

Dhaka Day by Day

Zaman — A Former Diplomat Translates Turkish Poet into Bangla

by Nancy Wong

Some former diplomats write their memoirs, often to the embarrassment of the government they had once served. Some take up lecture tours, often for a fat fee, as in the West. But a substantial number, perhaps the majority, go on retirement, enjoying the leisure they richly deserve, or so they think until leisure turns out to be boredom.

Arshad-Uz Zaman belongs to a category entirely his own.

A former diplomat who had also served as Assistant Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) and is now a guest columnist of this paper, Zaman is a gifted linguist, well versed in French, Turkish and Urdu.

same proposition, whereupon Zaman decided to have a look at it, and was "so charmed by it all" that he became hooked on Emre's poetry and decided to give the translation job a try.

Detailing the project, Zaman recounted: "The Director-General of Bangla Academy provided me with a good Bengali poet, Nurul Huda. He and I worked steadily for three months in my home, me translating and he giving it the poetic form. During this period we had numerous discussions and we finally made it." Printed by Bangla Academy press in high grade paper from Turkey, the pages are decorated with Islamic touches by the noted artist, Gayyum Choudhury. It has turned out to be a work of art!

not to mention Bangla and English. This is unusual in itself. What makes his achievement all the more significant is the former diplomat's latest literary venture, his translation of the renowned 14th Century Turkish poet, Yunus Emre's work into Bangla.

For this literary exercise, he received a prize from UNESCO as part of the UN Agency's programme in declaring 1991, the Yunus Emre Year. He also translated the famous French writer, Andre Malraux's book: "La Tentation de l'Occident" which consists of an exchange of letters between two French and Chinese men, discussing various facets of their respective cultures.

Yunus Emre is celebrated not only for his humanist approach to life, for his poetry which is steeped in Sufi mysticism and all its liberal ideas, but also for being the first literary figure to write in pure Turkish. In the milieu of his age, poets used either Arabic or Persian as their tools of communication owing to the strong influences of these two distinct cultures. Emre initiated the process of change by using not only pure Turkish but also the language of the village people of Anatolia from where he came. His poetry, both in content and form, thus struck a common chord throughout his country and to this very day, is taught to young school children in Turkey.

In Zaman's opinion, his poetry has universal appeal for it stresses the love of humanity and God, breaks all religious barriers as it is free of dogma and in its emphasis on the transitory nature of earthly life, arouses deep pathsos and yearning for the eternal glory of something beyond material wealth.

There is a striking similarity between Emre's poetry and the mystical Baul songs of ancient Bengal. Both are filled with thoughts of liberal spiritualism and expressions of desires for union with the Creator. Such passages are ecstatic in nature and transport the listener to an ethereal plane.

In fact, it was this characteristic which compelled Zaman to try his hand at translating Emre's works into Bangla when the Turkish ambassador, Ahmed Ermisoglu (a friend of Zaman of 25 years' standing) casually suggested a year ago, that he did the job in conjunction with UNESCO's celebration. Initially, he was hesitant, as he had "no pretensions of being a poet". However, a few days later, when he visited the Bangla Academy's Director General, he had a copy of Emre's poetry on his table. He made the



Most Bengalis will remember Andre Malraux's overwhelming support for the cause of the birth of Bangladesh — for at the age of 72, he seriously volunteered to join the liberation forces in the 1971 war of independence. Not really surprising, considering that this courageous writer-philosopher had actively participated in the anti-Franco forces in Spain in the 1920s; and was also part of the French Resistance movement during World War II. Malraux was however dissuaded from his gallant offer by people concerned for his safety.

Zaman was then Chief of Protocol in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as being President of the Alliance Francaise (from whom he had obtained a scholarship to study Political Science at the Paris University, after he had completed his university studies in Calcutta). Being an obvious candidate for the job, he served as interpreter to Malraux during his four-day visit. Recalling those "wonderful days" he told The Daily Star: "Andre Malraux had an imposing public presence — very much like his good friend, de Gaulle. He was on stage all the time he was in public and it was a tough job being his interpreter, as anyone who has read his books will tell you that his French is punctuated with lots of allegorical nuances and is very flowery — but it was a few days I shall always treasure."

Apart from this precious experience, there were many ones which Zaman remembers with pride — such as the period when he was in a unique position to feed the foreign press with accurate up-to-date information on what was happening in the country; in 1971. This was possible as he had served as Press Attache in New York and had been posted in cities like Paris and Geneva where the international media was based, and he had cultivated them assiduously. After all, he had started life as a journalist with AFP in Karachi, where he sat for the Public Service Commission exams and stood first in that batch. He was supposed to have been posted to Geneva but as fate would have it, he ended up in Istanbul — where he met a charming young Turkish lady: Vashiye, whom he subsequently married. At that time, it was not allowed for a foreign service officer to marry foreigners, but he was lucky enough to have an understanding boss who intervened on his behalf to facilitate the event. With a keen ear for languages together with his wife's encouragement, Zaman mastered the Turkish language; thus giving Bangla readers the opportunity to enjoy the splendid works of Yunus Emre.

