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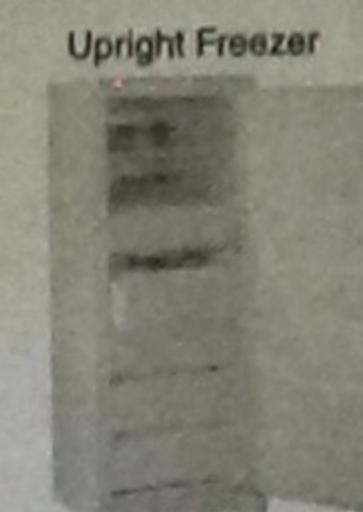
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Down to Earth**Rising Distress of Old Dhakaites**

By A.S.M. Nurunnabi

The denizens of old areas of Dhaka city are at present leading a life of extreme distress on account of a number of acute civic problems. According to recent print media reports, these wide-ranging problems including traffic jams, terrorism, extortion, irregular power supply, highjacking, chaos in telephone service, and an abominable sewerage system have reached monstrous proportions. The combined impact of these ills has very adversely affected the normal life of Old Dhaka, particularly in the field of commercial activities. For example, as stated by observers, in the Mouli Bazar area previously about 30 thousand wholesale traders used to assemble from all over the country every day; the figure has now reportedly dwindled to 15 thousand. The traders in Islampur area have mainly blamed the perennial traffic jams in their area as the prime cause for decline in business activities. The same problem has become a serious impediment to business in Nawabpur and other trading areas in Old Dhaka.

The attitude of the concerned authorities in dealing with such serious problems appears to be one of indifference and neglect. This has led the inhabitants of Old Dhaka to feel like discards or outcasts; that they do not count for much in the development process that is going on in the newer parts of the city.

The normal civic amenities in this part of the city has deteriorated so much that the whole area could pass for a concentration camp. The narrow streets

get so congested as the day advances that there is little room for open air. The handful of parks that previously existed have, in most cases, passed into the hands of illegal occupants.

The playgrounds and the few open spaces are also in the process of disappearing into the hands of land-grabbers.

There are other aspects of the neglect affecting almost all areas of Old Dhaka. In these areas where about 31 lakh people live, medicare facilities are hopelessly inadequate. There was a time, about three or four decades ago, when renowned doctors of the city used to set up their chambers in the old part of the city. Nowadays no leading doctor comes to this part of the city for practice which also lacks diagnostic lab of good standard. There is only one government hospital, namely the Mitford Hospital and a number of smaller hospitals and clinics under the management of the Dhaka City Corporation. On account of shortage of doctors, mismanagement and corruption, ordinary patients of Old Dhaka don't receive medical treatment worth the name. It is also alleged that there is a class of officials and employees at these establishments who routinely harass poor patients.

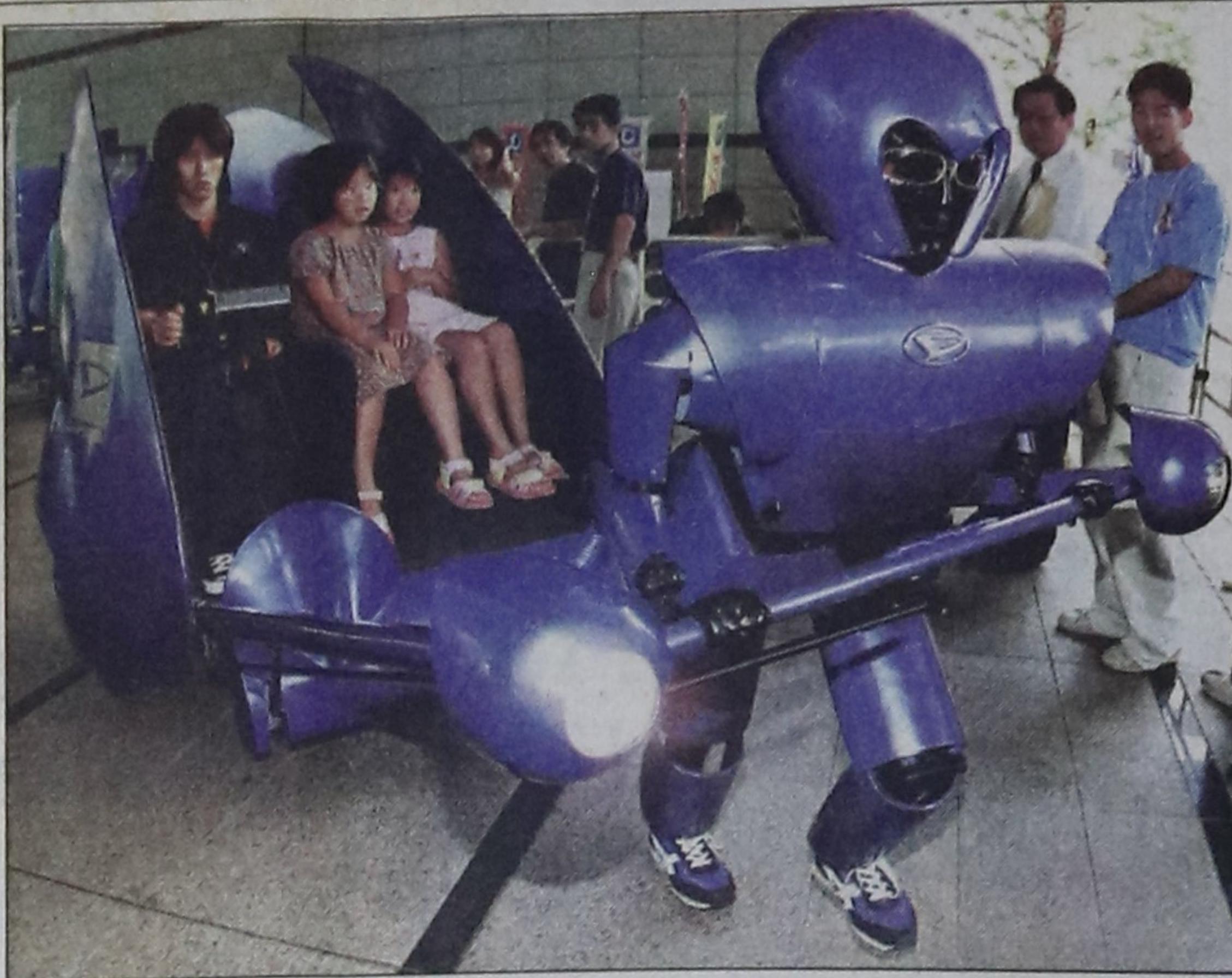
Other aspects of urban life in Old Dhaka are equally distressing. On account of acute traffic jams, extortions, and terrorism, trading activities in some areas like Shyam Bazar, Rai Shah Bazar and Thakat Bazar, are in the doldrums. Complaints to law-enforcing authorities generally produce no result. As a result, the anti-

