

Dhaka Day by Day

Radios are Better

by S Bari

An interview always involves a certain amount of trepidation. Will the interviewee have a penchant for monosyllabic answers, or worse, will each response fill pages of notebook? Will he or she repeat press release information till you are snoring, or make you sit up with startling scoops? While some subjects make you wish you had never heard the word 'interview', others provide renewed delight in your job. Morton Giersing was a specimen of the latter group.

Giersing is advisor for communications at Unicef's regional office in Kathmandu, and he is bursting with ideas for media cooperation in South Asia. "The media has a watchdog role which is most definitely essential. But it also has a responsibility to instruct, to carry certain constructive messages to the people," Giersing asserts. In a developing region, this role is especially crucial.

Unicef is interested in strengthening the media in order that it may transmit these messages more efficiently. Without properly trained journalists, the very foundation of the media remains weak. Giersing is insistent on improved training facilities. "We need modernized training, both in the methodology and in new technology," he says. This should be the concern of the professionals, the journalists themselves, as well as of the unions and the publishers. Giersing has learnt over the past few months in the region that press institutes and training facilities in general have little support from the professional community.

To produce a better breed of journalists, the media itself has to involve its professionals, "not only in terms of funding but also help in actual teaching," Giersing comments. He prefers press institutes with close links to the profession over university-based programmes, which can easily slip into excessive theory and become less relevant to the real media.

"You as journalists must obtain better training for yourselves," exhorts Giersing. "If unions can sit and negotiate salaries, why not negotiate training?"

Unfortunately, a lot of journalists feel theirs is a profession that cannot be taught; that one is born with some sort of broadcast in one's head. Giersing laughs: "Whatever the romantic notions some people may have, journalism is ninety percent work and knowledge, and only ten percent flair."

How well does he feel the press and the broadcast media are fulfilling their social responsibilities? With another smile, Giersing becomes the UN official, and replies diplomatically. "Let us say Bangladesh is not atypical of the situation in South Asia." He feels the region as a whole still has a way to go before it exploits communications to its fullest potential. And the distance will be covered faster if neighbouring states co-operate with one another.

With internal instability and frontier squab

bles in almost all the countries in the area, does Giersing think media co-operation is going to work?

"There are things happening in one country that can not benefit another," Giersing elaborates: Sri Lanka has launched community radio. Villagers produce their own broadcasts, helped by professionals. In Nepal, community newspapers use desktop publishing techniques and serve a wide readership. Not only does public involvement make people feel that they belong to the process, it is also the best way to meet their information demands, as the people who make the paper are the people who read it.

Sharing bright ideas, "like Grameen Bank or BRAC," Giersing says, will spread the benefits of such ideas. He has an innovative insight: though the variety of religions and languages shakes Asia with separatist movements and riots, the region is really surprisingly homogeneous. Tell that to the Akali Dal or the Tamil Tigers!

Luckily, the issues Unicef is concerned with are ones on which most countries agree. "Children and their secure future are of importance to any nation," Giersing states. "So there is every chance of co-operation." In the media, cross-border co-operation could lead to exchange of information and regional training programmes on special needs, such as women in the media.

Women, Giersing feels strongly, are under-represented in the profession. "When there are women journalists, editors tend to relegate them to fashion and art, or at the most to development and women's issues." More women, he says, should be trained in business, economics, and politics-oriented reporting. If the women are narrowed down in the topics they treat, the media loses new angles on every possible story.

As to Bangladesh's particular media problems, Giersing focuses on one point which he is vehement about. From a communications point of view, it is ridiculous to have such a large print media and a relatively weak broadcast media in a country which is largely illiterate. "I have never seen a country so well-served to radio," he exclaims. Television is expensive, but radio is easily accessible. There is room for many more sets, and licensing policies can loosen up considerably. Has he spoken to the government about this? Once again the smile, once again the diplomat. "I'm sure the government will agree it is only useful for the people to have freer information," he answers carefully. "This increases the credibility of the administration. Besides, there is little a government can do to actually stifle news. You have an extremely communicative society. News travels so swiftly, so many people move around and carry information and spread it as they go, what difference could a few more radios make? What difference indeed."

Agrani Bank employees demand incentive bonus

By Staff Correspondent

The officers and employees of Agrani Bank on Monday urged the government to accept their demands for paying incentive bonus and fringe benefits immediately otherwise they would go for movement.

At a press conference at the National Press Club officers and workers' leaders said that they fulfilled the Bangladesh Bank terms and conditions to get incentive bonus but the bonus of 1990 is not yet paid. They also demanded separate pay scale for the bank employees.

