

Dhaka Day by Day

For Some Quiet and Peace

by Tasneem Mosaddeq

I remember when we were kids, visiting relatives in Dhanmondi or Gulshan was always like a picnic for us. These areas with their greenery, lakes and open spaces had the peaceful ambience of a village. The only sound that we heard then were the musical chirping of birds and sometimes the cry of a lone fox deep in the night. Of course, the ting-a-ling of the ice cream man, the bell of the rickshaws passing by or the occasional hum of a car engine reminded us, we were very much in the metropolis.

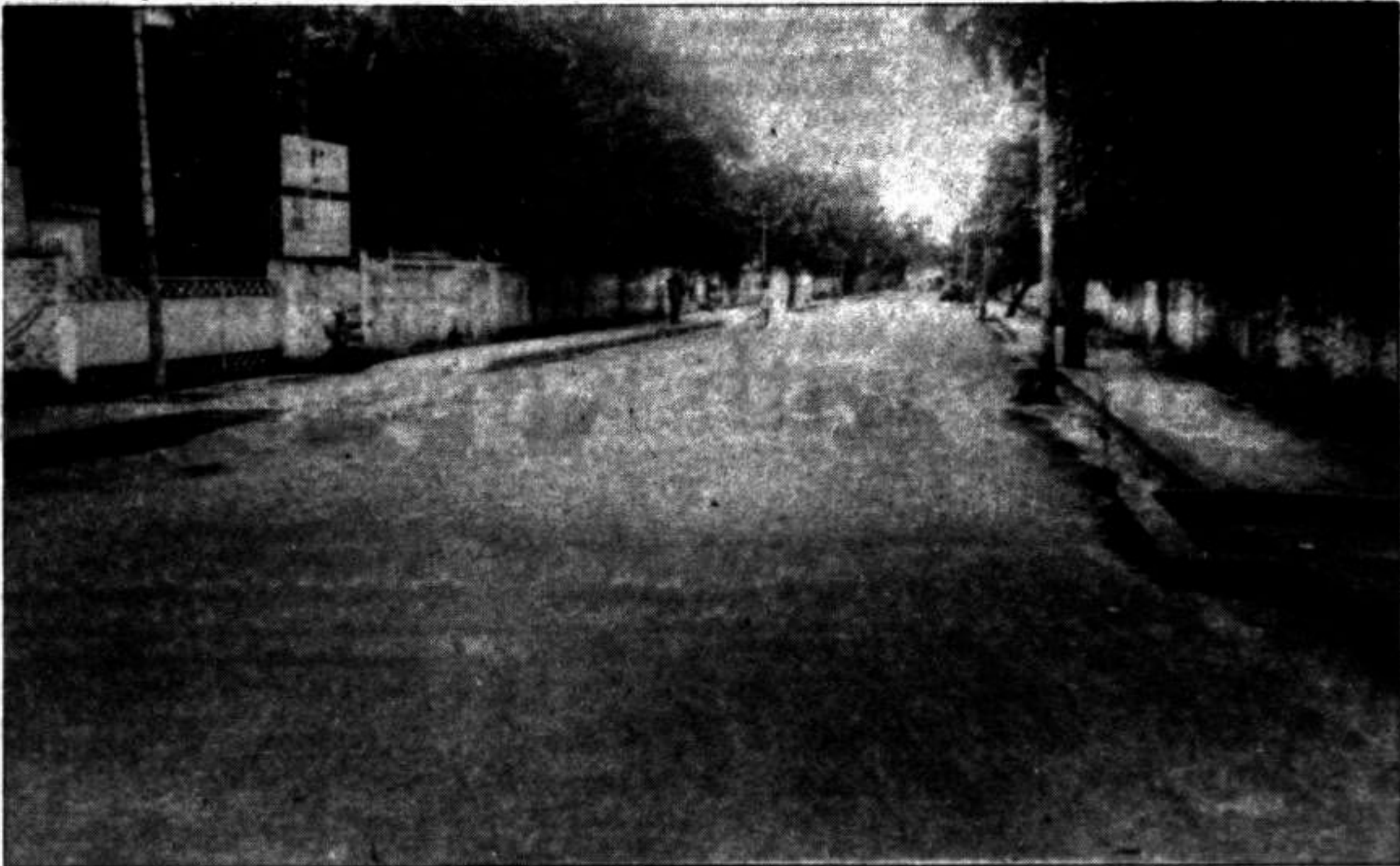
Dhanmondi had a unique charm of its own. Houses with their big compounds and high walls encompassed private worlds. Yet these very secluded properties bled with general scenery when children came out to play in the evenings. Though, there was not much social interaction but the neighbours knew each other, they exchanged pleasantries after the Friday prayer and congregated when there was birth, death or wedding in the neighbourhood. We used have bike races on the streets and pebble throwing competition at the lake.

