

## Dhaka Day by Day

### A Boy Lives in His Fantasy World

by Shamsad Mortuza

It was raining 'tigers and wolves' — if not to use the cliché, 'cats and dogs'. And there was only one place to save yourself from the rainwater — the front of a closed shop. After all, there is hardly a businessman, who would permit the mob to flock before his showroom. The drip-drop sound, the splashing of water droplets, the water rolling down from high above the stadium carniș — all have a soothing effect. 'Hey, your money has fallen,' a rude awaking from your stupor.

It was a double shock for me; first, there was no money down, second, the one who just dodged me was a small child of seven of eight years old.

"Come here," I ordered the boy with a mischievous look of retaliation, expecting the boy to flee. The little one, however, with defiance approached and asked, "What's wrong?"

Meet Ritu. This seven-year-old child has lost his mother — he knows not when — and has left his rickshawpuller father to avoid the beatings of his stepmother.

"I have none, not even a friend," Ritu

who has made the pavement of Dhaka stadium market his permanent abode, said. "Me and my brother came here fleeing from a house at Tiktatul", the boy in a torn shirt and worn-out shorts recalled. "I found Taka 250 lying on the stadium floor one day. My brother took it and told me to wait but he never came back", the boy added. "Sometimes when I go to look for my brother at New Airport, he comes to Gulistan, when I come to Gulistan, he leaves for Uttara or Sometimes, when I'm in Kamalapur, he's in Sadarghat..." Ritu seemed very determined to explain why he and his brother never had a meeting since the first departure. For an instant, he reminded one of Sukumar Roy's Abol-Tabol where the 'Gechho Bera' has a similar fugitive role.

"I know every nook and cranny of the stadium and Baitul Mukarram, everyone knows me... they often offer me food or something, but if my pocket is full, I don't take their food." A self-assuming swagger crossed Ritu's face.



"Shopping bags are sold like hot cakes, and the profit is also very high, one can profit 50 paisa per bag," the small boy who has a scar right on his nose went on telling about his living. "One day I found 50 taka and bought polythene bags with it... you won't believe how they took it from me... 'hey, one bag, 'hey, another...' within ten minutes all the bags were sold and I had a profit of Tk 100. The boy was lost in his dreamy story and didn't mind the error in his calculation.

He was realising that he had nothing more to tell — so, he resorted to exaggerating things. "You know, one day I found a bundle of money, I asked all to take it but none did," the boy was still in his fantasy world. "Whenever there is a big match, chances of getting money dropped is higher," Ritu told reflectively.

"Sometimes, when I am fed up with Dhaka, I go to Sylhet," Ritu was really out of stock of stories and desperately he tried to fabricate a new one. "Bangladesh is a small country," Ritu extended his little palms to show how small Bangladesh is.

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"But like Dhaka, you can watch all the football matches here. Well, sometimes, here is trouble. A few days back during the hartal police beat up many. I was hiding under the boxing ring... how they (police) lathicharged... I was hiding quietly and nobody noticed me.

"I wish I had 500 taka, then I could have

taken a shop at the stadium market and buy television sets. Suddenly the cunning boy

sounded stupid and I thought he was talking about a toy shop. But he added, "Everyone knows me here, if I ask for a shop, nobody will turn me out and besides television's business is a good one. Then I will not be poor any longer..."

Ritu spreadeagled his imagination and I felt not the slightest temptation to bring him back to reality from his reverie.

Carpets presented for dargah of Nizamuddin Awlia (RA)

Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Farooq Sobhan handed over four Bangladeshi carpets to the Dargah Committee of Hazrat Khwaja Nizamuddin Awlia (RA) in New Delhi on Friday last, reports UNB.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia had promised to present some carpets to the Dargah when she made a 'Ziarat' of the Mazar of the saint during her India visit in May last year, and accordingly, the carpets were sent.

Syed Iqbal Nizami received the gift from the High Commissioner on behalf of the Dargah Committee at a simple ceremony at its mosque after Asr prayers, according to a message received here yesterday. Imam Syed Khwaja Islamuddin Nizami led a munaqat on the occasion for peace, progress and prosperity of the people of Bangladesh and the Muslim Ummah.

The maximum and minimum temperatures and relative humidity recorded in some major cities and towns of the country yesterday were:

Cities/Towns

Temperature in degree Celsius

Max

Min

9am.

6pm

Humidity in percentage

Max

Min

9am.

6pm

Humidity