

Dhaka Day by Day

A Clean, Rewarding Job

by Raffat Binte Rashid

He looks exactly like any other average Bengali labourer, toiling from dawn to dusk just to survive. A clean shirt, lungi and slippers are all that he wears before walking down every day from his place in Bakshi Bazar to his clients' places scattered throughout Dhaka City.

For 40 years, Bankim Lal Das has been in the laundering business, that belonged to his ancestors through ages. His father, grandfather, great grandfather were all laundry men, traditionally known as 'Dhopsas'. They migrated from Calcutta since 70 years ago in search of better business opportunities and from that time onwards, they live in Dopa Para in Bakshi Bazar.

Thin but sturdy, Das looks confident and happy — a rare combination of qualities in any man. "An ordinary job of Tk. 4000 in any office or a Tk. 2000 job in garments is not for us. My daily Bazaar of Tk. 500 lasts me only two days," he said. Entertaining guests and eating delicacies have always been their family's weaknesses. "It's not that we earn any less, we make a reasonable good profit every working year which starts from Pahela Baishakh, but when it comes to savings and counting we are very poor," he explains their carefree way of living.

"Yes if we didn't have meat or milk and fish almost every meal or entertain house guests almost every week, we could have been much

deduction of chemicals charges Tk 100 or so." He also has customers who hire him for ironings, he charges Tk 1.50 per cloth and saree Tk. 3 per piece. This income he says is literally for the rainy days when his washing business is quite dull.

Besides these regular jobs, he bids for tenders to the hospitals like Medical College, Mitford, police hospitals. "Tenders are floated once in a year and then even by 'making the concerned' authorities happy," I try to grab these orders. These hospital jobs, which are huge work meaning huge profit, is worth all the hassles," he reports. He has been washing the clothes for Hazaribagh Police hospital for the past 20 years now.

Just washing 200 pieces, which is the minimum his son and he can wash in a day, they earn a net profit of Tk 300 a day, then with ironing charges and extra incomes act saves up to a good income.

"We are a very close knit family I will not let my daughters get married to any man besides the family circle even if he is rich. I married my cousin and my father theirs, the marriage trend is so in our family," he points out.

Even though Das was born and brought up here in Dhaka, he doesn't have a pure Bangla accent. He speaks Hindi fluently and that is the language everyone at his places speaks too. Das, a very practical man in spite of his weakness in luxury, wanted his children to be edu-



better off financially," he confides with a smile. But without any regrets.

From early in the morning when the first Azaan of the day is heard he and his 16 years old son starts out with minimum 200 pieces of clothes that were in water overnight. They go to killa more on the river Buriganga in Shaheed Nagar, Old Dhaka, to wash. "The water is very clear and good there, we take ropes with us and by noon the clothes are dried, the earlier we start out the better for us," he says.

There they come back home with the dried clothes which are ironed by the female members of his families. From 9 am to 9 pm his wife or daughters take turns in ironing the clothes. Monthly they pay Tk 500 and more for electricity bills. In the evening after lunch and their afternoon hap, Das walks over to client's houses to collect worn clothes and deliver the clean ones. Then coming back home he and his son again treat the clothes with soap, chemicals, bleaching powder, neel (indigo) and keeps them in water in a big bowl to soften through out the night. "We make it a point to sleep by 10:30 pm latest but now that we have installed the cable channels, we watch programmes, and sleep by 11:00 pm," he says.

This is his original working plan of the day, but during these working hours he makes time for extra work which he calls "overtime". Example: clothes like sweaters or suits or shirts, that have ink marks or drawings on them, are given to him to get those off. For this simple task, which he says, hardly takes an hour, he charges Tk 3 per piece. "So far every 100 piece my profit is net Tk. 200 after the

ated, "but my son is not very bright, he couldn't pass grade IX twice, I stopped his fees, it's sheer wastage. Even if he was educated, he would do nothing other than laundering because no other job would be suitable enough for his needs. As for my daughters they studied up to grade V, now they are grown up and I would marry them off soon," he explains his plans.

Das is quite content with his reputation as a good Dhopa. He has five brothers who took over their father's flourishing business. His father is still alive, but as longer active, business-wise. "I pay my father Tk. 10 daily and my brothers also give something, that is his daily pocket money," he says with a smile. Their main festival is Durga Puja, which they very ceremoniously celebrate. There's no end to food. Even their Muslim neighbours join them and enjoy their food. Occasionally during the puja they go to Calcutta for holidays. "Food and lodging is free there. We have many relatives and friends there. All we do is buy very gifts, dresses, jewellery from Calcutta. It's fun and we enjoy our vacations very much," he says satisfied with life.

"Any sort of tea, paan stain (betel leaf) or rust, we can remove it. We use many chemicals, like edible soda, bleaching powders, tinafol, which can bring the shine in clothes, we even use chumki commonly known as 'Aap' (a kind of shine) and for starch we use our own formula with flour and water.

"We just work hard and sincerely, I think these are the keys to a successful and a happy life," he says, exuding confidence.

Reception accorded to British MPs

By Staff Correspondent

A reception in honour of the visiting British Parliamentary delegation was accorded at a local hotel in the capital yesterday. The Commonwealth Student and Youth Organisation (CSYO) arranged the reception.

British High Commissioner in Dhaka Peter J Fowler, delegation member Andrew Bennett, first secretary of the Indian High Commission in Bangladesh Ashok Sajanher, Air Vice Marshal (ret'd) A K Khandaker and Abul Hasan Choudhury, MP of the Awami League, addressed the function. President of the CSYO K M N Manjurul Hoque Labu was in the chair.