With nostalgia gushing forth I accepted a relative's invitation to stay with them for a few days at their Dhanmondi residence. Their house, built at the inception of this residential area, stands by the lake. And from the first floor

stepping in mud, cow dung or the garbage that is mostly scattered on the streets rather than thrown in the bin, the pothole are not so easy to dodge. To say nothing about the muddy splashes from a speeding car. So, I called quits to the morning walk.

Daylight brought a procession of hawkers. As children we would mimic their interesting calls. Hawkers in those days had individual style of calls to attract attention. Sometimes these were lyrical and other times just an incomprehensible shout, but never irritating. The present day banal cries of "Murgi Murgi", "Moori Moori" or "Mach Mach" certainly doesn't stir anyone's curiosity. The cacophony created by the hawkers becomes so unbearable that we try to get rid of them from our immediate vicinity by declining their wares even though these items need to be replenished urgently.

Well, the hawkers were easy to tackle and I sit down with my morning cuppa and the paper for some quiet moments in the day which had begun so noisily. I had just taken my first sip when the car shattering honks from a passing car jolts me from my chair, spilling tea and everything. Cars, jeeps, mini buses even trucks are speeding by interminably, spewing exhausts, blaring horns and spattering mud and dirt.



Dhanmondi had a unique charm of its own.

— Star photo

verandah one gets a good view of the lake and the surroundings. The huge rain tree with branches spread like a green canopy rustled gracefully in the breeze and I settled down to enjoy mother nature in one of her many colours. But the mood soon vanished when I looked closely at the lake. The azure sky, the lush trees and the murky water of the lake didn't harmonise. This lake used to be clear blue, but now it is muddy; a rotting grey-green colour, garbage floating in from all directions. And when it rains a suffocating stench rises from its depths. At the point where the lake narrows it looks more like a sewerage now. Disappointed but not disheartened, I decided to discover the Dhanmondi or my childhood with a morning walk the next day.

Light hadn't yet penetrated the eastern sky when I was startled by the desperate moaning of a cow, from the street below. The cow's incessant cries breaking the blissful pre-dawn silence was nerve wrecking. So, instead of going back to sleep, I dressed and went down for the much planned walk. A few steps down the street I found myself passing through a mobile dairy farm. Cows and calves of various sizes and colours were carelessly tied along both sides of the street. Some were being fed while others were being milked. The odour from dung, urine and mud overpowered the subtle fragrances of early morning blossoms. And I wondered, whatever happened to the norms and regulations of residential areas. Surely, public spaces couldn't be used in this manner. The cows belong to some of the residents here who crave for fresh milk everyday. Well, they could turn their own homes into dairy farms, instead of spoiling public places and creating a nuisance in general. Just the other day I overheard a gentleman declare, he would be moving to Dhanmondi, though the rents are higher there but he would be able to keep cows and it is a small price to pay for fresh milk, malai and ghee. The area where he was residing did not have any space out-side the house and there weren't any parks either to run a private dairy. This sort of attitude cannot really be blamed because public amenities in residential areas are really in dire straits. The street where my relative stays and most of the streets in Dhanmondi for that matter are in a miserable condition. Though some of the main streets have been paved, carpeted and proper sidewalks added but the rest of the streets are in a sorry state of neglect. For pedestrians the streets are a nightmare. If one is lucky enough to avoid

By midmorning the rush on the streets had abated somewhat and I thought at last we will have some peace. But then it was time for the cars from driving schools to make their entry. The instructors and students took maximum advantage of the nearly empty streets and then the sound of screeching brakes and heated engines was added to that of honking horns. Only for a brief hour or so in the afternoon the streets looked deserted, for then it was too hot for anyone to stir out of the shade.

