

# Dhaka Day by Day

## Hide and Seek About Women Smoking

by Fayza Haq

The other day an overzealous young executive held forth ad lib. about how awful the habit of smoking was, at an office meeting in Naya Paltan. He surely had no idea of how many sore toes he was treading on. The meeting had basically nothing to do with smoking, so you can well envisage how peeved some of the employees felt.

My friend in Mohammedpur is constantly complaining about her brothers who smoke. "It is the only one of my six brothers who has this bad habit," she remarked, with exasperation, as I innocently eyed the stubs on the nearby ashtray.

When people are so censorious about men smoking you can imagine what they would have to say if they discover that women are indulging in the same pleasure, habit, pastime or what you will.

When I visit my colleagues—and friends at Dhanmandi, the doors are always shut and the curtains drawn, and it is made, many times sure, that there are no visitors or outsiders, when we indulge in the occasional puff. It just won't do to have people—who are not members of the immediate family—discover two women having a tete a tete over a cup of tea, and having a cigarette each.

Another friend of mine who lives in a flat near Ideal College will only smoke in the bathroom. This is because she has a teen-aged daughter, and feels it wrong to smoke before her. I have a strong suspicion, that when things go rough with her at work in the office, she has the occasional puff in the office toilet too.

This hide and seek about women smoking goes on throughout the Subcontinent. When I was working in Pakistan, the highlight of my evening was watching my friends, who were all young women, have secret puffs behind closed doors—as if it were some grand orgy at Versailles. I wish today I had had the sense to have joined them. Surely my nerves would then have held on better and I would not have had to take resort to being sheltered in the family home, as I do today, twelve years later.

It is reported, and I have seen myself, the same trauma surrounds a woman smoking in neighbouring India too. There too ashtrays are knocked over, whenever there are male visitors, and there are hot and flushed cheeks if the habit of a woman smoking is discovered, even by the closest member of the family.

When aunts and uncles in Dhaka discover that you smoke, love you as much as they do, they will not stop to think that you know all there is to the evil of smoking since the age of ten, reading articles from The Reader's Digest and Times. They are also aware that you have been through compelling courses in Biology at both school and college and could easily give a lecture on anti-smoking, if the occasion arose. "What a dirty habit!" they will immediately comment.

Relatives, which include mothers and elder

cousins, fail to comprehend that a woman would rather have arsenic or belladonna or even rat poison than have the sympathy of the world. This is specially so in the case of single career women—whether they are widows, divorcees, unmarried or are simply separated. The conservatives believe that God has created everything in pairs. When women have domestic problems or difficulties at the work place become too much, the cigarette smoke swirls like some male caress. Everyone needs a kiss or a cuddle sometimes to make their "garden grow." Every woman cannot lead the life of a nun and be content with it.

In the Maldives Islands, where I have lived and worked, the women smoked their "hookahs" without any qualms, just as they bicycled till midnight and beyond. If women are given so much of freedom in a tiny chain of exotic islands, why should women be embarrassed and ashamed of their smoking in a cosmopolitan city like Dhaka?

This frowning upon smoking for women is not a matter limited to the Subcontinent alone. When I went Down Under to visit my in-law, who, incidentally originally come from Geneva, they were horrified and scandalised when they heard that I had taken to smoking. You can rest assured I did not smoke before or behind any of them as long as I was in Melbourne. My other western friends in that city too were not happy at all that I had taken to smoking. "Cut it out!" they advised frankly, as all Aussies do. In London and New York too, I know for a fact that a woman smoking is considered a trifle "swift".

Women do not smoke because it is in fashion or because they want to flout society. They do it as a prop against the slings and arrows of life. Even men have known to be so cantankerous once they give up smoking.

I coaxed an ex-boss of mine not to abandon smoking altogether, because he used to get into such savage tempers when he cut out the tobacco tranquilliser. I know of yet another executive, who had a temper as sweet as that of a lamb when he smoked. Unfortunately his health does not permit him the indulgence of Raleigh's discovery any more. When things go amuck he can be as ferocious as an untamed tiger, and that is no joy for his colleagues, admire him as they do otherwise.

I know of a project manager who puffed away during Ramzan at Radio Bangladesh, Dhaka. His colleagues encouraged him as they too could inhale the fumes without smoking themselves. He was an outsider so he could flout the rules of Ramzan although he always remained sensitive to other people's sensibilities.

They say our women are being liberated. They march the streets during political movements, raise slogans and even give well-rehearsed speeches. Yet would they dare go near a tobacco stick in public? It remains a no-no.



## Anniversary of Jasimuddin's birth Jan 1

Preparations are afoot to observe the 88th birth anniversary of Palli Kabi Jasimuddin on January 1 in a befitting manner, reports BSS.

Several socio-cultural and literary organisations have chalked out elaborate programmes in this connection. Faridpur Shahjahan Parishad and Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC), Faridpur zone have chalked out a week-long programme at Gobindapur, ancestral home of the late poet.

The programme includes village fair, handicrafts exhibition, kabigan, jarigan, lathikhela, literary performances based on the works of the late poet. Ansarruddin High School at Ambikapur founded by the late poet after his father's name has also planned to observe the birth anniversary of the poet. The programme includes holding of seminars and literary competitions.

