

Metropolitan

Dhaka Day by Day Prophets on the Pavements

by Sabah Chowdhury



Prophecy on the city footpath.

-Photo: Jalaluddin Haider.

One does not have to be bird brains to consult birds about the state of the future. This may not be conventional wisdom but apparently the bird sector in the prophecy trade isn't doing too bad.

It is all about the man who sits with a parrot on busy corners of the city and waits for anxious citizens to come and ask to request the bird to go and pick an envelope which will carry some wise words or a touch of warning about the things to come. The future that is.

But future is a serious business in this city and all sorts of futurologists in the informal non-technological sector are working over to provide people with cautions and predictions. The palmists, the astrologers and other celestial observers are right up there in the totem pole and in between there are occupants who try a variety of channels to obtain information on things which have not happened yet. Mirrors are subjected to deep stares, entrails are sometimes examined and pots of water are rolled into the ground to see which way things plan to move. They are the poor cousins in the divining trade but the bird men are the pits. Just about the only ones who go to the birds, are those who are so badly off and down in luck that they have no zone to turn, except run down parrots, managed by equally run down handlers. Fortunately for all, the number of such decrepits are not few in luck in Bangladesh.

It wasn't easy trying to get in touch with the pavement prophets, because such oracles are patronised by those who literally move more comfortably in the streets, than they do in rooms and chambers. Even the appropriately dark and dank rooms which the horoscope crowd prefer hoping it adds something to the atmosphere is far too mystic for the poor and nearly wretched men who squat in front of the man, his row of dirty envelopes and the bird nonchalantly walking across and picking one at random.

Habibullah runs one such outfit near the bus stop at Asad Gate. For reasons of trade and credibility, Habibullah claimed that he is rarely wrong or his bird is rarely so. The parrot not exactly born with gifts of prophecy, can be trained very quickly we were told. Didn't it make the entire business of telling the future a matter of chance? Was a question which came very easily. The answer was that, a trained bird rarely made a mistake in foretelling what was about to come.

Habibullah did not seem very keen to inform about his income etc. Upon great insistence he said that he had put in over five years and he has not become rich doing this. He used to be an assistant in a cloth shop in Patuati, but there was theft there and he decided that as a poor man, he could always be a suspect. He felt too insecure and took to the road. And he came to the future reading trade through a person who shared his board and came from his same hometown Narsingdi.

An old man paid Taka one and had his envelope picked. He read it with an unmovable face without betraying joy or pain. It obviously didn't end his problems. Habib, reading my thoughts, asked me to pick one. My envelope read, "Although you have far to go there are dangers. Be careful when buying property." It seemed reasonably vague to qualify as a prediction. A pinched face Habib informed, that bad news is not good business. Location is also very important. Anybody who can get a spot near an office or embassy can make money. But he himself is not that lucky.

His family at Narsingdi is poor and his wife works for a local NGO organising the displaced. There was a hint of pride in his words as he narrated this. A full bus came around the corner and I left Habib with his future.

As my rickshaw threaded its way through the traffic clogged streets of Mirpur Road, the prophecy did look right. A long way to go and full of danger all the way to the office.

Safe air traffic in Bangladesh stressed

By BUET Correspondent

Professor S. Misbah Deen, Professor of Computing Science and Director, Data and Knowledge Engineering (DAKE) Centre, University of Keele, U.K. stressed the need for introducing Decision In-

formation System (D.I.S) with the help of Artificial Intelligence (A.I) in manipulating the operation of safe, orderly and efficient flow of air traffic in a congested air route specially in the context of air traffic con-

trol in Bangladesh.

Prof. Deen who originally hails from Bangladesh on a brief visit to Bangladesh on his way to Japan, where he will be chairing an international panel discussion was speaking at a seminar on "Cooperating Knowledge Based System" held at the seminar hall, Civil Engineering Building, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) on Tuesday.

