

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' Ojah, 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' Ramlal 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 catfish from trees," Phul Miah says.

He further insists, "I got 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, 'gandharaj', 'hasnabena' and 'rakta joba'."

He showed me coloured pictures of the two daughters of his 'guru' who cat-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 suck 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 'bakshesh'. 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 'bakshesh' 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.

A very significant source of his revenue is from selling snakes to the Chinese, Koreans and Japanese who live in Bangladesh and who pay him Tk 200 to Tk 500 for each snake. "They love the eyes of the snakes", he comments.

Another reliable source of his income, he claims his treatment of patients for piles, stomach trouble, and rheumatic ailments. There is no fixed rate of payment by this herbal "doctor". He accepts whatever he gets and sometimes it is as much as Tk 5000, by a grateful sufferer.

While he was in India, he taught 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.

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, Jessore, Kushtia and Barisal'. He claims that 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 'qawwalis'. He has no desire for films or videos, and says his family 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.

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 love to move forward."

The Mahila Parishad accorded reception to the Saugat 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 'Saogat' and the 'Begum' braving the red eyes of the headmen of the then conservative society.

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 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 UNB.

Saudi Ambassador to Bangladesh Abdullahi Abdullah Al-Maimanee handed over the cheque to Prof. AM Patwari, Director General of ICTVTR.

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

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 Motul Hossain, Abu Yusuf Muhammad Khalilur Rahman, Akhter-ul-Alam, Abul Asad, AQM Zainal Abedin and Anwarul Islam were present at the meeting.

One more foreign fishing boat seized: 13 held

KHULNA, Nov 20: Bangladesh Navy ship Shaheed Daulat while on a routine anti-smuggling and fishery protection patrol Tuesday apprehended a foreign mechanized fishing boat and arrested all its 13 crew members, an ISPR press release said Wednesday, reports BSS.

What's on today . . .

WASA

Anwar Silk Mills Welfare Trust and Dhaka WASA Karmachari Bhogayonnya Samabaya Samity Limited have jointly organised a function to distribute stipends among the meritorious children of WASA officers and employees today (Thursday) at WASA Bhavan at 1.15 pm.

Chairman of Dhaka WASA, Group Captain (retd) Nurul Islam will distribute stipends, among the children and Anwar Hossain, Chairman and Managing Director of Anwar Silk Mills Welfare Trust will attend the function as special guest.

BATESKOP Conference

The second national conference of BATESKOP, the CBA organization of the Bangladesh Telephone and Telegraph Board begins at Ramna Telephone House compound today (Thursday) at 2.35 pm.

After the inaugural ceremony a rally will parade in the city streets. The inaugural meeting will begin at 4 pm at the telephone house. The central leaders of the sramik karmachari oikya parishad (SKOP) will attend the function.

Seminar on "Water Management Practices"

A two-day regional seminar of Federation of Engineering Institutions of South and Central Asia (FEISCA) on "Water Management Practices" begins at the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh, at 11.15 am today (Thursday).

The seminar organised by the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh will be inaugurated by President Abdur Rahman Biswas.

Mosharraf Hossain Shajahan, State Minister for Irrigation, Water Development and Flood Control will attend the inaugural ceremony as the special guest.

Jatiya Grantha Kendra

The thirteenth book fair organised by the Jatiya Grantha Kendra (National Book Centre) will begin today (Thursday) at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the city.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will inaugurate the fair at 4 pm.

Karachi Bengali School Old Students Assoc

A special meeting of the executive committee of Karachi Bengali School Old Students Association will be held at 115, Shantinagar, Dhaka, at 5 pm today (Thursday).

Lions Club of Dhaka Oriental

The regular meeting of the Lions Club of Dhaka Oriental will be held at Janata Insurance, 39 Kauran Bazar at 2 pm today (Thursday).

The IBA Alumni Association

The installation ceremony of the newly elected executive committee of the IBA Alumni Association will be held at Sonargonj Hotel at 3.30 pm today (Thursday).

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman will attend the function as the chief guest while Pro-Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University Wakil Ahmed will attend as special guest.

Dr Rahim B Talukder, Director of IBA, Dhaka University will conduct the oath of the new office-bearers.

Rotary Club of Uttara

The 41st regular weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Uttara will be held at Chitling Restaurant, Uttara, at 5.15 today (Thursday).

The club meeting will be followed by board meeting.

Nibedon

A musical programme of old tune has been arranged by Nibedon at Shilpakala Academy at 6.30 pm today (Thursday).

Both veteran and young artists will render songs. Songs of Tagore, Nazrul, Ramprashadi, Nidhubabu, Rajani Kanth, Djendra, Atul Prasad, Mukund Das, Bhanu Sheikh, Radha Ramon, and Lalou Shah will be rendered at the programme.

Compiled by PA



Bangladesh Chhatra Union held a demonstration on Wednesday in front of the Indian High Commission demanding transfer of Tin Bigha corridor. —star photo

Handloom industry on verge of ruination: Home Minister

Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury Wednesday reiterated government's firm determination to launch a vigorous drive against smuggling and marketing of contrabands in the country for the greater national interest, reports BSS.

