

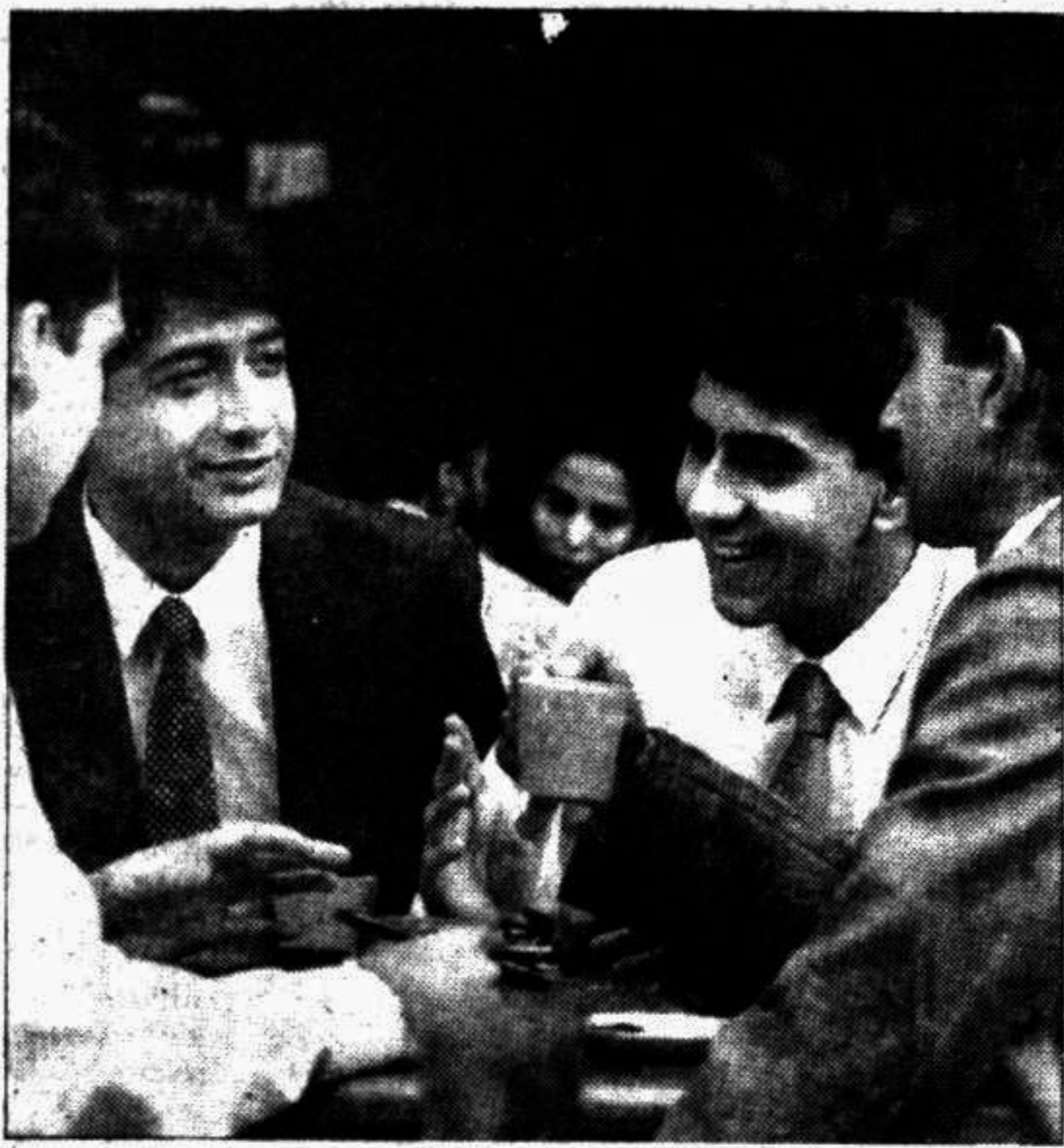
# Dhaka Day by Day Dinner at Dawn

by S Bari

I had a phone call from the Embassy of X this morning. An irate ambassador was on the line. "What can I do for your Excellency?" I inquired tremulously, trying to recall if I had recently written anything vituperative about X. "I have an unpleasant question," was his response. Thinking surely it is my editor's job to handle anything in the line of nastiness, especially on an ambassadorial level, I tried to pass the line. "Oh no," his Excellency retorted. "It is a social point." No matter, my editor is most sociable. I insisted, but the Ambassador was clearly out to

kill me. Squaring up to my responsibility I prepared for his question. "Why is the food so late at your parties here?"

