

# All about Diplomatic Passports for MPs; and Some Thoughts on Reprinting Materials from other Publications

SINCE we have grown somewhat allergic to the idea of members of the Jatiya Sangsad enjoying anything even remotely suggesting extra privileges, we have not taken kindly to the move that entitles MPs and their spouses to use diplomatic passports. Perhaps the reaction is a case of grapes being sour. My own feeling remains a little mixed. But some awkward questions have cropped up in my less-than-subtle mind.

I have noted that the new privilege will be enjoyed by MPs and their "spouses", meaning not only wives of male members of the JS but also husbands, if any, of women MPs. We can be reasonably sure that while most, if not all, wives of male MPs would be housewives whose interest in using-diplomatic-customs exits or the immigration counters. May be confined to a few "routine" purchases during a foreign tour, spouses of female MPs may well be the kind of businessmen who treat a foreign trip, with the use of diplomatic passport, as a gift from the gods or from the first democratically elected government in a decade.

The report of the move taken at the meeting of a Parliamentary Standing Committee — the decision, as expected, was unanimous, just another case of national consensus — is rather sketchy, leaving a few questions unanswered. For instance, while we know that this privilege would not apply to those members against whom charge of corruption or rather explicit case or cases are pending in the court, it is far from clear if MPs and their spouses would use their diplomatic passports during all foreign trips or only when the tour involves an official mission. Again, will there be a special mention in the passport that its bearer — a housewife or a businessman, as the case may be — holds a diplomatic travel document under a resolution passed by a Parliamentary Standing Committee?

We must not blame the immigration officials in Bangkok, Singapore or Hongkong if they find it all most puzzling and start asking more questions than they normally put to the holder of an ordinary international passport issued by the Government of Bangladesh.

Let us imagine a part of such an exchange, say, at the Bangkok airport where the language difficulties and built-in suspicion among Thai immigration officials about potential illegal visitors (not to mention drug traffickers) add to the discomfort of many genuine Bangladeshi tourists.

"You are not a diplomat, Madam, because you have mentioned 'housewife' as your pro-

cession," an immigration official says to the wife of a MP who starts wondering if it is an awkward statement or a rude question. "Well, I am the wife of a member of the Parliament and I am entitled to this diplomatic passport." The Bangladeshi replies, a little haughtily to hide her nervousness.

"Very interesting. You see, Madam, my wife is a member of the Thai parliament. But I

Sun for reprinting his feature from the Star, but he is not quite sure whether he should ask for a token fee of ten taka or a hefty charge of Taka 1,000. His third choice is to send what he calls a stinking letter to the management of The Morning Sun, protesting against the so-called unethical but increasingly popular practice in the Dhaka press.

Despite my own busy schedule, I must

spend a little time with Shahrier next week to persuade him to cross out the first one from his list of three options.

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IN opposing this unprofessional practice of newspapers reprinting materials from other, usually foreign publications, I fought my own battles with none other than the late Hamidul Huq Chowdhury who, as someone put it the other day, technically still owns The Bangladesh Observer.

I worked for him as the Editor of the Observer for six months in the second half of 1989.

From time to time, Chowdhury would send me a bunch of foreign newspapers, with several reports and features marked, with the suggestion, sometimes written and often just verbal, "You can reproduce them."

The such instructions, my reply was always the same: "I would not publish anything that we have not paid for." I would then add that I at least needed permission from the publication concerned and I was quite sure that permission would carry a price.

Despite his superb command over all legal questions, the late Chairman of the Observer group would refer to an outdated law that copyright of materials used by newspapers and journals only lasted 24 hours. While I doubted if such a law ever existed, I would insist that the situation had changed in recent years and that international copyright conventions provided protection to what is often pompously but rightly described as the "Intellectual property."

Chowdhury cared little for my argument on this matter.

Then, one day, we received an invoice from the Independent, the daily published from London, asking for one hundred pound sterling for two features which The Bangladesh Observer had reprinted, before, luckily for me, I had joined the paper as the Editor.

I would not know if the management of the Observer settled the bill. But credit goes to the London daily that after this incident, Chowdhury never asked me to reprint anything from a foreign publication without its permission — or anything that we had not paid for. To get another invoice for £100 would have been too much for a man who was already nearing ninety.

## MY WORLD

S. M. Ali

cannot hold a diplomatic passport. May I keep a xerox copy of your passport?"