Press Club members urged to safeguard its image

The Jatiya Press Club authorities yesterday urged all concerned to abide by the rules and regulations and code of discipline of the club and refrain from all sorts of provocation and indiscipline in safeguarding the image of the club, reports BSS.

A press release issued yesterday signed by the General

Secretary of the club, Shaukat Mahmud, said by violating the decision of the Jatiya Press Club Managing Committee some outsiders in cooperation with some club members intruded into its premises yesterday. They beat up club employees and held a rally there in the name of protesting the attack on Banglabazar Patrika.

Speakers at the rally mainly spoke against the club, threatened to attack it and called for an illegal rally on Wednesday next. These are contrary to the constitution of the Jatiya Press Club, added that the club Managing Committee can expel any of its member if his or her conduct is found violating the constitution of the club.

What's on today . . .

Rotaract Club Dhaka Buriganga

The third installation ceremony of the Rotaract Club of Dhaka Buriganga will be held today (Sunday) at 4 pm at WVA, Dhanmondi.

Justice Habibur Rahman will be the chief guest.

Talk on hydrology

Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies will hold a talk on "Regional response to global hydrological cycle change" at the institute, 1/46 Elephant Road, at 10 am today (Sunday).

Seminar on Rural Economies

North South University will hold a seminar on "The effects of public employment projects in rural economies — a framework for evaluation" today (Sunday) at the university, 35 Kemal Ataturk Avenue, Banani at 1 pm.

Seminar on Language Movement

Bangladesh Jatiya Sahitya Sangsad and Nazrul Jatiya Smriti Sangsad will jointly hold a seminar on "The Spirit of Language Movement: The Past and Present Situation of National Politics" followed by Islamic Music, Iftar and Milad Mahfil today (Sunday) at 3 pm at Jatiya Grantha Kendra auditorium.

. . . and tomorrow

Workshop on Graphics Prints

A three-week long workshop on Graphics Prints will begin at the Shilpakala Academy here from tomorrow (Monday).

Fine and Performing Arts Training Projects of Shilpakala Academy has organised the workshop with the assistance of Fine Arts Institute of Dhaka University.

Eminent Artist Monirul Islam will conduct the workshop. Renowned Artist Prof Mohammad Kibria will inaugurate the workshop at 4 pm at the Academy training centre.

Weather

Dry weather likely

By Staff Correspondent

Rain or showers accompanied by temporary gusty winds may occur at one or two places over Rajshahi division and the regions of Mymensingh, Tangail, Dhaka, Sylhet and Kusthia and weather may remain mainly dry elsewhere over the country during the next 24 hours commencing 6 am today (Sunday).

The Met office forecasts, night temperature is likely to remain nearly unchanged over the country.

The minimum temperature of 13.8 degree Celsius was reported from Rajshahi and Ishurdi and the maximum of 29.8 degree from Madaripur yesterday (Saturday).

The sun sets today (Sunday) at 6.01 pm and rises tomorrow (Monday) at 6.21 am.

The maximum and the minimum temperature and humidity of some of the cities and towns of the country yesterday were:

Cities/Towns	Temperature in degree Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	9 am	6 pm
Dhaka	29.1	21.0	82	58
Chittagong	28.0	17.0	83	74
Rajshahi	28.2	13.8	56	78
Khulna	29.4	19.7	93	64
Barisal	29.6	19.2	94	71
Cox's Bazar	28.5	17.4	70	68
Sylhet	26.2	17.5	77	80
Dinajpur	24.4	14.5	79	67

Kidney, gall stone crushing machine installed in IPGM,R

By Staff Correspondent

The first machine for crushing kidney and gall stone without surgical operations has been installed in IPGM,R, says a press release.

The machine named LITHOSTAR-PLUS has been installed by Siemens.

With this modern technology patients suffering from kidney and gall stone will require neither any surgical operations nor go abroad for treatment of this type of ailment.

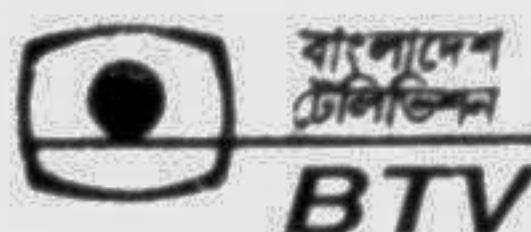
This will also help the students to pursue their post graduate studies in modern technology.

Lankan envoy presents credentials

The new High Commissioner of Sri Lanka yesterday presented his credentials to President Abdur Rahman Biswas, expressing the optimism that bilateral and regional cooperation would strengthen in days ahead, reports UNB.

"Both the countries are preparing for the challenges of new millennium with knowledge that regional cooperation would be further enhanced under the (SAARC) chairmanship of Bangladesh," officials quoted Dr AN Haniffa as saying.