They said that the bank earned profits even after providing low rate loans to different sectors upon the directive of the government. So they should be paid their benefits and considering their nature of job they should be provided a separate pay scale which has been given in other countries.

The leaders said that the Agrani Bank employees would start a 'systematic' movement if their demands are not met immediately. They however, declined to specify their programmes of action.

Officers' Association President Enamul Huq, and Secretary Mirza Waki Uddin, Workers' Welfare Association President Shaiful Islam Manju, and Secretary AK Shamsuddin were also present at the press conference.

Finnish MPs exchange views with Speaker

The visiting six-member parliamentary delegation from Finland, led by Pertti Passio, called on Speaker Shaikh Razaque Ali at the Sangsad Bhaban in Dhaka yesterday morning, reports BSS.

The members of the delegation exchanged views with the Speaker on parliamentary affairs, bilateral issues and other matters of mutual interest. The members of the delegation were briefed on the measures so far taken by parliament to give democracy a permanent institutional shape in Bangladesh.

The policies and development strategies of the government in different sectors and the role of the members of Parliament in the implementation of national policies and development projects also came up for discussions at the meeting.

Deputy Speaker Humayun Khari Panni was present during the meeting.

Torturing of Bhikkhu condemned

Dipankar Talukdar MP from Rangamati Monday condemned the torturing of Ven Basumitra Bhikkhu, Chief Monk of Bhalukaram Bouddha Bihar at Balukhali under Baghachari, on Thursday last by some people, reports BSS.

In a statement Talukdar demanded judicial inquiry of the incident and punishment of those responsible.

Greater Chittagong Hill Tracts Hill Students' Council and Chittagong Hill Tracts People's Council also issued similar statements demanding inquiry and punishment.

TV Tuesday

- 5.00 Opening announcement, Al Quran, Programme summary
- 5.10 News in Bangla
- 5.20 Recitation from the Geeta
- 5.30 Documentary film
- 6.00 Shikshanga
- 6.30 Health programme
- 7.05 Nazrul songs
- 8.00 News in Bangla
- 8.30 Drama series: Sankita Padajatra
- 10.00 News in English
- 10.25 Parliament round-up
- 10.35 Mini series
- 11.30 Khabar/The News
- 11.40 Wednesday's programme
- 11.45 Closing

Weather

No appreciable change

By Staff Correspondent

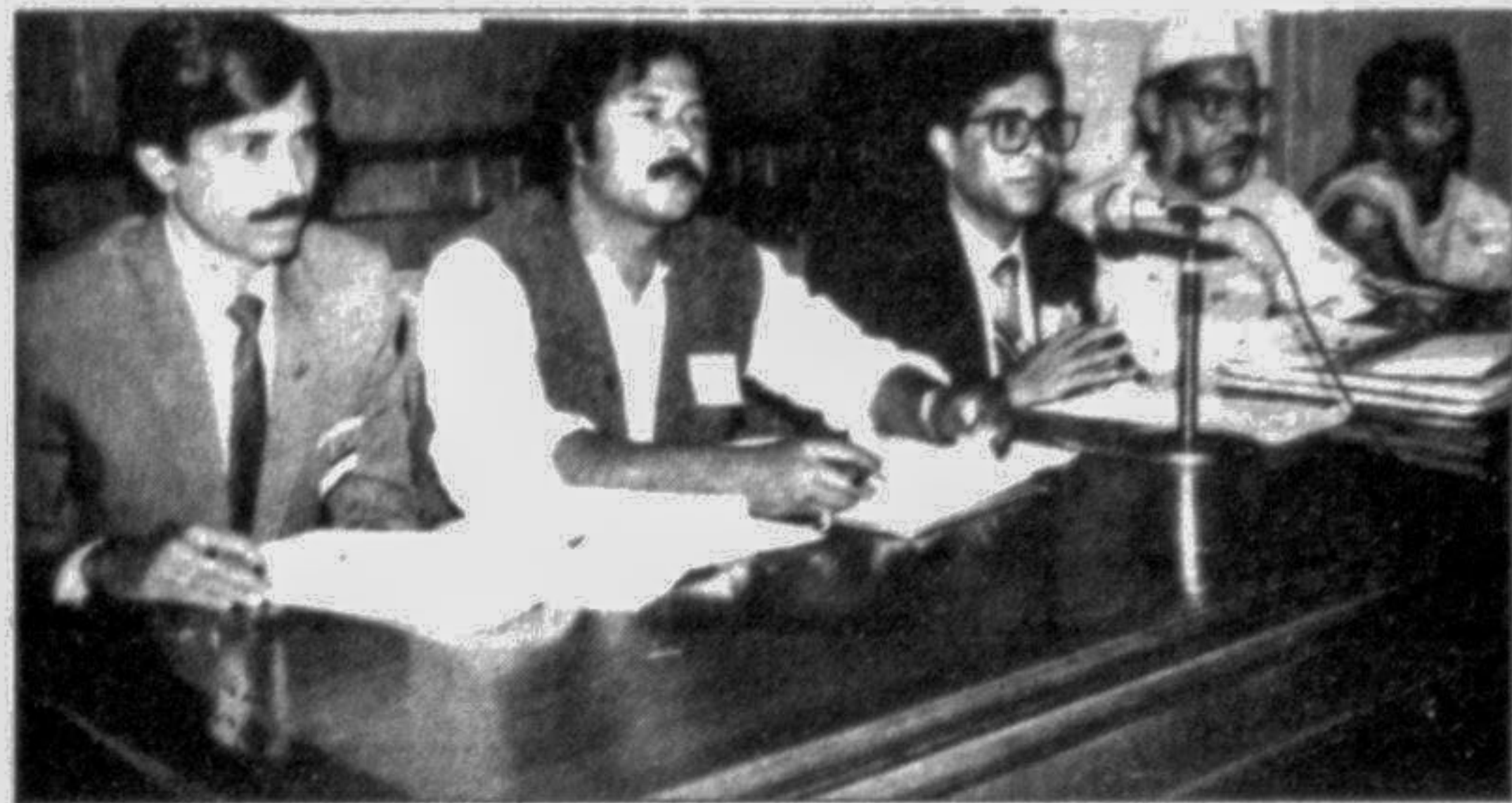
Mainly dry weather would prevail over the country with partly cloudy sky over Dhaka and Rajshahi divisions and the regions of Comilla and Sylhet during the next 36 hours commencing 6 pm Monday, Meteorological office forecast.

