

Dhaka Day by Day

Eyeless but Active and Versatile

by Fayza Haq

Salma Maqbool, a qualified general practitioner from Rawalpindi, is totally blind, but she is preoccupied in rehabilitating the disabled in the SAARC countries.

Speaking in this jovial lady, dressed in cream silk, and her husband Maqbool Ahmed, who is blind in one eye, one could not help but feel that there was a remarkable measure of spirit and determination in some disabled people.

Salma had the advantage of having completed her education before she lost her sight completely, through retinitis pigmentosa, in '74, but she is hardly the type to dwell on her handicap or lament over what she might be missing.

She was a wonderful contrast to many of the people I have met in the Subcontinent and in the West, who crib over what they do not have — when they are both mentally and physically fit, and are blessed with all that the gods could favour them with, such as jobs, children, dedicated husbands, and what have you.

Salma and her husband's work deals with advocating organisational work. They provide training for blind women at "Darul Azam" in Rawalpindi. They get about 25 patients a day, and there are five teachers to help them carry out the work.

"We train them in mobility and daily living skills as well as home management and income generating skills," she explained.

"We teach them tailoring, knitting, making of greeting cards, candles, artificial flowers, the preparation of jams, juices and detergent powder, and other innovative items. We sell them in 'meena bazaars' and when local clubs have functions," Salma added. There is a person, training for his Ph.D., who teaches the blind to handle colours.

"People think," Salma commented, "that the blind people can have no concept of colour combinations. Bottles are marked with braille, and like other average people, they enjoy the use of colours and have a marvellous concept of hues. They may not be basically aware of the difference between pink and red, if they have been born blind, but they gradually develop an awareness."

What were they doing in particular in Bangladesh? "We were engaged in a research, involved in international study of income generating strategies for disabled people. The study is conducted all over the world by ILO. The Disabled People's International, and Walter Dinsdale Centre for Empowerment of Canadians. I also work for the SAARC region as I am a researcher, and my husband is the co-researcher," she explained.

"We have been to various projects such as the V.T.C., Mirpur, for the blind. There was a Centre for Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed at Savar, that we inspected too. We have seen the Assistance

to Blind Children in Tangail; World Vision in Shaymoli; the School for Blind Girls in Mirpur; the Salvation Army (Mirpur); and the Bangladesh Institute for the Mentally Retarded at Eskaton. We had a round of the "Hi-Care" for deaf children and adults at Dhanmandi, as well as the "Bangladesh Pratibandhi Kalyan Samity." Salma informed me.

"We visited the Social Assistance to the Physically Vulnerable, as well as the Canadian University Service Organisation (CUSO). The programmes of the organisations were to support and encourage the differently disabled people. We saw the Special Education Complex at Mirpur, which will be opened on February 18th with the help of the Norwegians (NAVF).

How does she manage to practice as a doctor despite her handicap? "I joined the army after qualifying, and was with there for three years," Salma told me. "When I began practice I was already losing my sight, but because of my empathy I had a good practice. The purpose is not a monetary one. I do my diagnosis through talking to the patient, and in some cases, I use my hands. I have a helper. In complicated cases I refer to specialists. I'm on the medical panel of the National Bank of Pakistan," she elaborated.

"The most outstanding feature that I noticed in Bangladesh was the excellent understanding of the organisations for the disabled with the concerned government departments, as well as the other sister NGOs. There is no doubt that there is a discriminating attitude prevailing here as in other countries in the SAARC region. The situation is not so bad in the developed countries," she elaborated.

Salma and Maqbool found the Bangladeshi people "alert, hard-working, enthusiastic, specially the disabled. In a village I found a blind woman tending the cows, offering me milk to drink. She was not entirely a happy woman as her husband had taken another wife."

Salma met Maqbool in '77, when he was working for the Pakistan Association for blind people. "I was totally blind for 7 years. I went to aopath, homeopathy, 'fakirs', and 'mazars'. Suddenly I regained my eyesight in the left eye although I had to have a lense inserted. He helps me in every possible way," Salma commented.

Salma has visited Brazil, N America, Canada, and European countries. She has been to Estonia and to Moscow, in USSR. She also has been to the far East and South East Asian countries like Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore.

Salma Maqbool is the chairperson for the committee on the Status of Blind Women of the World Blind Union; vice-chairperson of the Disabled People's International, Asia Pacific region, and is a consultant for media policy on disabled people PTV and PBC.



Salma and Maqbool Ahmed seen at a Dhaka guest house.

Weekly cabinet meet held

The regular weekly meeting of the cabinet was held yesterday at Bangabhaban with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in the chair, reports BSS.

Ministers, state ministers-in-charge of different ministries and divisions attended the meeting.

The new Cabinet Secretary, M Ayubur Rahman, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, S Hassan Ahmed and secretaries of the concerned ministries and division were also present.

Biman's 'System Customer Services' confce opens

By Staff Correspondent

A two-day long System Customer Services conference of Biman Bangladesh Airlines was inaugurated Monday aiming at improved service to the customers.

Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Abdul Mannan inaugurated the conference and urged the employees of Biman to improve the flight and ground services of the national flag carrier.

The Minister said that Biman is the only sector in Bangladesh which does not face any competition from the private sector and added that the airlines should make profits for this reason.

The Minister asked the Biman employees to work with earnestness to make it profitable as it is facing tough competition from other international carriers.

Civil Aviation Secretary, Md Habibur Rahman also addressed the ceremony and said that Biman will soon introduce Departure Control System for better service to the customers.

The ceremony was also addressed by the Managing Director of Biman, Abdul Muid Chowdhury.



Abdul Jalil, Joint Secretary of Awami League, addressing a rally in front of National Press Club yesterday demanding repeal of Indemnity Ordinance and protesting price-hike.

—Star photo

SKOP demands trial of Golam Azam

By Staff Correspondent

Eighteen Leaders of Sramik Karmachari Otkyo Parishad (SKOP) in a statement on Monday demanded the trial of Golam Azam as a war criminal.

They also expressed their unity with the committee to uproot the collaborators and killers of war of independence and said Golam Azam is residing in the country illegally after he directly collaborated with Pakistani Army. They said Golam Azam is a criminal to the nation.

Meanwhile, Dhaka City Muktiyoddha Jubo Command on Monday held a rally demanding the trial of Golam Azam by March 26. The rally urged all to be united to face the collaborators of Pakistani army.

Matin seeks list of smugglers

By Staff Correspondent

Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury Monday called upon the business community to submit the list of smugglers and their activities saying that the government was determined to eradicate smuggling, reports BSS.

Special drive would be launched against the smugglers, if necessary, he said.

Addressing a conference of Bangladesh Wholesale Sugar Dealers at the Moulvibazar Traders Association Office in Dhaka the minister urged the traders to refrain from buying and selling smuggled and contraband goods. The traders of this business centre could play

a significant role to curb smuggling, he added.

He sought the cooperation of all quarters to solve the traffic jam and traffic problems in the old city.

Referring to the smuggling of sugar, the Home Minister said the government was evaluating that factors behind high price of the locally produced sugar and the issue of reducing its price.

Presided over by Mohammad Amanullah, the function was addressed among others by State Minister for Religious Affairs Abdul Mannan, Lt. Gen (ret'd) Meer Swakat Ali, MP and Syed Sahidul Hoq Jamal, MP.

Rajuk earns Tk 24.04 crore against allotment in Baridhara area

Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mia yesterday told the Jatiya Sangsad that Rajuk (Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakhaj) so far earned Taka 24 crore and four lakh against the allotment of plots in Baridhara Residential Area, reports BSS.

Replying to a question from Sardar Sakawat Hossain Bakul (BNP-Narsingdhi), the minister said Rajuk spent about Taka seven crore and 47 lakh so far for requisition of land and its development.

It would cost about Taka 15 crore to complete the development of 'J' Block of the Residential Area, he said.

Replying to a question from Shahjahan Khan (AL-Madaripur), Rafiq said employees of different directorate had been staying illegally in 24 flats in three buildings at Churnkurpool in the city.

Effective steps had been taken to evict the illegal squatters, the minister said.

To a question from Syed Nazibul Basar Matjibandari (AL-Chittagong), he said a total of 1820 flats had been constructed for the government employees so far since 1981-82.

Editors' Council meet today

An emergency meeting of the Council of Editors will be held at 8 pm today at the Daily Mefflat office in Dhaka, reports BSS.

The meeting will discuss, among other issues, financial condition in the newspaper industry.

All members of the council have been requested to attend.

What's on today . . .

Bangladesh-China Friendship Assoc

An emergency meeting of the Bangladesh-China Friendship Association will be held today (Tuesday) at 4 pm at its office in Dhanmondi.

Mirza Golam Hafiz, President of the Association will preside over the meeting.

Rotary Club of Dhaka

The regular weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Dhaka will be held today (Tuesday) at 5 pm at the Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

Anayetullah Khan, Editor-in-chief, 'The Holyday', will be the guest speaker. He will address on 'Internal and external dimension of Myanmar politics'.

Rotary Club of Ramna

The regular weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Ramna will be held today (Tuesday) at 5:30 pm at Hotel Sonargaon.

Dr Salehuddin Ahmed of CIRAP will be the guest speaker and he will speak on 'socio-economic perspective of disaster management'.

Seminar on sanitation

A seminar on "Social mobilisation for sanitation" organised jointly by LORD Ministry and UNICEF will be held today (Tuesday) at ten am in Sher-e-Bangla MP Hostel premises.

Nasiruddin Gold-medal Trust

Nasiruddin Gold-medal Trust will distribute awards for 1990 and 1991 among the recipients today (Tuesday) at 3:30 pm at the children auditorium of the National Museum.

