sent to their guardians if their mothers so decide," says Tariqul.

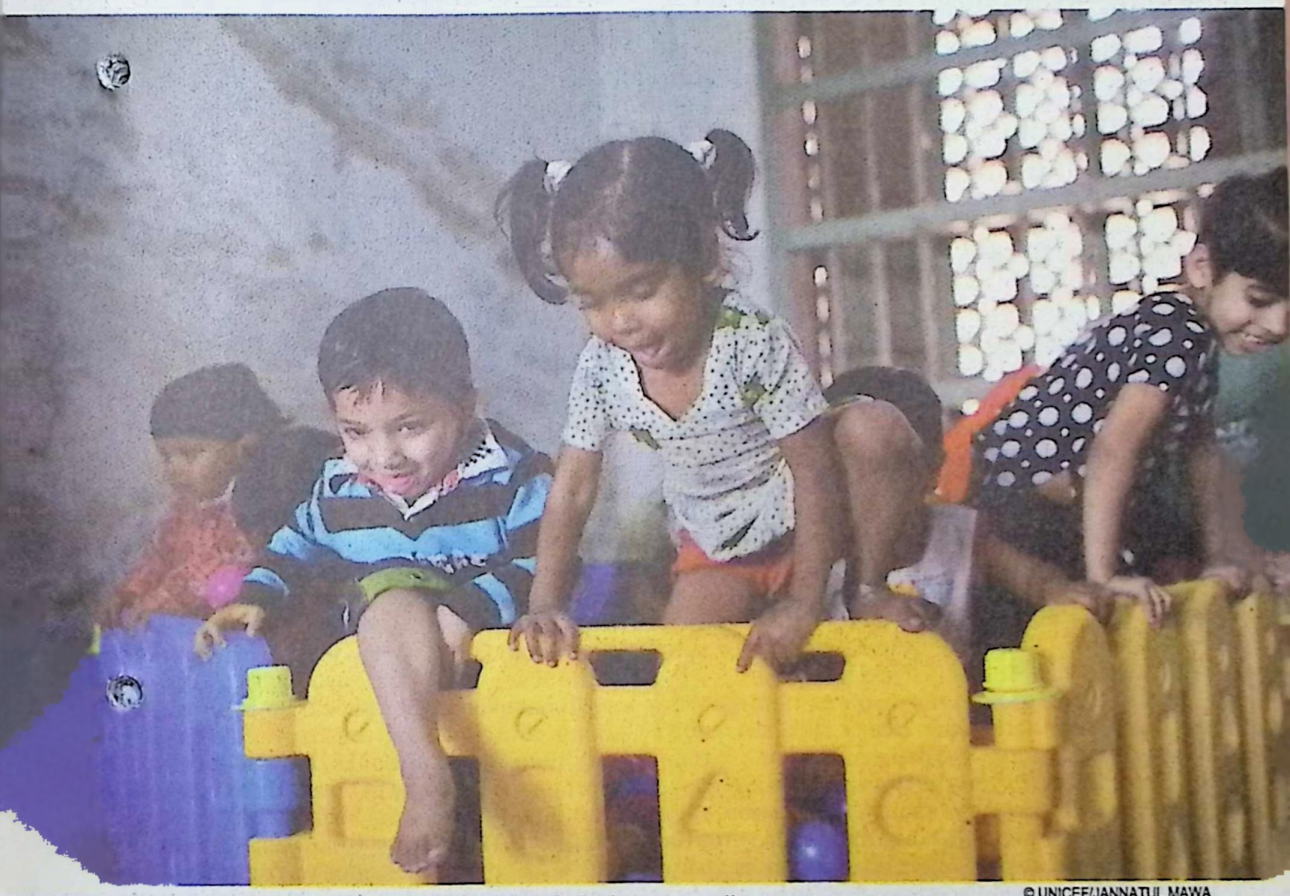
"Jail code permits children up to four years to stay with their mothers but with the Jail Super's special permission the child can stay two more years," adds Dipika Rani Shaha.

A child's smile brings joy to all

"There are instances when a mother got transferred but the child did not want to leave because they became attached to the centre and the teacher," explains Nur Jahan, Chief Matron of the women's cell.

friendly so if you consider that aspect of their lives I would say the children here are much better off. Having said that, I feel that growing up in a single room is not an ideal life either. A child needs to grow in a free environment in their own space where the good and the bad go along side by side. A bracketed environment like this bound by rules and regulations, which is nothing like the outside world, is not healthy. No one can lead a better life in imprisonment," says Md Farman Ali, Senior Jail Super, Dhaka Central Jail.

"We do not have funds of our own but as long as the funds continue we will continue the day care



The play corner is a recent addition that has brought in the extra smiles.

© UNICEF/JANNATUL MAWA

"The children call me Nanu (grandmother) and I do feel for them, and whenever we get orders from our Jail Super we bring cakes and chocolates for them," Nur Jahan adds, saying that winter clothes and other regular facilities are provided for them.

"The mother's mood affects a child and given the circumstances here, the day care centre is the best option for the kids and the mothers too are relaxed and assured that their children are well taken care of and are happy," she adds.

"The environment or societies these kids came from are not crime-free and neither is it child-

centre, we have no intention to discontinue. I strongly feel it is important to give these innocent little ones a chance; living in confinement with their mothers, amid depression and dirty talk, Bangladesh Shishu Academy's early learning project with the support of Unicef is as good as it gets for these young ones," Farman Ali emphasises.

Shanto, meanwhile, sits at the table along with his friends and reads from the Bangla alphabet chart that is hung on the wall. He is happy and secure in his own world, for the time being, even though he leads a secluded one away from the real world outside the jail walls.