

Dhaka Day by Day

When You Leave Your Heart Behind with the Rickshaws

by Fayza Haq

Unassuming but not unimpressive by any means, Carlos Aranaga has been handling press affairs for the USIS for seven years.

Mr. Aranaga may not have seen the nooks and crannies of the Subcontinent but talking to him at the USIS cafe — amidst frequent calls from his friends who wanted to have a last chat with him — I realised he had a fairly comprehensive notion of it.

This quiet young man has certainly absorbed the essence of Bangladesh and India although he may not have been a compulsive traveller.

I've been to Goa which is picturesque with its churches and cathedrals, which appealed to my sensitivity and background as I'm a Roman Catholic myself. Here you see the remnant of Christian heritage in India," he said.

He has been to places like Delhi and Agra like most people who have visited India. "I liked Delhi because it is beautiful and modern in many ways. They have real five star service where you get everything that you want. The people who built the Taj Mahal have their descendants who are still there to carry on the fine work," he added.

As for the Taj Mahal itself he said, "It is breathtaking. You've heard that this place is one of incredible beauty but the pictures don't do justice to the reality of seeing. The structure of the white marble with the inlaid work shimmering in the heat is like a mirage."

Comparing the places of the north of India with the south he described Bangalore as 'beautiful with its picturesque hills. He went to Madras and Mysore too but he found them quiet places. He felt the areas in the south were certainly more reserved than the milling and booming cities like Calcutta and Delhi.

Speaking of Dhaka and Calcutta Mr. Aranaga remarked, "It's a different place in each world. Here in Bangladesh you are never very far away from the rural life. Calcutta is such a humungous city. In that metropolis you can drive for hours but you couldn't leave the city. Here if I go on to the airport road, in fifteen minutes I'm seeing rice paddies, lakes and rivers."

Did he feel stagnated after coming from Calcutta to Dhaka? "No, I felt refreshed," he replied with enthusiasm. "You do have the theatre and 'sitars' recitals. There is a definite cultural life. Apart from the dance, drama, and other musical activities I've had the chance to meet a lot of writers, poets, journalists and politicians. It has been a great pleasure to have been here and I really regret having to leave. I wish I could stay at least another year," the confident and outspoken diplomat replied.

I was personally intrigued as to why he went about in a bicycle except when he went for official work. "I haven't owned a car in seven years," Mr. Aranaga replied with an infectious laugh. "It was a matter of practicality and not just a healthy habit. While in India the traffic in Calcutta was so horrendous that I didn't want to have the responsibility of owning a car."

I was naturally keen on finding out his opinion of the thousands of rickshaws in the city, and the overloaded buses, as well as the trains with passengers sitting on the roof. He was not unnerved by them as he came to work. "When I go back to the US I'll feel strange because there the streets aren't similarly full of people. I love crowds. The rickshaws provide jobs and they are a cheap form of transport. As for the buses and trains I simply held my breath when I saw them. Obviously there is a crying dearth of buses and trains in Bangladesh," he commented.

Dwelling on the city of Dhaka, again, Mr. Aranaga said, "Dhaka has a wealth of culture and tradition. You've been through your independence trouble and that's in no way less than what they have achieved in West Bengal. The cultural affinity between West Bengal and Bangladesh has made it easy for me to be here."

The diplomat added, "The food and the language is the same. I specially loved the 'biryani', 'tehari', 'nihar', 'bakarkhani' and 'borhani'. The 'achars' and 'chutnies' were delicious. You can love rich spicy food when you have it in moderation and not every day."

Did he have any embarrassing moment while in Dhaka? Mr. Aranaga was annoyed about the time he was once misquoted. "That taught me a little about making unguarded statements," he commented, with a short laugh.

How is it that he is leaving his heart behind in an overcrowded Third World country when he is proceeding to Washington? He replied seriously, "I've met only a tiny fraction of the millions of people who live in Bangladesh. They're people I'll always remember. I still hope they will stay a part of my life. Distance is not an absolute factor. In this day and age there are jet planes. Again, one can always write a letter."

Mr. Aranaga, who has grown up in Baltimore as an immigrant from Peru, with a physician for a father, is the eldest of a family of four children. He hopes to be in time for the marriage of his sister in USA, when he leaves Dhaka shortly.