Evening was a repetition of the morning rush hour mayhem, so I decided to go up on the roof to get away from it all. The view from first floor rooftop was quite limited because of the apartment blocks that were raising their heads all around. Dhanmondi has recently joined the era of apartment building, which had dawned over Dhaka with a sudden flourish. Therefore, houses were either taken down or lawns and gardens, converted into brick and cement structure providing habitation for more people. Thank God for the restriction imposed on the height of these apartment blocks especially in Gulshan and Dhanmondi. Otherwise, the sky would literally have become the limit for the enthusiastic builders.

I wondered what the children did in the evenings. Apartments didn't have much space at ground level for them to play, streets are too hazardous and parks are grazing fields for the cows and sleeping places for the beggars. Living shoulder to shoulder people do not know each other and are not concerned with their civic rights and responsibilities. Recounting my experiences in Dhanmondi, I commented to a friend who resides in Banani that probably she is much better off. After all, that part of Banani is relatively less congested. She gave me a rueful smile and showed the slum that is spreading along the lake there, just outside her wall. 'Your relatives' she said 'should be grateful for at least they get to see the lake and trees, over here I only get to view the dismal sight of humanity'. Another friend has decided to move to the top floor of the tallest apartment block. Since, he alone cannot change the status quo, he can at least escape by shutting out the din and pollution once he is inside his flat — far up from the mosquito, flies and the maddening crowd below. I wish him luck and feel sad at the slow and gradual decay of this beautiful city of ours. Where has all the public awareness gone? If we try, concerted efforts can surely bring about some positive change.

What's on today . . .

Press Club lecture

The fourth and last lecture of the National Press Club lecture series-1991 will be held at 4 pm today (Saturday) at the club auditorium.

Abu Abdullah, Director of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies will deliver the lecture on "Utilisation of Foreign Aid and National Development."

The discussants on the lecture are: Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Dr Khondakar Mosharraf Hossain, CPB President Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, former Ambassador Kaiser Rashid Chowdhury, journalists Atiqul Alam, Moazzem Hossain and Zahiduzzaman Faruq, additional finance secretary Dr Moshir Rahman and World Bank mission chief to Bangladesh Christopher Willoughby.

Workshop on VAT

A four-day workshop on Value Added Tax (VAT) organised by Survey Research Group of Bangladesh, a management and industrial consultancy house, will begin today (Sunday) in the city.

Prof Dr Rahim B Talukder, Director of the Institute of Business Administration, Dhaka University, will inaugurate the workshop at 4.30 pm at the hotel Purbani International.

Asiatic Society

The Asiatic Society of Bangladesh (ASB) sponsored Halima Sharfuddin Award 1991 ceremony will take place today (Sunday) at 4.30 at the ASB office at 5, Old Secretariat Road in the city.

Fisheries Department Director A K Ataur Rahman will be given the award for his book "freshwater fishes of Bangladesh" which has been adjudged the best original publication in science and technology for the years 1989 and 1990. The award carry Taka 30,000 and a certificate of commendation. The book will be available at a special discount at the venue of the ceremony.

President of Bangladesh Academy of Science Dr M Innas Ali will attend the occasion as chief guest.

VAN medical treatment

Voluntary Assistance for the Needy (VAN) will carry out a medical treatment to the eyes and teeth of the students of the schools run by the van.

The programmes will be held at Kutubkhali Government Primary School and Daffodil Kindergarten both in Dhaka.

Radio Clubs

Bangladesh Association of Radio Clubs will hold a get-together to mark the golden jubilee of BBC Bangla service today (Sunday) at 5 pm at the VIP lounge of the National Press Club. Scrajur Rahman, Barry Langridge and Dipankar Ghosh of the BBC will be present on the occasion.