Well, this certainly makes our Bangladeshi visitor more nervous. Now, imagine what happens at the airport in Paris, New York or Geneva where all immigration officials undergo an intensive course — so I am told — on how to be extra rude to all incoming visitors, on assumption that they are, without any exception, potential illegal immigrants, dealers in drugs or fugitives from justice.

At this point, the frightened Bangladeshi may well say to herself, "Give me back my ordinary international passport. I can do without this fancy diplomatic travel document."

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AS we are all for dissemination of development-oriented information, we, in The Daily Star, are genuinely pleased that a feature, titled "Dental Patients Should Stop Seeing Quacks" by our staff reporter, Shahrier Khan, published in this paper on February 21 last has been reproduced by our esteemed contemporary, The Morning Sun on August 5 without — this is the unfortunate part of it — any acknowledgement to this paper or permission from Shahrier or anyone else in this publication.

As far as I am concerned, the matter rests here. Unfortunately, Shahrier is said to be considering a number of options which have got me a little worried. His first option is, since his writing is so much in demand, he should get a raise from this newspaper. His second option is, to send a bill to The Morning

The article reproduced (at the bottom) by the Morning Sun from The Daily Star (inset)



# Injured Psyche of Battered Women

Estrella M Maniouis writes from Manila

DONNA Ferrato had focused her camera on Becca's face, blurring the prison bars.

Becca had been in jail since her arrest in 1984 for the killing of her husband. Her face when caught by the lens was furrowed with the pain of remembrance and a deep sense of having suffered injustice.

But she has not given up hope that one day she will get a retrial in which her husband's story as a batterer will be admitted as evidence," the photo caption goes.

Becca, it is explained, shot her husband in self-defence when he tried to strangle her. Years of abusive treatment had preceded the incident, but Becca could not bring these up in her defence because at the time, the law "did not recognise a couple's history of battery." Found guilty of premeditated murder, she was sentenced to life imprisonment without parole.

Worse, the experience of abuse has put bars around her own self. "In my heart I don't believe (my husband) is dead... He lives because we still live with what he did not us," she says.

Grieving women, defiant women, women bearing the marks of assault by their own partners are the subject of a recent photo exhibit in Manila featuring the works of multi-awarded photographer Donna Ferrato.

The exhibit has travelled worldwide, and in October 1991 Ms Ferrato published her book *Living with the Enemy*, called by the American feminist magazine Ms "a photographic legacy of battered women and their lives."

The book represents 10 years of pioneering work in the documentation of domestic violence in the United States. It began when Ms Ferrato was assigned to record the daily life of a "perfect American family."

As one who wants to know her subjects well, Ms Ferrato lived for a while with the couple Garth, a self-made millionaire, and Lisa. But the impression of an enviable lifestyle was soon to be marred — Ms Ferrato chanced on the two quarrelling in the bathroom. With her camera, she caught Garth — high on drugs hitting Lisa so hard that she slammed against the marble vanity.

This close encounter with wife-battering would later bring Ms Ferrato to hospital emergency rooms, prisons, shelters and troubled homes.

She spends as much time as possible with her subjects whom, she portrays "not as victims but as the survivors they really are." She also attends therapy sessions for the abusers and "tries to capture their own violent behaviour."

In the emergency room of a Minneapolis hospital, Ms Ferrato found Diana whose boyfriend "ran over my chest"

with the back wheels of a truck. Her chest had black tire marks.

Martha had a stab wound in the leg. "He didn't mean it," she said of her attacker. "You have to believe that the person you love wouldn't intentionally do this kind of thing."

A bruised shoulder, eye ringed with black and a bandaged cut on the cheek were the signs of battering for Jane. When her husband became irrationally jealous, she said, "his whole body went into beating me."

Other injuries, Ms Ferrato notes, are not as obvious especially if the attacker has become an expert at "hitting discreetly." Workers in hospital emergency rooms are thus trained to detect even slight signs of abuse.

A deeper harm lies in the experience's grip on the mind. "Once you have a violent man, it's very hard to get rid of him, or the fear of him," Ms Ferrato quotes one victim.

Protective of his mother, young Jason goes to bed with a plastic gun and rubber knife so that "if Daddy comes, I'll be able to stop him."

Often victims have to flee in the middle of the night. One photograph showed a woman and a child standing before the closed gates of a shelter, an overhead bulb the only light source in the bleak surroundings.

In one shelter, a young mother and her baby sleep soundly — "our first safe night in a long time," she was to announce the next morning.

