

## Dhaka Day by Day

### Troubled Rendezvous

by Raffat Binte Rashid



Hand in hand, staring lovingly into each others eyes, a young couple sat under a tree in Chandrima Uddayan. Unaware of their surroundings, they were totally engrossed in the silence of the afternoon.

Suddenly the man in blue uniform approached them, and inquired "Hey, what's going on in here? You two, what are you doing?"

"Why, nothing special. I am just visiting the park with my wife," said the man surprisingly.

"With your wife, I bet," replied the policeman sarcastically.

"What do you mean by that expression she is my wife," answered the man.

"Show me your marriage certificate?" said the policeman to the utter surprise of the couple.

"Well sorry sir, I didn't know that you demand the marriage certificate from people, just for them, to sit in a park. I gave the certificate to a shop to frame it, believe me next time I'll definitely bring it along," the man said equally sourly.

This is exactly what happens nowadays in the parks or in any other public place. Going out for stroll along the Dhanmondi Lake or the Crescent Lake, thinking of having a nice picnic lunch in Ramna Park or Chandrima Uddayan is something simply next to impossible. Literally speaking there is not a single place in Dhaka where people can just sit, enjoy the weather, the green or just be together.

Once green and still beautiful to look at, the parks and lake sides attract the young and the romantic who want to bring along their loved ones and share a few private moments.

But all things beautiful are not always the best, just try a walk or rather hop along carefully and you'll see for yourself. The green carpet of grass or the barren lake side is covered with human or animal faces — fresh or dried with flies or mosquitoes buzzing around, singing.

Even if you manage a place to sit, you will instantly be surrounded by all kinds of wallas (vendors) badam, jhalmur, drinks, what not. If you really want to be left alone, you buy a little of every thing and put off the other vendors or simply say no and find another place.

Thinking you have really succeeded in avoiding them, you will soon be bothered by small beggars or tokais. These young boys or girls are worse than the vendors, they will keep on pestering you until you buy that half-dried tuberose garland or give them a taka so that they go away.

There are few who are equally stubborn as these urchins and refuse to give them anything. That does it, like an unrelenting glue they will stick to you until finally they drive you off the place.

There might be some victims of these intrusions, who just for the heck of it and to embarrass the younger ones, would start to hug each other. Even this will not induce these little pests to move away.

Instead, they will continue to ask "Please, give me a taka." Moreover this public display of affection will not only be a cause of embarrassment for passers-by but might even land the people in question in big trouble.

If at that precise moment some photo journalists happens to pass by then the poor-love birds can be sure to find themselves on the front page of a daily the next day.

There are occasions when not only the tokais are a bother but some of the more aggressively adventurous couples, they also cause irritation. All those hands prying around and hugging — no, not in any corners but under the open sky or behind the trees which are not broad enough to give them the privacy they so demand. Without the slightest trace of embarrassment these love-sick fools display their passion, not at all considering what the others sitting around might think or say. Mostly in such circumstances it is the others who blush, blood red and feel awkward.

It might be an adverse effect of Hindi movies or Star TV. But these young heroes and heroines tend to forget that they are shooting all right, except for the director or camera around.

For some couples, who really have no place to go, the back of a mosque — of course outside the boundary walls — might be a good enough place to chat. But poor things, this pleasure is not for long.

Your presence there is definitely violating some kind of law. What a sin it is for a girl to sit on the doorsteps of a mosque even if it is outside of the building or even if it is inside the park compound. Some even claim that her mere presence is a distraction for pious men inside and so a sure sign of evil.

This big, ever growing Dhaka city really has no single spot where its tired almost bored residents could spend a few undisturbed moments. Even if you go anywhere with your family, you'll not be left alone by those ever-curious intruding eyes. This is a very unfortunate situation for the city's huge population — no doubt about that.

## What's on today . . .

**Satyajit Ray Retrospective:** Organised by Zahir Raihan Film Society. Film: Parash Pathar (The Philosopher's Stone). Venue: Indian High Commission Auditorium, Road 2, Dhanmondi. Time: 6:00 pm.