Reception to Rhymist

International Federation for World Peace, Bangladesh committee, will accord a reception to rhymist Sadia Chowdhury at her Shyamoli (Road No 1, House No 3/Kha/1) residence in the city today (Sunday) at 4 pm.

Noted researcher on folklore Dr Tripti Brahma will attend the function as chief guest.

. . . and tomorrow

Talk on South Asia

The Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies has arranged a talk by Gagat Mehta, former Indian Foreign Secretary tomorrow (Monday) at its auditorium at 4.30 pm. He will speak on 'South Asia, in the post-Cold War era'.

Tissue Bank

A meeting of the Bangladesh Tissue Bank will be held tomorrow (Monday) at 10 am at the Sir Salmullah Medical College Hospital.

All the members of the bank have been requested to attend the meeting.

Workers' Federation

National Workers' Federation will hold a gathering in front of the National Press Club tomorrow (Monday) at 3.30 pm to press for its three-point demand which include fixation of minimum pay-scale at Taka 1,500 for the workers.

Press Club chess contest

A chess competition organised by the National Press Club will be held tomorrow (Monday) at 4 pm at the club in observance of the 37th founding anniversary of the club.

Sponsored by the Bangladesh Sports, the contest will be inaugurated by Grand Master Niaz Morshed.

Govt urged to accept teachers' demands

By Staff Correspondent

President of Bangladesh Teachers' Association Sheikh Amanullah and Secretary General Azizul Huq Shah in a press release on Saturday expressed concern over non-acceptance of 15-point demand of the teachers' federation and 10-point demand of teachers' association.

The association leaders said that the government did not so far take any positive steps to accept the demands which created dissatisfaction among the teachers.

They urged the government to accept the legitimate demands of the teachers immediately.

Statistical pocket book published

Bangladesh Statistical Pocket Book-1991 has been published recently incorporating statistical data of various sectors, an official handout said Saturday night, reports BSS.

New Member of DESA

The government has appointed Lt Col (Retd) S S M Otullah as Member (Administration) of the Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA), an Energy Ministry press release said Saturday, reports UNB.

He was Director (Administration) of Petrobangla since 1985.

Weather

Rain, thundershower likely

By Staff Correspondent

Rain and thundershower accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at many places over Khulna and Chittagong divisions and at a few places over Dhaka and Rajshahi divisions during the next 24 hours commencing 6 pm Saturday. Met office forecast on Saturday.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period, Met office also said. Southwest monsoon has withdrawn fully from Bangladesh and north Bay. Saturday's low over west central Bay and neighbourhood is likely to become more visible. Seasonal low lies over eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and neighbourhood, Met office said.

Rainfall recorded on Saturday over the country were Dhaka- 39 mm, Rajshahi- 25 mm, Srimangal- 23 mm, Teknaf- 13 mm, Faridpur- 9 mm, Jessore- 7 mm, Ishurdi- 5mm, Cox's Bazar 3 mm and Sandip and Tangal 2 mm each. Sunset at Dhaka on Sunday at 5.35 pm and sunrise Monday at 5.56 am.

Temperature and humidity recorded at major cities and towns on Saturday were:

Towns on Saturday were:				
Cities/Towns	Temperature in degree Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	9 am	6 pm
Dhaka	31.5	26.6	78	97
Chittagong	30.8	25.5	82	80
Rajshahi	31.0	24.2	92	98
Khulna	32.0	25.2	86	
Dinajpur	33.0	23.6	93	82
Bogra	31.6	25.7	98	84
Sylhet	31.0	24.3	90	85
Satkhira	32.0	25.6	81	82
Feni	30.8	23.6	80	85
Mymensingh		23.4	82	



Soemakno Iswadi, Ambassador of Indonesia in Bangladesh handing over relief materials consisting of 12.8 tons of medicine, food and clothes to the Chairman of the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society at the latter's office on Saturday.