## 'Radio Clubs' essay contest

Bangladesh Association of Radio Clubs, central forum of radio listeners' clubs in the country will organise an essay contest titled 'Role of Voice of America in promoting world peace' to mark the Golden Jubilee of VOA, says a press release.

The contest will be open to all (including foreign nationals living in Bangladesh). The essay should be written within 1000 words either in Bengali or in English and to be sent to Akbar Hader Kiron, Secretary General, BARC, P.O. Box 1082, Dhaka. The best entries will be awarded through a function to be held in Dhaka to celebrate the occasion.

## JS body on Ministry of Law, Justice meets Tuesday

The second meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Law and Justice will be held at 4 pm on Tuesday, at Standing Committee Room No. 1 of the Sangsad Bhaban, reports BSS.

The Chairman of the Committee Law and Justice Minister Mirza Golam Hafta will preside. All members of the Committee have been requested to attend the meeting.

The members are: LORD and Cooperative Minister Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder, Chief Whip Khondaker Delwar Hossain, Barrister Moudud Ahmed, Information Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda, Salahuddin Kader Chowdhury, Sudhangshu Sekhar Halder, Jubed Ali, State Minister for Law and Justice Aminul Haque and Sheikh Ansar Ali.

## Maimanee pays farewell call on PM

The Saudi Ambassador in Bangladesh Abdul Latif al Maimanee made a farewell call on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her residence in Dhaka Saturday night, reports BSS.

He was accompanied by his wife. Maimanee, who served in Bangladesh for over seven years, was the dean of the Diplomatic Corps.

The Prime Minister appreciated the excellent work done by him for promoting bilateral relations between Bangladesh and the Saudi Arabia.

Begum Zia conveyed her good wishes for good health, happiness and long life of the custodian of the two holy shrines at Makkah and Madina, King Fahd Bin Abdul Aziz. She also wished peace and prosperity of the people of Saudi Arabia.

## 'Bureaucratic attitudes have gripped NGOs' Call to involve dispossessed into democratic process

Prof Rehman Sobhan, a noted economist, Saturday laid stress on involving the country's 'dispossessed' into the democratic process to safeguard democracy, reports BSS.

He was addressing a seminar on 'democracy, development, debt and the dispossessed: experience of 20 years of the independence of Bangladesh' at the Planning and Development Academy Auditorium.

Sobhan said, it was the dispossessed who built up resistance against aggression on democracy and installed a representative government in power.

So, the dispossessed, who make up the country's majority population, should be given due importance in improving their conditions at all respects, he suggested.

He said, illegal power grabbing and the politics of killing

could also be stopped if the usurpers knew that the majority people would stand behind the democratic government in the event of any such move.

Democracy was directly related to development, debt and dispossessed. Sobhan said adding that in our country, micro-level decisions had been creating macro-level problems.

He said, the past autocratic government was accountable to its donor agencies and countries as it had no popular mandate. But the present democratic government could bargain while taking loans from donor countries as it was accountable to the people, he added.

He said, it would be a test for the present government how it would run the country in the backdrop of a ravaged economy inherited from an autocratic regime.

Sobhan also stressed formulation of plans on the basis of national consensus to remove economic ills.

Dr Selim Zahan, Professor of Economics of Dhaka University, presented the keynote paper at the seminar, which was divided into two sessions.

The first session was addressed, among others, by Nurur Rahman, President, Khetmajur Samity, Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, Research Fellow of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, Harunur Rashid, a SKOP leader, Saiful Huq, a workers Party leader, Prof Latifa Akhanda.

The seminar was organised by the Association for Realisation of Basic Needs, a Non-Government Organisation.

In his key-note paper, Dr. Selim Zahan said, democracy was not institutionalised in the past 20 years due to repeated intervention of autocratic forces.

A section of people had been the beneficiaries of the development process of the last 20 years, he pointed out and said, basic economic values—economic discipline and accountability—had been destroyed.

He said, dynamism had not been created in the rural development while the voluntary organisations could not reach to the poorer section of people. Bureaucratic attitudes had also been developed in the Non-Government

## Krishibid Institution executives

The election of Krishibid Institution, national committee of agriculturists in Bangladesh was held on December 20, says a press release.

Mirza A Jabil, Chairman, BADC and Javed Iqbal, Deputy Director, Agriculture Extension Department has been elected President and Secretary General respectively.

The election of 67 branches of Krishibid Institution was held simultaneously at 28 polling centres around the country.

## Body to set up Ziaur Rahman Academy

A 15-member ad-hoc executive committee has been formed with Dr S M Lutfar Rahman of Dhaka University as its President to establish 'Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman Jatiya Academy' in the country, reports BSS.

The committee would announce objectives of establishing the academy through a press conference in Dhaka on January 10, a press release of the committee said in Dhaka on Saturday.

## Three get BAFA award

Ustad Faziul Huq, Barin Majumdar and Ustad Abid Hossain Khan were Saturday awarded by the Bulbul Academy of Fine Arts in celebration of its three decades of existence.

