

Dhaka Day by Day

'Children of a Lesser God'

By Iftikhar Ahmed Chowdhury

Once I had a talk with a boy of about 10 to 12 years who worked in a motor mechanic's garage. He was lending a subtle and efficient hand to his work while puffing briskly at his 'bid' and humming a favourite tune from a Bangla film.

I wormed it out from him that he had been working there for seven months. Each day he

has to work eight to 10 hours. The workshop owner did not pay him any wages at all for the first four months as he was an apprentice. But for the past two months he is being paid Taka 20 daily and no other incentives whatsoever.

I asked him whether he was content with his pay. "What better can I expect being an orphan in this big universe? was his philosophical and bitter submission.

He informed me that his name was Mukul. What an irony of a name, I thought. I wondered if Mukul

knew that he might never bloom at all in the long run. I did not have the heart to tell him.

Child labour, in almost all the developed and many developing countries of the world is strictly prohibited by the law. But in our country there is no specific law against it.

While discussing the matter with Dr Mozul Islam Patwari, Chairman of the Department of Law, Dhaka University, I learnt that there was no definite law for the total prevention of child labour.

In Article 34 of the Constitution there is a ban on any kind of forced labour and employment by force is a punishable offence. But it also proclaims that if any one indulges in labour for the cause of livelihood or survival, it shall be permissible. There is no mention to the age of the labourer.

So the constitution is free from any blame or the burden of sharing any guilt for the existence of this mammoth population of child labourers. But Dr Islam also mentioned that even if there was no total remedy for or prevention of child labour there is a law to control it.

But we can clearly visualise how much controlling is being done. Let alone the whole country, the number of child labour is increasing in the capital at an alarming rate. These great mass of rootless children slave through the whole day without even getting proper

wages for their labour.

It is a matter of great shame and ignominy that children who are 'perhaps the only consistent result of human ecstasy' as Peter Ustinov put it, are not given due attention in our country. Younger citizens of our country who are the possibilities of our future, end up as wastage owing to our non-chalance.

While trudging back home at an extinct hour of a January night, I nearly trod on a heap of jute junk on a footpath of Shahbagh Avenue. At least at the very first sight I thought it to be so.

I was surprised to find after a close scrutiny that five urchins (whom one would preferable call 'takai', for they virtually remain as left-overs in a mal-adjusted social order like ours) were sleeping, holding each other as close as possible covering themselves with gunny sacks in the shivering cold. It was a shocking experience to learn how human being wear a disguise of extreme tolerance for the sheer cause of survival. After a long day's slaving they were possibly lending rest to their exhausted limbs that had run wild during the day.

With a resigned sigh I continued my way home, because our will and endeavour rarely allow us to do more than that nowadays.

It is true that nature's adversity often strips the tinsel off the apotheosis of civilization. The shivering, bedraggled, poor forked animal as Shakespeare termed the unprivileged, uncared section of human society, daily mock the lip-service in the name of fraternity and egalitarianism.

Couple of years back I had the privilege to see an Academy award winning film, 'Children of a Lesser God'. The film was about the bitter sorrows and some rare happy moments of a group of retarded children. The title of the film took its root from a vital question, whether these unhappy retarded children were the creation of one benevolent creator or the result of momentary carelessness of a Lesser God.

As human being we do not stand in any position to question the ways of God, but it certainly disturbs one's conscience to face the poignant reality that there is so much difference between man and man under the sun.



A life of extreme tolerance

Dhaka, Tunis will extend cooperation in agri sector

Bangladesh and Tunisia will extend cooperation in agricultural development for mutual benefit of the two countries, reports BSS.

This was decided at a meeting between the Tunisian Ambassador in Bangladesh Muhammad Mustapha Mizouni and Agriculture and Irrigation, Water Development and Flood Control Minister M Majid-ul Haq here Tuesday.

The Agriculture Minister said Bangladesh might contribute in agriculture development in Tunisia by exporting fertilizers and other inputs.

They also emphasised the need for development of socio-economic and cultural relations between the two countries.

