

Dhaka Day by Day

Where Have All the Servants Flown?

by Fayza Haq

Imagine having to use a tea-bag shipped from Down Under just because there was no servant in the house for a week! Our lives are not regulated by dishwashers, washing machine or microwave ovens. Instead we are so totally reliant on servants that without them we feel crippled and at sea.

Yet how do these servants perform? Certainly not the way they did forty years ago, or even twenty years back. Now they can pack their tin suitcases and ragged knapsacks, and push off to the Middle East. If not, there are the garment factories to lure them, and also the houses at the "glided cage" of Gulshan, or even the foreign guest houses at Dhanmandi.

You certainly do not find the fidelity that was taken for granted years ago. The homes in the middle-class homes in Dhaka are training centres — so to put it — where they learn how to make cakes, puddings and pies; iron clothes; tend the garden; walk the dog — and then they take wings for better offers. In our house alone we have had a chain of changing servants in the past one year. This happens in the homes of my

friends, acquaintances and relatives too. "Give me a servant" is often the reason for the SOS on the telephone or the cause for the brief visit in one of our local tinny "flying chariots".

If the servants leave on their own, without having caused any commotion in the house, it is not so painful. Instead, they indulge



Melodrama and theatricals are a part of a domestic servant's life. — Star Photo

in various activities before they have finally said "au revoir" to the baffled and weary master or mistress. I know of a case where a maid decamped the second servant in the house to go and buy ice-cream. She then helped herself to the hidden keys of the house, and emptied the household of all the possible jewellery and money tucked away in every crevice of the steel cupboards. Even the cash hidden under the pillow and between pages of books were removed. In another relative's house the dollars and passports were surreptitiously sneaked away without any qualms, while the owner was away. Watches and other valuables were also removed. There was no way this aunt of mine could pinpoint the thief although she suspected the maid. After a lot of hassle and threat of going to the police, some of the cash was recovered, and no more.

Such cases occur in homes all over the city, whether the person is living in Banani, or Eskaton or Tikatully. People hide away their VCRs and jewellery as if they were the Kohinoor diamond or the Peacock throne.

If it is not stealing or petty thieving, they pinch food from the kitchen to feed their relatives. My mother cleans the rice and chops the meat herself, although she is — by all standards — a sick old woman who should be enjoying the

days of her life. This is because the maids in the house cannot be trusted. I have known things to have been different only ten years ago, when my father was alive to play the patriarchal figure, and subdue any backchatting, churlish or sluggish servant.

There is another way out for the servants in the house to laze and carry on. They often pretend or imagine to be ill. No matter how much of time, money and energy you spend over them, they will indulge in melodrama and theatricals, and give you sob stories about how their husbands ill-treat them and nearly bash them to death, like some scene out of Dickens's novels. They complain of allergies or stomach ailments. When they are medically checked, you discover that everything was either a figment of their imagination or a product of their hypertension.

The other day I came home to find the maid — who once worked downstairs — pecking all over the kitchen, panting and puffing, and crying. She finally resorted to a fainting fit. I understand the entire family is not only cossetting her as if she were some pet kitten, but searching high and low for a suitable job, and even a possible third husband to heal her wounds and pride.

No matter how much you explain to the servants they will not listen to your advice, based on "O" level lessons in Biology and Health Science.

They will get hold of people to do black magic for them and give them astronomical sums of money just for "jhar-phook". They will insist on going to "peers" and "fakirs" and even self-medicate themselves. I overheard one maid advising the other to X-ray her throat, in case she has cancer. No matter how hard I tried to explain that all her irritations were psychosomatic, in the form of eczema and no more, the cook just would not have a bar of what I had to explain. She gadded on and indulged in black magic to her heart's content. Maybe that gives her psychological peace, which is what she really needs. She has two daughters who are regularly mistreated by their respective husbands.

Servants are just as human as we are. We, in turn, the middle-class masters, try to appease them in every possible way. This happens not only in Dhaka but in all other cities of the Sub-continent. I see no remedy for this apart from departing into a more mechanised and industrialised life. If the wives in the west think life is a veritable paradise in a place like Dhaka just because servants are available, they have yet to know what a pain in the neck domestics can be at times instead of being the balm to the routine of existence.

