

## Metropolitan

## Dhaka Day by Day

## Snaring the Slimy Snakes

by Fayza Haq

If you should find a spider or centipede in your bed or bathroom it is a cause of alarm and repulsion. Snakes, centipedes and newts are objects of fear that belong to a nightmare or the cauldron of the witches of Macbeth. Snakes are symbols of danger that only gypsies have been known to handle with calm and care.

Sharparaz Phul Miah, 36 from Elliotganj, Comilla, has an uncanny and bizarre interest in snakes and creepy crawlies. Since the time he was a child he was often killing millipedes, centipedes and leeches. At the age of eight he went away with an uncle to Assam. This uncle had married an Assamese and settled down there. There Phul Miah got himself a "guru" Ramil Naga Sanwasi, and devoted his life to snakes. While living in Assam for seven years, Phul Miah, who had no fear of snakes even as a child, learnt all there was to snakes.

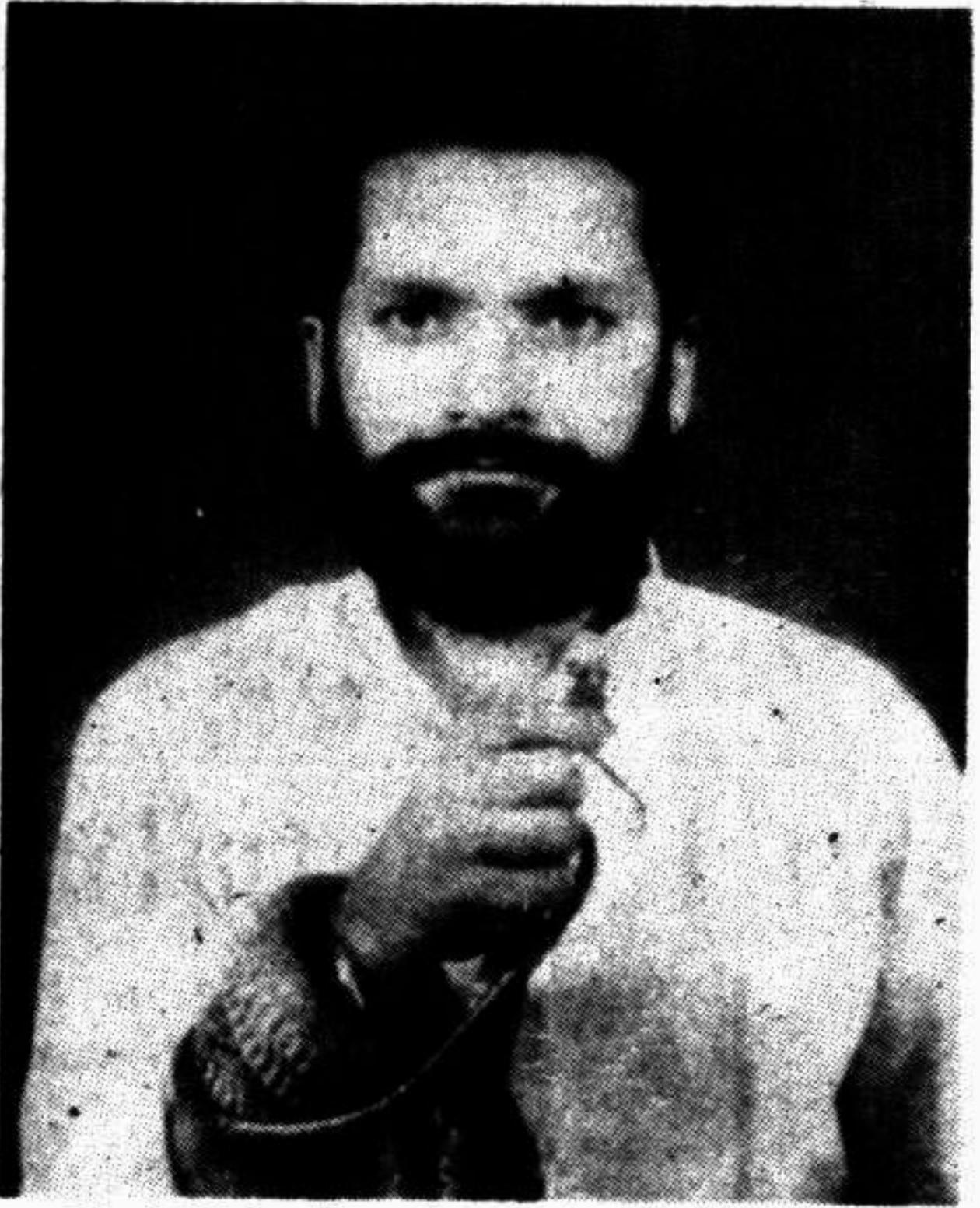
Sitting at my desk Phul Miah took out a multi-coloured snake - green, gold, orange, blue and silver in hue. This snake sat quietly in a many-coloured box while the "ojah" spoke to me. He then took out this reptile, wrapped it around his wrist, and had it bite his tongue till it bled profusely. The "ojah" then applied some her-bal medicine to his tongue and the ghastly bleeding stopped.

