

Dhaka Day by Day

A Ray of Hope in a Dark World

by Rahat Fahmida

No one could even have the faintest idea that he was blind. He warmly received his expected guest and offered a cup of tea. Golam Mostafa, now the executive director of Bangladesh Drishtihin Foundation (BDF), was not born blind. A severe attack of measles at the age of six which affected his eye sight left him with almost no vision.

It was clear from talking to Mr. Mostafa, that marginalisation or rather rejection of the disabled, whether they are cripple, deaf and dumb, or even blind, due to social prejudices, unjustifiably belittles them. Mr. Mostafa has a supportive family which has encouraged him and helped him to complete his masters degree in Sociology.

Facing rejection and apathy of the people around, Mr. Mostafa always aimed for an organisation like BDF — which would cater to the needs of the blind, and improve eye care and treatment in this country.

In this country, the BDF's executive director said, the disabled are excluded from everything because it is taken for granted that they cannot participate but it is because of such exclusion that they cannot participate. What is actively being done to combat disability or rather blindness? Very little.

In the past year BDF has worked to strengthen its practical work through setting up of eye camps in different parts of the country and its rehabilitation programme on Bhola Island. Mr. Mostafa, established Bangladesh Drishtihin Foundation (BDF) in February 1989. The United Nations Decade of Disabled persons (1983-1992) generated awareness which added to Golam Mostafa's plans and programmes. BDF's aim from the very beginning has been to improve eye treatment and restore sight through proper care and operations. As the executive director of BDF put it, that to prevent blindness through primary eye care programme of community health education, improved nutrition and sanitation, was one of their top priorities. He pointed out that to integrate visually handi-

capped people into the community through rehabilitation, education was equally important. There must be equal opportunity for the blind people; and this can be achieved through creating greater awareness of their needs.

Talking about the number of blind people in Bangladesh, Golam Mostafa said, "about three million people in this country are visually handicapped, and this number is on the increase every year. Approximately one million are totally blind, and two million are partially sighted. Of those who are blind, 77 per cent lose their sight after birth. We cannot blame this just on our bad luck".

Golam Mostafa said very sadly, that about 98 per cent of cases amongst blind children, the blindness was due to malnutrition, that is due to deficiency of vitamin 'A'. "About 30,000 children under the age of 8, mostly in the villages, are blinded each year due to lack of vitamin 'A', which can be taken in easily through vegetables. But this is to those who know about nutrition."

There are other causes for blindness, like, glaucoma, cor-neal ulcers and cataracts, which can be treated. BDF organises eye camps in the villages for the poor people who cannot afford to go to hospitals and specialists. BDF sets up these camps temporarily in different locations and a medical team provides medicine and treatment for a large number of patients for a limited period. All treatment and medicine from these BDF eye camps are free of charge.

Bangladesh Drishtihin Foundation is financially assisted by two foreign non-government organisations — Help Age and Action Aid. As Mr. Mostafa concluded, "without them most of our work would not be possible." Talking to people like Golam Mostafa, it is clear that what is needed, is to ensure that our society regards the blind or physically disabled as people and not as a burden of an economic policy. Each of these individuals are indeed a person with his own capacities and gifts, who has a right to education and training, just as he has a right to be different.



Golam Mostafa addressing a discussion for the blind

Preventive measures against killer disease sought Docs urged to evolve low-cost treatment of heart patients

President Abdur Rahman Biswas Wednesday underscored the need for creating public awareness about heart diseases and their prevention, reports BSS.

Inaugurating a two-day international conference on Cardiovascular diseases in the city the President said due to ignorance, leading of irregular life and lack of proper treatment many people including the children became victims of heart diseases. He urged the physicians to take a leading role in making the people aware about this.

He advised the physicians to take initiative in getting training at home and abroad and equip themselves with the latest scientific knowledge in diagnosing and treating heart patients.

Organised by Bangladesh Cardiac Society (BCS) the inaugural session was also addressed by the Deputy Leader of the Jatiya Sangsad Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury, BCS President Prof A Malik, Secretary General Prof R K Khondaker and member Prof

Nabi Alam Khan. About 200 cardiologists and medical scientists from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Thailand, Singapore, Japan, the United States and the United Kingdom are participating in the conference with the objective to promote control and prevention of cardiovascular diseases.

