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Down to Earth

Private Security Agencies Getting a Boost

By A S M Nurunnabi

Lately, city life in Dhaka has been undergoing changes in many ways that were unforeseen even a decade ago. These changes are being brought about by the growing trends of privatisation. The expression 'privatisation' has at present become quite common for enterprises that were previously owned or operated by government, semi-government agencies or corporations, and thereafter were taken over by private organisations or individuals. The expression is now used extensively to connote service facilities offered by private agencies in some spheres of urban life.

The security of private property is an important matter for which the city dwellers no longer tend to rely on government law enforcement agencies. Privatisation has entered this domain also. It is now the current practice with many private firms, institutions and individuals to hire their own security personnel to ensure security and protection. Most of the private security personnel engaged by their employers are provided with their own patterns of uniform.

Private security forces were first introduced in the city and also in other important urban centres in early nineties, and now it is estimated that over 150 agencies are engaged in this business in Dhaka City. Although their number is still on the rise, it is understood that there is no government policy governing employment of young men in private security agencies. As a result, there are allegations that, taking advantage of dearth of employment opportunities for youths, some of such private security agencies exploit the youths in

matters of salary, work hours, weekly holiday or other fringe benefits.

Even after a decade, the authorities are yet to formulate a policy or guideline for regulating the establishment and operation of these agencies.

At the moment, it is understood that the private security agencies can operate only through registration with the Dhaka City Corporation. There is reportedly no system or rule to monitor the activities of these agencies.

According to a source, the security agencies in the city have at present employed some 15,000 people as guards at corporate and private establishments. But in most cases, they do not maintain any standard in respect of their employees nor do they follow the laws of the land like the Labour Laws concerning wages, work hours and leave facilities to their employees.

Though at the initial stage, the private security agencies started their business mainly to provide security to individuals, they have now expanded their activities to cover banks, private hospitals, educational institutions, commercial and financial institutions and diplomatic missions.

Sometimes allegations are made against some of the private security agencies about their mode of selection of employees. It is alleged that they realise ten to fifteen thousand taka from each suitable applicant before appointing them as security personnel. But, after appointment, employees are said to find, to their dismay, that they are treated no better than ordinary labourers. Finding no alterna

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Mirror, mirror on the wall...



Miss India Priyanka Chopra, who was crowned Miss World 2000 late Wednesday, gets up bright and early during a photocall yesterday in London.

--AFP photo

PM blasts opposition for delayed reaction to Raja's remarks

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has strongly criticised the opposition for its delay in condemning the 'audacious and derogatory' remark made by a Pakistani diplomat about the War of Liberation, reports BSS.

"It is a matter of great regret that the opposition waited so long before condemning the audacious remark against the country's Liberation War," she said while inaugurating the National Youth Festival-2000 at Osmani Memorial Hall here yesterday morning.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who remained silent on the issue for several days, came out with the condemnation of the opposition yesterday after they made their observation Tuesday evening only after Pakistan had decided to withdraw its Deputy High Commissioner Irfan-ur Rahman Raja from Dhaka.

In the face of stormy protests by the people and diplomatic pressure, the Pakistani authorities withdrew its Deputy High Commissioner on Thursday from Dhaka.

She said the defeated forces and their allies in Bangladesh spoke in the same language after Bangladesh was liberated under the dynamic leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

She said the then military ruler General Yahya Khan had also made derogatory remarks about Bangabandhu after the crackdown of Pakistani soldiers on innocent Bangladeshis on the night of March 25, 1970.

She said the representatives of those defeated forces are now echoing the same sentiment about Bangladesh sitting in this soil. She urged the youth forces to resist the defeated anti-state elements who

showed the audacity to dishonour the national flag and independence and sovereignty of the country.

The Prime Minister said the youths of today were deprived of the true history of the liberation war of the country after the killing of Bangabandhu in 1975. She said history was distorted by the ruling cliques till 1996. "We are a victorious nation and our youth forces must know about the history of the War of Liberation in true perspective", she said.

She further said that the youth forces were kept in darkness about the history of the Liberation War by the defeated forces.

She also urged the people from all walks of life to remain vigilant against the anti-liberation forces and elements, and foil their evil design of spreading falsehood about the country.

Turning to the steps taken up by her government, the prime minister said that a total of 156,563 youths have been trained up to December this year in different trades under the ongoing and suspended projects by the Department of Youth Development since its inception.

