

Dhaka Day by Day

My Friend the Tiny Charioteer

by Fayza Haq

The rickshawpuller has been my companion to work and back for years now. I cannot ignore his presence or personality. When the auto-rickshaws and the 'Mishuk' are beyond my means the slow paced Ben Hur will do the job.

What annoys a woman is that she is sometimes fed with sob stories all the way to the destination and finally again at reaching the point where she wants to be dropped off. 'My mother is sick and I don't have money for her medicines. My grown up daughter must be married off and I haven't enough for the dowry. I need cash for my licence and I'm harassed every day by the police. I've been beaten up; can you not see the callouses and bruises?' These are the pat phrases that they expect you to swallow, and shell out ten taka notes, as if minting money were some private preoccupation of yours.

These jabbering, blabbermouths will revel in commenting on the political situation. They will tell you quite confidently that even if a 'farishta' comes down to rule Bangladesh there will not be an end to turbulent scenes and discussions. They will have jingles and rhymes pro and against the party that they support.



Even though the rickshawallas cannot read or write yet they are capable of giving mini speeches, and one is sometimes amazed at their knowledge of the

socio-political situation in the country. They can even tell you about what goes on in USA and USSR and not just neighbouring India. They must obviously be listening to conversations of the rickshaw riders. I wonder how many have even a single hand radio in their shacks and hovels, in the slum areas where they dwell.

These rickshawpullers, an integral part of the scene in Dhaka, have sometimes uncanny knowledge about where to buy things. They can even instruct you about where to go for a safe date, where there will be no peeping or prying. 'It's best in the bazaar area', one of the charioteers once advised me. You can walk and talk and even sip a drink or have 'chaat' and people will think you are simply shopping.

Once it was pouring rain and I needed some chocolates and flowers to be picked up on the way to the party I was attending. My rickshaw guide made sure that I had the essentials in my hand before I reached my friend's place, despite the thunder and lightning.

It is pathetic indeed when they have the conflicts with the police. If they hang around too long in places such as New Market entrance gate, the police will come and empty out their tyres. If and when they drive in the wrong way, as I have once witnessed going to Warli in old Dhaka, the police can be severe with their stern small sticks. The head swans to see the violence against the scrawny and poverty-stricken rickshawallas by the well-groomed, booted and stout police.

Sometimes the rickshaw man has just ar-

rived in the city and has no idea where even Motijheel or Dhanmondi are located, leave alone places like Tikatully and Hatirpool or Bhuter Gali. On occasions I have witnessed youngsters of 12 panting and puffing with the paddles. I have even seen a woman doing the conventional job of the man on a Friday, and she actually appeared quite pleased with herself. This was near the Foreign Office. One knows of more than one rickshaw repair worker in the city between Shabagh and Mohammedpur. To see a woman of the driving seat was unusual indeed. I have also been driven by men with one hand only. Their confidence and accuracy are remarkable.

At times they will tell how they are over 30 and yet can hardly support their parents in the village. 'I have no hopes of a wife and child for years, I assure you,' said a whimpering man as he dropped me off near the Goethe Institute. Of course, have no fear, I suspect these men to scrape together enough for the local alcoholic drink at the Mehtar Patti or to see some accommodating gay girl.

You have to be polite and address the rickshawpuller as 'Bhai' as you are desperate to reach your office, home, your friend's place or even the market for that matter in time, and be in one piece.

They love swearing and swaggering with their comrades and will even put up a mock fight with exchange of hot words and pseudo swinging kicks. This is specially so when they have a woman passenger. Their theatrical abilities improve with the presence of a captive audience in the form of the confused and overwhelmed woman passenger.

Sometimes they can be so arrogant and aggressive and have the daredevil tendency in them, that they will dare to overtake overloaded buses and 'tempos'. They have constant conflicts with motor cars, who naturally feel they have the right of the way, being bigger and more powerful vehicles.

These rickshawallas love making small conversation despite their sweat and struggle. When they pick you up or drop you they will sometimes question you about your job or even the ownership of the residence where you are getting off. 'That's a big house you live in!' they might comment, not realising that two-thirds of it is on rent.

Often when they ask for the extra money, as when they must detour near the Press Club, where there are repeated gatherings, they will not fail to flatter you with 'please Apa' thus flaunting their limited vocabulary of English. While some love to overcharge you and will sometimes quote you fantastic prices and make your blood-pressure shoot up, some can be extremely honest and give you back the right change — when you are absent minded and wrapped up in your colleague's recent romance, or the boss's sign of cynicism.