HERE and THERE

Govt college teachers assoc

Bangladesh Government College Teachers' Association urged the government to fulfil its demand immediately which include promotions of Assistant Professor and Associate Professor.

It also demanded creation two thousand new posts for fulfilling the vacancy in newly nationalised 93 colleges and holding a special BCS for recruiting lecturers in different colleges, says a press release signed by Mofazzal Hossain, President and Hassanul Bari, General Secretary of the Association on Saturday.

UP members assoc

Bangladesh Union Parisad Members Association felicitated Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and the Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina for the passage of 12th and 11th Amendment Bill in the parliament.

A two-day meeting of the representatives from the districts also urged its members to make the national representatives rally in Dhaka at the end of this month a success to realise their 10-point demand.

The meeting presided over by Chairman of the Association Kamaluddin Ahmed was addressed among others by Jamaluddin Ahmed Majumder, Mafizul Islam, Abdul Baten Sarker, Barun Bhoomik, Albert P Costra, AKM Shahabuddin, Nurul Islam, Babul Akan, Sahjahan Sattar, Moniruzzaman Monir, Rafiqul Islam, Kutubuddin Ahmed, Fatzuzul Aziz Manju, Reazul Kabir Chowdhury, Wajed Ali, Nazir Ahmed, Abdul Mannan, and Aminuddin Ahmed.

Central Insurance Company Ltd

The third annual general meeting of Central Insurance Company Limited was held on Wednesday last at Hotel Sonargon.

In a Board meeting after the general meeting Alhaj M A Malek was elected Chairman and Alhaj Amjad Hossain and Mohammad Shaif were elected Vice-Presidents of the Board of Directors.

Jatiya Sramik League

Jatiya Sramik League President S M Rumi and General Secretary Majibur Rahman Bhuiyan in a statement on Saturday expressed their satisfaction over the passage of 11th and 12th Amendment Bill in the parliament.

The leaders said that by the passage of the bills autocracy would be rooted out for good and true democracy would be established in the country.

Shisu Adhiker Kendro

A new children's organisation Shisu Adhiker Kendra (children rights centre) has been formed in Dhaka to uphold children rights and to make the people aware of it.

Kamal Aziz has been appointed its Director. The Executive Members are Mahmud Shamsul Huq, Manjurul Huq, Masur Rahman Siron, Ferdous Jahan Baby, Asif Siraj, Saiful Islam and Jahangir Khan, a press release said Saturday.

Jubo Ayinjibi Samity

Bangladesh Jubo Ayinjibi Samity (young lawyers association) on Saturday felicitated Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, Leader of the Opposition parliament Sheikh Hasina and other MPs for help passing the 12th Amendment Bill to revert parliamentary form of government.

In a meeting at the new city law chamber at Jonson Road, with convener Abul Kalam Azad

in the chair the meeting expressed concern over the widespread terrorism in the educational institutions of the country.

Samajtantrik Chhatra Front

Dhaka University unit of Samajtantrik Chhatra Front organised rally and procession in the campus demanding immediate reopening of country's closed educational institutions and arrest of terrorists.

The rally in front of DUCSU building was addressed by DU unit president of the organisation Naimuddin and General Secretary Mostaq Alam Tulu.

Lions Club of Dhaka oriental

The installation ceremony of the Lions Club of Dhaka oriental was held at Sonargon Hotel on Friday.

State Minister for Finance Majbur Rahman was the chief guest at the ceremony which was presided over by club president Ln S A Sakoor. It was also addressed among others by district governor Ln Humayun Zahir, Ln Moslem Ali Khan and Ln Anwarul Huq.

SKOP

Sramik Karmachari Otkhya Parisad (SKOP) demanded immediate implementation of Pay Commission report on Saturday at a rally at Mirpur.

The rally was presided over by Jahangir Alam Monju and was addressed among others by Dr Wajedul Islam Khan, Moksul Hossain, Tofacel Hossain, Mosharraf Hossain Khan, Shahjahan Babul and Tajul Islam.

The leaders also demanded to constitute a wage commission and to change office timing.

Jatiyatabadi Palli Dal

A three-day central committee meeting of the Bangladesh Palli Dal was ended on Saturday expressing concern over the price hike.