I was floored. How could I explain to the Ambassador of X, product of a foreign culture, the intricate background of social norms and traditions involved? "Sir, may I introduce you to the manners and customs of entertaining in our city. Remember the primal rule: FOOD IS ALL. A dinner party is to feed people, not to make



If asked to dinner at eight, you can be sure the hostess will still be in the shower at nine.

engaging conversation and pass an enjoyable evening. Once someone has had you over, it is your turn to feed them. You wait for a while, till several of these obligations have been collected. Then you invite all the people you owe. As a result, your college friend, your wife's cousin, your colleague from the Bangkok office, and your attorney, none of whom have the slightest bit of interest in each other, have to spend four hours together. Naturally, the only activity a group of strangers can indulge in is eating.

"Yes, but the food is always so late! They never serve you dinner till ten thirty."

"That is because guests arrive late. It is just not done to show up on time. When asked to dinner at eight, remember that the hostess plans on taking the chicken out of the freezer at eight-thirty, and going for his shower at nine. The host is still taking his after-work nap. This is an ancient custom. On the side of

the guests, why, our next-door-neighbour and his wife would sit in the living-room dressed to the nines periodically checking whether there were enough cars in our driveway; then they would make their entrance.

"You also have to keep in mind the round of drinks, which is a not-so-ancient custom. Some people make the effort of coming solely for the drinks. They are therefore allowed to make fools of themselves over their glasses of whisky for a good two hours. It is traditional for the host to participate in this ritual. If you decline

a drink, you are considered either a hypocrite or on doctor's orders. If you are not offered a drink, you must be a woman."

Exasperation on the other end of the line: "BUT WHY IS THE FOOD SO DAMN LATE?"

I smiled indulgently at this lack of perception. In order to make people appreciate the value of food, our custom is to hold dinner till dawn breaks or the host is murdered, whichever comes first. The perfect host times the

threshold of endurance to the second. If a guest has come straight from work, the host will wait till she is snoring into her Coke. If the guest is unused to local etiquette, he might (gasp) mention something about the time. Just as Ambassador X's appetite turns to thoughts of murder, food appears miraculously on the table.

"Age-old tradition is strict on the items to be served. Pulao, pulao, and pulao. For variation, biryani. We have a rich and varied cuisine, your see."

Everybody has to then lick their fingers and exclaim, "Very good indeed, but you should have had the biryani at Mr. Chowdhury's last week."

"Thanks so much for your help," said the Ambassador of X. "Please come to dinner next Friday and let me know if I've got it right."

## Mustafiz, Solanki talk bilateral issues

Foreign Minister Mostafizur Rahman on Sunday said he had talks with his Indian counterpart on bilateral issues in Male last week, reports UNB.

Mustafiz led the Bangladesh delegation at the meeting of the SAARC Council of Ministers held in the Maldives capital on July 3-4.

Outside the SAARC meeting, he met Indian Foreign Minister Madhavsinh Solanki and discussed outstanding bilateral issues.

This was the first meeting between the Foreign Ministers of the two neighbouring countries after the newly elected governments assumed the offices in Bangladesh and India.

The long outstanding issues between the two countries, include transfer of Tinbigha

corridor, sharing of waters of the common rivers including the Ganges, determination of the ownership of the South Talpatty Island, demarcation of the land boundary and maritime boundary and solution of the Chakma refugee problems.

An earlier report says: Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman returned home Sunday from the Maldives after attending the SAARC Council of Ministers meeting.