"It is ironic that the women are made to live like animals, hiding in houses with bars on the windows sleeping among strangers, donning disguises to go out in public and always having to watch their backs, (while) their husbands or boyfriends — dangerous, assaultive men — and the ones who remain safe at home," Ms Ferrato captions one work.

Domestic violence, the exhibit notes, is "the leading cause of injury in the US and claims more victims than the next three causes — car accidents, rapes and muggings — combined. Thirty per cent of murdered women are killed by their present or former male partners."

Ms Ferrato's awards include the W Eugene Smith Grant in Humanistic Photography (1985) for documentation of domestic violence in the US, the Robert F Kennedy Journalism Award for a two-part expose on domestic violence featured in the Philadelphia Inquirer and the Kodak Crystal Eagle Award for effecting change by photographically investigating an issue of social concern.

She tells Ms magazine: "My mission is to show what our lives are all about, to preserve. I try to record what's happening to us, what we're being affected by, so no matter what happens, we have evidence of what our civilisation is about."

— Dep't News Asia

## Down the Memory Lane The Last Flight From Karachi

by Dr. Habibuz Zaman

GOVERNMENT of Pakistan's Project of the Ayub Hospital and Tropical Medicine had been progressing at a snail's pace. The Ministry of Health at Islamabad had therefore initiated in 1968 an ad-interim Project of the School of Tropical Medicine with Dr. K. A. Mansur, the Director of the Institute of Public Health, Government of East Pakistan, then as the part-time Director of the ad-interim Project as well.

This postgraduate teaching institution was located within the premises of the Institute of Public Health at Mohakhali, Dhaka. The Government of Pakistan had obviously been convinced of the need to create specialist physicians well versed in tropical medicine. Facilities had been planned to give the trainees a good grounding in aspects of community and preventive medicine in addition to clinical medicine.

Students had been enrolled for the programme in tropical medicine leading to the Fellowship of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Pakistan. Departments of the six basic medical science subjects and all the departments related to preventive and social medicine and public health administration were in the process of being set up. Teaching positions had been created and were being gradually filled through the Central Public Services Commission.

Since my appointment in January 1970 as the Project Director of the Second Capital Medical Complex Dhaka, consisting of the School of Tropical Medicine, Ayub Hospital and the Cancer Institute, I had been assisting the central Public Services Commission in the recruitment of almost all class-I positions under the Ministry of Health. I had been sitting with the Commission in interviewing candidates at Dhaka for such positions.

About the end of January 1971, the Ministry of Health, Islamabad had asked me to assist the Central Public Services Commission in interviewing a candidate at Lahore for the post of Professor of Medicine, School of Tropical Medicine, Dhaka. The Commission had met several weeks earlier at Dhaka and I had sat with them in interviewing a candidate. I had been given a rather short notice through a telegram to go to Lahore. PIA, which had a direct flight from Dhaka to Lahore in those days, was unable to provide me with an economy or a first class ticket — all the seats at their disposal had

been sold. Consequently, a first class seat had to be assigned from the then East Pakistan Government quota from the Government House.

I boarded the plane in good time on the thirty-first January 1971, at the old Tejgaon airport. I was given an aisle seat towards the back of the first class. The departure time drew quiet near, but I seemed to be one of only a few passengers, who had boarded the plane. I wondered what was the fuss about getting a seat on near-empty flight! Hardly five minutes before the scheduled departure time, a huge crowd appeared on the tarmac and was seen proceeding towards the air-craft.

It took me a while to recognise the people in the crowd. When I finally did so, I realized I was flying to Lahore with the returning Bhutto entourage. The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) delegation had come to Dhaka for talks with the Awami League leadership, following the League's landslide victory in the December 1970 general elections, both for the Pakistan National Assembly and also the East Pakistan Provincial Assembly. I could identify only two of the Awami League leaders on the tarmac, Tajuddin Ahmed and Khondokar Mushtaq Ahmed. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had not come to the airport to see off Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto! Within minutes the plane was full. Mr. Bhutto had a window seat on the first row. The aisle seat next to him remained unoccupied throughout the flight. Was there none in the PPP big enough to be seated beside Mr. Bhutto? I had wondered.

