

## Dhaka Day by Day

### A Footwear for All

by A S M Nurunnabi



A pair of sponge sandals is very common, yet it seems to have something unique about it. There are probably few households in the country which do not possess at least a pair of sponge sandals. From this angle, it may be considered a versatile footwear. Originally it was called Hawaii sandal, probably from its large-scale use in the Hawaii Islands. From these islands, we have also got models of Hawaii shirts which are so popular in our country and also in other countries of south and southeast Asia where climatic conditions make them a comfortable informal wear for males.

We may trace the origin of sponge sandal to the late 50s. It was then a prized object for many. On account of its limited availability, its price was comparatively high, and many people used to be on the look out for the shop which offered this item for sale. An old timer recalls, that back in 1960, at an industrial exhibition held that year in Dhaka, limited quantity of this item was put up for sale at a stall. There was a heavy rush of prospective buyers at that stall. When the stock of the item ran out before all the customers could be satisfied, pandemonium broke loose, and the police had to intervene to restore order.

Many years have passed by. People of this generation may now feel amused that earlier generation could lose their temper over such a small thing as sponge sandal. It is the generation gap which has turned a prized object into a common thing.

In the present changed conditions, the sponge sandal has consolidated its position as the most widely used footwear in the country. The comparatively high price which it previously commanded has slowly come down to a level which a vast majority of consumers can easily afford.

The popularity of this footwear is due to several factors. Besides its favourable price, it is light in weight and can be worn for all in-

formal occasions. For common use in the household, its position is unrivalled. In the monsoon season, its usefulness in rural areas is undeniable.

The large-scale market for this footwear has proved a bonanza for its manufacturers who apply their capital and technology for making new designs in different colours, which pose a threat to large-scale sale of leather sandals. The threat becomes more real, because the sponge sandal has a vast network of selling outlets both in the urban and rural areas. At numerous haats and bazars in rural areas, it enjoys a monopoly of sales with village folks who are attracted by its low price and durability. It is also sold in the urban residential areas. Perhaps in the footwear trade, no other item commands a greater turn over than the sponge sandal.

A group of hawkers of this ware run this business on the periphery of a city bazar. Mofiz represents such a group. He has his wares neatly arranged in two or three baskets. When a prospective customer comes, a lot of competition ensues in the group to win him over to his side. Each sale involves a lot of haggling, since there is no fixed price. If a customer is not accustomed to bargaining, he is likely to pay more than the actual price. Mofiz said that his earning from the sales averaged Tk 50 to 60 daily. His sales, however, register a big jump on the occasions of big festivals.

Many of our people may not have garments to cover their body, but in all likelihood they may have a pair of sponge sandals to cover their feet. Thus it satisfies the requirement of a footwear at the grass-roots level.

When on any day in summer or winter, one finds on busy streets, a day labourer or a pushcart driver performing his strenuous tasks with sponge sandals on his feet to save him from heat; one feels happy that this unique footwear has been put to a really good use.

A transport office was gutted in a fire at Aricha ghat here in Manikganj yesterday when it came in contact with a snapped electric wire, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the live electric wire snapped and fell on Ajmiri Transport's office after a flock of crows perched on it. The loss was estimated at Tk one lakh.

Local police put out the fire with the help of fire extinguisher from a launch of the ghat.

The BNP Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan and other office bearers.

Referring to President Zia's proud declaration that he was a farmer, Barrister Talukder said that Shaheed President Zia had devoted all his energies to change the lot of the commonman.

Works Minister Rafiqul Islam said that Shaheed Zia did not only declare the Liberation War, but he also took part in

Govt asks PSC to fill 70 vacant posts of Asstt Judges

The government has asked the Public Service Commission to fill the 70 vacant posts of Assistant Judges (Munsif), parliament was informed yesterday, reports UNB.

State Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Barrister Aminul Haq made the statement in reply to Manirul Haq Chpwhdury of Jatiya Party.

Barrister Haq said 210 out of 460 Assistant Judge courts had been shifted to district headquarters following the dissolution of upazila system.

To a question from Niamatullah (BNP) he said legal steps had been taken against those involved in forgery of stamps and deeds.

So far, 41 cases were filed with concerned police stations for forging valuation of stamps of 252 deeds, after primary investigations.