The two-day meeting on July 3 and 4 discussed the SAARC activities for the current year and finalised the venue and dates of the next summit.

The council, made up by the Foreign Ministers of seven member nations, reviewed the SAARC activities in the light of

the decisions taken by the heads of government in their last summit in Male late last year.

The meeting finalised the dates for the next three-day summit in Colombo beginning November 7.

The meeting of the Foreign Ministers was preceded by a meeting of the Foreign Secretaries and discussions by senior officials.

The Foreign Minister also availed himself of this opportunity of discussing bilateral issues with his counterparts from other member nations during the SAARC Council of Ministers meeting in the Maldives.

## Indian Army chief calls on Khaleda

The visiting Indian Chief of Army Staff General Sunith Francis Rodrigues Sunday called on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her residence, reports BSS.

Mrs Rodrigues accompanied him during the call on. Chief of Staff of Bangladesh Army, Lt Gen Mohammad Noor Uddin Khan, Mrs Sufia Khan and the Indian High Commissioner in Bangladesh K Srinivasan were present.

## Bangabandhu Parishad meets July 12

A meeting of the Executive Committee of Bangabandhu Parishad will be held on July 12 (Friday) at the residence of Parishad's Chairperson Begum Sufia Kamal at 5 pm, reports BSS.

The Parishad has extended invitations to the General Secretaries of Awami League, BAKSAL, CPB, NAP, Ganotantree Party and two groups of Gano Azadi League to attend the meeting, a Press release said.

## Anniversary of Dr Muttalib's death today

The first death anniversary of Alhaj Dr. M. A. Muttalib, a renowned child specialist and former President of Community Health Research Association, will be held today Monday at 4 p. m. at the Association premises at 22 Bijoynagar, reports BSS.

On the occasion a discussion on the life and works of Dr. Muttalib will be held.

## 250 Army officers, troops leave for Kuwait

The first batch of the Bangladesh Army contingent led by Col M Shah Jalal left Dhaka for Kuwait early Morning, an ISPR Press release said, reports BSS.

About 250 officers and troops were in the first batch. They are part of the Bangladesh Army contingent to be sent to Kuwait for taking part in the reconstruction of the friendly country.

They were seen off at the Zia International Airport by the Engineer-in-Chief Bangladesh Army Major General Mohammad Abdul Halim and another senior Army officers.

## Dhaka-Bangkok ties to grow

Thai Ambassador in Dhaka Chalya Chindawongse Sunday made farewell call on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at the Secretariat and discussed matters of bilateral interest, reports UNB.

He thanked the Prime Minister for cooperation extended by her government to him in discharging his duties during his tenure here.

Begum Zia said, existing friendly relations between Bangladesh and Thailand would further be strengthened in years to come.

The Prime Minister recalled her meeting with Thai King Bhumibol during brief stopover at Bangkok on her way back from Beijing.

She also conveyed her best wishes to Thai King, Prime Minister, government and the people.



Bangladesh Hindu, Buddha, Christian Unity Council brought out a procession in the city on Sunday demanding repeal of religious discrimination laws in the Eighth and Fifth Amendments to the Constitution. —Star photo

## Mango trees being used as firewood: output falls by 70 pc

With the mango season approaching its end, increasing concern has been expressed on the declining trend in its production, reports UNB.

From 4.50 lakh tons two decades ago, the production of the juicy tropical fruit registered a 70 per cent fall to 1.50 lakh tons at present.

Per capita intake has also gone down to half, the Mango Research Centre in Chapain-

awabganj revealed. The cause of the decline is generally attributed to various factors including low per acre yield, lack of incentive for commercial production, natural calamities and pest attack.

Concerned circles also point out government indifference on the need for large-scale production, facilities for preservation, marketing and export.

Mango is now commercially produced in a few areas of the country although mango trees can be seen in almost every household, particularly in the villages.

Despite enormous potentials of mango cultivation, there has hardly been any serious effort to focus attention on formulation of appropriate policy in this regard, these circles alleged.