Has this American of Peruvian descent, who reads and writes Bangla, thought of settling down permanently with someone despite all his travels? The lover of books and music had this to say, "I might have and I'm not trying to be coy in saying this."

600 illegal power lines snapped in city: 11 held

Six hundred illegal power lines were snapped Thursday by the first and second electricity court at Shahinbagh (Mohakhali), Mohammadpur Mohammad Housing Market adjacent areas, market of Shahid Park and adjacent areas, a press release said, reports BSS.

During the drives, 24 cases were instituted and 11 persons were sent to jail, besides 200 accused were fined taka 2,000.

In all 50 electric heaters were seized and destroyed at Shahinbagh during the drive.

BRTC buses for female passengers

Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) introduces bus services for female passengers on another five routes in the city from today (Saturday) a BRTC press release said in Dhaka Friday, reports BSS.

The buses will be operated by woman conductors and will run as per specific time schedule, the press release said.

The routes are — "Mirpur-12-Kamalapur" (via Mirpur-10, Kalyanpur, Asad Gate, Science Lab, Azimpur, Press Club and Bangladesh Bank), "Mohammadpur-Kamalapur" (via Jigatala, Science Lab, Azimpur and Bangladesh Bank), "Mirpur-1-Gulistan" (via Kalyanpur, Asadgate, Farm Gate and Shah Bagh), "Gulshan-1-Gulistan" (via Mahakhali, Kamal Ataturk Avenue, Gulshan-2, the US Embassy, Rampura, Malibagh and Kamalapur) and "Uttara-Gulistan" (via Mahakhali, Tejgaon C/A, Magh Bazar, Malibagh and Kakrail).

Pan Pacific Hotels executive due today

Yasuhiro Utani, Vice President of Pan Pacific Hotels and Resorts and Director of Tokyo Hotels International, the operating company of Sonargaon Hotel arrives today (Saturday) on a 4-day visit, says a press release.

During his visit Utani will negotiate the management contract of Sonargaon Hotel with the Bangladesh Government.

He is expected to call on the Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism, the Chairman and the Managing Director of the Hotels International Limited.

Govt to welcome welfare-oriented programmes

State Minister for Labour and Manpower Rafiqul Islam Mia Friday said the present democratic government was committed to develop all parts of the country equally, reports BSS.

He was addressing a gathering of people of Laksm and Nangalkot upazilas staying in Dhaka at Asiatic Society auditorium.

PM stresses free flourishing of culture Land for permanent drama stage to be allocated

Prime Minister Begum Khaleida Zia on Friday called for strengthening the cultural activities to consolidate the democratic process of the country, reports BSS.

She said the present government was determined to ensure proper atmosphere for the flourishing of our own cultural heritage.

The Prime Minister was talking to the leaders of Group Theatre Federation who met her at her Sugandha office. The Federation Chairman, Nasiruddin Yusuf and other leaders Mamunur Rashid, Ramendra Majumdar, Ataur Rahman and Sanjiv Barua were present.

President of Jatyatabadi Samajik Sangkritik Sangtha (JASAS) Khurshid Ali and General Secretary Zahid Hossain Channu attended the meeting.

Begum Zia called upon the cultural activists, including the theatre workers, to promote culture for the people and not in the interest of any group or party.

Referring to the demands of the theatre workers, Begum Zia assured them that they would be given land to build a permanent drama stage.

She said the demand for the repeal of the Theatre Performance Control Act 1876

Steps for independence of judiciary urged

Democratic Lawyers Association of Bangladesh (DAB) on Friday appealed to the members of the Parliament to take steps for securing independence of the judiciary, reports UNB.

The Association in a meeting at its Dilkusha office here also discussed the bill moved recently by Salauddin Yousuf MP before the House relating to the independence of the judiciary.

Independence of the judiciary and separation of the judiciary from the executive are imperative for achieving rule of law and creation of a democratic social system, they observed.

Presided over by the Vice President of the Association AK Badrul Huque, the meeting was attended, among others, by Secretary General of the Association MR Chowdhury, Dr Tareq Chowdhury, MA Rashid and Nazrul Islam.

The lawyers also expressed concern about the hassles being created in the passage of the constitution amendment bill seeking switch over to parliamentary form of government, said a press release of the association.

