Tribute to Jagadish Chandra Bose, the Man who Knew All about Plants; and Challenging Time for Newspapers

HILE we talk about protecting our plant life and saving our forests, gro-wing more trees and turning our world into a greener place, we should, at some stage, pay our tribute to the man who knew more about our plants than anyone else of his time, the late Jagadish Chandra Bose.

This great Bengali scientist who lived and worked in London and Calcutta in the early part of this century is best known for his discovery that plants not only have lives but also have feelings, sensitivities, emotions. This breakthrough in the research in botany received due international attention, but, as many people feel, it fell short of the recognition it deserved, the Nobel Prize. The same lack of recognition deprived Bose of the highest possible award in the field of physics for his work relating to the invention of wireless transmission. That's another story.

It is good to know that there is now a renewed interest among contemporary scientists in the work done by Bose, on which one of our feature writers will produce a report for The Datly Star and later for a regional publication.



So, the more we know about our plants, the stronger will be the movement against destruction of our vegetation, a movement that already finds its manifestation in different forms, in different countries. As Fr RW Timm tells us in an informative piece, published by the Dhaka Courier, "in India, the Chipko Movement, in which women embraced the trees in order to save them form destruction by loggers, generated several folk songs about their efforts to arouse people's consciousness and enthusiasm"

The late Jagadish Chandra Bose would have been delighted with this new awareness among women in South Asia about the place of plants and trees in our life perhaps in their realisation that, apart from possessing lives of their own, they also have feelings and

F there is one thing com mon in many marriages, it

is boredom or lack of

excitement. It is considered to

be an inevitable reality.

something that is bound to

happen some day. And why

not? What can be more boring

than having to see the same

person for the last 10 or 15

years, listening to the same

jokes, sharing the same

other more intimate details of

life that one has to share? And

as if that was not bad enough,

there is the serious possibility

years. Yet, inspite of the bore-

often asked "we used to have

so much fun during the first

year of our marriage, why has

life become so boring now?"

The answer is "do you at all do

the things that used to make

life a fun? Typically, relation-

sensitivities, just what Bose had discovered more then half a century ago.

A great writer even by the standard set by his contemporary, Rabindranath Tagore, Bose might have then produced another of his superb essays, like the one we all read in our school. If I recall correctly, it was a piece in which speaking in first person, the writer has a long conversation with the Ganges, asking the river where it comes from and where it goes. As the river keeps up the dialogue, bringing in mythology again and again, you can almost hear the Ganges whisper in a soft low voice. May be some one should translate it into English for environmentalists in different

with other weekend dailies.

For decades, The Sunday Times has served as a model for journalists aspiring to bring out quality weekend newspapers. Serious without being pompous, the publication offered its readers a wide range of excellent coverage, from investigative reports on socio-political issues to straight-forward scoops, from stimulating book reviews to bylined columns by known and relatively unknown writers.

We have several reasons for paying our tribute to The Sunday Times of yesterdays.

In 1971, it was the first western publication to devote a four-page spread to what it called "Genocide", in large bold headlines, detailing

the massacre in the crstwhile East Pakistan by

Yahya Khan's army, written by a courageous

highly professional Pakistani journalist,

Anthony Mascaranhas. This coverage was later

expanded into the -book, "The Rape of

Bangladesh", perhaps the first book on the

subject published in English. As Mascaranhas

who died a premature death some years ago

once told me," It was the support of the Sun-

day Times editor, Harold Evans with his

enormous sympathy for the people of

Bangladesh who made all this possible, the

four-page coverage, the book and, finally, my

which served as a model for the Asian, the

Hongkong-based weekend newspaper which

was launched in the late sixties, under the

editorship of Tarzic Vittachi. Due to poor

marketing and inadequate advertising support.

this unique publication was closed down in the

early seventies, leaving a gap that is yet to be

As the editor of The Sunday Times, Evans

was always most helpful in the training

projects for Asian journalists. He served as a

resource persons at many of our seminars in

this region, one of which, if I remember

correctly, worked out some guidelines as to

how the media should cover religious or ethnic

conflicts. This particular seminar was held in

Colombo, but in the mid-sixties, long before

part of the island was caught in an endless

great deal to many of us in Asia for decades.