The President said in consideration of the socio-economic condition of the people efforts should be made to evolve a low-cost treatment of heart patients. He said the physicians should come forward with noble heart in providing low cost treatment. He said at the same time tariff reduction on life saving drugs and essential medical equipment also should be considered.

Prof B Chowdhury said the government should take a bold decision for extensive preventive measures against heart diseases with the active cooperation of the doctors. He said other people in the society also should come forward in this regard through different

non-government organisations. Prof Malik said heart disease is the third killer disease in Bangladesh. But he warned, due to lack of preventive measures the heart disease could be a number one killer disease in near future. He said people of all strata irrespective of their economic and social status were the victims of heart diseases.

In a number of recommendations he suggested expansion and improvement of heart disease treatment facilities in all the medical college hospitals, PO Hospital, and the National Institute of Cardiovascular Disease, training of the physicians and providing government support to the national heart foundation.

He said the Heart Foundation was creating public awareness by holding heart camps in different places. It would soon open a 26-bed ward for heart patients with the financial assistance from Bari Trust. This would lead to establishment of a 300-bed hospital in phases, he added.

Alem Al-Razee Smriti Sangsad formed

An organisation styled 'Dr Alem Al-Razee Smriti Sangsad' was recently formed in memory of the late jurist, a press release here said Wednesday, reports UNB.

It will award a 'Dr Alem Al-Razee Memorial Gold Medal' every year to the student securing first class first position in LLB Honours examinations in the Rajshahi University.

A 'Dr Alem Al-Razee Trust Fund' has already been instituted in the Dhaka University to award a gold medal to the students securing first class first position in LLB Honours examinations in the Dhaka University every year.

Members of the Sangsad includes Justice Kemaluddin Hossain, Justice DC Bhattacharya, Justice Badrul Haider Chowdhury, Prof. Nurul Islam, Justice KM Sobhan, Justice Mohammad Abdur Rouf, Barrister Syed Ishtiaq Ahmed, Dr Ahmed Hossain, Advocate Shamsul Huq Chowdhury, Ahmedul Kabir, Barrister Moimul Husein, Begum Sufia Kamal, Shamsur Rahman (Poet), Shawkat Osman (Litterateur) and Ataus Samad.

A general meeting of the organisation will be held on March 7 at 69/1, New Circular Road, Malibagh (4th floor) to finalise its programme for observance of Dr Razee's 7th anniversary of death on March 15 and future course of action.

Rifles Week '92 begins Mar 3

Bangladesh Rifles Week '92 will be observed at the Rifles headquarters at Pilkhana and other sector office from March 3 to 9, a press release said Wednesday, reports BSS.

Retired and invalid jawans and members of the shaheed families have been requested to attend the functions organised in this connection on the afternoon of March 7 at their respective sector headquarters.

Pak Muslim League team meets Panni

The visiting 3-member Pakistan Muslim League delegation, paid a courtesy call on Deputy Speaker Humayun Khan Panni at his office chamber in Sangsad Bhaban Wednesday morning, reports BSS.

Thursday Special Session

9.10am Opening announcement Al-Quran Programme summary am 5th World Cup Cricket: England vs West Indies.

Evening Session
5.00 Opening announcement Al-Quran Programme summary
5.10 News in Bangla
5.20 Recitation from the Gesta
5.35 Children's programme on the occasion of Democracy Day
6.00 Cartoon film: The New Three Stooges
6.30 Jiboner Alo: Religious programme
7.05 Debate
8.00 News in Bangla
8.30 Special programme on Democracy Day
10.00 News in English
10.30 Documentary on Democracy Day
11.30 Khabar/The News
11.40 Friday's programme summary
11.45 Closing.

'Effective opposition a must in parliamentary system'

Minister for Law and Justice Mirza Golam Hafiz Wednesday said that constitutional system and the form of government should suit the need of the people, reports BSS.

Mirza Hafiz said the decision to administer the country under parliamentary form was taken since the public opinion favoured the system.