ICFM to consider report on post-cyclone aid

Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman will hold bilateral talks with his counterparts of different countries during the forthcoming conference of the Islamic Foreign Ministers in Istanbul, reports UNB.

The 20th Islamic Conference of the Foreign Ministers (ICFM) begins in the Turkish city on August 5.

Mostafiz leaves Dhaka on August 2 to lead a four-member delegation at the 6-day conference which will discuss a 56-item agenda covering the political, economic, social and cultural scenario of the entire Muslim Ummah.

The meet will also formulate proposals for the next OIC Summit due in Dakar, Senegal in December this year.

Foreign Ministry officials here said the ICFM will consider a report on the possibility of extending assistance to the reconstruction and the rehabilitation programmes in the cyclone-affected coastal belt of the country.

Mostafiz is expected to meet the foreign ministers of different countries including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Pakistan, Egypt, Turkey, Indonesia and Malaysia, a foreign ministry official said.

Bangladesh Foreign Minister is also expected to pay official visits to Iran and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on way back home from the Istanbul meeting.

Volumes of world events presented to Press Club

The British Council in Dhaka has presented the annual register of world events in 12 volumes to the National Press Club, reports BSS.

Abdullah-Al-Abedin, British Council Librarian, handed over the volumes to Badrul Alam, Convener of the Library Subcommittee of the Club at a simple ceremony Thursday.

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Improved models of wheelchairs for disabled

By Staff Correspondent Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed on Friday launched its improved models of wheelchairs for the paralyzed at the British Council auditorium.

The chairs were designed by a five-member British motivation team who worked on the project since February this year.

These chairs have been specially designed to give maximum comfort to the paralyzed persons. These are lighter, cheaper and assembled with local parts.

Three types of the chair have been made: normal, medium and small for both adult and children. A special type of chair has also been designed for tourists.

George Finlayson, the Acting British High Commissioner in his address as the chief guest said these chairs which have been made with appropriate technology would be very helpful for the paralyzed people in Bangladesh.

Later, the members of the British team described the utility of the chairs. The team members include David Constantine, Nigel Carvey, Richard Frost and Simon Gue.

Red Crescent lottery held

The lottery draw of the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) was held at the auditorium of the nursing school attached to the Holy Family Red Crescent Hospital in Dhaka on Friday, reports BSS.

A three-member panel of judges headed by Prof M Shahjahan, Vice-Chancellor of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) conducted the draw. Other members of the panel were Dr Rafiqur Rahman, President of Bangladesh Supreme Court Bar Association and Alhaj Abul Qusum Joarder, Director, Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The first prize worth Taka three lakh was won by lucky ticket number Kha-136211.

The second prize worth Taka one lakh has gone to ticket number Ka 094169 while the third prize worth Taka fifty thousand to ticket number Ka 393895.



Carlos Aranaga: Dhaka has a wealth of culture and tradition.

Children's painting workshop

Alliance Francaise de Dhaka has arranged a three-month children's painting workshop starting on August 2. Children aged 7 to 16 are allowed for admission. The workshop will be conducted by Artist Masuma Khan.

Interested children have been requested to contact Alliance Francaise de Dhaka or Masuma Khan, Tel: 234638, says a press release.

TV Saturday schedule table with times and program names.

Weather

Shower with gust likely

By Staff Correspondent

Light to moderate rain or shower accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at many places over Khulna and Chittagong divisions and at a few places over Dhaka and Rajshahi divisions during the next 24 hours commencing 6pm on Friday, reports Meteorological Department.

The day temperature till Sunday morning may remain nearly unchanged over the country. On Friday, Mymensingh experienced the highest temperature 36.2 degree Celsius while Puni the lowest 24.6 degrees.

Outlook for subsequent two days: Little change. Extended outlook for another five days: Rainfall likely to deteriorate.

The sun sets today (Saturday) at 6.45pm and rises tomorrow (Sunday) at 5.26am.

Meanwhile, Rangamati witnessed the highest rainfall of 34mm during the last 12 hours till 6pm Friday. Sitakunda had 9mm, Kutubdia 2mm, Teknaf, Dinajpur and Chandpur 1mm shower during the same period.

The temperature and humidity in some cities and towns of the country on Friday were:

Table with columns: Cities/Towns, Temperature in Celsius (Max, Min), Humidity in percentage (9am, 6pm).



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