The Home Minister was talking to the leaders of Bangladesh Chhapa Sari Byabasayee Samity (Bangladeshi Printed Sari Traders Association) who came to meet him at his Secretariat office.

The Home Minister said

honest, dedicated and patriotic traders, businessmen, including consumers had a very important role to play to curb smuggling.

Thanking the leaders of the association for welcoming and supporting government's efforts in checking smuggling, the Minister expressed his hope that all concerned including the business community would extend their helping hands in this respect for the sake of economic emancipation of the people.

Describing textile and handloom industry and trade as one of the most important economic driving force, he said this sector is now on the verge of ruination nearly a crore of people involved directly and indirectly in the activities were now facing unemployment problems and economic distress government was pledge-bound to overcome this worse situation, he added.

Sounding a note of warning Chowdhury said, the government was firmly committed to uproot smugglers and criminals whatever might be their strength.

Referring simultaneous operation which will be launched from December 1 against smuggling and contrabands in shops and marketing centres in cities and towns, border areas, supply lines, he called upon the traders and members of public to wholeheartedly cooperate with the law enforcing agencies to make the operation a total success.

President of Bangladesh Chhapa Sari Byabasayee Samity Al-Haj Md Salauddin, General Secretary Md Kaikobad Bhuiyan, representative of printing and dyeing factory owners S M Sirajul Islam and representative of Grey Sari and Handlooms Factory owner Md Nuruzzaman Khan, among others, took part in the discussion.

Home Secretary M Lutful-lahil Majid was present at the meeting.

German Orchestra arrives Nov 26

A twenty-six member German Orchestra "Concerto Köln" will arrive in Dhaka on November 26 on a two-day visit, reports UNB.

During their visit, they will hold a concert at 6-30 pm on the same day at the National Museum auditorium.

It will be held to commemorate the 200th death anniversary of renowned composer W A Mozart, says a press release. Free entrance ticket will be available from the German Cultural Centre and at the box office on the concert evening.

Chalachitra Film Society has also arranged a Mozart Film Festival from November 21-25 at the German Cultural Centre Goethe-Institute Dhaka auditorium.

Tk 17 lakh contraband seized in Ctg

CHITTAGONG, Nov 20: Detective Branch of Custom House in two separate anti-smuggling drives today seized foreign contraband worth Taka 17 lakh in Nazirpara and South Patenga respectively, reports BSS.

According to a custom press release, the contraband including cigarette, whisky and beer were hidden under the ground.

Custom intelligence seized the goods and filed two departmental cases.

Death anniversary

On the occasion of the 15th death anniversary of the noted classical vocalist Ms Ava Alam, a milad mahfil will be held today at the Eskaton Mosque. Floral wreaths will also be laid at her grave at Banani.

Birthday Greetings

21 November, 1991
Happy birthday to
Karin Alfvg
Many happy returns of the day
From: Bo & Sylvia, SIDA

Birthday Greetings

Happy birthday
MUM
Wishing you a world
of happiness.
— SHONA

IN MEMORIAM



The family recalls, the memory of Late Abdul Mannan who was Senior Record Keeper of the Dainik Bangla and General Secretary of Dainik Bangla Employees Union, on his first death anniversary today, Nov 21.

To seek salvation to the departed soul Koran Khwani, Milad Mahfil and Kengali Bhoj have been arranged at his house—243 Uttar Badda (Tanila Para)—after, Asr prayer today (Thursday) and the family invites all his relations, friends and colleagues kind participation.

It's new just for you

The Daily Star is pleased to introduce a new column where individuals and organisations can publish Birthday and Anniversary Greetings, Congratulatory and Condolence Messages, Get-Well/Good-Luck Wishes, Birth/Death Announcements, In Memoriam, etc. at nominal charges.

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Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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

No 1373

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 Chajlan (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.

DFP(G) 13503-17/11
G-942

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
	Max	Min
Dhaka	26.8	18.4
Chittagong	28.5	18.7
Khulna	27.8	16.4
Rajshahi	28.0	12.2
Cox's Bazar	27.5	20.6
Srimangal	27.5	14.2
Mymensingh	27.0	14.4
Dinajpur	27.0	12.8
Barisal	21.0	17.2



Thursday

- 5-00 Opening announcement, Al Quran, Pro gramme summary
- 5-10 News in Bangla
- 5-20 Reading from the Gesta
- 5-30 Balte Para
- 6-00 Cartoon film: Captain Planet and the Plan- netters
- 6-30 Jiboner Alo
- 7-05 Katha and Sur
- 8-00 News in Bangla
- 8-30 Special programme on the occasion of the Armed Forces Day
- 10-00 News in English
- 10-30 Drama series: Twin Peaks
- 11-30 Khabar/The News
- 11-40 Friday's programme summary
- 11-45 Closing

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