

Dhaka Day by Day

A Trade that Tells about Tomorrow

by Iftikhar A. Chowdhury

There was an air of charisma and confidence writ large on Sultan Mahmud's face, which made people come under his spell instantaneously. Although he has not had many an academic qualification in palmistry, as he admitted himself, he boasts a large number of patrons in the city. He actually cashes in on gullibility and people's irresistible urge to know the future incidents, which can make a sea of change in the life of a person.

A law graduate from a district college, Sultan has seen his legal practice only getting from bad to worse. He had, as a matter of interest, read a little about palmistry during the days of his late adolescence and youth and found that some predictions that he made reading the palms of some of his close relatives had eventually come true. This,

going to end in marriage etc." Different people belonging to different age-groups react in a different way, comments Sultan. Some want to know about the prospect of a job coming their way, some want to know whether there is chance of going abroad, about the prospect of earning money, about accidents, ailments etc.

Two most common questions asked nowadays are, says Sultan, "Am I going to get a US visa through the DV-1 lottery that I applied for? And the other is, Am I going to win in the Krira Unnayan Lottery and get rich by winning the 30 lakh Taka 1st prize?" Sultan actually doesn't still have a permanent chamber as many other established palmists do. Instead, his is a rather mobile trade. He moves from one place in the city to the next daily and carries on his practice on the street



With stretched palms, waiting for the verdicts. — Star Photo

although he believed to be a mere coincidence, earned him a little fame among his acquaintances.

At a time when Sultan was struggling hard to keep his body and soul together, a close friend advised him to take up palmistry as his profession. At first, the idea seemed ludicrous even to him. But finding no other alternatives Sultan tip-toed his way into the world of palmistry. Today it has become the only source of his livelihood, and taking the superstition and vulnerability of our people to such things as *velkbaft* (miracle) into consideration, he is not doing all that bad either.

What are the things that people usually want to know from a palmist? "Well, there are many things people want to know. But usually, my clients who are in their late teens and early youth want to know about the affairs of the heart. Those who don't have a romantic involvement, want to know when it will come and play havoc with their lives. And those who have it, probably want to know if the affair is

sides. But very soon, says Sultan, he is going to rent a chamber in the Elephant Rd. area. As he has by now many fixed clients, he has more confidence. Where does this confidence come from? "Confidence is all in this line of business. As in the religious trade of peers, *fakirs* and *daruish* confidence and personal charisma play a vital role; here, in this case it is also much the same. Here, if you don't have that confidence, you can count yourself out of the business," says Sultan.

One thing he cannot but protest is that many educated people see no virtue in palmistry, rather they dismiss it as a trade capitalising on the mental weakness of people.

"It has some merit in it. I have seen many predictions come true myself," says Sultan. But has Sultan ever endeavoured to read his own palms for a change? No. Why not? He could not tell. The poor chap seemed to be in doubt and his confidence shaken a little for an instant.



Members of the mechanised infantry battalion of the Bangladesh Army boarding a UN chartered plane at the Zia International Airport to leave Dhaka for Zagreb to join the United Nations Protection Forces (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia-Herzegovina yesterday morning. — ISPR photo

Children's Week begins Sept 29

A Children's Week will be observed throughout the country from September 29, reports BSS.

The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs will observe the week to create mass awareness of the children's rights in consistent with the United Nations Declaration.

The programme of the week would include children's gatherings, children's rally, seminars, discussion meetings, cultural programmes, essay and painting competitions and publication of special supplements in newspapers.

The week will also be observed at district, thana and union levels.

Army team leaves for Bosnia to join UNPROFOR

An advance team of a battalion of the Bangladesh Army comprising 178 personnel including 11 officers and six junior commissioned officers, left Dhaka yesterday morning to join UN Protection Forces (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia-Herzegovina, reports BSS.

The advance party, led by Colonel Salim Akhtar, is a part of a mechanised infantry battalion — comprising 1,220 army personnel.

Senior army officers saw the advance team off at the Zia International Airport.

