

Metropolitan

**Dhaka Day by Day**

**Where the VAT is Bugging Where the Shoe Pinches**

by Fayza Haq



Jeweller shop in old Dhaka.

Zubairuddin Ismail, aged 26 years, from Tait Bazaar, Bakshi Charan Shen Poddar Lane, in Old Dhaka, is most vexed with the Value Added Tax (VAT). He says that the people come to him to get their jewellery cheap, and cannot accept the imposition of the VAT. The jeweller's shops in places like New Market and Channi Chawk can afford it, he says. But Ismail and his neighbouring goldsmiths and silversmiths cannot suffer it.

"I have my labourers to pay, and my family to care for. There is my younger sister, Lina, aged 17 years, to be given in marriage. I bring home the bread and butter, along with my younger brother, Abdus Salma, aged 23 years," Ismail says. "I have to slog and work my heart out, and yet the monthly saving is about Tk 600 only," he adds.

Yes, his elder brother, Mohammed Ibrahim, aged 38 years, and who runs a business of a wholesale grain shop along with "shuji", will contribute to the sister's dowry, the jeweller admits. Yet, he too is being pressed to make his individual contribution to the dowry and trousseau; and he is far from amused with the prospect of dishing out money from his individual savings. "It is my elder brother's duty and not really mine, as I see it," he comments.

The haggling that ensues with the customers make him sweat and fume, despite the new fan in his shop. This is despite the fact that the prices are so much cheaper than anywhere else in town, or at least more reasonable than in other similar shops in Dhaka. He works from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., and deals both with his customers and his workers... who have their own moods, demands and rhythm of work... even though they are cooperative enough.

If there is something that is definitely eating him up, it is the fact that he has not saved enough money to get himself a suitable bride... according to his taste and his upbringing. One wonders if he has heard of the favourite sixties song "Son, be a bachelor boy... and that's the way to stay". It is normal and natural for a young man in Dhaka to wish to be married and content. He believes in the conventional concept of a blissful married life.

The jeweller, furthermore laments that he cannot afford meat, and must be pleased with the rice, fish and vegetables, served to him by his sister. Yet going by his "chana noni" face, one felt he was surely exaggerating his story slightly, if not altogether.

Zubairuddin is contented with his "mohalla" people and there are no "mastaans" to harry or hound him. His able-bodied workers, and amicable neighbours would "fix them" in minutes, he says, should the situation ever arise.

He is also glad that there are no security authorities to pander to. Once again, he vehemently says that his workers and people in the adjacent shops give him full protection and support.

He inherited his shop from his elder brother Mohammed Israfi, who he says, died while trying to help out with the relief work, in the '88 flood in Dhaka, and elsewhere in Bangladesh.

The electricity failures, and the road jams in his lane — due to the rickshaws — upset him, he continues, talking about his problems at work. However, with his six workers, and his brother as a partner, he appears to be doing well for himself, going by the fancy mirror, the tubelights and six additional suspended bulb lights — apart from his fancy dandy appearance.

The jeweller deals with anklets (powder boxes, soap dishes, *shindur-dans*, apart from gold sets which range from Tk. 14,00 to Tk. 7,500. He sells his "mangtashi" ring, popular with many in Dhaka, for Tk. 12,00. A pure gold, impressive ring for gents is for Tk. 700 and contains one and a half "annas" of gold. The "jhumkas" range from Taka 1,700 to Takas 2,700 a pair, depending on the amount of gold used, and the workmanship employed. His "tikli" is for Tk. 1,800. He even has gold plated coronets for marriage occasions.

One finds the prices a refreshing change from the inflated ones, in places like New Elephant Road or even the original "Jarwa House" near the "Jonaki" cinema hall. As a salesman too, Zubairuddin appears amicable, and only too ready to serve and please.

**189 weapons recovered from Khulna division**

KHULNA, Aug 16: One hundred and eighty-nine pieces of illegal weapons were recovered from all the 16 districts of Khulna division from August 1 to 15 under the anti-terrorism drive "Operation August 92" launched all over the country, an official handout said Sunday, reports BSS.

The illegal weapons included rifle, revolver, pipegun, pistol, shotgun, and 383 live cartridges and bullets.

Besides, a total of 2,317 persons were arrested in this connection during the period.

**Crisis of democratic transition not correct: Dr Kamal**

Awami League leader Dr Kamal Hossain didn't agree with the observation at a seminar yesterday that the country is in crisis in its democratic transition, reports UNB.