Prof. Deen described some of the recent developments in the field of Artificial Intelligence (A.I) voice-operated intelligent data bases and human neural networks. Explaining the connection model Prof. Misbah informed computer operates million time faster than human brain. He also explained 3 dimensional model analysis quoting special reference to regional and sub-regional geographic analysis.

Denoting Cooperating Knowledge Based System (CKBS) as the new era of research. Prof. Deen outlined the research activities within the Data and Knowledge Engineering (D.A.K.E) Centre, concentrating mainly on the new emerging area of C.K.B.S. He also discussed some of the recent research works on understanding how a human brain works, particularly how it processes the large data bases stored in memory.

Conducted by Dr. Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, director of the Computer Centre, BUET, the seminar was attended by a large number of sharp-witted intellectuals and computer professionals.

TV Wednesday

- 5-00 Opening and recitation from Al-Quran Recitation from Geeta.
5-15 News in Bengali
5-20 News in Bengali
5-30 Shikshangon - (Distant Education)
5-55 Mabe Ramzan
6-30 Shourave Gourabe
7-05 Compiled and presented by Lutfur Rahman Riton Programme for new artists Presented by: Jahanara Akhtar
8-00 News in Bengali
8-30 Documentary 'Ai Deah Amar'
9-00 Macgyver
10-00 News in English
10-30 Magazine (Ittadi) Presented by -Laila Banu
11-15 Khabar/The News
11-30 Closing

Govt employees meet Khaleda

The leaders of the Coordination Council of the Government Employees Tuesday called on the Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, at her Secretariat office, reports BSS.

The Prime Minister gave a patient hearing of the problems narrated to her by the leaders of the employees.

Leaders of the Coordination Council present during the meeting included Chief Adviser Golam Mostafa Talukder and Secretary General Md. Salehuddin Selim.

Anniversary of Justice Murshed's death today

The 12th Death Anniversary of Chief Justice Syed Mahub Murshed, an eminent jurist, an independent thinker, and one of the greatest constitutional lawyers of the sub-continent will be observed today (Wednesday).

In this connection, Quran Khani will be held in the morning at his mazar premises at Banani and the Syed Mahub Murshed Memorial Committee will lay floral wreaths.

A Milad Mahfil will be held at the deceased residence at NW-5, Road 68, Gulshan at 3:30 p.m. before Asar Prayer. Various socio-cultural organizations will hold discussion on the life and achievements of the Justice Murshed, says a Press release.

PROGRAMME today

Poetry festival

By DU Correspondent

Dhaka University Sahitya Sangsad will hold a poetry festival titled 'Spring Poetry Festival '91' today (Wednesday) at Battala on the campus.

The festival will be held in collaboration of the Dhaka University Central Students Union (DUCSU).

The festival will be inaugurated by prominent writer Abu Rushd while Vice Chancellor Prof Maniruzzaman Miah will attend as chief guest.

JCD demands speedy trial of Ershad

The Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) on Tuesday brought out a procession on the Dhaka University campus demanding speedy trial of ousted President Ershad and his associates, reports BSS.

Later the JCD held a brief rally at the DUCSU Bhaban premises. The rally was addressed by JCD Joint Convenor and DUCSU AGS Nazim Uddin Alam and Habibunnabi Sobel.

The leaders pledged their full-cooperation with the authorities in making the campus free from illegal arms. The government should initiate a drive to mop up illegal arms from the campus, they said. The JCD leaders warned that the students would not tolerate any kind of procrastination regarding the trial of Ershad and his associates.

The Bangladesh Chhatra League (Sha-A) also brought out a procession on Tuesday in the campus demanding implementation of 10-point charter of demands given by All Party Students Unity (APSU) during the recent democratic movement, which includes withdrawal of all black laws, filling up of the vacant one lakh and 86 thousand government posts. They also demanded immediate release of their leaders arrested earlier from the campus.