So, as you see, The Sunday Times meant a

Harold Evens left The Sunday Times some

years ago to take over as the Editor of The

Times - a distinct honour for a relatively

young journalist - but, in a matter of years, was

eased out of his job by Rupert Murdoch, the

controversial newspaper tycoon. As expected,

Evans ended up by writing a best-seller, "Good

Times, Bad Times", detailing the story of his

by The Sunday Times, prompting other British

dailies and weekend papers to wash the royal

linen in public, has done incalculable damage

to the image of British journalism. The line di-

The serialisation of the book on Princess Di

ethnic bloodbath.

In some ways, it was The Sunday Times

migration to London, with a job in his paper.

viding the quality press and the sensational tabloids has suddenly become very thin indeed, with each publication fighting its own battle in the circulation war, under its own rules. And what happens in Britain can also happen ciscwhere, including Bangladesh.

My other worry is, if the London-based Press Complaints Commission cannot halt the drift in the British press to irresponsible journalism, there will be pressure from within the parliament to enact new laws to curb media intrusion into private lives. If this happens, the stage could well be set for restricting press freedom in Britain, at least in certain areas, perhaps marking the start of an unpredictable process.

A few of our Bangladesh editors are currently attending the conference of the Commonwealth Press Union (CPU) in Edinburgh. It will be interesting to know later if the CPU meeting has discussed the development in the British press objectively and fairly, while delegates from other commonwealth countries are given little lectures on press freedom and responsibility.

NE major reason why a quality publication like The Sunday Times compromises on its editorial standard results from the circulation war, involving most newspapers in Britain. This, in turn, is linked to the high cost of production, the maintenance of ever-changing sophisticated printing technology and a mad rush to share the advertising market with the electronic media. This is happening everywhere, including in many countries in Asia. Here is an

In Sugapore, the Straits Times which has long dominated the newspaper scene of the republic will have a competitor, perhaps within a year, in the form of a tabloid daily. No, this is not much of a news, until you see the figure, quoted by the authoritative regional workly, the Far Eastern Economic Review, of the estimated capital, the equivalent of \$62 million or approximately 250 crore taka. Oddly enough, the venture will be owned by the government-controlled National Trade Union Congress (NTUC) which runs several other commercial projects. If you find the figure of the estimated capital of the new proposed daily somewhat mind-boggling, just consider how much cash the Singapore Press Holdings (SPH), the publisher of the Stratts Times has in its reserves, a tidy S\$ 450 million, the equivalent of \$281 million or an astronomical amoun if you convert it into taka.

With such high ficarcial stakes, publications cannot afford to lose. But some still do, even in such an well-organised, highly efficient city republic as Singapore. In 1986, another laily, the Singapore Monitor which had also vainly tried to compete with the Straits Times, closed after three years of operation with an estimated loss of \$15 million.

One sees the same scenario in Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok and Hongkong, not to mention such cities as Seoul and Tokyo Somehow it is all rather frustrating for small entrepreneurs, a losing game for the community press. Now, one notices the same trends in India, especially among the big monopolies. Whether other South Asian countries, including Bangladesh, will face the same phenomenon is still to be seen.

Kuakata—a Place for the Discerning Traveller by Mohammad Ahsan Kabir and Shabbir Hossain

B ANGLADESH is not a paradise. It cannot be a utopia, and that clusive It lies in the Potuakhali district of the southern part of land of Shangrila lives only in the country. Amidst steep cliffs the dreams and imagination of at an altitude of hundreds of man. But Bangladesh is real. meters, the beach appears like a Scandinavian fjord. The And alive. It is a country which may not be a cool cradle as the trek to Kuakata begins at mountain kingdom of the Khepupara, a 15 -hour iterasnowkissed Himalayas, but it is tion by launch or bus from Dhaka. The trek through the a land that is forever summer; a sweeping panorama of subtle Sunderbans is an alternative balances of sound, shade and with a charming launch journcy through the green mystercolour; an exciting boutique of ics of its newly developed diverse cultures and fascinating tradition. forest range.



Rakhaine fishermen-out in the sea.

Bangladesh may not be one of the "big boys" of interna tional tourism but it has not diminished in charm and gradually it has established it self as one of the most desir able destinations in South East Asia for tourists.