Presided over by G M Ibrahim chairman of the organisation the meeting was addressed by Secretary General Benzir Ahmed and others.

NVP demanded implementation of Shaheed Ziaur Rahman's 19-point development programme.

Social Welfare Workers Assoc

Sukur Salek has been elected Secretary General of Bangladesh Social Welfare Workers Association for the year 1991-92 at the conference of the representatives recently.

'Mukhar'

Cultural organisation 'Mukhar' has reshuffled its executive committee on Friday.

Former Joint Secretary General Nasim Anwar has been given the post of Acting Secretary General, former member Hemayet Mukul made Joint SG.

Mostofa Mamun Kalimullah has been made Asst Literacy Secretary and Asim Safar Uddin and Khalidul Huda have been made member.

The change was approved at a meeting with its president Mahmud Manna in the chair on Friday.

Tongi BSCIC Industrial area owners' association

A 11-member adhoc committee of Tongi BSCIC Industrial area Owners' Association has been formed with Sarder Abdur Rahman as President and Anwar Hossain as General Secretary.

The other office bearers are Shah Alam and Dr Abul Bashar — Vice-President, Sudhir Basu — Asst Secretary, Abdul Nasir — Treasurer, Mrs Noor Zahan Begum — Women Affairs Member, Ehsanul Huq — Organising Secretary, and Zahidur Rahman, S M Rahman and Abul Bashar — members.

Compiled by ASZ



Government employees holding a rally in city Saturday.

—Star photo

Fresh action programme announced

Govt employees abstain from work for two hours from today

Bangladesh Sarkari Karmachari Sanghati Parishad Saturday announced a fresh agitation programme to press home its three-point demand including new pay scales, reports UNB.

The BSKSP action programme includes two-hour (10am-12 noon) abstention from duties daily from today till August 15 and four-hour abstention on August 17 from 10 am.

The programme was thrown at a meeting held in the Secretariat premises, where the BSKSP leaders also warned of a greater movement to be launched on August 18, if the government fails to fulfil their demands.

Chaired by Sarfaraz Hossain Kalu, President of the Khulna

Ministerial Employees Association, the meeting was addressed, among others, by BSKSP Secretary General Syed Mohtuddin, Abdur Rauf, Syed Ataur Rahman and Shah Alam.

The leaders said they were not out to oust the democratically-elected government, rather they wanted wage hike for sustenance.

"We want to live with respect, honour and honesty, we haven't put forward our demands for privileges to hobnob in clubs," one of the leaders said, painting a contrast between the lifestyle of bigshots and theirs.

The government is playing foul by placing another forum against us," Syed Mohtuddin alleged, vowing to continue movement peacefully.

"We can lock the Secretariat gates anytime, but we want to give the government the last chance to accept our demands," the speakers said unanimously.

The decision to form a liaison committee was announced at the meeting to co-ordinate programmes with that of other forums in agitation for pay scales.

The meeting also decided to stage demonstration simultaneously during abstentions.

Third and fourth class government employees are in movement for the last one month for realisation of their demands — implementation of the Pay Commission report, new office timing and due provision for their promotion.

Govt college teachers may be promoted

State Minister for Education Principal Yunus Khan Saturday said united efforts of the students and the teachers should be continued for checking terrorism in the campus, reports BSS.

He was speaking at the prize distribution ceremony on the concluding day of the Literature—Cultural Week of Dhaka College Students' Union.

He said the government was facing a social problem like two crore unemployed youths besides huge debt burden inherited from the previous government.

Referring to the various demands of the lecturers of the government colleges, the State Minister said the government was considering with sympathy their promotion cases.

Speaking on the occasion, State Minister for Irrigation, Water Development and Flood Control Mohammad Ansar Ali Siddiqi expressed the hope that the student community would be able to restore congenial atmosphere in the campus.

He said the government was determined to bring back academic atmosphere in the campus immediately as it solved the constitutional problem of the country.

Presided over by Principal of the college Nasir Uddin Ahmed, the function was also addressed by Jatiya Sangsad Member Begum Bani Ashraf, Prof Altafunnesa, Vice-President of Students' Union Mir Sarfat Ali Sapu and General Secretary Zakir, Hossain Zakir.