The first year B.Sc (Hons) students of different depart-

Lest We Forget A genius, a Lordship Murshed by name

By Nurul Momen

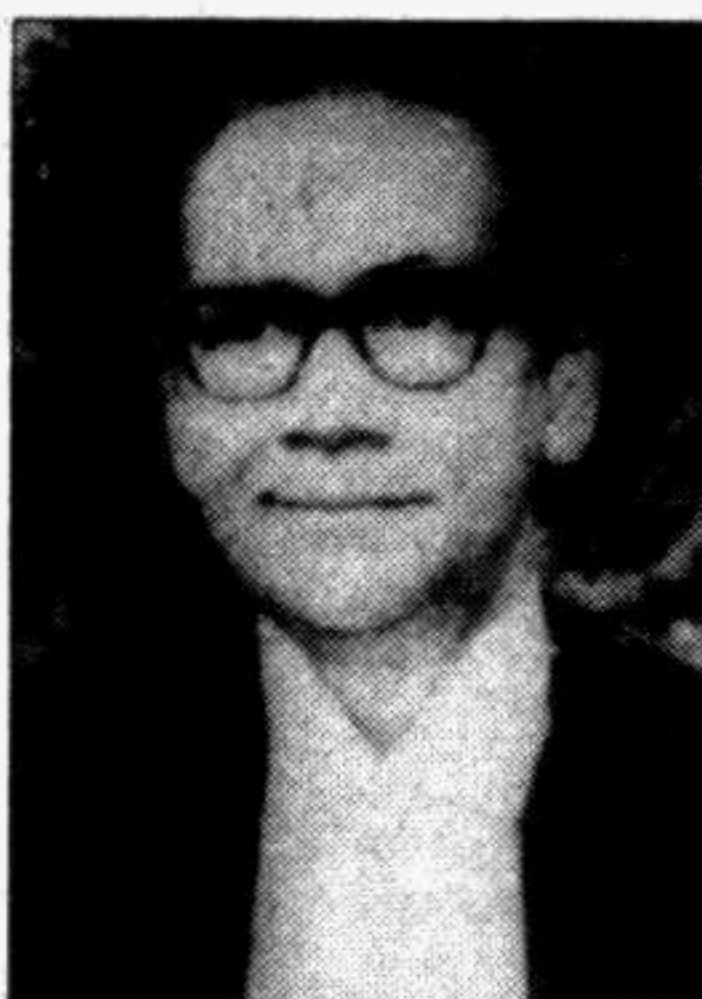
Today is the 12th death anniversary of the late Chief Justice Syed Mahub Murshed who made his mark not only as a jurist but also as a patriot, committed to the welfare of people of Bangladesh. The tribute to the late Justice Murshed, made available to The Daily Star by family friends, was written by the late Nurul Momen, a former professor of Law of Dhaka University and a well-known playwright and a personal friend of the former Chief Justice. Momen passed away last year.

If to be a genius, a person has to have exalted intellectual power; instinctive, extraordinary, creative, and imaginative faculty late Chief Justice Syed Mahub Murshed was undoubtedly one.

Again if lordship means, in the dictionary sense, to have a lord's personality, then Murshed was undoubtedly one for the fact that his qualities of head and heart were such as to make the people around him as a person towering far above others.

It is said nothing succeeds like success about a man when he is considered most successful in his life. That means when a man is as successful as he ever was expected to be all adverse speculations about him are set at rest, as nobody having any practical sense dares to comment, in any prejudicial manner, upon his success which is taken for granted. And more so after his death as success stays finally at the height he achieves at his death and there remains nothing to detract from it after his death.

The success Chief Justice Murshed achieved during his life, scintillated till the time of his death. Therefore, it is no wonder that people now find such unsurpassing qualities in him, like they do in the retrospective in all such successful persons, after great success they achieve. It may be said in other worlds if Chief Justice Murshed were less successful, people who did not know him intimately would have regarded



him as possessing less of those qualities, which they found he was endowed with by the measure of the big success he had to his credit.

