

# Dhaka Day by Day

## A Manila Journalist Pleads for Responsible Press

By Nancy Wong

With the successful outcome of "people's power" followed by the downfall of the corrupt dictator, Ferdinand Marcos, the Philippines were poised for a golden era in democratic government. The press (formerly one of the freest in Asia), which had been shackled for nearly twenty years was liberated from the gloom of total control. The Aquino administration acted quickly in restoring press freedom, with the Constitution reinforcing this pillar of democracy by passing legislation that "no laws should be passed that will encroach on the freedom of speech and the press."

Due to long years of suppression, the media scene exploded with intense activity, with numerous newspapers and magazines making their debut. Concurrent with this proliferation came the columnists — particularly of the political genre, who gave vent to their ideas and feelings with great gusto and no second thought to the laws of libel. In one instance, a daily paper had to battle 60 libel suits against it — all simultaneously! Columnists who gave unfettered rein to feelings of vengeance, personal dislike, and sometimes sheer bad taste filled their columns with unfounded rumours, were hauled to court. Great liberties taken by reporters who did not bother to verify facts whereby often readers would find contradictory accounts of the same incident in different newspapers.

In the midst of such chaos and confusion, some groups of activists who had been involved in the anti-Marcos movement, looked around the media scene and began to assess its performance: with the aim of correcting the excesses.

In 1989, Melinda Quintos de Jesus, a veteran journalist-editor, set up the Centre for Media Freedom and Responsibility, with the objective of instilling the requirements of responsible journalism such as accuracy and non-partisan attitudes in politics; so that freedom of the press can gain greater ground and remain a permanent feature of democracy. After all, if responsible practitioners in the profession do not exercise good judgement and taste, journalists will be in danger of "digging their own graves" by inviting censorship from a revulsed government and readership.

In an interview with The Daily Star, de Quintos disclosed that the Centre for Media Freedom and Responsibility is a NGO, funded by a Philippines foundation, the Jaime Ongpin Institute for Business and Government and the Asia Foundation. Its activities revolve around media and development seminars, media-sectoral interaction and dialogue sessions as well as organising special lectures at which Philippine journalists learn about media performance from their respected and experienced foreign counterparts.

Elaborating on this, de Quintos explained: "Many different groups such as those from the electronic media, press, NGOs, scholars and policy makers come together to focus on ur-

gent issues and the clarification of national policies. One example is the discussion we had on the negotiation of the bases treaty. Free discussions help to prepare the media to cover complex situations. It is important for the media people to interact with different leaders of society, which include government as well as forces outside it."

In order to counter the ill effects of irresponsible and careless conduct on the part of some "black sheep" in the fraternity, de Quintos is of the opinion that "the profession must have a code of ethics which encourages excellence in journalism." Speaking on the appalling practice of plagiarism, she noted: "We have not had very strict observance of the International Copyright laws. In the Philippines, there have been numerous cases of outright lifting from international newsmagazines without so much as a line of credit being given. In one blatant case of dishonesty, a reader pointed out the plagiarism of a reporter in one of the dailies known for its "investigative stance." This reporter had simply taken the words of another reporter from another paper and claimed them to be his own. This became quite a "cause celebre" even in a city which had become dangerously "wild" in its lax attitude to certain journalistic norms. Undoubtedly, the plagiarist became butt of jokes among his more serious minded colleagues! The "Philippine Journalism Review," published by the Centre, has in-depth articles which deal with such deplorable malpractices.

During the period of recovery following Marcos' ouster from power, freedom of the press was a relatively new concept. That being the case, de Quintos feels that "we should work more and more to prove that this is good for the government. Unfortunately, there has been a tendency to take the worse aspects of adversarial journalism that we see in the United States with the result that you have criticism which tends only to see the bad side of things, thereby losing the perspective balance in the overall picture and losing touch with reality. So much so, that readers wrote in asking: 'Are things really that bad?' Being adversarial for the sake of being adversarial does not enhance responsible journalism."