PEOPLE VOTE IN REFERENDUM: Top row left: Voters coming out after voting despite rains that flooded the polling centre of Faridabad High School. Top row right: Queue at a centre of Munshiganj. Bottom row left: People awaiting in a line to cast their votes at a city centre. Bottom row right: Law enforcing personnel guarding a polling centre in the city on Sunday.

Dhaka's cultural team enthrals Pak audience

The visiting 10-member Bangladesh cultural troupe performed to the resounding applause of an overflowing audience at the Allama Iqbal Open University auditorium in Islamabad Saturday evening. It was the troupe's first performance after their arrival in Pakistan on September 12, according to a message received in Dhaka Sunday, reports BSS.

After two more evenings at Islamabad, the troupe will move on for performances at Lahore, Karachi and Hyderabad.

Senate Chairman and Acting President Wasim Sajjad was the chief guest at the function. In a short speech, Wasim Sajjad stressed on the need for more frequent exchange of cultural, trade and students' delegations between Pakistan and Bangladesh to reinforce the excellent relations.

He said that Bangladesh was a land of rich literary, artistic and cultural traditions and the visit by the cultural troupe symbolised the strong bonds of history, religion and culture

Khaleda greets PM of Papua New Guinea

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia Sunday greeted the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea Rabbie Namaliu on the occasion of the country's independence day, reports UNB.

'On behalf of the government, people of Bangladesh and on my own behalf, convey to your excellency our sincere felicitations on the auspicious occasion of the independence day of Papua New Guinea', she said in a message.

She also extended her best wishes for his personal health and happiness and for the progress and prosperity of the people of Papua New Guinea.

The Prime Minister also felicitated the Governor General of Papua New Guinea Serei Eri on the occasion of the country's independence day.

Begum Zia, in a separate message, felicitated the Mexican President Carlos Salinas on the independence day of the country.

12th Amendment Bill rejected: Freedom Party

By Staff Correspondent

Freedom Party on Sunday charged that announcements were being made in favour of 'yes' votes by rigging the results of the referendum.

A meeting of the central executive committee of the party was held at its central office to review the overall situation of the referendum. The meeting was presided by party co-chairman, Col. (Retd.) Abdur Rashid.

The meeting decided on the basis of available information that although not more than five to seven per cent of the voters turned out at the polling stations, a large number of those voted 'no' in the referendum.

According to information it has been proven beyond doubt that the people have rejected the 12th Amendment Bill to the Constitution and have provided a clear verdict to keep their rights to vote freely to elect a president, the state-

HERE and THERE

Jamaat

Acting Ameer Abbas Ali Khan and Secretary General Moulana Matur Rahman Nizami of Jamaat-e-Islami on Sunday felicitated the people for participating in the referendum despite the existing flood situation and inclement weather.

The Jamaat leaders in a statement expressed their sincere greetings to the fellow countrymen for enthusiastically participating in the referendum on the 12th Amendment Bill of the Constitution.

'We express our gratitude to the Almighty Allah as the referendum has been held in a peaceful atmosphere and we seek help from Him to make this journey at democracy a success,' the statement said.

JSD

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Rab) on Sunday demanded adequate relief materials for the flood affected people of northern and southern regions.

General Secretary of the Party Humayun Kabir Iluru in a statement expressed concern over the outbreak of diarrhoea in the flood-hit regions.

Madrasha Teachers Assoc

Bangladesh Madrasha Teachers Association on Sunday demanded legal action against Mawlana Mannan and his sons Bahauddin and Moinuddin for repressing the workers of the Dainik Inqilab.

A statement signed by Alhaj Khairul Islam Jessori, President of the Association also demanded reinstatement of the terminated workers.

The association claimed the newspaper and the Inqilab building were established with the hard earned money of Marasha teachers and demanded to hand over its ownership to 'Jamiatul Modarresshin Trust.'

Compiled by ASZ

Plea to help mentally retarded

Mrs Solvi Knudsen, President of Norwegian Association of Mentally Retarded (NFFPU), Saturday unveiled a plaque commemorating her organisation's donation of more than one acre plot of land along with a building to the Society for the Care and Education of Mentally Retarded in Bangladesh (SCEMRB) at 4, Eskaton Garden in Dhaka, reports BSS.

Addressing a brief function on the occasion, Mrs Knudsen said the emblem would symbolise friendship and solidarity of NFFPU with SCEMRB for development of the projects toward the welfare of mentally retarded in Bangladesh.

The NFFPU President, who is leading a four-member Norwegian delegation on a week-long visit to Bangladesh, also stressed the need for generosity of wealthy sections of the society for extending help toward these unfortunate people.

Other members of the delegation are: Bjorg Ringstad, Chairman of NFFPU Committee for Aid to Developing Countries, Mrs. Lena Richter, Executive Director of NFFPU and Karl Johan Hanes, NFFPU Coordinator.