Earlier, Mustapha Mizouni presented his credentials to President Abdur Rahman Biswas at Bangabhaban.

Presenting the credentials, the Ambassador said Bangladesh and Tunisia always

shared the ideals of peace for the wellbeing of their peoples and for the prosperity of the Islamic Ummah.

He said Tunisia was following with great admiration the democratic process which was successfully developing in Bangladesh and wished its total success.

The Ambassador said the existing relationship between the two countries were excellent and economic and commercial relations would rise to the same level.

He hoped that the bonds of traditional relationship between the two brotherly countries would grow in future.

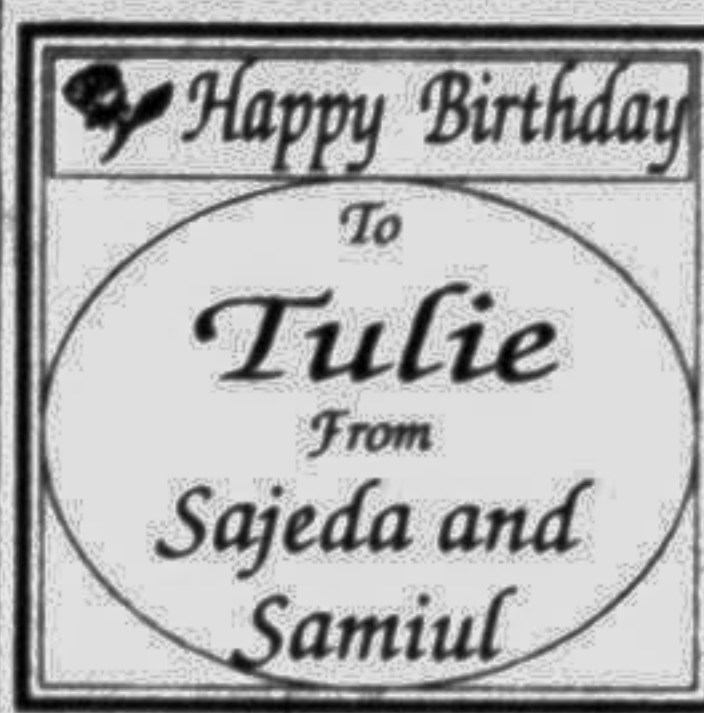
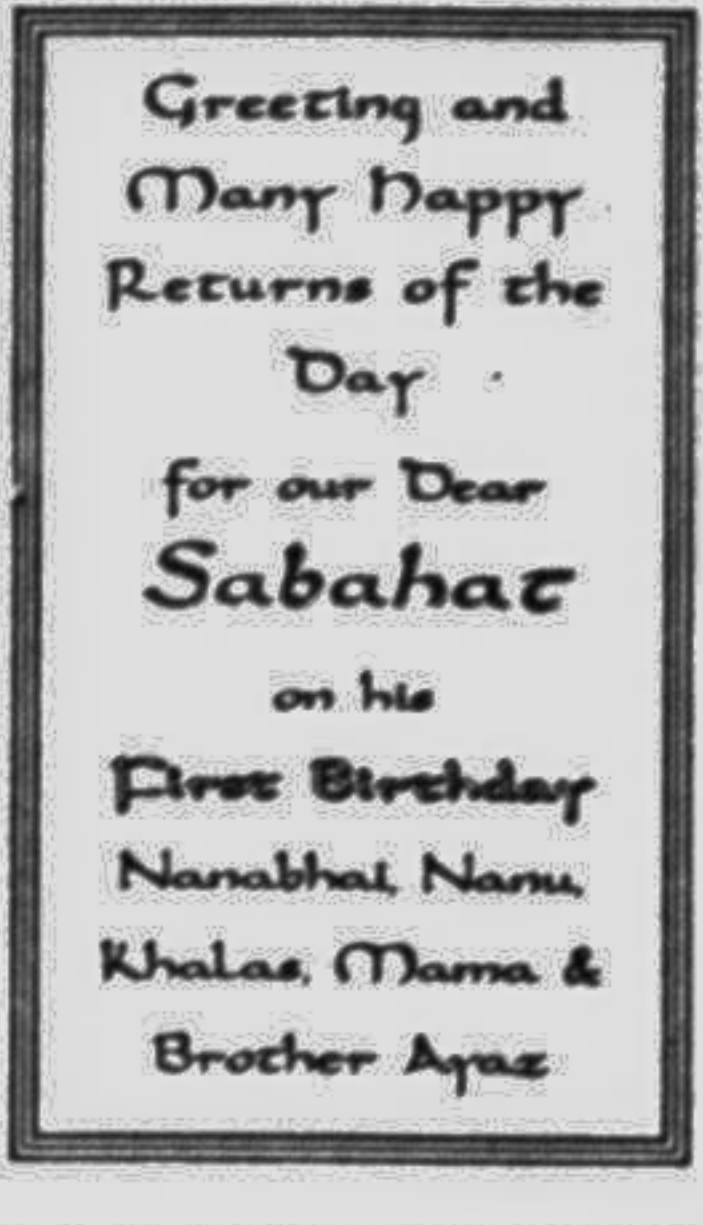
Accepting the credentials, President Biswas said the fraternal ties between the two Islamic nations were deeply rooted in common relation, shared heritage and culture.