Any person, who knew him (Murshed) intimately when he was young could easily foretell this future for him to come, almost with the exactitude as it finally came. If he had achieved a success less than what he had, that person would have considered it was a sad deviation from the normal expectation of his achievement. And I am one who knew Murshed from the days we had been together in Calcutta reading law and attending post graduate classes and practicing in the Calcutta High Court almost for a decade.

Any way I found Murshed a genius per excellence so when I left.

With Pakistan coming into being Murshed transferred his practice form Calcutta to Dhaka. I got a little scared about him, in the way I got for myself. I joined the Dhaka University before partition after a sort of a miracle that happened in my case to shift my ambition to work in another field, the field of literature. My first writing ever a play 'Rupantar' being published, ever again, within a year in an Ananda Bazar Puja special, where only the writings of doyens of literature of long standing used to be accepted, created such a furor that I became famous overnight! And naturally I found... a lectureship in the Dhaka University to be respectable enough to accept in lieu of the legal practice at the Calcutta High Court, and convenient enough to get myself going with my literary efforts undisturbed.

The eminence Murshed had already achieved for himself in the Calcutta High Court got sort of fozzled out, and he had to start anew to establish himself in a zone for remove from his home and centered of activities. But thanks to his genius he managed to put his best foot forward in a way only Murshed did in the past. In short, he had the patience, the sympathy for the clients and their causes, the intelligence made sharper by relevant studies of law and spirit of taking boldly the advantage of any rightful opportunity offering itself. These are the qualities of any lawyer to shine. And these qualities Murshed had not only a plenty for himself but also enough to spare for his juniors.

And anybody in the past who had these qualities had shone, and anybody in the future who would have them like he had would shine. That lesson above any other thing he had left as a legacy for young lawyers to go by. Justice or no Justice Murshed would have lived on his on writings of whatever matter it would have been merely for the vigour of his own style and penetrating thoughts, had he ever wielded his pen with that end in view.

It does not matter if he had not still some of his classical judgements, likely to be referred to and pointed out "as a rich legacy", for those who believe in truth and justice. Murshed was a justice per excellence. And if reasoning of the judgements are to show "not only justice is done but must appear to be done" then those judgement become as powerful universal, that any person from whom they proceed is undoubtedly a genius and a lordship though he may accidentally be a Murshed by name.

Govt urged not to appoint engr in PDB, WDB admn

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Water Development Board (WDB) and Power Development Board (PDB) Diploma Engineers Association has protested the demand by the President and General Secretary of Degree Engineers Institute for appointment of engineers in the highest administrative post of different organisations including WDB and PDB.

In a joint statement on Tuesday they urged the government not to appoint engineers in any administrative post.

Gas goes to Hajiganj

Bakhrabad Gas supply was formally commissioned in Hajiganj upazila on Tuesday, reports UNB.

State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Dr Khandker Mosharraf Hossain switched into operation the gas supply at a function at Hajiganj Pilot High School Tuesday afternoon.

A 20-kilometre lateral pipe line was constructed from Chandpur TBS to Hajiganj bring the upazila under the gas distribution network.

The project completed at a cost of Taka 2 crore 48 lakh and 34 thousand will meet the demand of the people of Hajiganj sadar upazila and its adjoining areas.

BNP mum over landing of Indian copter : AL

Awami League leader Amir Hossain Amu Tuesday criticised the BNP government for "maintaining silence" over the landing of an Indian army helicopter at Sarail in Brahmanbaria last Saturday, reports UNB.

"We're surprised at the mysterious silence of the government after this incident," Amu told a group of reporters at the Awami League office Tuesday evening.

The Awami League leader also mentioned recent killings of four Bangladesh nationals by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) at a frontier village in Feni.

Amu censured those quarters who orchestrated propaganda before parliamentary elections that the country's sovereignty would be threatened if Awami League was voted to power. "Why those parties are now keeping mum?"

He demanded that the government make public the 25-year Indo-Bangladesh Friendship Treaty signed by the

Awami League government led by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the government of India led by Mrs. Indira Gandhi soon after the country's independence.

