

# Letter From Calcutta

Great Eastern Hotel

## A Peep into Imperial Calcutta

by Rahat Fahmida in Calcutta

Calcutta, the grandest city in the British Empire, created by an enterprising businessman from Fair Albion, Job Charnock by name, is the primary city in the north-eastern region of India and is accepted as the cultural and intellectual capital of the sub-continent. The rich heritage of colonial India is not only centred on the Victoria Memorial Hall, which is a storehouse of old documents, paintings, miniatures etc, but ranges on to bewilderingly variegated areas.

One remembers in one breath the institutions which stood for the elitist Calcutta in the early nineteenth century -- the Great Eastern Hotel, the Sans Souci Theatre and the Calcutta Club.

Messrs D Wilson gave an advertisement in the daily newspaper 'Englishman and Military Chronicle' of Friday, November 6, 1840, that they were soon going to open a 'family hotel' at No. 1, Old Court House Street. This building stood on the ground where Sans Souci Theatre stood originally, which was burnt down in the early hours of a day in 1839. The building was named at the time Ezra Mansions.

Soon, the Wilson Hotel was re-named 'Auckland Hotel' after Lord Auckland, who was the then Governor-General of India. He was also a brother of Miss Emily Eden, whose sketches and writings have made Calcutta known to all.

This is the Great Eastern Hotel of today, that has thus passed its 150 years of existence. The Post-Master General W W Taylor had mentioned about this hotel in his book entitled 'Thirty-eight Years in India'. He had praised the services of the hotel in which he lived with his family in 1842.

From the beginning till 1862 the hotel was owned by Mr Wilson. In 1862 the hotel was owned by Mrs Wilson. In 1862 it changed hands and was named 'The Great Eastern Hotel Ltd' and was transformed into a newly

formed limited company. In 1863 the monthly room rent in the hotel was Rs 250 only. There was some higher-priced accommodation as well. All celebrities like Rudyard Kipling and many others stayed here during their visits to the city. The Coffee House of the hotel, 'Jerusalem', became the centre of business and trade. Indians thus started to go there. A couplet in Bengali written at that time visualizes this contact between the 'Sahebs' and the natives --

"Bangalee jaat marchhey teen Sen Keshab Sen, Ishti-Sen and Wilson" -- meaning the hotel.

The setting up of small shops in the hotel premises was also started by this hotelier. The shopping arcade was named the 'Hall of All Nations' and had a variety of merchandise -- mainly silks, ivory and ornaments. There was also a barber shop for men and a beauty parlour for women, who were staying in the hotel premises.

It is interesting to know that Tekchand Thakur or Peary Chand Mitra, the writer of the famous satire 'Alal Gharer Dulal' -- was a Director of this hotel from 1867 to 1870. Many records bear his signature. W C Bonnerjee, one of the founder members of the Indian National Congress, was its share-holder from 1890 to 1896 holding 5000 shares. Lovelock & Lewis, Chartered Accountants, audited the accounts.

In 1862 Wilson left Calcutta for England after having transferred the management of the hotel to a private limited company. Till 1928 the majority of the share-holders were Englishmen; slowly it passed over to Indian hands. As the English went home, the billiard room of the hotel lost its importance and now it is one of the main meeting halls of the hotel, 'Rajani Gandha'. In 1975 the Government took over the management and that status is still continuing till date.



Great Eastern -- 150 years of pioneering Indian hoteliering -- Photo by Subimal Chakraborty.



Five-Party Alliance brought out a procession in support of the public trial of killers and collaborators of '71 in the city Wednesday. --Star photo.

## BCIC debts increasing steadily

Liabilities of the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) has been increasing steadily over the recent years largely because of bad performance by some of its enterprises, UNB reports. Official sources on Wednesday said total liabilities of BCIC stood over Tk 1,466.01 crore in January this year compared to Tk 1,404.33 crore at the corresponding time last year. About 22 units of the public sector corporation overdraw nearly Tk 52.29 crore from banks during the period against Tk 45.40 crore in the previous year. Khulna Newsprint Mills

overdrew Tk 7.28 crore against Tk 1.84 crore. Kohinoor Battery Manufacturers (KBM) over-drew Tk 12.09 crore compared to its previous year's overdraft of Tk 10.61 crore. Total asset of the corporation, including cash bank balance, debtors' loans and advances, however, grew to more than Tk 2,020.79 crore from previous year's Tk 1,980.39 crore. Meanwhile, 94 per cent of the production targets of all BCIC enterprises on an average was achieved in last January while sales target achievement was 74 per cent.

Officials said normal production at the North Bengal Paper Mills suffered setback while the Sylhet Pulp and Paper Mills ran below its target owing to frequent power failure. Production at the Cement Clinker Grinding Factory in Chittagong also suffered because of erratic electricity supply and technical trouble in the plant. Power failure also led to production target failure in Kohinoor Chemical Company, KMB, Lira Industrial Enterprise and Eagle Box and Carton Manufacturing Company.

