

Dhaka Day by Day

Dens of Vices

by Raffat Binte Rashid

It is a small shabby shop, Alam, the shop-owner is busy making tea, his shop's special, Rickshaw-pullers, drivers, passers-by and many others like them are his customers, but definitely not Alam's favourites. Their demands are usual: tea, biscuits or pan (betel leaf) and these small dealings do not interest him at all, even though his daily earnings from these customers are not bad either. But he waits patiently and anxiously for the chauffeur-driver ones, the sons of rich daddies and others like him. Their needs are special and urgent. They want drugs.

From the look of the shop, it is hard to guess Alam's inside business. Drug-dealing is highly risky. There are the police, the narcotics people, the local people to consider. Bringing them does not always work; after all not all can be bought or satisfied. But when the profits are considered, the temptations are too strong to give up the clandestine business. Its addiction is both ways, for the dealer the attraction for easy money, and for the customers, it's the hard habit. These drugs are imported very carefully across the borders. The lot first reaches the points located at Sayedabad bus terminal, Gabtali, Farmgate, Baridhara lake and a few other places and then those places act, in turn, as the supplying points. These places are no less discreet than Alam's own shop. The purchase centres are situated in dark alleys or behind any garage, workshop, club or cinema halls. Mostly they look like the living place of a poor salesman, offering cigarettes, biri, pan etc. The carefully disguised can fool anyone. When these deals are over, they dispose of the purchases as quick as possible to people like Alam, from where the curse reaches the customers.

Phensidyl, known as daal, because of its low effect, is the favourite among many. It is cheap, a bottle of such daal sells for Tk. 80 to Tk. 90 whereas Alam procures it for Tk. 45 to Tk. 50 only. This syrup is usually, diluted with water or other drink before taking in. Alam has approximately 500 customers, including foreigners, on a regular basis. It is easy to calculate how much he earns by selling daal alone. No doubt this is a big business. A small pinch of heroin powder, they call it 'purias' like the homeopath medicines, sells for Tk. 400 to Tk. 500 each. There is an unusual way of inhaling the fumes.

The powder is placed on a piece of broken glass and then a note of Tk. 1, curved exactly

like a cigarette is set to fire, and slowly as the note burns to black ashes the fumes are inhaled. Injecting morphines, or pathedrin smoking marijuana or 'ganja' have become common here. In fact a stick of 'ganja' is cheaper than many brands of cigarettes. It costs Tk. 3 only.

According to a doctor "phensidyls were used till the late 70s as a cough suppressant syrup, one spoon was enough to make a child sleep soundly for the night. But the whole bottle being gradually taken in at a time is surprising. Actually these give a feeling of euphoria, everything they do is fun, they have a temporary elevation, light-headedness and that's when the world becomes the best place to live in, — something close to heaven they suppose. But these feelings are all temporary, withers away when the drug loses its effect on the person.