Chapainawabganj is probably the largest of the prolific growth centres where good quality mangoes are produced.

Currently, a total of 16,500 acres of land with over 2.50 lakh mango trees is under mango cultivation in the district and the annual average production is 60,000 metric tons worth over 90 crore.

The per acre yield of mango is still very low and the average production is three metric tons with the number of trees being 15-20 per acre.

About 20,000 people are directly involved in mango culture and marketing.

The Mango Research Centre established in 1984 for research on species and production recently arranged a farmers rally in which as many as 100 farmers took part.

The Minister for Agriculture, Irrigation, Flood Control and Water Development, M Majedul Haque, addressing the rally, called for increasing production and developing preservation techniques.

But mango farmers stressed

the need for a comprehensive policy on mango production and marketing. They suggested that brick fields should be disallowed within 5 miles of the orchards and ban on using mango tree as firewood.

More serious concern was expressed on the lack of adequate transportation, processing and preservation facilities.

Since mango is a perishable item, it has to be marketed within a week of the harvest.

Mango produced in Chapainawabganj is transported to different parts of the country by truck which take more than a week and some time even more for inadequate ferry service across the river Mohanaanda, thus destroying a major portion of the mer-

chandise. The Mango Research Centre is yet to find out a suitable chemical process for mango preservation and means of preventing pest attack.

Traditionally there are five main varieties of mango such as Langra, Gopalbogh, Khirsapat, Ashwina, Fazil and Mohanbogh.

A mango tree generally gives better yield during its economic age—usually from 31 to 50 years. Of all the varieties of mango, Langra gives the highest yield of about 3500 pieces per tree every year, while the yield of Gopalbogh is around 3000 pieces, Fazil 1200 pieces, Khirsapat 2750 pieces and Ashwina 2000 pieces.

## 8,300 tons sugar now lying unsold

The government is considering withdrawal of its control over the marketing of sugar, while a huge unsold stock in godowns is melting away.

Official sources told UNB Saturday the Food Ministry might auction the stock and cease to stock and supply sugar at government-fixed rates.

A high-level meeting was held on July 4 with representatives of Food Ministry, Commerce Ministry and the Ministry of Finance to find ways out of the crisis.

The meeting was learnt to have decided to sell out the present stock in open-market auction as soon as possible.

But, according to sources, quality of the stock has declined to such a level as makes the auction difficult even if lucrative price reduction is offered, officials said.

A total of 8,300 metric tons

of sugar is now lying unsold in different godowns of the Food Department. With the advent of monsoon, the unsold sugar started melting and has now taken a serious turn.

"The floors of sugar godowns of the Food Department are now inundated with 5-6 inches of juice of melted sugar," a senior official of the Food Ministry said.

Some 163 metric tons of sugar syrup have been collected from the godowns and melting continues with increase in monsoon humidity, he said.

He said availability of cheaper smuggled sugar in the market resulting in sharp fall of the demand for the indigenous product had virtually made the stock and supply operations by the government ineffective and useless.

## CROSSWORD PUZZLER

ACROSS

- Inhabitor
- Pack away
- Mr. Hunter
- vera
- Drink
- heavily
- Life to Live
- Swati
- Tetrahym
- symbol
- Mr. Buttons
- Paruse
- Father
- Best
- Pennant
- Bone
- Dead Society
- Small lump
- Lamprey
- Running
- Stitch
- Smart
- Father
- TV's Danson
- Carpenter's

DOWN

- Chapeau
- Guido's high
- tool
- plate
- Hypothetical force
- Rapidly
- recompensed
- Beneath
- Sour
- Cloth
- measure
- Gold symbol
- Altered
- Arabian garment
- Narrow
- opening
- Nerve network
- Delicacy
- At this place
- Chair
- note
- Electrified particle
- Rues
- Vapor
- As far as
- Choose
- Seven days
- Muscular
- Again
- Articles of furniture
- Rents
- Condensed moisture
- Bond
- nomadic
- Blamish
- Pitch
- Concerning
- South
- Lease
- Fencer's sword
- Alight
- Armed conflict
- interactable persons
- 100 pennies
- Damp
- Six-pointed
- Full
- Squander
- Ray
- Medi-
- terranean island
- Cine
- Rubber tree
- Golf mound
- Sched. abbr.
- Deposit
- Alternative word

