

## Dhaka Day by Day

### Of Myths, Religion and Feminism

by Fayza Haq

Lois Gould, the visiting US novelist, who came to Dhaka for a workshop, was born before my mother got married. But one would not believe it listening to her speak and seeing her. She is full of guts and go. Not only that, she knows how to perceive an analyse life in depth. She has strong beliefs, has read copiously, and has vast experience as a writer.

For her, writing is as natural as breathing. She began writing as a school-girl, translating Latin verses. She had a hectic career as a journalist, and then turned her hand to writing novels — seven in number — two non-fiction and, numerous essays, as well as fables for adults, which are written in a satirical manner.

People everywhere are alike, and yet they are different in some ways. If you have reached the pain in their mind and heart, you have made a connection and built bridges in societies the world over," she commented about her writing, sitting in the USIS Auditorium.

Her work has been connected with feminism by critics. There is a tendency to categorise to make matters simple, she commented. "I was denounced by the women's libbers and by the others too. Such is the fate of writers. The themes that occupy me are power, betrayal, religion, mythology and ex-

— social, political, sexual and economic. I write about imaginary people and places but they all have some context to the contemporary. There are the protagonists who have illusions of power and safety. The king, in one of my novels, is obsessed with dreams, which is really his ego-booster," Lois explained.

The writer insisted that she was not influenced by any particular author. "I don't want to sing around. I want to remember my own cadences. My focus is on my own life. But I do admit to have liked the Brontës, Tolstoy, John Donne, G. M. Hopkins, as well as Edith Warden in my younger days," she said. "I think poetry had a lot of influence in my writing, and I always wanted to be a lyricist," she added.

She gives little description of her characters in her novels. The scenes are almost theatrical, she explained. "I do envy writers who put in 'dashing horses' and get away with it. But I did put in a triangle, as I did in 'La Presidenta', and brought in soldiers, and revolutionaries. People who read my novel told me that I had captured the essence of Argentina. Similarly, in 'Verdura', I believe I brought in the cattle farms and the warm climate with an impact," she commented about her own work with remarkable confidence.

In her latest book 'Madusa's Gift', she has brought in a film star who has had many love affairs. "I had Marilyn Monroe and Natalie Wood in mind. Yet ambiguity remains in the narrative. You cannot draw a line between truth and fiction. There might be an automobile accident, and five onlookers will have five different versions to the incident. People accuse me of spelling out the truth, yet there is no absolute

truth," Lois insisted.

When critics say that she was involved in "sexual revolution," Lois explained that they referred to her article for 'New York Times' in which she investigated the readership of pornographic magazines. "I was writing about the effect on the audience. I admit I was involved in porn, for women, but I discovered that the readers of such magazines are mostly men — although the authors directed them towards female readers," the writer elaborated.

Romance and historical novels are printed in plenty, Lois pointed out. "There is no thorough examination of the sexuality of the lives of the characters. In my own novel, 'Such Good Friends', I have written about the explosion out of the marriage of a wife, who discovers the secret amours of her husband, by reading a diary, when he is at his death bed. I have touched on some unmentioned topics. Marriage is often a closed door. Men worry that their secrets may tumble out. Not often is the male marital infidelity written about. I write about trust and misplaced trust," Lois elaborated.

The writer is comfortable about using mythology. She has written about Evita Peron. Here was a woman with an interesting history. I dealt with

the death and immortality of Evita. I admit I was carried away a bit with my protagonist. Yet we find easy villains in women. USA has fastened on to Imelda Marcos's shoes. She is a figure of easy hatred. The real tyrant remains shadowy in USA, as elsewhere. People remember Marie Antoinette, and her 'Let them eat cakes', but don't remember others who also brought on the French Revolution, Lois commented.

Dwelling on her experience as a journalist, she informed her listeners about how she did police reporting. "I had to satisfy both the editor and the police. Not too many women go in for journalism of that sort. I had to be careful and objective. Women journalists are often not trusted, as it is believed that they cannot be 'cool'. I felt an enormous responsibility to other women. I dared not

make mistakes. I believe that journalism is the best way to begin a career for a writer," the novelist narrated.

As for freedom for writers, Lois believed that issues such as pornography and obscenity are matters that have to be carefully dealt with. There are racist images and a lot of scenes on crime, which are shown on TV, and are carried in books, which could be controlled, she believed. "There is a wiggly line between what is wrong and right," Lois said with a smile.

Regarding Rushdie's 'Satanic Verses', Lois felt that it was an unthinking and offensive material. The irony is being offensive to be famous," she added.

With two sons and a handful of dogs, and time off in Ireland, Lois appeared to be doing well for herself. Her debonair appearance with the flamboyant bejewelled butterfly at her throat, and trendy clothes spoke of success.



### Concern over non-govt teachers' strike

The Bangladesh Government College Teachers' Parishad Saturday expressed concern over the situation arising out of the strike by non-government teachers, reports UNB.

In a joint statement, President of the Parishad Moazzem Hossain Khan and Secretary General Ali Akbar Khan Dolar urged the government to resolve the issues through negotiation with the teachers.