Communications Minister Oli Ahmed attended the function as the chief guest and distributed the awards.

The chief guest lauded the efforts of the academy for honouring the cultural personalities and said, this would inspire them to work more earnestly in their respective fields. He also said, preparations would be taken to hold a cultural function by the academy in Chittagong to spread the cultural activities.



A sequence of dance drama 'Mayar Badhan' at National Museum auditorium Saturday in celebration of the founding anniversary of BAFA.

## Compulsory primary education in 64 dists from Jan 1

Education Minister Jamiruddin Sircar reiterated here Saturday that compulsory primary education would be launched in one thana in each of the 64 districts from January 1 next, reports BSS.

"The mass literacy programme of the government would also be launched soon", he told the second session of the two-day conference of the Deputy Commissioners which began in Dhaka Saturday.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia presided over the session. The minister gave an outline of the system of education to be followed in the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examinations next year.

He sought cooperation of the Deputy Commissioners for conducting the examinations

smoothly. Sircar said the Deputy Commissioners would act as chairman of the committee for compulsory primary education and mass literacy programme.

He said about 40 lakh adult people were benefitted from the mass literacy programme during the tenure of BNP government.

Participating in the discussion, Education Secretary Mir Mustafizur Rahman described both the programmes as "massive" and said the DCs could play a vital role in their implementation.

He called for stopping malpractices and copying at the examination centres through strict vigilance and supervision.

State Minister for Education Principal Eunus Khan was also present.

## 'Scouting can help build youths as disciplined force'

President Abdur Rahman Biswas Saturday said the youth should be organised as scouts to help them build as a disciplined force inspired with the ideals of patriotism, reports BSS.

He said the aim of scouting was to build the children and the youths as good citizens imbued with the spirit of service to the country.

The President who is also the Chief Scout of the country was speaking as the chief guest at the inaugural session of the 19th annual general meeting of

national council of Bangladesh Scouts.

Held at the premises of National Scout Bhaban in Dhaka, the function was presided over by the President of Bangladesh Scout M Mahbubuzaman. Chief National Commissioner of Scouts M Mansurul Karim gave the address of welcome.

President Biswas urged the youths to join scouting and said it was an effective movement to save the children and the youths from moral erosion. He said necessary steps should

be taken to organise scouting in every educational institution of the country.

Termining scouting as the guiding force in building a disciplined nation, he said if the scouts could be inspired with the ideals of patriotism and service to the country then we will be able to build a happy and prosperous nation for the future generation.

Lauding the role of Bangladesh Scouts in carrying out humanitarian services in the cyclone-hit areas and in post-cyclone and flood rehabilitation activities, he said this was a unique example of giving service to the distressed humanity.

Referring to the children's health projects undertaken by the scouts to create public awareness for health services, he said this should be strengthened further.

He said the integrated rural development programme of the scouts should also be expanded to at least one village in each Upazila.

The President said the scouts should be inspired to participate in tree plantation programme through competition. He said this would inspire others for tree plantation which would help maintain ecological balance.

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### 1st Death Anniversary

of  
DR. Syed A. K. M. Hafizur Rahman

We remember with grief and sorrow the passing away of our dear father on this day last year. A mital has been arranged at his son's (Major Syed Munibur Rahman, Retired) residence at House No. 668, Road No. 33 (2nd floor), Dhanmandi R/A, Dhaka (after Azar (4.00 PM) on 29 December, 1991. All friends and relatives are cordially invited to attend and pray for the salvation of the departed soul.

Sons and Daughters  
Dr. Syed A. K. M. Hafizur Rahman

## Weather

### Cold wave to continue

By Staff Correspondent

Met office forecast Saturday that moderate cold wave would continue for another couple of days. Dry weather would prevail during the next 36 hours commencing 6pm Saturday.

Night temperature during the period may fall by 2-3 degree Celsius. Met office also said.

Dense fog is likely at places over Rajshahi, Dhaka and Khulna divisions and the region of Comilla and Sylhet. Little change in weather would be noticed during subsequent two days. Met office also forecast.

Temperature and Humidity recorded at important cities and towns on Saturday were :

Cities/Towns	Temperature in degree Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	9 am	6 pm
Dhaka	20.2	11.8	83	78
Chittagong	21.7	14.0	85	72
Rajshahi	19.8	8.2	88	88
Khulna	25.4	10.8	83	88
Barisal	21.2	10.6	88	84
Cox's Bazar	23.0	15.5	80	72
Sylhet	20.6	10.2	100	85
Dinajpur	19.0	10.2	92	87
Ishwardi	20.0	8.2	91	83

The lowest temperature on the day was recorded at Rajshahi and Ishwardi.

## Obaidul Hoq, Neelima Ibrahim get Nasiruddin Medal

The names of the recipients of the 'Nasiruddin Gold Medal' for the year 1991 were announced in Dhaka Saturday, reports BSS.

Obaidul Hoq would receive the Medal for his special contributions in the fields of culture and journalism and Neelima Ibrahim for her works in literature and social services, a press release said.

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সুজুকি এ এম ১০০

সুজুকি এ এম ১০০ - এখানে অপ্রতিদ্বন্দ্বী

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