From time immemorial Kuakata, an emblem of uncared natural beauty, with the endless blue-green sea of unknown depth caressing it with the gentle foam - has never failed to enthrall the hearts of even those who have not a jot of interest in mother nature. In fact everything there in Kuakata is more than natural. Though motels and restaurants are yet to be there you can have your moon-light dinner at Salam Miah's paltry beachrestaurant and get together for small homely barbecues under the open starry sky with perfect merriment. Bored of perfunctory city life? Take a slow journey up the coast, where the coconut beaches are long, and where alluring picturesque greenery preserve way of life charming in its simplicity. Like to enjoy both the sunset and sunrise? The 'infinite' beach equally extended to both west and east, will provide you that

There are two types of inhabitants here with different cultures and ways of life - the Bangalee Muslims and the Rakhaines. Rakhaines are followers of Buddhism and believed to have come from the then Burma before British-Raj'. Usually Bangalec Muslims call them as 'mag'. History says that they started cultivation clearing the jungle and thus established a civilization. But now-a-days, in an odd twist of fate, they are on the verge of extinction. Even then they are holding up there own culture, custom, and social norms.

Rakhaines are said to be beauty-loving tribe. Almost every house is adorned with a beautiful garden in front. They keep their houses always tidy and weave their own apparels on homespun handlooms. They have their own language but at times they also speak Bangla.

You will find here people of different professions like fisherman cultivators and others. A group of hard-working people catch shrimp with a peculiar rectangular mosquitoe net. If you go farther toward the deeper sea you will discover people catching sharks of dif-See col. 3

MYWORLD

S. M. Ali



Scientist Jagadish Chandra Bose and a tree that, one hopes, will survive a threat to its life.

countries who are campaigning against manmade pollution of our rivers, including the

IKE a sizable number of journalists in that it is The Sunday Times of London which has just serialised what is said to be an atrocious book on the private life of Princess Diana, thus presenting its readers with "this new odious exh-ibition of journalists dabbling their fingers in the stuff of other people's soul", as a London-based press body put it the

It is all very sad that it should be the stable companion of The Times - still a great paper

. . . .

different countries, I feel dismayed

- that stoops so low in its battle for circulation

Excitement in Marriage

by Shaheen Anam



dom and all the other not so pleasant aspects of marriage, people all over the world, evship starts losing its initial ex ery day millions of them, are citement when the children making the commitment to "love and to care, in good come. As motherhood, and all the virtues ascribed to mothtimes and bad, till..." As the erhood are so eulogised, years pass, most couples live women take it as the prime by the commitment but somemission in their lives. They try how somewhere the fun goes to become such perfect mothout of the marriage, the relaers that unconsciously the tionship becomes stale and life goes on in a steady husband is neglected on the other hand, the husband is monotonous pattern. Boredom perceived as the bread earner. in marriage is so prevalent that many couples accept it as an This causes him to concentrate all his energies and efintegral part of marriage, not forts in his profession. Over being aware that it could be the years the fun goes out of different. But is it really so inthe marriage, emotionally the evitable? My answer is of couple drift apart and a time course no. There is nothing comes when they have nothing inevitable about it, marriages to say to each other. The concan be interesting and exciting cept of romantic love after for ever if conscious effort is marriage is scorned upon and made. Admittedly it is tough, any outward demonstration of but it can be done. If we look affection is discouraged. But at relationships as growing, alive, vibrant with the potential this need not be so. Marriage should not mean the end of of immense diversity and romantic love. On the other growth, and what is what a hand, it should be the beginhealthy relationship should be. ning of a beautiful romantic then the question of boredom relationship that lasts a lifedoes not arise. One can spend time. Given the monotony, the a lifetime discovering the diversity and the banality of each sameness, the pressure of day to day living, it is very tough to other's personality. I know by keep up the excitement and now most readers are saying to the romance but there are themselves, "this is all very ways, actions that do not rewell, but how does one keep quire too much effort such as a the marriage exciting?" The compliment, a simple word of answer to that is firstly, conappreciation, bringing home scious effort and the next is to flowers even when no one is get out of some of our cultural sick or surprising each other stereotypes that inhabit couwith a gift, celebrating without ples, to enjoy, each other in playful, childlike funny ways. in any occasion, going out to dinner without the children, takour culture, couples are coning interest in each other's stantly bombarded with the work, hobbies - anything to message of "now that you are communicate that life is fun, married and have children you that you are blessed and happy must be scrious and responsito be with each other. There is ble". Marriage counsellors are

no other better way to bring

back the excitement and fun of

the early days of marriage than

to take holiday, just the two of

you without the children.