The award winners are: Syed Shamsul Huq, Al Mahmud, Obaidul Huq and Nilima Ibrahim.

Baitul Mukarram Traders Group

A reception to the newly elected office-bearers of the Baitul Mukarram Traders Group will be accorded today (Tuesday) at 10 am at the auditorium of the Islamic Foundation.

State Minister for Religious Affairs Alhaj MA Mannan will attend the function as chief guest while MA Awal, Secretary of the same ministry and Munsur-Ul-Huq Khan, Director General of Islamic Foundation will be present as the special guests.

Weather

Dry weather likely

Mainly dry weather is likely over the country till 6 pm today (Tuesday).

Night temperature likely to fall by one to two degree Celsius over the country, Met office forecast.

The highest temperature, 28.2 degree Celsius, recorded at Khepura in the country while the lowest, 12 degree Celsius was recorded at Rangpur and Dinajpur Monday.

The maximum and minimum temperature recorded in Dhaka Monday were 25.6 and 17 degree Celsius respectively.

The percentage of humidity recorded in Dhaka was 71 at 9 am and 59 at 6 pm.

The sun sets today (Tuesday) at 5:51 pm and rises tomorrow (Wednesday) at 6:34 am.

Cities/Towns	Temperature	Humidity
Dhaka	max 25.6	min 17
Chittagong	27.2	18.2
Rajshahi	23.8	12.4
Khulna	25.9	15.1
Sylhet	25.1	13.4
Cox's Bazar	27	18
Khepupara	28.2	14.8
Dinajpur	22.9	11

Bangladeshi to run in British City Council election

British Conservative Party has nominated a Bangladeshi to contest the City Council election for the post of City Councillor in the British Midlands, a press release said in Dhaka Monday, reports UNB.

The nominee, Azad Chowdhury, who hails from Sylhet, is a businessman and well-known social worker among the immigrant South Asian Community in England.

British Labour Party and British Liberal Democratic Party have also recognised and nominated the immigrants for various elected municipal posts.

The British Conservative Party has started enlisting Bangladeshis as its members and nominated Azad for the city council elections realising that they control a large number of votes.

Grave concern over oilspill in Bay

Environmentalists on Monday expressed grave concern over the oilspill in the Bay of Bengal and its impact on the mangrove forests of Sundarbans, reports UNB.

Reacting to a news item published in the Daily Ittefaq yesterday the experts said if immediate steps were not taken to redress the 40-mile slick from Putney to Shakkalchar, it would cause major havoc to the flora and fauna of the threatened Sundarbans.

In a joint statement, Tahmina Ahmed, Secretary General of Asia-Pacific Forum of Environmental Journalists, Hasna Moudud, Chairperson of Coastal Resources Development Management Association, and Dr Mizanur Rahman Shelly of Centre for

Development Research, Bangladesh, demanded immediate inquiry into the foreign ship which had dumped its ballast oil into the Bay.

The protesters also urged the government to demand compensation from the polluting party for the losses.

They called upon all concerned agencies and the people to voluntarily help combat the deadly slick on the Bay waters.

The environmentalists, who had called for declaring the Sundarbans as world heritage in a seminar two days back, said the famous mangrove, still reeling from the impact of the 1989 oilspill that caused major damage to its entire fish and plant resources in the coastal zone, was struck by another spill two weeks back.



Seizaburo Sato, Professor of Political Science, University of Tokyo and Research Director of the International Institute for Global Peace, called on the DU Vice-Chancellor Prof M Moniruzzaman Miah yesterday at the latter's office.

Prof Sato meets DU Vice-Chancellor

Prof Seizaburo Sato, Professor of Political Science, University of Tokyo and Research Director of the International Institute for Global Peace called on the Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University, Prof M Moniruzzaman Miah, yesterday at the latter's office, reports BSS.

Discussion on Shafiu Azam

The SM Shafiu Azam Commemoration Committee, Chittagong will hold a meeting in memory of former minister and cabinet secretary SM Shafiu Azam in Chittagong Rifles Club auditorium today (Tuesday) at 3 pm.

Personalities from home and abroad will take part in the discussion on various aspects of his life and works.

Tuesday

- 5-00 Opening announcement Al Quran Programme summary
- 5-10 News in Bangla
- 5-20 Recitation from the Geeta
- 5-25 Documentary film: Wildlife on One Shikkhangon: Education Programme
- 6-00 Documentary on the occasion of national day of Iran
- 7-05 Nazrul Song
- 8-00 News in Bangla
- 8-30 Drama series: Sankit Padajatra
- 10-00 News in English
- 10-25 Parliament round-up
- 10-35 Mini series
- 11-30 Khabar/The News
- 11-40 Wednesday Programme summary
- 11-45 Closing

Death anniversary

The fourth death anniversary of Alhaj Moulavi Tayeb Ali, a noted educationist of Madaripur, will be observed today (Tuesday).

In this connection Doa-e-Mahfil and feeding the poor have been arranged at his Mirpur residence.