The renowned lawyer and PPP leader, Mr. Mahmud Ali Kasuri walked from the economy class a couple of times during the two-and-a-half-hour flight to talk to Mr. Bhutto. He had remained standing beside the PPP Chairman's seat just like a few others, who had ventured to get anywhere near their leader. I recall the atmosphere in the plane was gloomy — there was no rejoicing or exhilaration of success. I had gathered from newspaper reports that the talks had not gone well. Apparently Mr. Bhutto had made several rather unusual demands to share power with the Awami League. So there was no question of reaching an agreement. My impression was confirmed by the young man in his early twenties, seated beside me. He had joined the PPP bandwagon only some months earlier, soon after his graduation from the

Karachi University. Since he lived near the Vatican Legation at Clifton, in Karachi, I suppose he belonged to a wealthy business family. His account of the talks was most disheartening and depressing. The Bhutto entourage, according to his assessment, was returning to West Pakistan thoroughly disenchanted with the Awami League leadership.

On disembarking at Lahore I could identify the hijacked Indian Airlines plane parked at one edge of the runway. A day earlier the crew of this Indian Airlines plane (was it on a Srinagar to Delhi flight?) was over-powered and brought to Lahore by a few youngsters, who had identified themselves as activists for the liberation of Kashmir. Mr. Bhutto had given his blessings to the hijackers on his arrival at Lahore. Allegedly they had felt encouraged to do something dramatic. After Mr. Bhutto had left the Lahore airport, the hijackers had blown up the plane. Mr. Bhutto had lived long enough to repent this act of indiscretion. It had turned out during the protracted trial of the hijackers by a Pakistani court that the hijacking episode could have been engineered by the Indian Intelligence Agency.

Next day some disturbances had occurred near the Lahore airport. When I left Lahore, after a stay of only two nights, for Karachi, I had seen some evidence of these disturbances near the airport.

I had put up at Karachi with my wife's second brother, Salahuddin. He was then the Operational Manager of the Pakistan Security Papers Limited. His bungalow was located adjacent to the factory, not far from the airport at Malir.

After a short stay at Karachi, I had taken the PIA flight to Dhaka, as per my travel arrangements. I arrived at the Tejgaon airport shortly before sunset. On approaching the terminal building, I was somewhat surprised to find a large number of my colleagues, both officers and staff of the Second Capital Medical Complex, now called The Shaheed Suhrawardy Hospital, awaiting my arrival. On getting closer I could identify Dr. Rahim and Dr. Ramtuzuddin. I wondered what had brought so many of them to the airport. My co-workers mentioned, to my immense satisfaction and relief, that they had been worried about my safe return to Dhaka, since the PIA over-flights across India were expected to be banned any time. As it turned out, I had availed of the last flight from Karachi to Dhaka over India!

It had taken the Pakistani authorities a week or two to restore the air-link between the two wings. PIA started flying to Dhaka from the Indian peninsula over Sri Lanka. This must have been quite expensive. In that sense Mr. Bhutto had unwittingly advanced the cause of Bangladesh!

## Novel Documentation of Noteworthy Development

BENGLALIES live on rice and fish — "bhaite machhe Bangalee" the saying goes. Fish is our diet and also a dependence, economically an occupation, a livelihood. Bangladesh is a small area with a big popula-

tion. Bangladesh (IFIB) from 1990 for promotion of livestock, poultry, horticulture and silviculture along with fish culture.

Now they have made an audio-visual documentation of the whole thing with a view to

informing others. The document entitled "Audiovisual Script on IFB & IFIB" is a 10-minute duration projection of 72 slides with narrative commentary. Planned, prepared and photographed by J. Selim, the Script is by DP Majumder and J. Selim while the narration is by Ayesha Hossain and Shamim Ashraf Chowdhury.

Everything seems all right, but when the projects are more about fish culture the audiovisual document could have more slides on fish culture activities, maybe replacing one or two on waterbodies or even the population map. For Bangladesh has too many waterbodies and a very big population are facts more known to many.

Projection of specific activities perhaps could serve the purpose even better. Or the number of slides could be increased extending the duration (I don't know whether it was feasible). However, the effort is praiseworthy, and inspires us to look forward to even better and interesting audiovisual documentation of even greater development enterprises by the same people and also others.

