

# Dhaka Day by Day

## Your Fate Told for Tk 1!

by Sharier Khan

If you're bothered by the twist of luck, here is a reminder: you can go to all major bus stops of the city and meet tradition-old parrot-aided fortune-tellers, and have your fate told for only one taka.

Obaed, 28, is one of those 'Buzurgs' who sit on a footpath near the Fulbaria bus station. He has no crystal ball, but a pair of innocent, tamed parrots and a series of 'falnamas' — in which your fate is written.

Obaed's fortune-telling method is simple. All you have to do is tell him your name and he will recite a celestial 'Necyay', pick up a parrot on a stick and place it on the series of envelope-packed Falnamas on the ground.

The trained parrot will then pick up a Falnama of its choice.

As I asked Obaed to pick up my Falnama, he processed one and started reading it in a very piercing voice, which he seemed to have developed to fight the overwhelming noise of the traffic: you are a Leo... I he shrieked. I argued right at that moment that I was an Aries. But I could not manage to win against his voice. So he continued: "You are in a very dangerous situation, your enemies are trying to put you in constant danger. However, you'll overcome your problems if you stay cautious."

I did not try to argue that he was reading some body else's fate.

But had I told him my nick name, the result would have been different. If I had asked him to do it with the same name twice, the results would have been different.

Then I asked and paid him to see his own fate. Obaed smiled and processed his Falnama. He read: "It says I am heading towards very fortunate times. Opportunities and happiness will prevail with me soon." etc. etc. "Well, you cannot say I'm not fortunate and happy! Maybe

tomorrow is a different day for me!"

This fortune-teller earns 20 to 50 takas an evening. He is not a full-time fortune teller. All day long, he hunts for solid jobs.

"I suppose there are better jobs for me than fortune telling, this does not earn me much to meet my daily necessities."

Obaed came to this profession two years ago. There was no 'guru' to teach him how to do it. He is self-taught. He learnt the trade from books written in them.

"I also read palm lines..." says he, showing me a self-drawn palmistry guide page, "and sell Falnama guide books for three takas only."

He picks up a thin book. This Falnama book is only for Leos. Wanna buy one?"

Obaed trained his two parrots in this manner: he laid down a series of envelopes few of which were filled with food, the parrots had to find out their food from the envelopes. After a month of training the parrots were conditioned to act in a way as if they knew which Falnama should be chosen for whom.

"Why parrots?" Obaed answers. "Actually I could do the parrot's job, but a parrot is wild, innocent and colourful, it attracts people... and above all, that's the way this business is."

But like other parrot fortune tellers, his parrots are tame and live in a wooden cage that is kept beside him. They also look sick and undernourished and their beautiful colour is layered with dust. Nobody can tell if they are happy picking Falnamas.

You may be a believer or disbeliever — in both cases, the parrot fortune telling may not seem satisfactory to you. But remember, there is not much to get for one taka nowadays in Dhaka.



### Release of BCL leaders demanded

Pro-Awami League Chhatra League held a rally in front of the National Press Club Tuesday demanding immediate release of its city unit leader Manjurul Islam Asru, reports UNB.

The meeting also demanded release of all leaders of the BCL and withdrawal of "false" cases against them.

Presided over by city unit President Ashrafur Islam Maruf, the rally was addressed by SN Mannan Kachi, Muttur Rahman Muti, Kamal Uddin Ahmed, Mujibur Rahman, Shamsul Alam Swapan, SM Sabbir Hossain and Golam Rabbani Chini.

The speakers accused the government of unleashing repressive measures against the opposition forces, particularly the Awami League and its student wing activists.

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### Violence, police firing in Sylhet Voting postponed in 7 centres

Votings were postponed in seven centres amidst widespread violence that left scores injured on the 12th day of union parishad elections yesterday, reports UNB.

All the polling holdup was reported from four unions in Golapganj upazila of Sylhet district, where some 50 people were injured in clashes between the supporters of rival candidates.

Police fired 50 blank shots to quell the rowdy situation in different centres of the four unions of Golapganj.

Election Commission sources said the polls were postponed at East Bagha Primary School and Parganabazar Primary School centres in Bagha union, Fulbari

Union Parishad office and Barya Majbajh Primary School centres in Fulbari union, Union Parishad office and Nurania Primary School centres of Laxmipur union and Bargram Primary School centre in Badbarbaria union.

Police control room said police fired five shots in the air at around 4.45 pm at Bilabaria centre in Paglakarni union in the sadar upazila of Jhenidah district as several hundred people stormed the centre.