## Bangladeshis in US urged to help consolidate democracy

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said in Washington Wednesday that her government was striving hard to attain economic emancipation which would help democracy get an institutional shape, according to a message received in Dhaka yesterday, reports BSS. Addressing the members of Bangladeshi community living in Washington at the conference room of Willard Inter-Continental Hotel here, she urged them to extend their total support for consolidating democracy in Bangladesh. "You should work hand in hand with your brothers in Bangladesh to help consolidate the hard-earned democracy", she added. Referring to the misrule of the autocratic regime she said her government had inherited a devastated economy where indiscipline and corruption were the order of the day.

She said the people of Bangladesh have tremendous potentialities through which they could achieve the impossible. She stressed the need for attaining food autarky and check population boom in the greater national interest. She said all the development efforts were bound to fail if we can not check the population explosion, she said. She listed several development programmes taken up by the present government including compulsory free primary education and free education for girls upto class eight in the rural areas. The Prime Minister said press is enjoying complete freedom under the present democratic government. She said the political parties also get equal opportunities to express their opinion through Radio and Television.

## Death anniversary of Abul Mansur Ahmed observed

The 13th death anniversary of Abul Mansur Ahmed, renowned journalist, literature and politician in the subcontinent was observed Wednesday with due homage. Abul Mansur Ahmad Memorial Committee organised a discussion meeting and mihad mahfil at the residence of the late leader on the occasion. The meeting addressed by MA Mohalmen, Barrister Ziaur Rahman Khan Mp and Mahub Anam stressed the need for preserving the memories of late national personalities with a view to taking lesson from their lives. Speakers at the meeting said that the policies and measures taken by the late leader during his ministership laid the foundation of industrialisation in the country.

## BSB okays Tk 26 cr project

By Staff Correspondent. Bangladesh Shilpa Bank (BSB) on Wednesday approved Taka 26.49 crore for yarn mill to be set up in Gazipur. The project would be jointly financed by BSB, IDA and IPDC. The mill would involve Taka 15.88 crore in foreign currency and the rest in local currency. The mill will have the capacity to produce 10.12 lakh kg of yarn annually and employ 400 workers.

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## IRS TAX ASSISTANCE

A taxpayer specialist from the Internal Revenue Service will visit Dhaka on March 22 and March 23 to answer questions Americans have on filing their Federal income tax returns. He will give a short general talk at 8:30 A.M. on Sunday, March 22 at the ARA Club in Gulshan. He will hold individual meetings with taxpayers after 10:00 A.M. on Sunday and all day on Monday. These meetings are open to all U.S. citizens and Legal Permanent Residents. Arrangements are being made for admittance to the ARA club for non-members. For further information, or to schedule a private meeting with the IRS representative, please call the Embassy Consular Section, 884700-22 ext. 794 or 273.

### DIPLOMA IN COMPANY SECRETARYSHIP

(Through Correspondence & Personalised Guidance)

The secretary is the key personnel in an organisation and functions as the bridge between its top management and the administration. In almost all English speaking and European countries, the Secretary is a statutory post in an organisation of corporate character. In neighbouring India the legal framework makes it mandatory for every company to have a secretary whose obligations are defined in the Indian Companies Act 1956. In Bangladesh, disinvestment of nationalized industries, forming holding companies of the nationalized enterprises, and a continuous enlargement of private sector have necessitated specialized secretarial expertise. RAPPORT realizing this imperative urgency and in view of the obtaining wide gap in the management practices, decided to introduce this Diploma course. The Course begins May 1, 1992. For details please collect FREE Brochure from: RAPPORT BANGLADESH LIMITED management consultants, trainers & publishers 98 Malibagh (D.I.T Road) Tel. 400419

## Wheat procurement drive One lakh ton targeted

One lakh metric tons of wheat will be procured for four divisions of the country during the country-wide wheat procurement drive that began from March 15 (Sunday), reports UNB. The drive began under the Internal Procurement Programme at a cost of Tk 64.20 crore, has been undertaken with a view to strengthening food stock, an official handout said Wednesday. Out of the total target, 75,500 tons will be pur-

chased from Rajshahi, 21,000 tons from Khulna, 2,500 tons from Dhaka and 1,000 tons from Chittagong division. This quantity of wheat will be procured directly from the farmers through 13 central storage depot, 621 local supply depot and 208 temporary purchasing centres of the country. The procurement price has been fixed at Tk 240 per maund or Tk 643 per quintal of wheat. The aim of the procurement is to provide fair price to the farmers for their products and to motivate and encourage them for boosting up the production of wheat. The programme will continue up to August next.