Bush's greetings for newly-wed couple

US President George Bush and his wife Barbara have congratulated Farah Naaz Huq Ripa, granddaughter of Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazul Huq, and her husband Serajul Mannan Chowdhury on their wedding, reports UNB.

"Congratulations and best wishes on your marriage," said the US President and the first lady in a letter of greetings to the new couple, enclosed with a press release issued here Saturday.

"May your love and commitment continue to grow and bring your happiness and strength through the years," the Bushes said.

Ripa is the daughter of A K Faizul Huq, a former minister and son of late leader Sher-e-Bangla.

State honour for Mujib demanded

The 16th death anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman will be observed on August 15, reports BSS.

Bangabandhu along with his family members were killed on August 15 of 1975.

A 253-member 'National Mourning Day '91 Observance Committee' has been formed with poetess Begum Sufia Kamal as its president.

The committee comprises national and political leaders, lawyers, journalists, writers and artists.

The Mourning Day Observance Committee, in a statement Saturday demanded state honour for Bangabandhu as the father of the nation.

50 'mastans' held in Narayanganj

NARAYANGANJ, Aug 10: Police arrested 50 alleged mastans criminals in a crackdown last night from different areas of the town in a bid to improve the law and order situation, reports UNB.

The arrested were wanted in connection with hijacking, rape and looting cases.

Officer-in-charge of the Narayanganj police Akbar Hossain said the operation was carried out at the direction of Police Super Habibur Rahman.

Police admitted that law and order situation in the town deteriorated to a great extent during the last few days due to rise in anti-social activities of the hoodlums.

Open sale of drugs including heroin and liquor was rampant in the town, adjacent to the capital. School and College-going girls are regular victims of eve-teasing, local people complained.

Ali Amjad (17), of the town was severely beaten and his valuables were snatched by unruly youths when he tried to protest against eve-teasing this morning, witnesses said.

Amjad was later admitted to Narayanganj Sadar Hospital. In another incident last night, armed youths ransacked a hair dressing shop and looted the cash at Chasara area of the town, police said.

Weather

Moderate rain likely

By Staff Correspondent

Light to moderate rain accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at many places over Chittagong and Khulna divisions and at a few places over Dhaka and Rajshahi divisions during the next 36 hours commencing 6 pm on Saturday, reports Meteorological Department.

The day temperature till Monday may remain nearly unchanged over the country. On Saturday, the highest temperature recorded in Rajshahi was 34.6 degree Celsius while the lowest temperature was 23.8 degrees recorded at Feni.

Outlook for subsequent two days: Rainfall likely to increase. Extended outlook for another five days: Rainfall activities likely to increase further.

The sun sets today (Sunday) at 6.36 pm and rises tomorrow (Monday) at 5.33 pm.

Temperature and humidity in some cities and towns of the country on Saturday were:

Cities/towns	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Maximum	Minimum	9 am	6 pm
Dhaka	32.2	26.8	83	79
Rajshahi	34.6	27	84	73
Khulna	33.8	27.3	83	81
Chittagong	33.4	25.6	Na	Na
Sylhet	32.4	25.6	82	85
Srimangal	33.2	26.8	75	92
Barisal	31.3	26.4	90	86
Cox's Bazar	30.5	25.4	Na	Na
Jessore	34.2	26.5	Na	Na
Bogra	34	27.5	82	78
Feni	31.8	23.8	82	81

TV Sunday

- 5.00 Opening announcement
- Al-Quran
- Programme Summary
- 5.10 News in Bangla
- 5.30 Jhilmili
- 5.55 Cartoon film: Abbot and Costello
- 6.20 Sports Programme
- 7.05 Tagore songs
- 8.00 News in Bangla
- 8.30 Probaho
- 9.00 Drama series: Oshin
- 10.00 News in English
- 10.25 Parliament round-up
- 10.40 Magazine programme
- 11.30 Khabar / The news
- 11.45 Closing



Justice Abdur Rahman Chowdhury speaking at a seminar on "Dr Mohammad Shahidullah" at National Museum auditorium in the city Saturday. —Star photo

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