"I eat five snake heads a year because my 'ustad' introduced me to. But to counteract this I naturally consume a quantity of canteens from trees," Phul Miah says. He further insists, "I get struck by this 'kalina surjomukhi' that you saw five times a day. It has been with me for 10 years now and I feed it with milk, 'gandhar', 'hasnahena' and 'rakta joba'."

He showed me coloured pictures of the two daughters of his "guru" who eat, drink and sleep surrounded and wrapped by 300 snakes.

Apart from playing around with snakes how does this father of five children feed, clothe and shelter his family? Surely he cannot be frittering his time playing dangerous games with snakes. I stuck out the venom from those who have been bitten by snakes. I have cured 150 people by now. I normally take no money for my services but satisfied patients naturally give me 'baksheesh'. I cover areas like Dhaka and Chittagong. I have caught more than 35 cobras and 'darish' from the homes and gardens of people. I also get 'baksheesh' from each place, and this is usually about Tk 500."

Phul Miah works with nine students. "When the snake bites on the hand I make two ties on the hand and suck out the poison. I then apply juice of roots to the affected areas. If the bite is on the foot I tie two knots on the thigh and similarly draw out the venom and apply herbal cure. Usually the snake does not get a chance to bite the body but goes for the hand or leg," he informs me.



Phul Miah: 'I eat five snake heads a year.'

there are not many snakes in the Dhaka area because of the existence of thousands of human beings.

While in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, he narrates that he was once badly entwined by a powerful snake and could have died. His students rushed to his rescue. While he was learning, he says he was often bitten by the snakes, but was always invariably cured by his "ustad".

The "ojah" also supplies "rajmohoni" - which is a useful tree - and it is made into a talisman or just kept in purses and bags. He feeds his snakes with milk, frogs and fish and claims there are at least 15 variety of snakes in Bangladesh. He hopes to cultivate snakes some day on his own as they do in the snake farms of India.

He keeps his contacts with the gypsies just outside the Dhaka city. These gypsies who live in boats, provide him with snakes when his foreign customers want them.

Strangely enough this "ojah" has a hankering for visiting Ajmir Sharif repeatedly and listening to "qawwals". He has no desire for films or videos, and says his family life leaves him no room for "addas".

Phul Miah cannot bear the idea of any of his own children turning into an "ojah" like himself - one wonders why.

Begum Sufia Kamal, in her address, said Mohammad Nasiruddin would be ever remembered for his patronisation of the women and encouraging them to come out of their veils.

She said Mohammad Nasiruddin had pulled out women of the darkness and fought against all sorts of oppression and religious dogmatism.

Poetess Begum Sufia Kamal called upon the government to decorate Nasiruddin with state award and honour.

She prayed for good health and long life of Nasiruddin.

Tk 78.27 lakh Saudi donation for

ICTVTR

Saudi Arabia donated an amount of Tk. 78,27,906 to Islamic Centre for Technical and Vocational Training and Research (ICTVTR) on Wednesday, reports BSS.

Saudi Ambassador to Bangladesh Abdullaif Abdulla Al-Mafmanie handed over the cheque to Prof. AM Patwari, Director General of ICTVTR.

It was Saudi Arab's mandatory contribution to ICTVTR for 1989-90.

Weather

Dry weather to prevail

By Staff Correspondent

Met office forecast on Wednesday that dry weather would prevail over the country during the next 36 hours commencing 6 pm Wednesday.