Some parents, I know, will be

shocked at my suggestion, but

if children can be left behind



in proper care there is no reason to feel guilty about leaving them for a few days or weeks. Couples have known to have come back rejuvenated and much better equipped to deal with the demands made on them by the family, home and children. During the course of our married life, we tend to forget that we owe ourselves some fun, some entertainment and relaxation. Another reason for boredom in marriage is

sponsibility to make himself/herself more interesting, and to help each other to develop to the maximum one's potential. This is the factor that makes life interesting. The passing years, with age and experience, should make a person more interesting and interested in life. Couples must have their own world no matter what they do, be it home or the work place, and thus come together each bringing his/her own experiences making the relationship richer and the charm enhanced.

ouster from the Times group.

lack of interest in each other's

lives as well as in one's own

life. Each partner has a re-

So couples, are you willing to take up the challenge, for a challenge it is? The best time to start is now. Pick up the phone and say something sweet, something different to your spouse, 'we have something special tonight, bring home some flowers, go out for a quiet dinner just two of you, talk about how you first met just do it - it will make a difference, I promise.

Kuakata

From col. 8

ferent sizes, if not too big, with barbs in order to collect the fins which later they sell at a price say Taka 26000 per maund. These are also exported to foreign countries and thus earn a lot of foreign

turesque, uncrowded beach, encaged in a halo of breathtaking natural beauty, it is still uncared for. It can easily be turned into a charming resort. An action-packed programme of activities and festivities should be planned for the tourists - So that they come, enjoy and experience the mystic charm of Bangladesh.



Back from the sea with the catch—young sharks.

Rash-Utsab" is the main attraction in Kuakata in mid Agrahyan (early winter). The nature takes a festive look when the Rakhatnes sprinkle red 'abeer' on each other during the festival.

Though Kuakata is a sensational tourist spot with a pic-

This is to inform our young readers that the Rising Stars page will appear on Saturday instead of Friday from now on. We regret the inconvenience to our readers.

Rising Stars

WRITE TO MITA

Dear Mita.

I have followed your advice, and have decided to let my 'bhabi' go ahead with her marriage plans. I have left her to God, because only God can deal with her now.

Incidentally, I read that letter from Ms Selina Jahan, who is obviously a lady of very decided opinions, if I may say so. She says that society is shocked when a woman marries a much younger man, but nobody minds when a man of 40 marries a woman of 20. That is true, but I'll point out that there are biological reasons for this. A man can have a child at 60 or even 80. Can a woman do that?

As for minding my own business (believe me, Ms Selina Jahan), that's exactly what I'm doing. I must look after the interests of my neices, since their mother obvioulsy won't. Who'll marry them now? By what right does Ms Jahan call me to account?

And you, dear Mita, agreed with Ms Jahan a little too well for the liking of a great many people. I suppose, it's because you're a woman yourself. I've noticed that you answer from a strongly feminist point of view. Most of my friends read your column - I know this for a fact. To do justice to your male readers, you should be strictly neutral.

Your agreed with her when she said chauvinist hypocrisy should be condemned, implying that I'm oppressing my 'bhabi'. Sounds great on paper, sure. But real life tends to be a bit different. The things women can do to each other, are far worse than anything a man could ever do to them. Believe me, I know what I'm talking about. The people who are picking my poor deluded 'bhaht' to pieces, and blackening her name, even before the marriage — the people who'll see to it that she dies a living death in society — are all women, not men.