About 300-400 unruly people with sticks, rods stones attacked the centre and tried to snatch ballot boxes, they said.

However, there was no report of any casualty, and polling later ended peacefully.

On Monday one person was killed and two others were injured when police opened fire on mob in a polling centre at Pakshimul union of Sarail Upazila, official sources said in Brahmanbaria yesterday.

Taju Mia (25), a resident of Joydalkandi of the union was killed on the spot.

The other injured are Presiding Officer Jasim Uddin (36) and officer Ali Hossain (30). They were sent to Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital.

Elections were held in 160 unions of 20 upazilas in 18 districts yesterday. Polling will be held in 222 unions of 27 upazilas in 25 districts today (Wednesday).

So far, elections have been held in 3,343 unions, and the 16-day staggering polling which began on Jan 22 will come to an end on February 6.

### NMCP team arrives Feb 8

A delegation of the Netherlands Management Consultancy Programme for developing countries and Eastern Europe (NMCP) will be visiting Bangladesh from February 8-20, reports BSS.

The delegation comprises W A Zuidhof, Managing Director and M Heijnsbroek, Regional Coordinator for Bangladesh.

The aim of NMCP is to assist entrepreneurs in various developing countries to solve their problems and to transfer in general management, professional and/or technical skills. This is done by means of enlisting the services of retired technicians and executives from industry and placing their know-how and experience at their service.

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### Maid found dead

By Staff Correspondent

A 15-year-old maid Shahana, was found dead at her master's house at Shewarpara in the city Tuesday morning.

Mirpur Police said, they recovered the body, which was hanging in a room at the house, 178, Shewarpara, at about 7:30 am. Police told The Daily Star, quoting Haji Anwar Hossain, owner of the house, that Shahana committed suicide.

The German Deputy Foreign Minister Helmut Schaefer arrived here from Bhutan Tuesday afternoon on a three-day official visit to Bangladesh, reports UNB.

Foreign Secretary Reaz Rahman received him at the airport.

Director General (Europe) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs S M Rashed Ahmed, German Ambassador Dr. Karl Heinz Scholtz and Bhutanese Ambassador Karma Dorjee were also present.

Talking to newsmen at the airport, Schaefer said that the main objective of his visit is to discuss bilateral matters, economic interest and international issues of common concern.

The German Deputy Minister also said that the two sides would exchange views on both economic and political cooperation in the backdrop of the changed development in Europe.

Schaefer will hold official talks with Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman today.

During stay here, he is scheduled to meet leader of the opposition in the parliament Sheikh Hasina and different government leaders and officials.

He is also due to visit the German aided Ashuganj Power Station.

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### German DFM arrives Economic matters to figure at talks

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A sequence of street-drama 'Montreer Paatshala' staged by Shaibal Natyachakra at the Central Shaheed Minar on Tuesday. —Star photo

### Women's affairs offices to be set up in dists, UZs

The fifteen per cent job quota for women announced by the government will be maintained strictly in the government services, reports BSS.

This was decided at the second Parliamentary Standing Committee meeting on Women's Affairs Ministry held at the Sangsod Bhaban Tuesday with the State Minister for Social Welfare and Women's Affairs Sarwari Rahman in the chair.

The meeting also decided to collect the updated statistics on the vacant posts for female employees of all classes in the government services soon.

The meeting decided to establish women's affairs offices in all districts and upazilas and start their function soon.

Women's affairs offices are at present functioning at 22 districts and 136 upazilas.

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## Students urged to guard against terrorism

Education Minister Jamiruddin Sircar Tuesday said rule of law is the precondition for the flourishing of democracy, reports BSS.

He said the present democratic government determined to stop violence and anarchy in the society for giving an institutional shape to democracy.

The Education Minister was addressing installation ceremony of the Student's Union of Eden Girls College here.

Presided over by Principal Jahanara Begum, the function was addressed by State Minister for Textiles Abdul Mannan, State Minister for Education Principal Eunus Khan, JCD central leader Fazul Hoq Milon, Vice-President (VP) of Rokya Hall Students Union Shirin Sultana, VP of

the college student's Union Helen Zerlin Khan and General Secretary Saimun Begum Saimun.

The Education Minister said BNP government had already fulfilled its all electoral commitments and will take all steps for the welfare of the masses. He said the student community must keep vigilant against all sorts of terrorism and violence to restore peace in the campus. Sircar said, the students of the country must take endeavours to build up leadership quality in themselves for shouldering their future responsibilities properly.

He said the government had already launched compulsory primary education in the country and will reintroduce mass education programme to eradicate illiteracy by the year 2000. He also called upon the students to contribute to make the programme a success.

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