Speaking in the same vein, she continued, "Some journalists have given the media an image of carelessness and irresponsibility as they have provoked this kind of reaction by their practice of brinkmanship. They want to see how far they can go and in the process, use language which have no place in civic discourse — such as name-calling, even describing personal defects of some public officials. This can only do real damage to the profession as a whole."

Human beings what we are: fallible and prone to get out of hand, it is clear there is a need for fledgling democracies (such as Bangladesh) to set up an organisation like the Centre for Media Freedom and Democracy.



Melinda Quintos de Jesus



JSDX(Inu) held a demonstration in city yesterday demanding annihilation of mosquitoes.

— Star photo

## 200 vessels run aground for lack of signals in Padma, Jamuna

Some 200 vessels like ships, ferries and boats ran aground on shoals in Padma and Jamuna rivers for lack of signal lights and many of them were said to have been looted by thugs in the last three months, reports UNB.

According to sources at Aricha terminal, at least 13 dacoities were committed in the two river routes during last six months, in which three people were killed and about 70 injured and property worth and estimated Tk 35 lakh was looted.

Some bandits, allegedly in connivance with a section of responsible people, take away signal and beacon lights used for navigation in Aricha-Nagarbari, Daulatdia-Aricha and Aricha-Baghabari routes, endangering water transportation of people from 36 northern and southern districts of the country.

Sources in the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) told UNB

correspondent that about 3,000 signal lights, including 200 beacon lights, were stolen by these elements in the last one year till February 28.

The sources feared road communications and river transportation between the national metropolis and north and southwestern regions of the country might be disrupted shortly if effective measures against the culprits are not taken immediately.

Organised interdistrict dacoities, in some cases, destroy signal and beacon lights and conduct their operation even in presence of helpless members of law enforcing agencies assigned to escort ships and ferries to their destinations. The dacoits use firearms, ramdaos, axes and other sharp weapons in the operations.

Respective police stations in every incident had allegedly failed to bring to book the culprits even after filing cases. The sources said two types

of beacon lights were hugely stolen recently. These lights, each costing about Tk 1.25 lakh, were bought during the days of Pakistan.

At present, three lightmen in Aricha-Nagarbari, two in Aricha-Daulatdia and 6 in Aricha-Baghabari routes are working against 25 sanctioned posts.

There is no boat or speed-boat of BIWTA to inspect lighting of riverine routes. There is also no shed at the lightpost for the lightmen to take shelter at night or even in rainy days.

## Hijacked clothes worth Tk 10 lakh seized

NARAYANGANJ, Mar 14: Siddhirganj Police in a raid last night recovered a huge quantity of hijacked garment clothes worth about Taka 10 lakh from a garments factory at Mirpur Kasipara in Dhaka, reports BSS.

According to police sources, a truck load of clothes was hijacked by a group of four robbers from Mizmizi on Dhaka-Chittagong highway on the night of March 11 while it was coming to Dhaka after being loaded from Chittagong

port. The robbers boarded the truck at Meghnaghat in the evening in the guise of automobile mechanic when some trouble developed in the engine of the truck.

Police on secret information raided the garments factory on Saturday night and recovered the clothes and arrested five persons of the factory.

A case has been registered with Siddhirganj Police Station.

## মহিলা শিক্ষা কর্মসূচী সংগঠক নিয়োগ

গ্রাম অঞ্চলে অবস্থিত ব্র্যাকের উপ-আনুষ্ঠানিক প্রাথমিক শিক্ষা কর্মসূচীর জন্য শিক্ষা কর্মসূচী সংগঠকের পদে মহিলাদের কাছ থেকে দরখাস্ত আহ্বান করা হচ্ছে।

(ক) শিক্ষাপত্র যোগ্যতা স্নাতকোত্তর। বয়স সর্বোচ্চ ৩০ বছর। বেতন ৩০০০ টাকা।

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নির্বাচিত কর্মীকে স্কুল তত্ত্বাবধান, স্কুলের শিক্ষার্থীদের অভিভাবক ও স্থানীয় জনসংগঠনের সাথে নিযুক্ত যোগাযোগ, শিক্ষক প্রশিক্ষণ প্রভৃতি কাজগুলো পরিচালনা করতে হবে।