He said as fellow member of the organisation of the Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement the

two countries had common perception and close identity and developed a good tradition of mutual cooperation on regional and international issues.

President Biswas assured the Ambassador of his all possible support in discharging his responsibility in Bangladesh towards consolidation of bilateral relations between the two countries.

On arrival at Bangabhaban, the Ambassador was given a guard of honour by the President's guard regiment. He also inspected the guard.



Pre-primary students to be inducted in Literacy Programme

A meeting on introduction of Mass Literacy Programme in mosques and maktabas was held Tuesday at the Conference Room of the Islamic Foundation Bangladesh with State Minister for Religious Affairs Prof M A Mannan in the chair, reports BSS.

Secretary, Ministry of Religious Affairs Abdul Awal, Director General, Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, Mansurul Haq Khan, representatives from UNICEF, high officials from Ministry of Education and other related agencies were present at the meeting.

The State Minister said at present there are 28,000

trained imams in the country who would be of immense help in implementing Mass Literacy Programme at mosque level within the shortest possible time.

He said, at the first stage one mosque or maktaba could be brought under Mass Literacy Programme which might be expanded later. He said initially pre-primary level students of 4-5 years age group would be inducted in this programme and this would be raised upto 6-10 years age group later.

Prof Mannan said with the presence of wide physical facilities like mosques and maktabas at the villages, a huge amount of money would be saved with regard to building infrastructures and administrative side.

Restaurant strike from Feb 1

By Staff Correspondent

The owners and employees of the restaurants in the city will observe a two-day strike from February 1.

The strike call was given by the Bangladesh Restaurant Owners' Association to realise their demands including reduction of electricity and gas prices, repression of the city corporation.



Leela Samson arrives Feb 2

An elegant product of Kalakshetra in Madras and a prominent contemporary exponent of Bharat Natyam in India, Leela Samson shall perform on February 4 and 5 at the National Museum auditorium and on February 7 at the Hotel Sonargaon in aid of disabled children for the Bangladesh Protibondhi Foundation and Shadonna, a centre for advancement of Sub-continental classical dance and music, says a press release on Tuesday.

Leela's numbers satisfy both the intellect and aesthetics and depicts the subtle aspects of abhinaya in a delectable manner.

Author of the book 'Rhythm in Joy' winner of the awards Sanskriti, in '82, 'Padmashri' in '90, Leela Samson is a Delhi University graduate and has been teaching in Delhi since 1975.

Leela will arrive in Dhaka on February 2 accompanied by Smt V K Rao (Vocalist), Sri R Sringanech (Mridangam), Smt V Venkatchalam (Veena), Sri P Mukya Prava (Flutist) and Smt D Nagaraj (Nattavangam), the press release added.