Andrew Bennett in his speech stressed the need for closer cooperations between the government and Opposition parties in a parliamentary democracy. "We have to learn from each other at the national as well as the international level," he said.

Among the 6-member delegation Dr David Hinchliffe, Viscount Waverley and Mrs Michael Colvin were also present on the occasion.

Peter J Fowler highly appreciated the formation of the Commonwealth Student and Youth Organisation saying such a body could help strengthen the traditional bonds among the Commonwealth states.

Recalling the long relations between the United Kingdom and Bangladesh, he said the British parliament and the media played laudable role supporting Bangladesh during the War of Liberation.

The Indian High Commissioner praised CSYO for bringing together the students and youths of the Commonwealth countries.

A K Khandaker said the visit by the British legislators helped exchange views and ideas on the practice of parliamentary democracy and also in other fields.

Abul Hasan Choudhury, MP, explained his party's present stand in local politics to the delegation members.

He blamed the ruling party for creating the current political stalemate.

The AL leader also explained the justification of polls under a caretaker administration.



The Commonwealth Student and Youth Organisation accorded a reception to the visiting British Parliamentary delegation at a local hotel in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Discussion on Cairo confce Western world trying to destroy Islamic norms

Speakers at a seminar yesterday said that the draft resolution of the Cairo conference on Population and Development was designed to violate human rights and family norms, reports UNB.

They also alleged that the Western World, through the draft proposal, was trying to impose their social vices on the traditional Muslim society to destroy the Islamic norms and social values.

The Centre for Human Rights organised the seminar titled "The Cairo Conference on Population and Development: Human Rights and Moral Issues" at the National Press Club auditorium in the evening.

Secretary general of the organisation Abdur Razzak presented the key-note paper at the seminar.

U A B Razia Aktar Banu, Associate Professor of the political science of Dhaka University, The New Nation Editor Alamgir Mohiuddin and Nikhilesh Dutta addressed while Justice Ruhul Islam, a former judge of the Supreme Court, chaired the seminar.

Abdur Razzak said the Muslims around the world should continue their fight against the conspiracy of spreading immorality in the name of population control.

Razia Aktar Banu said there was no conflict over the question of population control, but the methods must be moral and humane. Abortion was an immoral and inhuman thing

Discussion on Literacy Day

RAJSHAHI, Sept 9: State Minister for Establishment Barrister Aminul Haque said here on Thursday that the conscious people would have to play their due role to help increase the percentage of literacy, reports BSS.

He said this while addressing as the chief guest at a discussion in observance of International Literacy Day at local Zila Parishad auditorium.

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What's on today . . .

Group Theatre Federation: Drama *Dewan Gazir Kichcha* will be staged as part of the federation's fund raising drive. Venue: Mahila Samity auditorium. Time 7:00 pm.

Rotary Club of Sonargaon Dhaka : Regular weekly meeting will be held. Venue : Hotel Purbani International. Time : 5.30 pm.

Training Course: A week-long training course on land management and survey will be opened. Venue: The Land Reforms Board auditorium at Motijheel. Time 9.15 am.

Land Secretary Abdul Muhit Choudhury will inaugurate the course to be participated by assistant commissioners and equivalent officers.

BTV

Saturday

4.30	Opening of the session	Bangladesh has been elected, for the first time, a member of the Council of administration of the Universal Postal Union (UPU), reports UNB.
4.40	Triptak recitation	
4.45	Magazine programme for children: Moner Katha	
5.10	News in Bangla	
5.25	Musical programme: Kids Songs	Bangladesh bagged 117 votes in an election at the 21st congress of UPU in Seoul yesterday, according to a message received in Dhaka.
6.00	Magazine programme for varsity students: Shukkhangan	
6.30	Population programme: Samacher	
7.00	Folk songs: Bansharee	
7.25	Comedy series: Major Dad	
8.00	News in Bangla	
8.30	Agricultural programme: Mott O Manush	
9.00	Animat	
10.00	Drama series: Dynasty	
11.30	Khabar/The News	
11.40	Announcement of tomorrow's programme	The UPU congress, which began on August 22 will be concluded on September 13.

Weather

Day temperature may fall

Moderately heavy fall is likely at places over Chittagong, Barisal and Dhaka divisions during the next 24 hours till 6:00 pm today, reports UNB.

Met office says occasional moderate rain or shower may occur at most places over Chittagong and Barisal divisions, at many places over Dhaka and Rajshahi divisions and at a few places over Khulna division.

Day temperature is likely to fall by 1-2 degree Celsius during the period across the country.

Meantime, Cox's Bazar experienced the highest 66 mm rain during the last 24 hours till 6:00 am yesterday. Dhaka had 54 mm, Khulna 52, Dinajpur 50, Sylhet 43 and Barisal 13 mm shower during the period.

Country's highest temperature 32.8 degree Celsius was recorded at Sylhet and the lowest 23.2 degrees at Mymensingh.

The sun sets today (Saturday) at 6:08 pm and rises tomorrow (Sunday) at 5:43 am.

Maximum and minimum temperatures and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday are given below:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in Percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	29.0	25.5	95	92
Chittagong	31.5	26.2	84	-
Rajshahi	28.6	27.2	96	92
Khulna	-	25.0	82	-
Barisal	31.0	25.0	89	100
Sylhet	32.8	24.5	92	78

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