উল্লেখ্য, নির্বাচিত কর্মীকে বাইসাইকেল/মটর সাইকেল চালিয়ে কর্ম এলাকায় কাজ করতে হবে।

নির্বাচিত কর্মীদের নিখরচায় থাকার ব্যবস্থা রয়েছে। চাকরিতে স্থায়ী হলে কর্মী গ্র্যাচুইটি, প্রতিবেশ কাণ্ড ও ইন্সিগুরেন্সের সুবিধা পাবেন।

রংপুর, যশোর, কুমিল্লা, ময়মনসিংহ, চট্টগ্রাম, জামালপুর, বগুড়া, টাঙ্গাইল, দিনাজপুর, পাবনা, রাজশাহী, ফরিদপুর, কুষ্টিয়া ও বরিশাল এই চৌদ্দটি কেন্দ্রে ইন্টারভিউ অনুষ্ঠিত হবে। প্রার্থী যে কেন্দ্রে ইন্টারভিউ দিতে ইচ্ছুক, অবশ্যই আবেদনপত্রের উপর এবং নামের ওপর সে কেন্দ্রের নাম উল্লেখ করতে হবে।

আগামী ০৫ই এপ্রিল, ১৯৯০-এর মধ্যে পূর্ণাঙ্গ জীবনবৃত্তান্ত, মূল সনদপত্রের ফটোকপি ও এক কপি ছবিসহ কর্মী ব্যবস্থাপনা বিভাগ, ব্র্যাক, ৬৬ মহাবলী, ঢাকা ১২১২ এই ঠিকানায় আবেদন করুন।

ব্র্যাক

## Render more dedicated services, Oli to engineers

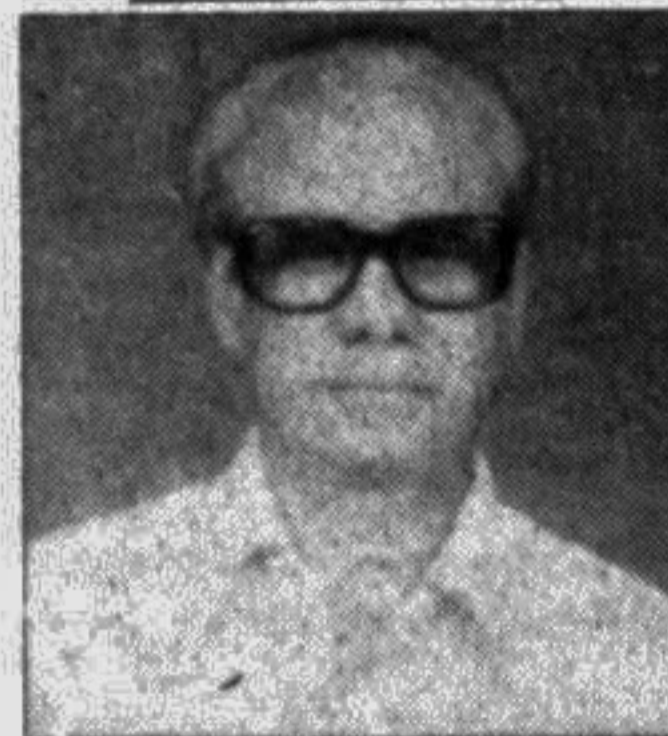
Communications Minister Oli Ahmed yesterday called upon the engineers to render more dedicated services for the development of communications network of the country which is the pre-requisite for all national development approaches, reports BSS.

He was addressing as chief guest the installation ceremony of Roads and Highways Diploma Engineers' Association and iftar party at the Sarak Bhaban.

State Minister for Communications Fazlur Rahman Patal, Roads and Transport Secretary Syed Rejaul Hayat, Roads and Highways Chief Engineer Ataur Rahman, Bangladesh Institu-

tion of Diploma Engineers' President Saifuddin Sarker and newly elected President of the Association Mirza Nazrul Islam and General Secretary S M Salakin also spoke on the occasion.

Oli Ahmed asked the engineers to be strict in supervising and monitoring the phases of implementation of various projects so that they could earn reputation of the people.