The envoy said Sri Lanka was looking forward to the seventh SAARC summit to be held in Dhaka marking the next phase of this vital regional organisation.



Sunday

- 5:00 Opening announcement Al-Quran, Programme summary
- 5:10 News in Bangla
- 5:25 Cartoon film: Tom the Nasty Cat
- 5:40 Mahe Ramzan
- 6:10 Hamd and Naat
- 6:30 Open University
- 7:05 Tagore Songs
- 8:00 News in Bangla
- 8:30 Jubo Mea
- 9:00 Film: The Wizard
- 10:00 News in English
- 10:30 Parliament Round-up
- 10:40 Song Programme: Sur-O-Bani
- 11:30 Khabar/The News
- 11:45 Closing

Formation of Social Forestry Directorate discussed

The eleventh meeting of the Parliamentary standing committee on the Ministry of Environment and Forest was held at the Sangsad Bhaban yesterday, reports BSS.

Minister for Environment, Forest and Fisheries, Livestock Abdullah Al Noman presided over the meeting.

Members of Parliament Depankar Talukdar, Shaikh Harunar Rashid Mia, Satish Chandra Roy, Begum Lutfun Nessa Hossain and Bani Ashraf were present in the meeting.

The meeting discussed various matters relating to the development of environment and forestry in the country including the formation of a new directorate with the name of "Social Forestry Directorate".

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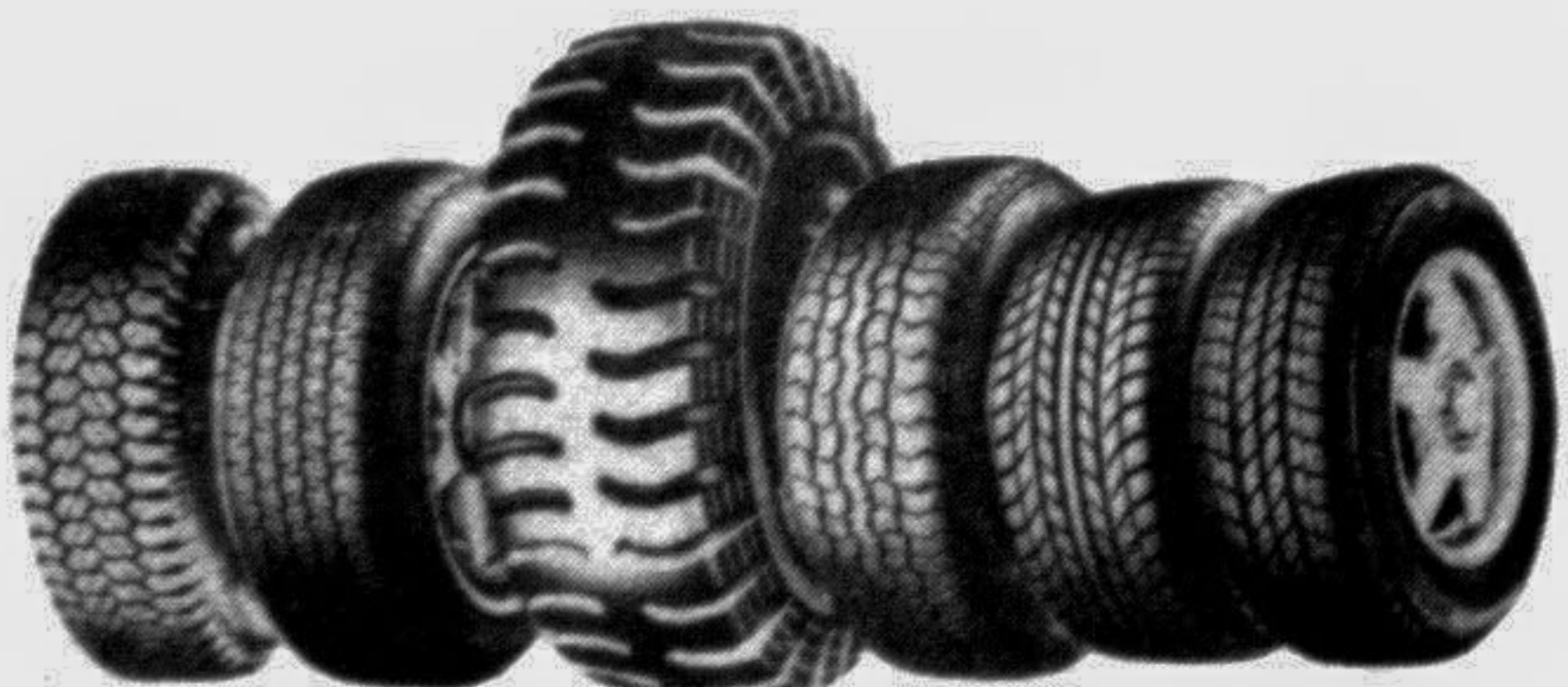
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