## Supreme Court exonerates Editor of Sangram

Supreme Court has exonerated the editor, publisher and a staff reporter of the daily Sangram from the charge of contempt, reports UNB. A contempt rule was issued on March 9 against them for a impinged report published in the March 8 issue of the Bengali daily. The charged newsmen were exonerated with a warning for the future when they appeared in the court Wednesday and submitted an application expressing regret and tendering unqualified apology for the report. They stated that the wrong report was due to "inadvertence and inexperience" of the reporter.

## Journalists of Dainik Desh demand arrear salaries

An emergency meeting of the Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) 'Dainik Desh' Unit Wednesday demanded immediate republication of the newspaper. The meeting held at the office of the 'Dainik Desh' also demanded payment of all arrear salaries and allowances of the journalists. Abul Kalam Azad, DUJ Unit Chief of the newspaper presided over the meeting while the leaders of DUJ addressed.

## Power suspension

Power will be suspended at the Tejgaon industrial area, Kaliganj upazila area, Paiksha Palash thana area and Rugganj thana partly Friday from 9 am to 4pm. It will also remain suspended on Monday at the same hours at the Narshingdi town area, Shibpur thana area and Narshingdi Sadar thana area partly, a DESA press release says.

## Tk 10 lakh Indian sarees seized

A special squad of Customs Department laid Tuesday night seized 3190 pieces of Indian sarees worth about Tk 10 lakh from a truck at Fulbaria in the city. On a secret information, the law enforcing personnel followed the truck coming from Jessore and halted it near Fulbaria market at about 3 am.

## Projonmo'71 rally in support of Golam Azam's trial

Projonmo'71, organisation of the children of the martyrs of 1971, will hold a rally at 3 pm today (Thursday) in front of the National Press Club. The rally has been organised to voice support for the public trial of foreign citizen Golam Azam, who was allegedly behind the blue print for genocide in 1971. The trial will be held on March 26 in people's court at The Suhrawardy Udyan of the city. Prominent writer Jahanara Imam, Convenor or the Coordination Committee for the realisation of the ideals of the Liberation War and Elimination of the Killers and Collaborators of '71, will be chief guest at the rally. The meeting will be addressed by mothers, widows, sons, daughters, brothers and sisters of the martyrs of 1971.

## Training Course on Sewing

The three-month long training course on sewing concluded Wednesday at the training centre for the Ansar and VDP.

## Thursday

- 5.00 Opening announcement Al-Quran Programme Summary
- 5.10 News in Bangla
- 5.20 Recitation from the Geeta
- 5.30 Jana Ojona
- 5.45 Mahey Ramzan
- 6.30 Cartoon: The New Three Stooges Debate
- 7.05 News in Bangla
- 8.00 Drama of the week
- 10.00 News in English
- 10.30 Drama series: Twin Peaks
- 11.15 Khabar/The News
- 11.25 Friday's Programme Summary
- 11.30 Closing

## What's on today . . .

### Condolence meeting of Puja Committee

Mahanagar Sarbajanin Puja Committee will hold a meeting to condole the deaths of Justice Ranadhir Sen and Chittaranjan Saha alias Barunda, today (Thursday) in the Dhakeswari Mandir premises here.

### Islamic Academy Discussion Meeting

Islamic Academy will hold a discussion meeting and Iftar party today Thursday at 5 pm at 21 Dhanmondi, Road No 9/1.

### 5-party press conference

Five Party Alliance will hold a press conference today (Thursday) at 4 pm at Col Taher Auditorium to express view on the Rajshahi University incident and Golam Azam issue.

## Weather

### Weather may remain dry

Rain or thundershower accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at one or two places over the region of Pabna, Bogra, Tangail, Mymensingh, Comilla and Sylhet during the next 36 hours commencing 6 pm Wednesday, according Met office. Weather may remain mainly dry elsewhere over the country. Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged during the period. The sun sets in Dhaka today (Thursday) at 6-10 pm and rises tomorrow Friday at 6-03 am. Temperature and Humidity recorded in important cities and towns on Wednesday were:

Cities/Towns	Temperature in degree Celsius	Humidity in percentage
	Max	Min
Dhaka	31.5	22.5
Chittagong	30.4	23.2
Rajshahi	30.0	15.6
Khulna	32.2	21.6
Kheppupara	30.4	22.5
Cox's Bazar	31.2	23.4
Sylhet	29.2	18.0
Dinajpur	32.0	25.3

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This is to advise that M.V. ASIAN ANGEL VOY-16A is expected to arrive at Chittagong on or about 26-3-92 carrying cargoes with Vehicles from Japanese Ports. Consignees are requested to arrange clearance of their consignments as soon as possible after discharge. It is advised that Consignments not cleared within 45 days from the date of arrival of the vessel are liable to be sold in auction by Customs Authority without any reference to the Consignees. For: JAMES FINLAY P.L.C. AS AGENTS. NYK LINE, TOKYO, JAPAN

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