Delivering his lecture at a talk on 'the concept of presidential regime as in France in the context of Asia' in Dhaka, the minister said an effective and well-organised opposition was necessary for the functioning of parliamentary system.

He said the other element for the smooth functioning of parliamentary system was to have tolerance and respect for each other's views.

The visiting French scholar and expert on international relations M Jean Alphonse Bernard was the keynote speaker at the talk which was presided over by eminent lawyer Ishtiaq Ahmed. The French Ambassador M Serge Degallaix

also spoke on the occasion. Judges, academicians, lawyers and researchers attended and took part in the discussions held at the Alliance Francaise.

Mirza Hafiz said the rule of law was based on justice and democracy could be given a strong institutional shape through ensuring independence of judiciary.

Bernard dwelt on the evolution of the present presidential system in France and said in the process it had turned to be an effective system of check and balance.

He said constitutional system of a country could attain perfection only through practice.

BARC council meet March 12

The 23rd council meeting of the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) has now been rescheduled on March 12, reports UNB.

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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Annual Sports and Prize Distribution Ceremony '92

The Annual Sports and Prize Distribution Ceremony of our school will be held on February 28, '92 Friday at Shantibag High School compound. The Mayor of Dhaka City Corporation Mirza Abbas MP will be the chief guest on the occasion while—
Dr. Shahjahan Tapan, Professor, Dhaka University;
Md. Nurul Huda, Deputy-Director, Bangla Academy;
Mir Tajul Islam, social worker, Sha-pur;
Mir Liaquat Ali Siddique, President, Prankhola Khelaghar Asar will attend the function as special guests. Your participation is cordially solicited.



Butterfly Kindergarten
383, North Shahjahanpur, Dhaka.

Happy Birthday



'Shayon'

Son of Lopa & Farrokh
North Carolina, USA
Nana Bhai

Tk 52 lakh sanctioned for Rohingya refugees

The government has so far sanctioned Tk 52 lakh in cash for the Burmese refugees sheltered in the districts of Bandarban and Cox's Bazar.

About 490 metric tons of rice and 240 metric tons of wheat have also been allocated for the refugees, M Abdul Hakim, Secretary in charge of the Ministry of Relief told UNB Wednesday.

Besides, 1500 tins of biscuits, 2000 cartoons of powdered milk, 100 cartoons of clothes, 257 bags of sugar, 962 cartoons of baby food and 2000 cartoons of other materials have been despatched for them.

The Secretary informed that relief works that began

mid January has been going in full-swing through local administration and added that the Red Crescent Society has also been distributing food and other necessary goods.

He said that France, European Economic Community (EEC) and various international agencies including the World Food Programme (WFP) have responded promptly to the country's call for providing relief to the tens of thousands of the Burmese Muslims fleeing to Bangladesh.

More than 80,000 refugees have so far crossed into Bangladesh, the Secretary said.

The unofficial count is however, one lakh twenty thousand.

Roads & Highways Prokashali Samity executives

Abdul Matin and Idris Mia were elected President and General Secretary of Roads and Highways Prokashali Samity, says a press release Wednesday, reports BSS.

The other office-bearers are: AN Atiqullah and Fazal Hoq — Vice-presidents, a AQM Ikramullah and ASM Nuruz-zaman—Joint-secretaries, Manzoor Ahmed Bhuiyan — Treasurer, Arifur Rahman — Publicity Secretary and Abdul Mokdadtr Belal — Sports and Cultural Secretary.

Members: Md Farhad Hossain Khan, Md Amzad Hossain, Syed Sakhawat Hossain, AKM Fazul Hoq, Azizur Rahman, Md Shaiful Azam Bhuiyan, Jorsh Hossain and Farhad Hossain.

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The next step was to send out applications for the research fellowship. And believe me it took some doing. Hunting for addresses. Electric-typing each application. Photocopying all the certificates. And stamps, stamps, stamps. Posted each envelope personally. Settled down to a long wait. The postman became Man of the Year. But every evening found an empty mailbox. Until a moment ago. "It's Harvard, no less!" I think I deserve a Gold Leaf now.

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