To call it "crisis of democratic transition is not correct, Bangladesh is struggling for transition, because the age of new government is 20 months," he told the seminar on "Crisis of Democratic Transition in Bangladesh and the

American Model of Democracy". Bangladesh Association for American Studies (BAAS) organised the seminar at Goethe Institute of the German Cultural Centre in Dhaka.

Dr Bazul Mobin Chowdhury, a professor of Sociology and Registrar of Shah Jalal University of Science and Technology, Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman, research fellow of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, BAAS President Prof Nazrul Islam and General Secretary Dr Fakrul Alam also took part in discussion on the key-note papers on different aspects of the growth of Bangladesh politics.

Dr Kamal, also Convenor of the Democratic Forum, said establishing democracy is a process, giving it an institutional shape would not be possible on contract for certain period.

Referring to law and order situation, he said violence now crept down to the grassroots level, posing a challenge to establishment of democracy. The Awami League president member and eminent lawyer said university teachers and students could play a vital role in establishing democracy as an institution.

Presenting his paper on the seminar title, a Dhaka University professor said influence of large bureaucracies was growing and an unholy alliance of political adventurers, professional trade unionists and hoodlums virtually turning the body politic into a kind of "legitimate oligarchy."

Dr Shamsul Islam Khan of the Department of International Relations also presented another paper on "Politics of Fragmentation: A Study of Political Parties in Bangladesh." Prof Islam observed the contemporary politics of the country had sometimes been described as "crisis situation" and sometimes as "prolonged political impasse."

He said shortly after independence when attempts were made to adopt formal institutions of "liberal democracy" it failed to take roots because the very substance of politics were "liberal democracy" had thrived was absent.

The Awami League emerged as a single mass-party as it apprehended the independence struggle, the key-note paper maker said, adding a crucial factor which contributed to this failure to grow political pluralism lay in the problematic of charisma and legitimacy.

Personal charisma of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman failed to evolve any rationalised and concrete structure of "extraordinary lasting social form", a precondition for consolidation of democratic institutions in the country, he viewed.

Mujib, according to the findings of Dr Islam, tried to routinise his charisma into patrimonialism with a personalised administration based on patron-client relationship.

But, since the "legal obligation of absolute obedience" on the part of two well-established institutions — the army and civil bureaucracy — could not be taken for granted, it created a conflict situation.

**Biswas, Khaleda greet Soeharto**

President Abdur Rahman Biswas Sunday greeted President Soeharto of Indonesia on the occasion of its Independence Day, reports BSS.

President Biswas, in a message to President Soeharto, expressed his confidence that the friendly ties binding the two countries would be further strengthened and consolidated in the coming years.

In another message Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia also felicitated President Soeharto.

**What's on today . . . .**

**Rotary Club of Dhaka North**

The 1134th regular weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Dhaka North will be held today (Monday) at 5.30 pm at Sonargang Hotel.

**Rotary Club of Gulshan**

The regular weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Gulshan will be held today (Monday) at 5.30 pm at the Gulshan Club.

**Nirmul Committee meet**

The city unit of the Ektatturer Ghatok Dalai Nirmul Committee will hold a meeting at its Topkhana Road office today (Monday) at 5 pm.

**JSD (Rab) meet**

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Rab) will hold a joint meeting with the party's front organisations — Jatiya Samik Jote and Chhatra League at its 40/k, Dilu Road in the city today (Monday) at 4 pm.

**Lions Club of Dhaka Orchid**

The general meeting of the Lions Club of Dhaka Orchid will be held today (Monday) at 5 pm at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

**Rotary Club of Dhaka Central**

417th weekly regular general meeting of Rotary Club of Dhaka Central will be held today (Monday) at 1.00 pm at Family Lounge of Dhaka Club.

**Seminar on Kerry**

A seminar marking the 23rd birth anniversary of William Kerry, a forerunner in publishing first Bangla newspaper in the subcontinent and introducing prose style in the Bangla Language, will be held at Bangladesh Scout Bhaban at 10 am today (Monday).

The seminar has been jointly organised by the Weekly Dhaka and Bangladesh lithas Gobshana Parishad.

**. . . . and tomorrow**

**Launching ceremony of Farabi's works**

The launching ceremony of works of Khan Mohammad Farabi will be held at 5.30 pm tomorrow (Tuesday) at Children's Auditorium of the National Museum under the auspices of Brahmanbaria Shahitya Academy.

Professor Haroon-ur-Rashid, Director General of Bangla Academy, will preside over the function while Dr. Anisuzzaman will be the chief guest.

