

Dhaka Day by Day

Domestic Help Phobia

by Lamis Hossain

Thank goodness the plague is no longer the prime topic of conversation, but it has unfortunately been replaced by something more macabre. The city's twin murder mystery is now a metropolitan obsession.

The tragedy has undoubtedly touched Dhakaites deeply. They have shown their compassion by united calls to bring the culprits to justice, but the sad events have also had rather farcical effects on our city denizens. No workplace, tea shop or home is free from the interminable discussions on 'whodunnit'. City dwellers have taken an unusually keen and unhealthy interest in the gruesome. Every small newspaper report is minutely gone through by housewives for a possible clue or a new angle to the story.

Overnight, we have become expert criminologists with our own pet theories. A survey of possible explanations proffered around town reveals a wide disparity in opinion: 'She couldn't have done it alone. It must have been her lover. I hear she had many boyfriends,' or 'Look at her photo, she looks like a criminal. Of course, she did it alone,' or 'I think it was the local mastani gang.' How long before we implicate space aliens?

The dailies are happily feeding the frenzy and cashing in on the mood. Speculations and rumours find their way into print when there are no new findings to report. Fortunately, some newspapers are showing restraint.

But the 'damage' is already done. Our fascination for horrid details and the continuous media exposure has resulted in city-wide paranoia. Middle class residents are looking at their household employees in a suspicious light. Long-time servants who were once trusted blindly, are coming under close scrutiny. 'Oh no, hasn't our maid servant been with us for eight years already?'

Other houses are frantically looking around for a copy of their employee's photo and rushing off their CVs to the nearest police station. Prudent housewives make sure all sharp instruments are tucked into drawers before scolding anyone.

Meal times are strained. Your cook has just served a hopeless curry, but does anyone dare criticise? It's safer just to grin and bear it.

Apart from scaring themselves silly, the Dhakaites have also taken to social commentary. According to the latest hypothesis, current master-servant relationships are to be blamed. In the good old days, master and servant enjoyed a special bond, where the master knew he would be served loyally and the servant and his descendants were assured of a job for life. What happened to proper discipline, where your employee listened to everything you said? Servants nowadays are just too cheeky for their own good.

But has anything constructive emerged from our endless theorising? Shouldn't we think of depending less on hired help, for example? Middle class families now earn less than before, yet they still insist on keeping domestics who are often frustrated with their low wages. One foreigner noted frankly, 'The poor people of Bangladesh keep even poorer servants.'

Alternatively, we could listen to a distinguished lawyer offering one of the rare sensible solutions heard around town. He suggested that we ditch our whole concept of 'master-servant' and start looking at the relationship in strictly professional terms.

The future may hold a society where all household employees receive some sort of training, are carefully vetted and registered with the police. Until that happens, can we please stop petrifying each other?



Newly elected women commissioners of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) and their jubilant supporters brought out a victory procession in the city yesterday. The Awami League-backed candidates bagged all the 18 posts. — Star photo

Farakka issue marks World Food Day programme

Bangladesh focused on the 'man-made' water problem affecting its agriculture and ecology as the international community observed World Food Day yesterday, reports UNB.

The main theme of the day was 'Water for Life' that highlighted the importance of water in producing food for human survival.

Addressing as chief guest a seminar on the theme, organised in observance of the day, Agriculture and Water Resources Minister Majid-ul-Haq said Bangladesh was being deprived of due share of water for the adverse impact of Farakka Barrage over the Ganges.

'Desertification process has already started in the south-west and northern parts of the country due to unilateral withdrawal of Ganges water by India,' the minister told the

function at BARC auditorium in the city.

He hoped that India would consider the issue showing respect to laws as it is related with the life-and-death question of 11 crore people of the country.

Organised by the Agriculture Ministry and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) the seminar was also addressed by Additional Secretary of Agriculture Ministry Ahsan Ali Sarkar and country representative of FAO Peter Mayer.

Key-note speech on 'Proper Utilisation of Water in Agriculture Development', written by BUET Vice Chancellor Dr M Shajahan, was presented by Dr S M Shamsul Haq, Agriculture Secretary M Akhtar Ali presided over the function.

Later, the minister inaugurated a two-day exhibition of agricultural food items at the

BARC premises. Some 50 stalls on system of agro-production, fisheries and livestock have been set up.