Night temperature may fall by one to three degree Celsius during the period.

No appreciable change in weather will be noticed during subsequent two days.

The lowest 12.2 degree Celsius temperature was recorded at Rajshahi on Wednesday.

Temperature and humidity recorded Wednesday in important cities and towns were:

Cities/Towns	Temperature in degree	Celsius	Humidity in percentage
Dhaka	Max	18.4	89
Chittagong	28.5	18.7	78
Khulna	27.8	16.4	78
Rajshahi	28.0	12.2	80
Cox's Bazar	20.6	89	87
Srimangal	27.5	14.2	88
Mymensingh	27.5	14.4	65
Dinajpur	27.0	12.8	77
Barisal	21.0	17.2	84
		82	73

### Press Council constitutes 8 committees

The Press Council has constituted eight separate committees for conducting its various activities smoothly, reports UNB.

The committees formed at its monthly meeting recently are: Justice Committee, Appointment Committee, Discipline Committee, Finance Committee, Law Evaluation Committee, Rule Committee, Seminar Committee and Publication Committee, says a press release.

Presided over by Chairman, Justice Ruhul Islam, the Council members Barrister Shawkat Ali Khan, Professor KAA Qamruddin, LK Siddiqui, Professor Muhammad Harunur Rashid, Sanaullah Nuri, Barrister Moinul Hossain, Abu Yusuf Muhammad Khalilur Rahman, Akhter-ul-Alam, Abul Asad, AQM Zainal Abedin and Anwarul Islam were present at the meeting.

Phul Miah points out that snakes are being reduced in the country. This is because a) The wild bushes and trees are being reduced. b) There are many more clearing with the building of houses, roads and public places, like schools and offices. c) In the fields there is the use of poisons to get rid of pests and these destroy the eggs of the snakes. The snakes lay eggs in winter, the "ojah" informs, and these hatch out by the warm season. Each snake lays about 50 to 60 eggs.

The snake expert catches snakes specially in Sylhet, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Jessor, Kushtia and Barisal". He claims that there

there are not many snakes in the Dhaka area because of the existence of thousands of human beings.

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### Plea to decorate Nasiruddin with state honour

Centenarian litterateur-journalist Mohammad Nasiruddin Wednesday called upon the womenfolk to continue their march towards progress and advancement, reports BSS.

Speaking at a reception accorded in his honour by Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, Nasiruddin said, "The women of the present age are conscious, they have put their mark in various fields, what they need now is to take vow to move forward".

The Mahila Parishad accorded reception to the Saangat Editor, Nasiruddin and Fatema Nasiruddin, on the occasion of

104th birth anniversary of Nasiruddin.

Poetess Begum Sufia Kamal President of the Mahila Parishad, chaired the function while General Secretary of the organisation Aysha Khanam spoke on the occasion. Begum Sufia Kamal presented a shawl to Nasiruddin on behalf of the Parishad.

Nasiruddin briefly narrated how he had fought for the backward Muslim class and the womenfolk through the 'Sangat' and the 'Begum' braving the red eyes of the headmen of the then conservative society.

### Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Director Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital Barisal

Date - 12/11/1991

### AUCTION NOTICE

Sealed tenders are invited for auction sale of goods declared condemned as mentioned in the schedule at Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital and General Hospital, Barisal. Tender schedule of auction purchase can be bought from the Office of the undersigned at Taka 100/- (One hundred) only (non-refundable) up to 1 (one) PM of 26-11-91. Incompliance of the term in the tender schedule, CD / BD or Treasury Chalan (Revenue Deposit for Taka 3000/- (Three thousand) depositing in favour of Director, Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital, Barisal as Earnest Money, should be dropped with the tender in the sealed Tender Box kept at the Office of the undersigned by 11:00 A. M. on 27-11-91, and the Tender Box will be opened on the same day by the committee.

The authority reserves the right not to accept tender or to reject all or any tender without assigning any reason.

Prof (Dr) Abdul Karim Molla  
Director

Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital  
Barisal

No 1373

DFF(G) 13503-17/11

G-942

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While he was in India, he caught as many as 1200 snakes of different types, removed the venom, and gave it to the snake farms in Assam, Calcutta and Madras. In his life he has caught 20 king cobras of the white, brown and black species, he claims.

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