Anonymous, Dhanmandi, Dhaka

Dear Anonymous

Forgive me if I offended because it was not intentional at all. I try to be neutral even if I am a woman and a feminist. When I agreed with Ms Jahan I meant all kinds of hypocrisy, and not only male hypocrisy, should be condemned. I certainly did not imply that you were oppressing your 'bhabi', on the other hand I believe you are her well wisher and care what happens to her. Your comment about women oppressing each other is right on target. Unfortunately, even now after years of women's movement, there is a lack of solidarity among women as for your fear that your neices will not get married because of their mother's actions. Well if that is really true, then we are an extremely narrow-minded and vicious people. But I truely believe that this will not be the case. The girls will stand on their own because of their education and personality and if men refuse to marry them just because their mother married a younger man, then they are not worthy suitors.

Dear Mita,

After five years of marriage, my wife gave birth to a boy two months ago. He looks exactly like my first cousin who is also my next door neighbour. I don't look like my cousin at all. The strangest rumours have got going. I can't face anybody anymore. I have lost 30 pounds in two months.

I am 30 and passably goodlooking. My wife is 25 and pretty. My cousin is 35 and very handsome. He is respectably married and the father of two children. There has never been any scandal about him before. Our families always slipped in and out of each other's houses. This has stopped after the scandal

I have never had any reason to suspect my wife. She sometimes goes out alone - shopping or visiting her family and friends. But that is normal. There is a very strong argument in favour of her character. If there was a anything fishy, my mother would have sniffed it out a long time back and raised

hell. She lives with me and she has always hated my wife. It was only after the baby's birth that my mother got her chance at last. I was horrified to find out that it was my mother who first got those rumours going.

What do I do now? I have asked my wife no questions, and she has said nothing. But she avoids eye contact with me now, and she looks miserable. People tell me that my mother is going around saying that the only way I can save myself is by divorcing my wife. But I still love my wife.

Is there any medical test to find out if this baby is mine or not? If he isn't, I will throw him out of my house along with his mother. But if he is," I will throw out my mother. Tell me, 'chaprassis' in my office are laughing at me. My life has turned into a nightmare.

In all my years of counselling, I have seldom come across

Anonymous, Gulshan, Dhaka

Dear Anonymous,

a letter as complex as yours. There are many facets to this problem. I well try to address the most compelling ones and be as sensitive as possible. It is really unfortunate that a child, who should normally brings joy and happiness, who is the outcome of the love and commitment between a couple is now the cause of pain, shame and scandal - through no fault of his. First, just because a woman gives birth to a child who looks like someone else other than the father is rather a flimsy reason to suspect infidelity. There are many cases of children not looking like their parents at all but resemble an aunt, uncle, grand parents etc. The genes which gives us our physical characteristics can come from anyone. On the other hand, since such a suspicion has entered your head, you have to seek conclusion. Yes, there are tests that can ascertain if you are the biological father of the baby. Then what? Suppose it does prove that the baby is not yours. What next? You throw out the baby and the mother. Then what and how accurate are these tests? Can anyone rely 100% on them? Rely enough to put your life and love at stake? There is really no guarantee, you will forever be haunted by doubts; either way you lose. There is only one guarnatee - faith and trust. Forget what the child looks like, just look at your wife and ask yourself if you trust her or not. You say she looks miserable. Well why not, what else can she do? A scandal such as this is enough to drive most middle class women to suicide. You say she does not say anything. Perhaps she is begging for help, perhaps she is looking at you to dispel all these rumours and place her back in the position of dignity and honour where she rightly belongs. And there is yet another angle to the problem. What about your cousin's family, what is the scandal doing to them? And all this just because a baby by some fluke happens to look like your cousin and not like youl

Please don't think I am taking any side or not being sensitive to your problem. Given our culture and social norms, a scandal such as this can destroy a family and of course there are always some people who will derive a perverse pleasure from this. You say the gentleman is your first cousin. If he is from the same family, it is not at all freakish that your son looks like him. Ask any doctor, they will tell you. Here is what I advise. Talk to your wife, please don't isolate or connect her before she has been proven guilty. Both of you together can overcome this crisis, just remain united and continue to communicate. The scandal mongers will stop when they see you together. Please don't destroy your life this way, try to look at the problem rationally. If, as you say you have never had any reason to doubt her character, then what has changed now? As for your mother - there is no need to throw her out too. Just make it very clear what her role in the family is and that it is overstepping that role and thus undermining her own position. Face this problem with courage and patience and I am sure, together you will overcome it.