Night temperature is likely to remain nearly unchanged during the period.

No appreciable change in weather would be noticed during the subsequent two days, it also said. Temperature and humidity recorded in important cities and towns on Monday were:

Cities/towns	Temperature in degree Celsius		Humidity in Percentage	
	Max	Min	9am	6pm
Dhaka	26.4	14.8	76	52
Chittagong	27.9	14.6	78	62
Rajshahi	26.4	11.5	88	86
Khulna	26.4	11.8	96	77
Feni	27.8	13.2	89	74
Cox's Bazar	27.4	15.0	76	78
Srimangal	-	11.8	89	-
Dinajpur	26.0	12.0	93	67
Ishurdi	26.5	12.0	96	78

The sun sets today (Tuesday) at 5.41 pm and rises tomorrow (Wednesday) at 6.42 am.



Enamul Huq, president of the Agrani Bank Officers Association (3rd from left) addressing a press conference at the National Press Club on Monday.

Modhu Mela begins

A three-day 'Modhu Mela' (fair) began at Sagardari in Jessore Sunday marking the 169th birth anniversary of great poet Michael Modhusudan Datta, reports UNB.

Social Welfare and Women's Affairs Minister Tariqul Islam formally inaugurated the fair. State Minister for Cultural Affairs Prof Jahannara Begum was present on the occasion.

A number of eminent poets and litterateurs of Bangladesh and India also attended the opening ceremony.

Discussion on poet Modhusudan's life and work, seminars, recitations, musical soiree, dol dance and cultural functions were also organised on the occasion.

At the fair, there were 300 stalls to display the handicrafts of BCSC and similar other organisations.

Speaking at the inaugural function, the Social Welfare Minister said Michael Modhusudan Datta will be ever remembered for his extraordinary contribution towards enriching Bengali literature.

From the traditional bondage of superstition the poet had brought Bengali literature to the progressive arena, said the State Minister for Cultural Affairs.

Among those who spoke at the opening function were Farida Rahman MP, Khan Tipu Sultan, MP, Maulana Sakawat Hossain, Prof Golam Rahman, Vice Chancellor of Khulna University Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, Chairman of Tariff Commission Manruzzaman Chowdhury, Chairman of BCSC and Nimal Bhattacharya, a renowned litterateur and journalist of India.

USIS lectures on Jan 30, Feb 5

The United States Information Service (USIS) will hold two lectures on democracy and politics at its auditorium here on January 30 and February 5, reports UNB.