social elements get all the more daring in their illegal activities.

The majority of business activities of the city take place in the old part, and the bulk of the country's manufactured and imported goods find its way to the warehouses of the big guns in business. These business establishments and warehouses are located in the Chowk Bazar, Mouli Bazar, Imamganj, Islampur and Armanitola areas. It is alleged by businessmen of the old areas that, instead of controlling traffic and clearing the roads by preventing unauthorised parking of vehicles, the traffic police on duty remain busy checking the papers of the goods that go in and out of the warehouses, for reasons obvious to all.

Because of an administration that is pathologically apathetic to public woes, number of vehicles of all sizes and shapes (most of which are unauthorised) roadside shops, roadside hawkers, unauthorised encroachment of roadside land and illegal factories have multiplied in Old Dhaka, creating an unbearable traffic congestion situation for hours on end. The hundreds of thousands of man-hours wasted on the roads, would appear to be a colossal sum in terms of money.

The tragedy of the situation is that due to lack of effective measures by the concerned authorities to arrest the decline in the living standard of the residents, let alone improve it, the dwellers of the old part of the city seem to be destined to live a life of endless miseries with no prospect of redemption in the near future.



Rickshaw puller: Japan's automaker Daihatsu unveiled a robot wearing sneakers at a robot festival in Osaka yesterday. The robot which weighs 300 kilograms is operator controlled as it pulls a rickshaw at a maximum speed of three kilometers per hour.

—AFP photo

Domestic investment should be doubled in next 2 years

BEA annual conference told

By Staff Correspondent

Speakers at a conference in the city yesterday underscored the need for increased domestic investment for generating employment and facing the challenges of globalisation of trade.

Domestic investment should be doubled in the next two years and contribution of manufacturing sector to GDP should be increased by at least 25 per cent, they said at a working session of the biennial conference of Bangladesh Economic Association.

Small enterprises in the country are facing the biggest challenge of trade globalisation and these are being marginalised by multinational companies, the speakers noted.

Hatiz G A Siddiqui of North

Mastaan shot dead by gang members in N'ganj

From Our Correspondent
NARAYANGANJ, Aug 11: One person was shot dead in Mahimupur area of Pagla on Thursday night.

The victim Amjad Hossain, 30, who was known as a local mastaan, was shot dead by some of his gang members over land dispute at around 9.30 pm.

According to police, Amjad, son of Hasan Ali of Bhuijan area of Fatullah was a worker in a local re-rolling mill.

He started business with a local 'criminal syndicate' only few months back.

Local mastaans Jasim, Saidur, Salauddin killed him while they were returning together from the residence of the land owner.

Police could not arrest any of the three accused till filing of this report at 7.30 pm today.

They recovered one 9mm revolver from Jasim's house.

A case was filed with 'Fatullah' thana in this connection.

South University chaired the session which was addressed by A K Azad, Debapriya Bhattacharya, Zaidi Sattar, Julhas Uddin, M Azizur Rahman, Prof Joy Prakash Dutta and Syed Jamal Uddin.

The three-day conference being held at the Institution of Engineers ends today.

The speakers pointed out that the domain of small enterprises is being captured by multinational companies and export-oriented industries are getting focus, rather than those

producing import substitutes.

Industrial units are also getting concentrated in urban areas, with their main thrust on consumer items.

Debapriya Bhattacharya said policy makers should identify some special sectors for boosting investment and give more emphasis on those.

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