The delegation, which is leaving Dhaka today for Nepal, came to Bangladesh to evaluate the projects being imple-

Weather

Late monsoon spell causes heavy rainfall

By Staff Correspondent

Met office said on Sunday that a late monsoon spell from south-west Bay, now crossing Bangladesh, caused heavy rainfall in Dhaka, Tangail, Mymensingh, Sylhet and Rajshahi divisions.

It would take at least four more days to cross the regions. The spell was mainly concentrated over Dhaka, Met office also said.

Rainfall in Dhaka on Sunday was 120 mm which was the highest in the country.

Met office forecasts rain or thundershower with heavy falls may occur at places over Dhaka division and the regions of Comilla and Sylhet and Rajshahi divisions during the next 36 hours commencing 6 pm Sunday.

Day temperature is likely to remain nearly unchanged over the country. Rain fall activities would increase during the next two days.

Sunset in Dhaka on Monday at 6-02 pm and sunrise at 5-46 am on Tuesday.

Temperature and humidity recorded in major cities and towns on Sunday were:

| Cities/Towns | Temperature in Celsius | | Humidity in percentage | |
|--------------|------------------------|------|------------------------|-----|
| | max | min | 9am | 6pm |
| Dhaka | 27.0 | 24.2 | 96 | 93 |
| Chittagong | 31.4 | 25.5 | 83 | 80 |
| Rajshahi | 30.4 | 23.0 | 92 | 97 |
| Khulna | 32.5 | 26.0 | 78 | 92 |
| Saikhira | 32.8 | 25.6 | 82 | 94 |
| Sylhet | 27.3 | 26.7 | 100 | 84 |
| Cox's Bazar | 31.4 | 24.5 | 78 | 77 |
| Comilla | 30.0 | 25.0 | 95 | 89 |
| Dinajpur | 30.3 | 25.3 | 93 | 87 |
| Bairhat | 30.5 | 44.5 | 97 | 93 |

The function was attended, among others, by D P Barua, past President of SCEMRB and Managing Director of BSS, Ashraf-ud-Dowla, first Vice President, Wajidul Islam, second Vice President, Abdul Matin, Secretary General, G W H Chowdhury, Treasurer, office bearers of SCEMRB and Director and teachers of BIMR.

Reliance is not just a Name. You can come and see for yourself.

Reliance has proved that it is not just another Insurance Company. Reliance is here to meet the needs of a changing world. Our strong back-up of human resources, in-depth market know-how and wealth of experience give us the strength to provide the security for all your general insurance needs.

EXPERIENCE · STRENGTH · SECURITY

RELIANCE INSURANCE LIMITED

BSB BUILDING, 8 RAJUK AVENUE, DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH
 Phone: PABX - 240105-6, 235080
 Telex: 671196 RIL BJ

What's on today

- Show of French film**
- The show of the French film 'L'Arnee Des Ombres' will take place at the Alliance Francaise (26, Mirpur Road, Dhanmondi) in the city today (Monday) at 8.30 pm.
- Story of the film: A handful of men and women in the resistance in occupied French, although action is largely present in the narration, Jean-Pierre Melville seems to be chiefly interested in the moods and feelings of his characters—doubts, anxiety, conflicts, and ends with a psychological film. His favourite themes are there, friendship, honour, fair-play, but also, at the core of the story, their opposite, treason. All the actors and particularly Paul Meurisse are excellent.
- Rotary Club meeting**
- The weekly regular general meeting of the Rotary Club of Dhaka Central will be held today (Monday) at 1.30 pm in Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.
- Dr Mostafa Zaman Abbaasi will be the guest speaker and will speak on 'youth activities.'
- Press workers joint meet**
- A joint meeting of the Dainik Bangla Employees Union and the Dainik Bangla Press Workers Union will be held at the Dainik Bangla office today (Monday) at 12 noon. The meeting will discuss the situation prevailing at the Daily Inqilab, publication of which has been remaining suspended since attack on the papers press workers.
- Lions Club meeting**
- The regular meeting of the Lions Club of Dhaka Oriental, will be held today (Monday) at 5 pm at the Managing Director's chamber of the United Commercial Bank Limited.
- All members have been requested to attend the meeting.
- and tomorrow**
- Girl Guides 'Peace Day'**
- Bangladesh Girl Guides will observe 'Peace Day' tomorrow (Tuesday).
- In observance of the day, a meeting will be held at the Baily Road Guide House auditorium at 9 am.
- Education and Cultural Affairs Minister, Prof Badruddoza Choudhury will attend the meeting as the chief guest.