**Rotary Club of Sonargaon Dhaka:** Regular weekly meeting. Guest speaker: Rtn M Mashur Rahman. Venue: Hotel Purbani. Time: 5:30 pm.

## Unesco symposium May 9

Ramendu Majumdar, General Secretary of Bangladesh Centre of the International Theatre Institute (ITI) and Vice-President of ITI Executive Committee (Worldwide), left Dhaka Thursday night for Paris to participate in an international symposium organised by Unesco, says a press release.

The symposium will mark the celebration of World Day for Cultural Development on May 9.

## Seminar on legislature today

The Study and Research Group (SRG) and the Manabik Shahajya Sangstha (MSS) will hold a day-long seminar-cum-workshop on "Legislature in Bangladesh: Past experience and present concerns" today at the Academy of Planning and Development at Nilkhet in the city.

Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad Shaikh Razzak Ali will inaugurate the function as chief guest at 9:30 am.

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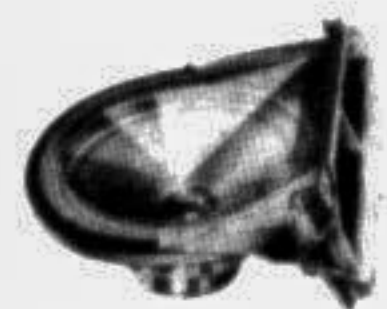
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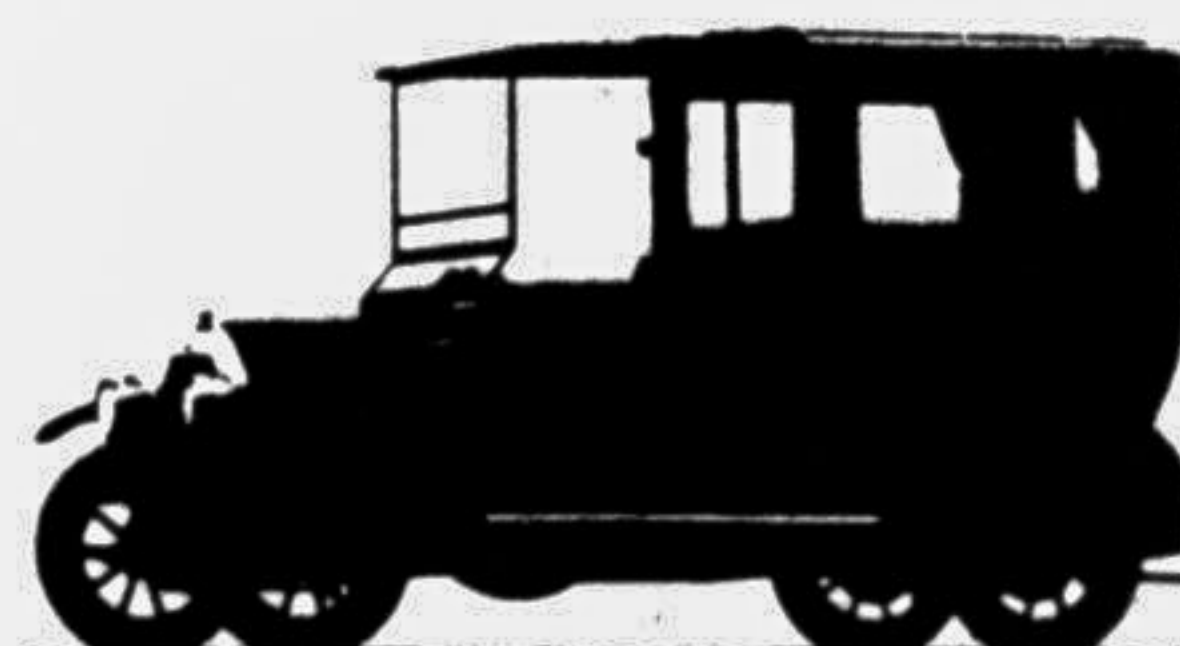
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