Posters and folders carrying messages of the day was also published. Radio and TV broadcast and telecast elaborate programmes, while national dailies brought out special supplements highlighting the importance of the day.

BSS reports: Prof Shajahan in his paper said water availability was one of the constraints for development of agriculture in Bangladesh and the farmers here could not respond fully to the needs of the modern seed technologies which requires not only more water but also better water control.

Among other discussants, Amjad Hossain suggested formulation of a water use policy from the bitter experience of Bangladesh.

Orthopaedic team meets President

A delegation of the executive committee of Bangladesh Orthopaedic Society led by Prof K M Sirajul Islam called on President Abdur Rahman Biswas at Bangabhaban yesterday, reports UNB.

While exchanging views with the delegation, President Biswas underscored the role of orthopaedic surgeons in view of road accidents leading to various kinds of injuries.

He said that facilities for orthopaedic surgery should be further expanded and developed so that people need not to go abroad for treatment.

Earlier, the members of the delegation apprised the President of their forthcoming International Orthopaedic conference to be held next month.

Among other doctors Mohammad Moazzam, A K Badruddoza, Abdus Samad Sheikh, A F M Ruhul Haq, Amjad Hossain, Aziz Rahim, Mahbub Hossain Mehedi, Hamidul Haq Khondaker, Shamol Kanti Sutar and Shamsuddin Ahmed were present on the occasion.



Lalon's death anniversary today

By Staff Correspondent

The 104th death anniversary of mystic poet Lalon Shah will be observed today.

Different socio-cultural organisations have planned programmes to mark the day in the city as well as Kushtia and Harishpur, the birth place of the poet.

The Lalon Parishad Kendriya Sangsad has arranged a discussion meeting at the National Auditorium of the National Museum at 4:30 pm today.

Dr. Ashraf Siddique will preside over the discussion while the pro-Vice Chancellor of the Dhaka University, Professor Wakil Ahmed will attend as chief guest.

A session of Lalon's songs will be presented after the discussion.

4 more foreign fishing boats impounded

KHULNA, Oct 16: Bangladesh Navy ship Shaheed Mohibullah during a routine patrol yesterday seized four more foreign fishing boats within country's water territory and arrested all their 42 crew members from near fairway buoy, reports BSS.

The total number of foreign fishing boats and trawlers impounded by the Bangladesh Navy during the last one and a half months now stands at 24, according to an ISPR press release issued yesterday.

The impounded boats were taken to the Hiron point and medical examination of the crew was done by the port health officer of Mongla Port authority.

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Int'l Teachers Day to be observed on Oct 5 every yr

The International Teachers Day will be observed on October 5 every year in Bangladesh as a part of the global programme, reports BSS.

A discussion on this issue was held in the conference room of the Education Ministry yesterday with Education Minister Jamiruddin Sircar in the chair. The leaders of the National Federation of Teachers' Associations (NFTA) attended the meeting.

The meeting emphasised observation of the day to express solidarity with the international teachers' community. It decided to provide all possible cooperations to observe the day in a befitting manner.

Education Secretary Irsadul Haq, DG of Secondary and Higher Education Prof Eunus Mia, vice-presidents of NFTA Prof Mozfar Hossain and Shakawat Mollick were also present.

Meeting on 'Purbachal New Town'

A meeting for implementation of 'Purbachal New Town' project was held yesterday at the Ministry of Housing and Public Works with Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Miah in the chair, reports BSS.

Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury attended it as the special guest.

The meeting took some decisions regarding implementation of the project. The decisions include compensation for land at the rate of Tk one lakh per bigha, rehabilitation of the affected families and payment of compensation money at a time.

It was also decided at the meeting that Rajuk would give priority as regards employment of local people. The Ministry of Land will build 500 pucca houses for allotment among the landless families.



Monday

- 4:30 Opening session
- 4:45 Cartoon film: Captain Planet And Planeteers
- 5:10 News in Bangla
- 5:25 Sports programme: Football
- 6:30 Bikkhan
- 7:00 Open University
- 7:25 Nazrul songs
- 8:00 News in Bangla
- 8:30 Shukher Thikana
- 9:00 Magazine programme: Upahar
- 10:00 News in English
- 10:30 Comedy series: Murphy Brown
- 11:00 Comedy: Coach

Qulkhwani

Qulkhwan of M S Islam, former President of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), will be held at Banani, Road No 7, House-43/G on Wednesday, reports UNB.