He also demanded of the new government to publish and scrap those provisions in the treaty which many leaders, now in the government, had propagated as asperous on the sovereignty and integrity of independent Bangladesh.

Jamaat women MPs for 'purdah'

Jamaat M. Hafiza Asma Khatun on Monday said they would launch a campaign for 'purdah' system for women in and outside Parliament according to the injunctions of Islam, reports UNB.

"We will not force women to wear 'burqa' but pursue them to maintain 'purdah'", she said.

Asma Khatun, also the Secretary of the Jamaat-e-Islami, was talking to newsmen

BNP to fulfil electoral pledges : Mannan

Sixty-two ward unit of Dhaka city Jatiyatabadi Samajik Sangskritik Sangstha (JSSS) Tuesday evening hosted an iftar party at a city hotel, reports BSS.

State Minister for Jute Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and State Minister for Establishment Osman Ghani Khan attended the iftar party.

Speaking on the occasion Mannan Bhuiyan stressed the need for continued struggle for establishing democracy in the country.

He called upon all to work together for revitalising the economy of the country and establishing rule of law.

Osman Ghani Khan in his address, underlined the need for a corruption-free administration for the sake of democracy.

Envoys of Japan, ROK meet Mustafiz

The Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Toshio Saiki, on Tuesday called on the Foreign Minister, A. S. M. Mustafizur Rahman, at his office, reports BSS.

The South Korean Ambassador Lee Jai Chun, also called on the Foreign Minister.

Join BNP

Dr. Ajbul Huq of Feni (owner of Shaheen Clinic) and Mohammad Mokibul Hasan (Putu) of Alifadanga, Faridpur Monday joined BNP expressing their support to its programmes and to the pragmatic leadership of party Chairperson and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, reports BSS.

Makibul Hasan joined the BNP after severing his all connections with the Jatiya Party.

CROSSWORD PUZZLER

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Includes 'Answer to Previous Puzzle' and a TV Wednesday schedule.

Weather

Thundershower likely

Rain or thundershower accompanied by temporary gusty wind at places likely to occur over Dhaka and Chittagong divisions and at one or two places over Rajshahi and Khulna divisions. Day temperature likely to remain nearly unchanged over the country.

Warning : Squally wind at the speed of 60 to 75 kilometers per hour may occur at one or two places over the regions of Rajshahi, Pabna, Bogra, Faridpur, Dhaka, Tangail, Jessore, Kushtia, Comilla and Sylhet during the next 24 hours commencing 6 p.m. of Tuesday.

Rain or thundershower occurred on Tuesday at many places over Chittagong and Rajshahi divisions. Day temperature remained nearly unchanged. The highest temperature was recorded at Rajshahi and Ishardi.

Outlook for subsequent two days : Little change. Extended outlook for another five days : No appreciable change.

Table with columns: City, Temperature in Celsius (Max, Min), Humidity (9am, 6pm). Rows include Dhaka, Chittagong, Rangpur, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar, Khulna, Rajshahi, Bogra, Dinajpur.

Body to review cultural strategy

The government has constituted a nine-member committee to recommend ways and means for properly portraying and developing the national cultural heritage through radio, television and films in future in Dhaka Monday, reports BSS.

The committee will be headed by State Minister for Education Principal Mohammad Yunus Khan.

Other members of the committee are Mr. Joyal Abedin Farooq, MP Mrs Selima Rahman, MP, Secretary of the Information Ministry, Secretary of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Mr Mustafa Monwar, Director General of national mass media institute, Mr Amjad Hossain, a film director, Mr Lukman Hossain Fakir, a singer.

The Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs will act as member-secretary of the committee.

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7. The books must be supplied in accordance with the list submitted by the authority.
8. Rate of discount payable to the Institute must be mentioned.
9. Requisite papers containing the cost of books fixed by the publishers shall have to be submitted.
10. Books must be supplied within 45 days of the receipt of the work order.
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