Chehlum

Chehlum of Golam Akbar, former Deputy Secretary, Govt of Bangladesh and an Advocate of Dhaka Bar Association will be held on March 18 (Thursday) at 72/C Azampur Colony, Dhaka, says a press release yesterday.

A milad mahfil will be held after Aar prayer on that date followed by doa and iftar. Friends, relatives and admirers of the deceased have been requested to attend.



Monday

- 6:00 Opening announcement Al Quran
- 6:05 Programme summary
- 6:10 News in Bangla
- 6:25 Cartoon: I want to know
- 6:50 Mahe Ramzan, Haam'd and Naa'
- 6:55 Open University
- 7:05 Debate
- 8:00 News in Bangla
- 8:30 Aponar Dactar
- 9:00 Magazine programme: Upshar
- 10:00 News in English
- 10:30 Mother Love
- 11:40 Tomorrow's programme summary
- 11:45 Closing

## Weather

### Temperature may rise

By Staff Correspondent

Rain or shower accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur over the regions of Bogra, Pabna, Dhaka, Mymensingh, Tangail, Comilla and Sylhet during the next 24 hours commencing 6pm Sunday, Met office forecasts.

Weather may remain mainly dry elsewhere across the country during the period, it adds.

Day temperature is likely to rise by one to two degree Celsius during the period over the country, it says.

The highest temperature of the country on Sunday 38.5 degree Celsius was recorded at Jessore while the lowest, 17.6 degree Celsius was at Rajshahi.

The sun sets today (Monday) at 6.08 pm and rises tomorrow (Tuesday) at 6.07am.

The maximum and minimum temperature and humidity recorded at important cities and towns of the country on Sunday were as follows:

Cities/Towns	Temperature		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	9am	6pm
Dhaka	33.8	23.0	82	59
Chittagong	29.4	22.0	85	80
Rajshahi	37.3	17.6	47	28
Khulna	35.6	23.0	77	43
Cox's Bazar	29.0	22.8	83	80
Sylhet	30.5	19.0	74	66
Jessore	38.5	21.5		
Rangpur	32.4	18.6	77	45
Barisal	33.8	23.0	90	78



Dr Abdullah Farouk, Chairman, Board of Directors of BSRS presiding over the meeting yesterday that approved the half yearly accounts of the Sangstha. Mamun-ur Rashid, Managing Director of BSRS is seen on his right along with other directors.

## BSRS earns Tk 2.12 cr as pre-tax profit

Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha (BSRS) earned a pre-tax profit amounting to Tk 2.12 crore during the six months ending December 31, 1992. This was disclosed while approving the half yearly audited accounts of BSRS in the 40th emergency meeting of the Board of Directors of BSRS held on 14th March, 1993 under the Chairmanship of Dr. Abdullah Farouk, Chairman, BSRS, Board of Directors, says a press release.

such transfer DBL would issue the prospectus for sale of 45% of its Class 'A' shares to local and foreign financial institutions.

The balance 50% would then be offered to general public while the Government would retain nearly 5% of Class 'A' shares. Apart from approving the audited accounts the Board considered some administrative and operational issues concerning opening of branches for commercial banking operations and sanctioning of additional loan to the tune of Tk 1.02 crore equivalent in foreign currency for import of machinery and Tk 21.50 lakh to be disbursed in local currency for rehabilitation of one of its financed sick projects.

The Board was apprised of the fact that the tax authorities had made their final assessment for the same period in anticipation of the dissolution of BSRS and its transfer to Development Bank Limited (DBL) by April, 1993. After

## Painting contest for children March 19

Joy Bangla Sangskritik Oikkyajot, in observance of the 73rd birth anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, will hold a painting competition for children on March 19 at Bangabandhu Bhaban, a press release of the organisation said yesterday, reports BSS.

The subjects of the competition are: for 'KA' group (Age 4-8) open, for 'KHA' group (9-12) Muktiuddha and the role of the collaborators and for 'GA' group Bangabandhu and Bangladesh.

The competitors must reach the venue before 8-00 am with painting materials. On the inaugural day poet Begum Sufia Kamal will distribute prizes among the winners of the last year's competition.