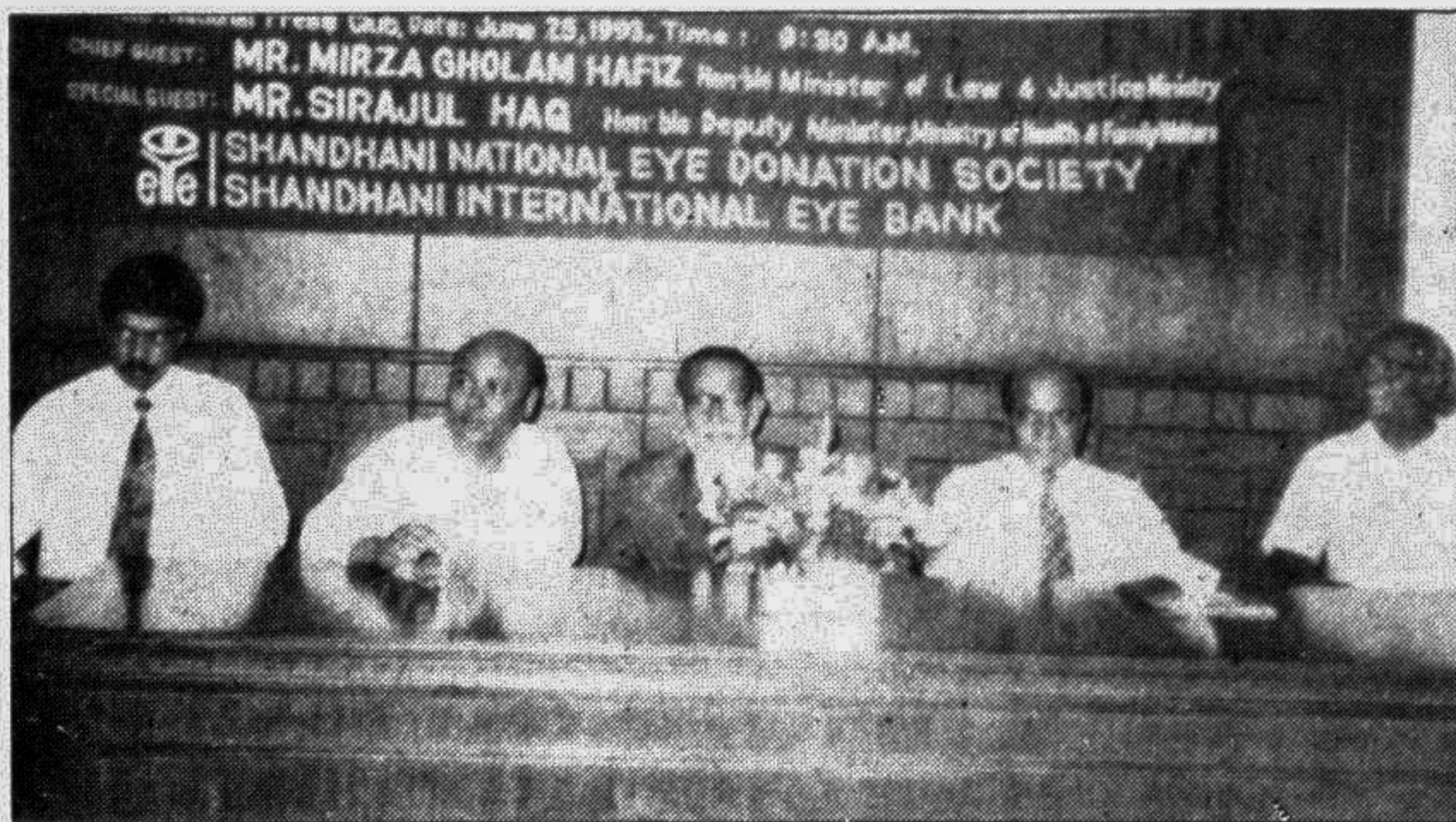
"When the need for the drug is strong in his blood, he suffers from various irritations, high fever, running nose, shivering, itching and many such symptoms. Then the pain overcomes happiness. I fail to understand such fake temporary contentment and satisfactions," the doctor stated.

So does every one, these boys or girls lose their civic sense, they create any sort of public nuisance without being aware of it. They can't walk straight, think straight. In a trance, they discover the world unreal. For them, sitting beside the garbage is also fun, (the obnoxious smell perhaps is not as strong as the fumes they inhale).

Shops like these, with young boys buzzing around are not uncommon in Dhaka now. Frustrated, girls and boys in search of easy solutions fall into such vicious traps. Yet it's hard to believe that the future and present of our country is in the hands of thousands of such dopes.

Parents, friends, as well as society should try to help them to give up the self-annihilating habit. Drug Rehabilitation centres should be modernized and much more cooperative. It is the duty of the whole society to make these people understand that the sound of music is real, not the colour of music, that's fantasy.

The 26th June of each year is observed as an International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. We should all work together to prevent the plague from deteriorating further.



Law and Justice Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz (middle) inaugurated the biennial convention '93 of Sandhani National Eye Donation Society at the National Press Club yesterday.

Extend activities to rural areas, Hafiz asks Sandhani members

Law and Justice Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz, yesterday called upon the members of Sandhani National Eye Donation Society to extend their activities to the rural areas where majority of the population live, reports BSS.

Inaugurating the third biennial convention of the Society at the National Press Club here, the Minister said that the Society should work for both prevention and curative measures so that people could get back their sight.

Chaired by Ruhul Amin Mazumdar, Convenor of the Organising Committee, the function was addressed, among others, by eminent jurist Gazi Shamsur Rahman, Director General of Health Services Prof Nurunnabi, Secretary General Dr Habibe Millat and Vice

President Dr Hassan Shahid. Deputy Minister for Health and Family Welfare Sirajul Haq, attended the function as special guest.

Mirza Hafiz lauded the activities of the Sandhani and said this was very necessary in Bangladesh where millions of people are crying for light.

Assuring all out cooperation of the government, the Law Minister said "Your activities are complementary to the efforts of the present government which is pledge-bound to serve the people."