— MS



Riverine Bangladesh



Fish market



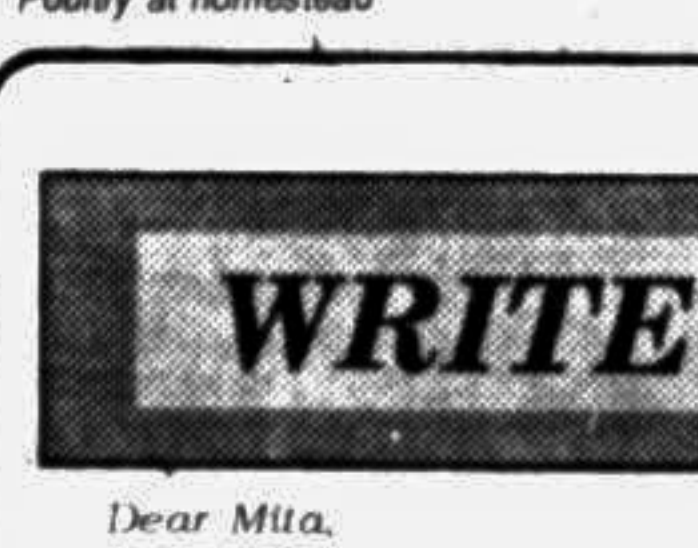
Fishing



Poultry at homestead



Protein deficiency



Housewife's delight



Housewife's delight

tion. But the country is crisscrossed by numerous waterbodies which offer excellent opportunities for planned fish culture. Many people here suffer from malnutrition, particularly protein deficiency. Hence any attempt contributing to the development of pisciculture or fisheries deserves praise.

Rotary Club of Comilla established a training programme to teach local residents how to develop fish nurseries for food and income. From October 1983 to January 1990, nearly 16,000 people participated in the production and sale of some 7,00,000 fish.

They launched a five-year project entitled "Inland Fisheries in Bangladesh" (IFB) in 1984 and established 171 fish fry nurseries, one in each union of Comilla district. Encouraged by the success of fish fry project, the Club again launched a project entitled "Integrated Farming in

## WRITE TO MITA

Dear Mita,  
I am a foreign student, studying in one of Dhaka's high educational institutions. I have been staying in Dhaka for the last five years. I made many friends, some of them are girls. Two years ago I met a girl who is beautiful, kind, talented and honest. After getting close we revealed our love to each other. She in fact, asked me to marry her, but I cannot accept the proposal because it is rather impossible to marry due to a very complicated problem.  
The problem is that being a foreigner, there is no rule that permits me to stay permanently in Bangladesh even after marriage, on the other hand, she cannot accompany me to my country because of the very very complicated political situation there. I do believe in destiny and Allah but still it is causing us some kind of despair. Please advise.  
Saadiq, Dhaka

Dear Saadiq,  
You were not very clear in your letter about your age, occupation and nationality and there it is a little difficult for me to advise you. But if you are an adult and sincerely in love with the girl then all other problems can be solved. True love can overcome much more serious obstacles than the one you mention. It might be that you are not yet ready to take a decision on such an important issue, marriage is a big commitment that two people will have to live together throughout their lives, think and discuss about it before you take a decision.  
Dear Mita,  
I am a student of class 12 at Dhaka College. Though I am 18 years old my height is only 5ft 2 inch. Though I exercise regularly I still do not become tall. Can you prescribe any medicine? I am very upset about it.  
Anonymous

Dear Anonymous,  
If I knew of a medicine that could make people tall, then I would have taken it myself. Height is inherited, doctors say children inherit the median height of their parents though, there are exceptions, certain exercises such as swimming and swinging with a ring are supposed to help and you can try those. But the important thing is to develop as a self-confident and competent person in spite of the fact that you are not tall.

Dear Mita,  
Don't you sometimes feel fed up with your family, home, children, husband, servants etc? What do you do when you feel that way? Recently I find myself often in such a state and although I realize it looks unfair in my family I get in a very bad mood and resent everything they say or do. I regret my behavior later on but it is often too late. Please advise.  
Shumit, Maghbazaar, Dhaka

Dear Shumit,  
What is happening to you is nothing abnormal. Yes I have often left that way and so do millions of women all over the world. The important thing is not to let this situation continue for too long. Get to the bottom of the problem as soon as possible. Being aware and conscious of a problem is solving half of it. Take your family in your confidence. If they are the cause of the problem, they will help you solve it. The demands made on the modern working mother is sometimes too much and difficult to cope with. The support and consideration of the family is therefore crucial.

## WRITE TO MITA

Run by a trained and experienced Family and Marriage counsellor, assisted by a professional team of doctor, psychologist and lawyer, this column will answer questions relating to family, marriage, health, family laws, and social and interpersonal relationships. Please address letters to Mita, The Daily Star, GPO Box 3257 or to 28/1, Toynbee Circular Road, Motijheel, Dhaka-1000.