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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FRO BA PLACE
AERIES RIBALD
YA YRIE LIKE
ELM EDIT ER
UTTERED NOW
HUGE EXIT AT
IL BSY TEA TN
EN TEEM ROSE
DAB EMOTION
EA PAIR EPT
LEST ENYER LO
ALTERS ANADEM
ASSET NE ODE

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## What's on today . . . .

### JPPP emergency meet

An emergency meeting of Jatiya Party Parliamentary Party (JPPP) will be held today (Monday) at 8.30 am at the Jatiya Sangsad (Parliament) Office of the party. JPPP Chief Whip Monirul Huq Choudhury has urged all JP MPs to attend the meeting.

### Workshop on women's literacy

An 11-day workshop on curriculum development of literacy programme for the women begins today (Monday) at the Dhaka Ahsania Mission auditorium (House No. 8, Road No. 12 (new) Dhanmondi residential area).

Dhaka Ahsania Mission has organised the workshop under the joint patronisation of UNESCO and UNDP.

Education and Cultural Affairs Minister Prof AQM Badruddoza Choudhury will inaugurate the function as chief guest.

Education Secretary ANM Yousuf, UNDP Residential representative Charles H. Larsimont will be the special guests on the occasion.

### DU officers' strike

Officers of the Dhaka University today (Monday) observes a day-long strike demanding fulfillment of their 13-point demand.

The demands include revision of the officers' downgraded pay scale and their representation in various bodies of the university including the Syndicate and the Senate.

The DU Officers Association (DUOA) called for observance of the strike as its earlier ultimatum of acceptance of the demands expired Sunday.

During the strike, the DUOA will hold a meeting at the TSC seminar room at 10 am to chalkout its next course of action in this regard.

### BCL (N-S) rally at DU

JSD (Inu)-backed Bangladesh Chhatra League (N-S) will hold a rally in front of Aprarajeyo Bangla on the Dhaka University Campus today (Monday) demanding trial of the killers of its leader Mahbubur Rahman.

A final year History Department student Mahbub was killed during a gunfight between the BCL (N-S) and Awami League backed BCL (A-A) on June 20 last.

### Jatiya Sramik Party meet

Jatiya Sramik Party will hold an emergency meeting of its central committee today (Monday) at 4 pm at the party central office at 123 new Kakrail road in the city.

All central committee members have been requested to attend the meeting in time.

### Community Health meet

Community Health Research Association has arranged a discussion and milad mahfil in observance of the first death anniversary of Dr Alhaj MA Muttalib, founder President of the Association at its head office at 22, Bijoynagar in the city today (Monday) at 4 pm.

### Lecture on culture

A special lecture on 'culture and humanity' will be held at the Arts Faculty building of the Dhaka University under the auspices of Govinda Dev Darshan Gobeshana Kendra (Philosophy Research Centre) of the university tomorrow (Tuesday) at 4.30 pm.

Noted Indian Philosopher and Professor of the Department of Rabindra Bharatiya Bishwabidyalaya Prof Dhanesh Narayan Chakrabarty will deliver a special lecture on the subject.

The lecture function will be presided over by the DU Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Chairman of the Centre Prof Wakil Ahmed.

## Weather

### Moderate rain likely

By Staff Correspondent  
Weather forecast valid till 6 pm Monday says light or moderate rain accompanied by temporary gusty wind likely to occur at many places over Rajshahi and Chittagong divisions and at a few places over Dhaka and Khulna divisions. Day temperature is likely to rise by one to two degree Celsius over the country.

Meanwhile, rain or thundershower occurred at most places over Dhaka and Rajshahi divisions. The chief amount of rainfall was recorded from Bogra at 49 mm.

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