Mirza Golam Hafiz also urged the members to make more publicity of their programmes so that vast population could know about their activities.

Referring to the enactment of law which would allow peo-

ple to donate their eyes at free will, the Law Minister said the proposal of the Society was being examined.

Sirajul Haq said lauding the efforts of Sandhani the Society had been rendering tremendous service through its eye banking activities in the country. He said Sandhani was the pioneer in the field of posthumous eye donation movement in Bangladesh.

The Deputy Minister called for projecting the activities of the Society in television and radios so that people could be motivated to donate their eyes.

The speakers noted that about 30,000 children are going blind every year in the country due to vitamin "A" deficiency. A large number of them could be cured through cornea grafting, they opined.

Project disparities, Badruddoza tells poets

Deputy Leader of the Jatiya Sangsad Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday urged the country's poets and litterateurs to project the inequalities that are keeping some men away from others, reports BSS.

Addressing the publication ceremony of a bilingual collection of poems 'A choice of Verse on Human Rights' brought out by the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) at its premises here as the chief guest, Prof Chowdhury said the government was trying hard to reduce disparities among people.

The Deputy Leader said it was a matter of regret that champions of human rights were turning a blind eye to the elimination of Bosnian Muslims. He said this double standard was being practised all over the world.

Hamdard chief meets DUVC

The visiting president of Hamdard Foundation, Pakistan, Chancellor of Pakistan Hamdard University, WHO advisor on traditional medicine and UNESCO award winner for service to humanity Hakim Mohammad Said called on Professor Emajuddin Ahmed, Vice-Chancellor University of Dhaka at the latter's office Thursday, reports BSS.

During the meeting they exchanged views on the development of the traditional systems of medicine in Bangladesh and future collaboration among Hamdard Foundation of Pakistan, Department of Pharmacy, Dhaka University and the College of Unani and Ayurvedic systems of medicine under Dhaka University. Hakim Mohammad Said also discussed matters relating to the Hamdard Foundation, a press release said.

Moyeen Khan MP meets major leaders in Cambodia

Dr. Moyeen Khan MP now in Cambodia to work as a member of parliamentarian team for post elections consultations there met senior leaders of all the three major parties in Cambodia in their Phnom Penh offices, according to a message received in Dhaka last night, reports BSS.

The meetings took place Thursday and Wednesday. Meanwhile, Dr. Khan had meetings with Dr Reginald Austin, the chief electoral officer for UNTAC, A Karim, Chief political adviser for UNTAC as well as Charlie Twining, the head of US mission, Phnom Penh. The United States has no formal mission in Phnom Penh since its withdrawal in 1975.

Call to waive tax on books

Country's leading anti-smoking organisation, Adhunik made an appeal to the Members of Parliament to raise tax on tobacco to discourage smoking in the country, reports UNB.

It also called for waiving taxes on books and educational equipment.

The appeal was made by the executive committee of the organisation at an emergency meeting held at its office yesterday.

The meeting, chaired by Adhunik President National Professor Nurul Islam, decided to invite research protocols on any aspect of tobacco. Effect of tobacco on health, nutrition and economy will be given preference.

It also decided to hold national convention of the organisation in November this year.

Strengthening the activities of the organisation through its 74 branches across the country was emphasised by the executive committee.

Ekramul Amin laid to rest

Ekramul Amin, treasurer of Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS), who died here Thursday night was buried at the Banani graveyard yesterday, reports BSS.

Earlier, the Namaz-e-Janaza of the deceased was held at the Baitul Mukarram Mosque after Juma prayers.

Meanwhile, the Managing Board of the BDRCS at a meeting condoled the death of Amin who was Treasurer of BDRCS.

Advertisement for Bangladesh Lottery (বাংলাদেশ ডায়াবেটিক সমিতির লটারী '৯২-র ফলাফল) with a grid of winning numbers and prizes.

Advertisement for BTV Saturday program featuring Areen Huq (Allo) as the first class first.

Weather forecast section titled 'Showers likely' with a table of temperature and humidity for various cities.

Large advertisement for TATA-HITACHI CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT COMPANIES, featuring a wheel loader and listing various equipment models.

IN MEMORIAM notice for Mrs. Halima Rahman, passed away in 1986.

COSMETIC PLASTIC SURGERY advertisement for THE SPECIALIZED HOSPITAL (PVT.) LTD.

WANTED advertisement for an international organization seeking a graduate for an administrative assistant position.