Number of divorcees stands at 5.24 lakh

The total number of divorcee-women two years ago was 5,24,000, Social Welfare and Women Affairs Minister Tariqul Islam told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday, reports BSS.

Replying to a question from Satish Chandra Roy (Al-Dinajpur), the minister said since 1989 there was no census of divorcee women.

The minister said there was no specific programme for rehabilitation of divorcee women.

There is, however, provisions of vocational training for divorcee, distressed and oppressed women through assistance centres under the Directorate of Social Welfare, he said. Besides, there was a cell in the Directorate of Women Affairs for providing legal aid to the oppressed and divorcee women.

The Minister said a total of 222,065 distressed women had been rehabilitated since liberation through vocational training imparted at various levels by the Ministry of Women Affairs.

Replying to a question from Sardar Amjad Hossain (JP-Rajshahi), the minister said 5,200 distressed women and 2,985 children had so far been rehabilitated under the Ministry of Social Welfare.

Replying to a question from Mashiur Rahman (BNP-Jhenidah), the Minister said there were four hostels for career women where 532 women could be provided accommodation. He said there was plan to construct more such hostels with availability of funds.

Wednesday

- 5.00 Opening announcement, Al-Quran, Programme summary
- 5.10 News in Bangla
- 5.20 Recitation from the Geeta
- 5.30 Tarunnya
- 6.00 Sports programme
- 7.05 Pallab
- 8.00 News in Bangla
- 8.30 Writer Tale Tale: Dance Programme
- 9.00 Film: MacOyver
- 10.00 News in English
- 10.25 Parliament round up
- 10.35 Muktaadhara
- 11.30 Khabar/The News
- 11.40 Thursday's programme Summary
- 11.45 Closing.

NOTICE TO CONSIGNEES

The containerised cargo ex. m. v. "Bremen Senator" V-EM-201 from Felixstowe and Containers Originated from Singapore have been relayed to M. V. "FONG SHAN" V-9203, Imp. Rot. No. 46/92 is due to arrive Chittagong on or about 30.01.1992 from Singapore.

Consignees are requested to take delivery of their cargo from "FCL" Containers within 5 days free time from the date of landing and if cargo not cleared within 45 days will be guided by Customs Act.

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Weather

Drizzle likely

By Staff Correspondent

Very light rain or drizzle is likely to occur at one or two places over Dhaka and Rajshahi divisions and the regions of Kushtia, Comilla and Sylhet during the next 36 hours commencing 6pm Tuesday. Meteorological office said.

Dry weather and partly cloudy sky will prevail over the country, it also said.

Night temperature may rise by 1-2 degree Celsius during the period.

The Sun sets today (Wednesday) at 5-43 pm and rises tomorrow (Thursday) at 6-41am.

Temperature and humidity recorded in important cities and towns on Tuesday were:

| Cities/Towns | Temperature in degree Celsius | | Humidity in Percentage | |
|--------------|-------------------------------|------|------------------------|-----|
| | Max | Min | 9am | 6pm |
| Dhaka | 26.5 | 15.7 | 80 | 60 |
| Chittagong | 28.0 | 20.9 | 80 | 58 |
| Rajshahi | 26.8 | 12.0 | 85 | 74 |
| Khulna | 27.5 | 12.0 | 94 | 82 |
| Feni | | 13.9 | 88 | |
| Barisal | 27.6 | 13.2 | 86 | 73 |
| Cox's Bazar | 28.6 | 15.8 | 73 | 66 |
| Sylhet | 27.5 | 14.4 | 83 | 63 |
| Dinajpur | 26.5 | 12.8 | 85 | 71 |



WVA Annual Meenabazar-1992

WVA will be holding its annual Meenabazar at Gulshan Shishu Park on January 31, 1992 from 11. AM to 5 PM. The bazar will have international and other stalls and attractive prizes for raffle: Entry cards will be available at the venue. This annual fair is being held to raise funds for WVA's health, educational and vocational projects in aid of underprivileged and physically disabled children of Bangladesh.

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