Responding to Mirza Azam (AL), Barrister Haq informed the House that till last December, 392 cases were disposed of by the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, 3942 by the High Court, 1,05,364 by Judge Courts, 12,184 by Additional Judge Courts, 30,879 by Sub-Judge Courts, 66,123 by Assistant Judge Courts and 1,63,453 by Magistrate Courts in the country.

Most speakers highlighted the beneficial effects of using ORT which had been found to reduce the duration and severity of diarrhoeal diseases.

They said new research results are awaited in the field of development and efficacy of other ORS formulations, made of such constituents as rice and maize.

dealing with diarrhoea, nutrition and maternal and child health with family planning were presented at the conference.

The annual scientific conference of the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B) also stressed the need for promoting family planning programmes in the country.

Speakers at the conference pointed out that proper nutrition of mothers and children was a critical factor in developing resistance against common illnesses.

The conference, designed to share the results of research done at the ICDDR,B among health care workers and health policy planners in Bangladesh, was earlier inaugurated by Health Minister Chowdhury Kamal ibne Yusuf.

About 150 experts, officials and workers from health institutions and health centres of Bangladesh government, NGOs, donor agencies and the media participated in the conference.

The cases have been registered with different thanas. The number of accused persons in these cases was eight, the press release said.

The cases are under investigation.

Anti-terrorism Act 4 held in city

The detective branch and thana police of the metropolis have arrested four persons from the city under the Anti-terrorism Act from January 10 to 16, a press release of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) said here yesterday, reports BSS.

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Over 60 scientific papers

## Metropolitan

### Photo show on Zia begins

A two-day photo exhibition began yesterday (Monday) at the National Museum on the occasion of 57th anniversary of birth of late President Ziaur Rahman, reports UNB.

Minister for Labour and Manpower Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan inaugurated the exhibition arranged by the Zia Smriti Sangrakhan (preservation) Parishad.

Addressing the function, the minister called upon the sponsors of the exhibition to preserve the works and memories of great men for presenting the true history to the future generation.

The people are inspired by the works of great men and engage in nation building activity, he said.

Recalling the contribution of late leader to the Liberation War and post-liberation nation building mission, Mannan Bhuiyan said the history of bold leadership of Zia would inspire the future generation for ages.

Later, the minister visited the exhibition. Over 100 photographs on Zia's life and works are on display.



Traffic jam continued for about three hours at the Airport Road after the Akheri Monajat at Tongi yesterday. — Star photo

### Khurshid Hamid made Envoy to Italy

Khurshid Hamid, Director-General at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has been appointed Ambassador to Italy, said an official announcement yesterday, reports UNB.

He has previously served as Ambassador to Yugoslavia with concurrent accreditation to Greece, Cyprus and Albania.

Born in 1940, Hamid joined the diplomatic service in 1965.

He served in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Industries and Agriculture, President's Secretariat (Cabinet Division) and the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC).

He has also served in various capacities in the Bangladesh missions in London, Beijing, Kuala Lumpur, Tehran, Moscow and Bangkok.

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### Wage Commission report to be announced soon : Salam

BNP Secretary-General and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder said here yesterday that the government was determined to serve the cause of the peasants, workers and other working people of the country, reports BSS.

Addressing as the chief guest a discussion, organised by Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal at BCIC auditorium here on the occasion of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman's 57th birth anniversary, the LGRD Minister said that the report of the Wage Commission has been submitted to the Prime Minister yesterday and it would be announced this month for the welfare of the working class.

President over by Sramik Dal President Iskander Ali, the function was addressed, among others, by Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mia, Labour and Manpower Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Vice President of Sramik Dal Abdul Malek, its General Secretary Nazrul Islam Khan and other office bearers.

Referring to President Zia's proud declaration that he was a farmer, Barrister Talukder said that Shaheed President Zia had given a sense of direction to the nation during a crucial hour. He said Shaheed Zia did not only declare the Liberation War, but he also took part in

the war to liberate the country.

Labour Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said that the present government was quite aware of and sympathetic to genuine demands of the working people. He pointed out that till announcement of the wage commission report, the working people would continue to get Taka 250 interim allowance.

The LGRD Minister said that the present BNP government is working relentlessly to implement the 19-point programme of Shaheed President Zia for national development.

Talukder also said it was

the pledge of the BNP to restart the closed mills and factories of the country. He said this particular pledge was materialised by the party by restarting some mills and factories after its coming to power.

He said the economy ruined by the autocratic rule could not be recovered overnight. In this context, he said that it was also not possible to re-start all the closed mills and factories overnight.

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