamic Constitution Movement confirmed the clash and said the organisation later held its rally at the north gate of Baitul Mokarram. The organisation will also hold a press conference at its party office at Purana Paltan today to protest the incident, the release said.

The followers blamed the activists of Shibir, student front of Jamaat-e-Islami, for the attack.

Panic spread in the nearby area. Police clubbed the rival groups to restore normalcy, witnesses said.

At least 25 people were injured in a clash between followers of Peer of Charmonai, leader of Islamic Constitution Movement, and Peer of Dewanbagh at the south gate of Baitul Mokarram in the city yesterday.

Of the injured, 10 were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The clash erupted when followers of Dewanbagh, backed by activists of Islami Chhatra Shibir, chased supporters of Charmonai out of Baitul Mokarram south gate after Jumma prayers.

Followers of Charmonai under the supervision of Nurul Huda Farayzi had gathered at Baitul Mokarram south gate after the prayers to protest alleged bomb attack on the vehicle of their Peer in Bogra two months ago.

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