SM Ali's death anniversary

(Contd from page 12)

Late 'S M Ali was born in Sylhet on December 5, 1928. The eldest son of late Syed Mustafa Ali, an official of the Assam Civil Service, he came from a noted Bengali literary family. He was the nephew of famous litterateur and essayist late Syed Mujtaba Ali and late Syed Murtaza Ali, a former Chairman of the Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB).

Educated in Calcutta, Dhaka and London, Ali was one of the few Asian journalists who distinguished themselves in regional journalism.

All completed his matriculation in Sylhet and went on to attend Saint Paul's College in Calcutta. He completed his honours and masters degrees from the English department of the Dhaka University in 1950 and 1951 respectively.

While a student at the Dhaka University he joined the newly-launched erstwhile Pakistan Observer in 1949 as its first Staff Reporter. An ardent nationalist, he actively participated in the Language Movement of 1952.

In the early 1950s he left for London for higher studies in journalism, where he worked with the News Chronicle of London and also the BBC. He also served as a spokesman and translator for the late Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, who was staying in London during his brief exile.

Ali returned to Pakistan in 1954 and joined the Dawn newspaper in Karachi as a Staff Reporter and again came back to the Pakistan Observer in 1956 as a Staff Reporter.

At that time he became active in the journalist union and was the President of the erstwhile East Pakistan Union Of Journalists (EPUJ) during the 1958-60 period. He also represented the interests of the journalist community as the only journalist member of the All Pakistan First Newspaper Wage Board.

In 1960 he joined the Pakistan Times in Lahore as an Assistant Editor. Subsequently, in 1962 he became the Assistant Editor of the Hongkong-based regional publication The Asia Magazine (1962-64). He then worked as the Southeast Asia Bureau Chief for the Karachi daily Dawn (1964-65) and then was appointed the Managing Editor of Thailand's leading English language daily, the Bangkok Post (1966-70).

In 1971, Ali became the Roving Foreign Editor of the

Singapore afternoon daily, New Nation. And at that time he actively rallied support for the Liberation War of Bangladesh. A year later, he returned home to cover the Liberation of Bangladesh as Contributing Editor of the new weekly regional newspaper, The Asian.

In late 1972, Ali based himself in Hongkong again, as Managing Editor of the Hongkong Standard. His articles and analytical essays on Asian events appeared in leading regional journals including the Far Eastern Economic Review, the Asian Wall Street Journal, Orientations and Insight.

In 1973, Ali wrote a book, based on his personal research and at-the-site study about the problems during post Liberation Bangladesh entitled: 'After The Dark Night.'

He also wrote a novel, Rainbow Over the Padma which was published after his death.

In 1977, Ali joined the Manila-based Press Foundation of Asia as its Executive Director and started the well-known development feature service Depthnews. He served as the chief executive officer of this premier journalism training and research institution until 1981 when he joined UNESCO as its Regional Communications Advisor for Asia and the Pacific based in Kuala Lumpur.

In this capacity he was instrumental in promoting the advancement of journalism in Asia, specially in the developing nations of the region. Several media-related organisations in Bangladesh received support from UNESCO during Ali's tenure there, including support for setting up and subsequent expansion of the Press Institute of Bangladesh.

After retiring from UNESCO in 1988, Ali returned to Bangladesh in 1989 and briefly joined the Bangladesh Observer as the Editor in June 1989 and served in that capacity until he resigned in December of the same year. He was also an Advisor to the United News of Bangladesh (UNB) news agency for a few months in 1990.

On January 14, 1991 he launched The Daily Star as its Editor and Publisher and helped establish the newspaper as a leading independent national daily. He remained actively involved in the day to day affairs of the newspaper till the end of his life.

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Weather

No change in temperature

Dry weather is likely to prevail over the country with temporary partly cloudy sky over the region of Chittagong during the next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period.

Temperature and humidity percentage recorded in different parts of the country yesterday are given below:

City	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	6 am	6 pm
Dhaka	32.9	22.4	77	71
Chittagong	32.8	23.3	73	71
Sylhet	32.0	21.3	72	75

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