She said her government's efforts to make the vast youth force self-reliant would continue in the future. She said since the modern age is the age of science and technology, the government has decided to set up 12 science and technology universities in the country.

She also said that government would give computers to schools in all the upazilas of the country to help the younger generations learn about the use of computer.

The prime minister lauded the role of the youth forces in various struggles of the country including

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Awareness, education key to AIDS prevention

Speakers observe at World AIDS Day seminar

By Staff Correspondent

Awareness and education on AIDS among the urban and rural people could protect the citizens and future generation from the deadly disease, speakers observed at the inaugural session of the World AIDS Day seminar at the Engineer's Institute in the city yesterday.

They stressed the need for safe blood transfusion as indiscriminate blood transfusion has been identified as the main cause for contracting the AIDS virus in the country.

Addressing the seminar as chief guest, Health Minister Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim underscored the need for creating mass awareness and called upon all to live by religious values governing proper sexual behaviour. As there is no cure for AIDS, prevention is the only way, he said.

The health minister informed that the government would soon enact a law dealing with safe blood transfusion.

He said the cabinet has already approved the Safe Blood Transfusion Bill to be passed in the next parliamentary session. "After enacting the law, the government will set up safe blood transfusion centre at each Upazila headquarters."

Sheikh Selim said the World Bank, under an agreement

signed with the government, will provide over 52 million US dollars for AIDS prevention through creating mass awareness.

Special guest Prof. Amanullah called for increasing investment in the health sector by the developing partners as well as local

private investors. He also stressed the need for using contraceptives for safe sex.

In his speech, Health Secretary Sayed Alamgir Farouk Chowdhury who also presided over the seminar emphasised on

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Masum's mother wails over the corpse of his son at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday. Masum was gunned down by rivals as a sequel to dispute over trade in garments cut piece at Hajipara in the city. (Story on page 1)

--Star photo

Israeli troops kill 2 more Palestinians

RAMALLAH, West Bank, Dec 1: Israeli troops killed two Palestinians and wounded some three dozen others during clashes Friday in the West Bank and Gaza Strip which also saw Israeli tanks fire on the Palestinian-run city of Ramallah, reports AFP.

Israeli troops shot and killed two Palestinians, including a 12-year-old boy in the Gaza Strip, shot in the neck during clashes at Rafah in southern Gaza, hospital officials said.

Israeli troops shot four other Palestinians with live rounds at Rafah, hospital officials said, and another four at the Karni crossing point to Israel.

One of the injured at Karni, who received a bullet in the eye, was described as being in a critical condition.

Hamza Nadi al-Hasis, 27, was also shot dead with a bullet to the heart during clashes Friday in the southern West Bank town of as-Samua, near Hebron, hospital officials said.

Two Palestinians were also shot during a gunfight with Israeli soldiers in Hebron.

Friday's deaths brought to 298 the number of people killed in two months of deadly Israeli-Palestinian violence, most of them Arabs and around 100 of them under the age of 18.

In the West Bank town of Ramallah, north of Jerusalem, Israeli soldiers injured 23 Palestinian stone-throwers with rubber-coated steel bullets near the northern entrance to the city.

In Ramallah, Israeli tanks also bombarded a building site, apparently after coming under Palestinian gunfire from there.

Alliance's apathy to Ershad's arrest irks JP MPs

Jatiya Party lawmakers have expressed disappointment as the partners in the 4-party opposition alliance did not extend 'cooperation and sympathy' they expected after the verdict of the Supreme Court against HM Ershad, reports UNB.

The disappointment was voiced during the JP's extended and parliamentary party meetings on Thursday and yesterday respectively.

In a statement yesterday JP senior presidium member Raushan Ershad said the party MPs alleged in the meetings that contrary to their expectation, the 4-party alliance did not extend its cooperation.

"Ershad had to go to jail because of the 4-party alliance," she said and hoped the misunderstanding would be resolved soon.

The JP lawmakers held a meeting to exchange views with Raushan Ershad, also an MP and party secretary general Najir Rahman Manjur at the party central office yesterday afternoon.

Chaired by Raushan Ershad, the meeting was attended by Dr TIM Fazle Rabbi Chowdhury, GM Quader, Barrister Rabeya Bhuiyan, Shah Mofazzel Hossain Kaikobad, Dr Asadur Rahman, Karimuddin Bharrha, NK Alam Chowdhury, Joyanal Abedin Sarker, Lutfar Rahman Chowdhury, Rustum Ali Farazi, Abdur Rashid Sarker and Mohammad Wahiduzzaman Sarker.