The teachers' strike entered into its eighth consecutive day yesterday.

### Bangabandhu Gabeshana Sangstha formed

A 51-member central executive council of Bangabandhu Gabeshana Sangstha was formed at its general meeting recently with renowned economist Dr Selim Jahjan as the Chairman, a Sangstha press release said in Dhaka Saturday, reports BSS.

The senior vice-presidents of the council include Messrs. Siddique Rahman, Panna Kaiser, Sirajul Haq, Bela Nabi and Khondker Mohammad Khaleel. Abir Ahad is the Secretary General and Ms. Fatema Khairunnissa Zebu is the treasurer of the new council.

### TV Sunday

- 5.00 Opening announcement.
- 5.10 Al-Quran, Programme summary
- 5.20 News in Bangla
- 5.30 Recitation from the Gecra
- 5.30 Chhara Chhara Lekha Para
- 6.00 Documentary on the occasion of the National Day of India
- 6.30 Sports programme: Cricket
- 7.05 Tagore songs
- 8.00 News in Bangla
- 8.30 Probaha
- 9.00 Drama series: Oshin
- 10.00 News in English
- 10.25 Parliament round-up
- 10.35 Chhaya Chhanda
- 11.30 Khabar/The News
- 11.40 Monday's programme summary
- 11.45 Closing



The US Ambassador to Bangladesh William B Milam addressing a reception in honour of him at Sonargaon Hotel in city on Friday evening. Mr Henk M Mathot (first from left), president of the Cargill Limited, USA and Syed M Altaf Hossain (3rd from left) Bangladesh representative of the Cargill Limited, also in the picture.

## Promotion of private sector necessary: Milam

The US Ambassador to Bangladesh William B Milam said, "Promotion of private sector is necessary to boost up the Bangladesh economy", says a press release.

He opined that the pace of the development process in Bangladesh could be accelerated by increasing private sector investment in the industrial and agricultural sectors in the country.

Referring to his recent deliberations with the industrial entrepreneurs and chamber leaders on promotion of private sector, Milam said, "The

US can make more contribution in the development process in Bangladesh through its assistance to the expansion of private sector."

The US Ambassador was addressing a reception accord to him by Syed M Altaf Hossain of W and W Grains Corporation, the Bangladesh representative of the world's biggest agricultural product exporter the Cargill Limited, USA, at Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka on Friday.

The visiting President of the Cargill, USA, Henk M Mathot welcome the govern-

ment's policy for encouraging the private sector and said that it would help in increase of trade and cooperation between Bangladesh and USA. He hoped that his enterprise could contribute more in growing private sector in Bangladesh.

Syed M Altaf Hossain thanked the US government and people for their continued support to the ongoing development process in Bangladesh.

Works Minister Barrister M Rafiqul Islam Miah, Agriculture Secretary KM Rabbani, food Secretary Ataul Huq, Director of the USAID, Dhaka office Ms Merry C Kilgour, the visiting Vice President of the Cargill Limited, USA, Burt Risma, members of diplomatic corps, high civil officials and local elite attended the function.

### Weather

#### Dry weather to prevail

By Staff Correspondent

Dry weather is likely to prevail across the country meteorological office forecast.

Met office says night temperature may remain nearly unchanged.

Sun sets today (Sunday) at 5:40 pm and rises on Monday at 6:42 am.

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

Cities/Towns	Temperature in degree Celsius	Humidity in percentage
	Max	Min
Dhaka	25.1	13.6
Chittagong	24.2	13.8
Rajshahi	25.2	10.6
Khulna	25.7	11.0
Faridpur	25.0	11.5
Barisal	25.5	12.4
Cox's Bazar	25.0	15.0
Srimangal	25.0	12.0
Dinajpur	23.5	11.3

### 5-Party iterates demand for ousting Golam Azam

By Staff Correspondent

The five-Party Alliance at a meeting Saturday reiterated its demand for ousting Golam Azam, Amir of Jamaat-e-Islami from the country and said the people would no tolerate him on this land.

The meeting termed the election of Golam Azam to the post of Amir of Jamaat as an unholy conspiracy and said that the incident once again proved Jamaat's position as anti-liberation element.

The Five-Party meeting presided over by Hassanul Huq Inu, convenor of the alliance was addressed, among others, by Khalequzzaman, AFM Mahbubul Huq, Saiful Huq, Sharif Nurul Ambia, Mohtuddin Khan Badal, Abdullah Sarkar, Tipu Biswas and Abu Sayed Khan.

Speakers at the meeting blamed the government for indulging the Anti-liberation elements, for which they felt Jamaat dared to elect Golam Azam challenging the spirit of the Liberation War.

The meeting also expressed grave concern over the killing of the student leaders Abu Hasan Murad and demanded immediate arrest and trial of the killers.

The speakers referring to the killing, said the incident was not only a sign of severe deterioration of law and order, but also a sign of threat to the security of the political activists.

The five-Party leaders, however, stressed the need for united effort by the political parties, to make an end to the situation.

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