Barbara Good, a former US Foreign Service officer and presently Vice President of National Women's Party, will make deliberations on the role of women in the political process on January 30 at 3.45 PM.

Dr Elizabeth Hanson, a professor of political science at the University of Connecticut, will discuss on democratic principles and values on February 5 at 4.45 pm.

Annual jute production about 51 lakh bales

Jute Minister A S M Hannan Shah yesterday said the average annual jute production was now 45 to 51 lakh bales and production cost per maund was Taka 303.30, reports BSS.

Replying to a question from Rowshan Ali (AL-Jessore), the Minister said Adamjee Jute Mills was announced closed under relevant laws three times due to illegal work stoppage by the workers and labour unrest from 1972 to 1991.

During the period, the Adamjee Jute Mills was closed for one workday in 1985-86, six workdays in 1989-90 and two workdays in 1990-91 and suffered a loss of about Taka 4.70 crore in export earnings due to loss of production, he said.

Replying to another question from Abul Kalam Azad (AL-Jamalpur), Hannan Shah said the export target was fixed at 18 lakh bales during the current fiscal and 37.06 per cent of the target was achieved by exporting 6.67 lakh bales in the first half. "The target is expected to be fulfilled during the remaining period of the year," he said.

The export target during the 1990-91 was 17 lakh bales, of which 94.14 per cent were achieved, the Minister also said.

The total number of workers in these jute mills are 1,48,554 including an additional 6.05 per cent above the required number, he said.

Replying to a question from Mirza Waki Uddin (AL-Gazipur), he said the price of raw jute per maund at grower's level was Taka 294.16 in July 24.99 in August, 231.59 in September, 252.12 in October, 278.40 in November and 280.00 in December last year.

Replying to another written question from Nurul Islam Moni (Ind-Barguna) the Jute Minister said at present the annual production in the country's jute mills is 5.16 metric tonnes. Their total capacity is 9.03 metric tonnes.

He said at present 120 jute mills were operation while

The government has no plan to fix minimum price of jute at Tk 500 per maund, said the Jute Minister in parliament Monday, reports UNB.

Brigadier Hannan Shah (Rtd) was replying to a written question from Latifur Rahman of Jamaat-e-Islami during the question-answer hour.

He told Shamsuddoha of CPB that jute sector incurred a loss of Tk 345.33 crore in 1990-91 against Tk 514.22 crore in the 1989-90 fiscal.

He said 5.61 lakh bales of raw jute worth 3.67 US dollar (TK 146.80 crore) was exported till the last year end (Dec 1991), the minister told the House.

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Govt has no plan to fix jute price at Tk 500 per maund, JS told

Rly spare parts worth Tk 6cr stolen

Diesel worth about Tk 60,00,000 and spare parts valued Tk 6 crore of the Railway have been stolen in the last 12 years till 1991, reports UNB.

State Minister for Communications Fazlur Rahman said this in parliament yesterday replying to independent member Nurul Islam Moni.

He told the House that action had been taken against those involved in the pilferage.

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Salanga Day today

The historical Salanga Day will be observed today in a befitting manner, reports BSS.

Maulana Tarkabagish Smriti Parishad, Salanga Samaj Kalyan Samiti and Maulana Tarkabagish Pathagar have taken a joint programme to observe the day. The programme includes hoisting of black flag, discussion meeting and special prayers at all places of worship.

Seventy years ago hundreds of people were killed on this day when soldiers opened fire on the participants of a rally under Tarkabagish against the colonial rulers.

FBCCI plea for ADB assistance

Alhaj M Akram Hussain, President of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) Monday pleaded for Asian Development Bank (ADB) assistance in channelling foreign exchange directly to the entrepreneurs for encouraging industrial investment in Bangladesh, reports BSS.

He made the plea in a discussion with Dr Sri Bavan Sri Skanda Rajah, chief invest-

ment officer of the ADB and a member of the visiting ADB investment mission at the FBCCI. The mission is now visiting Bangladesh to assess the investment climate in the country.

Dr Rajah assured the President of the FBCCI of full cooperation for private sector development in Bangladesh and agreed to reexamine the current provisions for re-lending of foreign exchange loans and repayment schedules for private sector projects for removal of risks and constraints faced by the private sector borrowers.

The FBCCI President pointed out that high re-lending rate to the private sector projects and exchange rate depreciation were the two basic causes of current sickness of large number of industries in the country.

Chehlum

The chehlum of Dr. M.N. Huda, former vice president and eminent economist, will be held on Thursday after Maghreb prayer at his residence House No.57, Road 6A, Dhanmondi Residential Area, reports BSS.

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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