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Garment workers brought out a procession in the city yesterday condemning the death of fellow workers in fire at a garment factory in Narsingdi on November 25.

--Star photo

Bush, Gore lawyers spur at US Supreme Court

WASHINGTON, Dec 1: Lawyers for White House rivals George W Bush and Al Gore warred before the US Supreme Court Friday in a historic session that could determine the winner of the snarled 2000 presidential race, reports AFP.

Nearly four weeks after the contested November 7 election, the nine justices heard 90 minutes of oral arguments over manual recounts that reduced Texas governor Bush's razor-thin lead in the decisive state of Florida.

Meanwhile, thousands of miles (kilometres) away, Bush attorneys were to ask a Florida judge to throw out the Democratic vice president's main challenge to the state's disputed presidential election results and scrap a manual ballot recount Gore hopes will further erode that edge and hand him victory.

But all eyes were on the US Supreme Court, which Bush hoped would set aside earlier hand

counts, while the Democratic vice president urged the justices to let the hand counts remain part of any final tally.

Outside the court, around 1,000 demonstrators, many of whom braved the winter chill to camp overnight in front of the august building, shouted slogans and waved signs.

Baton-wielding police kept the peace in a crowd split about two-to-one for Bush, who was certified the winner in Florida last Sunday by a scant margin of 537 votes out of about six million cast.

The court barred cameras and tape recorders but allowed 50 citizens, many looking like refugees with their bundles of pillows and sleeping bags, under the carved 'Equal Justice Under Law' that adorns the court entrance to join a media horde covering the unprecedented event.

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ANNOUNCEMENT

Selection of a representative to the World Press Photo Child Jury 2000

The Daily Star and Drik Picture Library are jointly organizing a contest for Bangladeshi children aged between 11 and 12 years for selecting a representative to World Press Photo Child Jury 2000.

The selected child will join the Child Jury in the Netherlands in February next year, free of cost, to select the best photograph in the eyes of children at the prestigious World Press Photo Contest 2001.

To participate in the contest a child needs to:

- choose any photograph published in The Daily Star between 02-04 December 2000
- write in English/Bangla why he/she selects the particular photograph (in one page);
- send in the write-up with full address to The Daily Star office along with the selected photograph before December 10, 2000.

The short-listed children (names will be published in The Daily Star on December 13, 2000) will be participating in a second round of contest to be held at Drik Gallery (House 58, Road 15A, Dhanmondi, Dhaka) on December 16, 2000 at 4pm.

The child jury committee of Drik along with the representatives of the World Press Photo Foundation will select the final winner.

PHA 2000 begins at Savar tomorrow

SAVAR, Dec 1: An international conference titled 'People's Health Assembly 2000' (PHA 2000) will begin here tomorrow, reports UNB.

The objectives of the 5-day conference are to identify problems, trends and challenges for evolving strategies to ensure health for all.

"Over 1,000 representatives from some 92 countries will attend the assembly, to be held at Savar Gonoshasthaya Kendra," said coordinator of the PHA's Global Secretariat Dr Qasem Chowdhury while addressing a press briefing yesterday.

Gonoshasthaya Kendra project coordinator Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury, PHA's regional coordinator for America Maria Hamlin Zuniga, regional coordinator for Asia Dr Prem Chandran John, Consultant of Oxfam (India) Dr P V Unnikrishnan and PHA's Arab Health unit coordinator were also present during the briefing.

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Feni killings: 4 arrested, 6 policemen closed

FENI, Dec 1: Six policemen were closed today for their negligence to duty following the killing of four Juba League activists in Sadar and Sonagazi upazila in last two days.

The action was taken by local Police Super against two sub-inspectors Shuvo Darshan Barua and Nizam Uddin and four constables Abul Kashem, Shaiful Islam, Harun-ur Rashid and Nazrul Islam.

Meanwhile, police this morning arrested four people from Char Darbeshpur in Sonagazi upazila suspecting their involvement in the killings.

An uneasy calm has been prevailing in Sonagazi and Sadar upazilas. Traffic on Feni-Sonagazi road remained suspended today as ruling party activists put up barricades on the road.

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