Principal Mohammad Noman, Professor Abdullah Abu Sayeed, Shamsuzzaman Khan, Selina Hossain, Shantou Kaiser, Dr Selim Zahan and Ali Imam will be among the participants.

**Seminar on environment**

A seminar on environment will be held at the Sir Salimullah Medical College Tomorrow (Tuesday).

Jointly sponsored by Bangladesh Society for the Conservation of Environment and Students' Union of the college, Dhaka City Corporation Mayor Mirza Abbas will attend the seminar as chief guest.

Eminent scientist Dr Shamsur Ali and Vice Chancellor of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology Prof M Shahjahan are expected to be present as special guests.

**JUCSU orientation programme held**

The orientation programme of the newly elected members of Jahangirnagar University Central Students Union (JUCSU) was held yesterday in university premises.

Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury, Deputy Leader of the House, Abdullah Al Noman, Minister for Environment and Forest, Jamiruddin Sircar, Minister for Education, Amanullah Aman MP and Niamatullah Sabu MP attended the programme.

President of JUCSU presided over the function.



- Monday**
- 5-00 Opening announcement Al-Quran
  - 5-10 Program summary
  - 5-20 News in Bangla
  - 5-25 Recitation from the Geeta
  - 5-30 Cartoon Show: Tom the Nasty Cat
  - 6-00 Indonesian Independence Day: Envoy's Address and Documentary Film
  - 6-30 Sports Programme
  - 7-00 TV Debate
  - 8-00 News in Bangla
  - 8-30 Apnar Shastho
  - 9-00 Magazine/Upahar
  - 10-00 News in English
  - 10-30 Film Show: Hill Street Blues
  - 11-30 Khabar/The News
  - 11:40 Tuesday's programme summary
  - 11:45 Closing

**14 UP chairmen join BNP**

Fourteen union parishad chairmen of Sreenagar Thana under Munshigonj district in Dhaka Sunday formally joined the BNP, reports BSS.

They joined the BNP in the presence of Deputy Leader of the House, Dr AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, at a city hotel.

Reposing trust on the strong and dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and inspired by the politics of Bangladeshi nationalism of BNP, they assured their best effort to improve the law and order situation in the locality.

The Deputy Leader said during the last three years of the nine-year long autocratic regime, almost all the development funds were misused and plundered. The local government bodies will be given more power for development activities in future, he added.

**Need for bringing down child mortality rate stressed**

Health and Family Welfare Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ubbi Yusuf yesterday stressed the need for bringing down child mortality rate to create a positive impact on the efforts of checking population boom in the country, reports BSS.

He urged the health and family planning personnel to reach health services to the poor people.

The Health Minister was addressing a conference of health assistants and family planning workers of Savar thana. Presided over by Dr Lutfur Rahman, the function was also addressed by local MP Niamatullah Sabu.

The Health Minister said,

the health and family planning workers can play a vital role in the health sector at grass root level. He said health is basic need for improving the quality of people's life and efforts are going on for providing essential medicare and family planning devices to the masses.

The Health Minister said, that the government would do everything possible to solve the problem being faced by the family planning workers.

Later, the minister handed over the key of an ambulance to the Savar Thana Health Complex. The Health Minister also announced that a blood bank and a casualty unit will be established at the health complex.



BCI Depositors Association staging demonstration while the Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia inaugurated the Eastern Bank Ltd in the city yesterday. — Star photo

**Weather**

**Moderate rain likely**

By Staff Correspondent

Light to moderate rain or shower is likely to occur at a few places over Chittagong and Khulna divisions and at one or two places over Dhaka and Rajshahi divisions during the next 36 hours commencing 6pm Sunday.

Day temperature is likely to remain nearly unchanged all over the country during the period, says a Met office forecast.

Outlook for subsequent two days: Little change.

Extended outlook for another five days: No appreciable change.

Rainfall was recorded on Sunday at Bhola, Patuakhali, Khepupara, Teknaf and Chandpur.

The sun sets today (Monday) at 6-30 pm and rises tomorrow (Tuesday) at 5-35 am.

Temperature and humidity recorded at important cities and towns were:

Cities/Towns	Temperature in degree Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	max	min	9am	6pm
Dhaka	32.1	26.7	77	71
Chittagong	32.0	25.3	78	85
Rajshahi	34.0	25.5	79	84
Khulna	31.8	26.2	81	84
Cox's Bazar	31.0	25.0	86	82
Sylhet	34.3	25.6	79	84
Dinajpur	33.2	25.7	76	73
Jessore	32.7	26.4		

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