The remaining members of the battalion are expected to leave Dhaka by the first week of October.

Weather

Thundershower likely

Temporary light to moderate rain or thundershower is likely at a few places over Chittagong, Barisal, Khulna divisions and at one or two places over Dhaka and Rajshahi divisions during the next 24 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

According to the Met office, day temperature may fall by 2 degree Celsius over the coastal regions and may remain nearly unchanged elsewhere across the country.

Meanwhile, Jessore experienced the highest 13 mm rain during the last 12 hours till 6 pm yesterday.

Maximum and minimum temperatures and humidity of some major cities and towns recorded yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	31.2	27.5	66	70
Chittagong	33.0	26.2	73	76
Rajshahi	33.5	26.1	68	74
Khulna	31.0	26.0	86	
Barisal	30.0	24.6	95	78
Sylhet	33.8	24.4	85	78
Cox's Bazar	31.6	25.0	73	77

CCC probe body formed

CHITTAGONG, Sept 4: The Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) on Saturday formed a three-member enquiry committee to report irregularities in employees' provident fund, shopping centres, income and expenditure of the corporation, reports BSS.

The probe body was formed at the monthly meeting of heads of departments of the city corporation.

JP (Nationalist) meets tomorrow

An extended meeting of the Jatiya Party (Nationalist) will be held at 7/4 Aurongjeb Road, Mohammadpur in the city at 3 pm tomorrow, says a press release.

All the members of the central committee and convenors of the district committees of the party have been requested to attend the meeting.

IUB course concludes

Certificate award ceremony of the third batch of participants of the commercial management course for apparel industry was held yesterday in the city, reports BSS.

The ten-week course was conducted by the Extension and Continuing Education Centre of the Independent University of Bangladesh (IUB).

Dr A Majeed Khan, President of IUB distributed the certificates.

Save the Children (UK)

REGIONAL ADVISER-MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT based in Kathmandu, Nepal

Save the Children, the UK's largest international voluntary agency working for the rights and welfare of children, has well-established programmes throughout South Asia. Projects currently operating in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka cover the fields of health, education, social welfare, income generation and community development.

SCF's South Asia Regional Office (SARO), based in Kathmandu, advises on policies and strategies in the region, both to London HQ and to the five country offices, and is concerned with ensuring that the quality of programme activities is maintained and enhanced through the provision of a range of advice and support.

SARO wishes, as soon as possible, to appoint a new Regional Adviser in Management and Development. The Adviser will work closely with the Head of the Regional Office, and the four other members of the advisory team. S/he will have particular responsibility for providing advice and support, throughout SCF programmes in the region, on management systems, human resources development, and monitoring of project work, as well as in particular policy areas of which s/he has knowledge and experience.

Qualifications: Significant experience of the management of development projects, preferably with national or international NGOs, such as might have been acquired through service as a programme director or project manager, is essential. Candidates are expected to have knowledge and practical experience of project design and analysis, monitoring and evaluation, and of HRD; good communication and consultancy skills; ability to work under pressure, writing ability, and willingness to travel extensively throughout the South Asia region. In addition proven knowledge and practical experience of work in one or more of the following areas will be an advantage: project and programme monitoring; working with children; child rights; gender policy and practice.

Terms and Conditions: An initial 25 month contract is offered for this position, which is in the international cadre of SCF staff and will be paid on the salary scale for London-based staff. The Adviser will be based in Kathmandu, and will be provided with free furnished and equipped accommodation. SCF has a pension scheme; an educational allowance scheme; and will cover reasonable medical expenses within the country of employment. Economy class air fare will be paid (for the Adviser and accompanying dependents) from and to the country of domicile at the beginning and end of contract, and at mid-contract leave time.

THE CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS FOR THIS POST IS 17 OCTOBER 1994. Further particulars may be obtained from, and completed applications, with the names of two referees, sent to: Ms Sarita Muktan, SCF (UK) South Asia Regional Office, Eknatakuna, Jawalakhel, GPO Box 5850, Kathmandu.

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