Durga Puja from today

By Staff Correspondent

A six-day celebration of Durga Puja, the biggest festival of Hindu Community, will begin today (Sunday) at Sree Ramkrishna Moth (27, Ramkrishna Mission Road) in the city.

The Durga Puja festival will be followed by celebration of Sree Sree Shyamapuja on November 5.

Joining of BNP workers in AL refuted

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) on Saturday protested the news items published in different dailies on Friday that 500 BNP workers and leaders, quoting some newspaper that 5,000, have joined Awami League.

The general secretary of BNP city unit Salauddin Ahmed, MP, in a press release said that the press release of AL which claimed it, is fabricated.

The names which were published in the press release had never been BNP leaders or workers of Jatrabari and Demra units.

Bank loan for shrimp culture

Steps will be taken for sanctioning working capital for the development of shrimp cultivation and thereby enhance the country's export earning from the item, reports BSS.

This was informed at a meeting on coordination of shrimp production held in Dhaka Saturday with Industries Minister Shamsul Islam Khan in the chair.

The meeting was further informed that steps will be taken to build embankments along the shrimp cultivation areas.

It was also disclosed that shrimp cultivation on 16,000 acres of land have been seriously affected during the recent devastating cyclone and tidal surge.

The meeting decided that the Fisheries Department will take care of providing bank loan as working capital to the cyclone and tidal surge affected shrimp cultivators.

Development of 93 frozen food processing industries in the country also came up for discussion in the meeting.

The meeting gave emphasis on introducing modern and

scientific cultivation process to raise the per acre production of shrimp.

Shahjahan Chowdhury, MP, Taher Sobhan, Chief Adviser, Bangladesh Frozen Food Exporters Association, high officials from Fisheries Ministry and representatives from Shrimp Cultivators Association of Chittagong and Cox's Bazar were present in the meeting.

Girl commits suicide

One Shefali Begum (20) committed suicide by hanging herself from a wooden beam at her Mirpur residence early Saturday, hospital sources said, reports UNB.

A garment worker Shefali was residing at House 22, Road 5, Block H, Mirpur-2.

The cause of her committing suicide was yet to be ascertained.

Her body was brought to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

A case was registered with Mirpur thana.

Privatisation of more banks stressed

by Staff Correspondent

A Remy, a French economist, gave a lecture on the French experience in privatisation of enterprise at the Alliance Francaise on Tuesday.

Present on the occasion were the Planning Minister Zahiduddin Khan, the French Ambassador, and other economic experts and businessmen of Dhaka.

Remy said that the World Bank was devoting an increasing amount to privatisation. He pointed out that when many industries have to be privatised there is the fear of this turning out to be a national drain.

The economist said that there were many conditions of success. This included a strong political will; the fact that the general public should participate; and there should be unrestricted access to information.

He said that privatisation should be determined according to the domestic market,

that privatisation of the industrial sector should go with the privatisation of banks, that privatisation must have competition in the domestic market.

In order to have better economic efficiency, Remy said privatisation should bring flexibility; there should be balancing of public finance; there should be development of public share holding; there should be participation of employees in their own firms. They could have shares in their own firms, he added.

Privatisation is for the benefit of the individual, Remy stressed.

Premadasa greets Biswas

Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa Saturday felicitated President Abdul Rahman Biswas on his election to the highest office in Bangladesh, reports UNB.

Imray, Mannan discuss bilateral issues

British High Commissioner in Dhaka Colin H. Imray Saturday called on State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Abdul Mannan at his office, reports UNB.

They discussed bilateral matters and increase of security arrangements at Zia International Airport with British assistance, said an official handout.

TV Sunday

5.00	Opening announcement
	Al-Quran Programme summary
5.15	Reading from the Bible
5.20	News in Bangla
5.30	Haathi Khushi
5.55	Cartoon Film
6.20	Sports programme
7.05	Rabindra Sangeet
8.00	News in Bangla
8.30	Probaho
9.00	Drama Series: Oshin
10.00	News in English
10.30	Sanglap
11.30	Khabar/The news
11.45	Closing

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