

Dhaka Day by Day

Talented Artist Looks for an Opening

by Raffat Binte Rashid

Every human being may have imaginations but not all can colour them. During the mid seventies, when Habiba Sultana — more commonly known as Belly Sarker, was just a first year Intermediate student in some Rangpur college, she had this undying compulsion to express her thoughts; rather her inner turmoil or conflicts. She chose sculptures as her own language of expression. Here, she could not only bring life to lifeless stone or wood but actually ended up saying something new.

Those were the days when my instincts were my tutor. I moulded clay, on seeing the pictures of the personalities that I wanted to give a three dimensional shape, and later painted them," she confesses her naivety, laughing. Sheikh Mujib, Lenin, Tagore, Nazrul — those clay structures are now just fragments of her past, just like childhood dolls for any body. Seeing her indifferent to studies and more engrossed in making *matr murli* (clay image) her neighbours abhorred her ways of growing up. They thought she was doomed to go to hell for such irreligious deeds. She has now come a long way from those days in Rangpur and all the way she was guided by her instincts and dream.

She came to Dhaka and appeared for the admission test in the Institute of Fine Arts and finally after trying for two years she could avail a seat and managed a diploma in ceramics. "Ceramics was never my preferred line of work, but as I did not get a chance in sculptures here, I took this opportunity just as a start," she reflects.

Young and talented and driven by an urge to fulfil her dream, she worked hard and was awarded the first prize in the Bangladesh ceramic competition held by the Small and Cottage Industries Corporation Dhaka, Bangladesh. This was her first break. After this competition and with the help of acquaintances she was granted a scholarship to study sculpture in the Decorative Art Department of the Central Academy of Art and design in Beijing. After the completion of her undergraduate courses, she was admitted to the post-graduate studies programme in the same specialisation in the same institute, which she completed in 1993.

"We have seen her develop from a student into an excellent sculptress. Her excellent results were the fruits of ten years of hard study, and in acknowledgement of her achievement the examination committee advised the department to award her Honours on graduation. She also received the department's 'Special Award' in the honours category," praises Professor Yuan Yunpu, Director, Department of

Decorative Art-Central Academy of Art and Design, Beijing on the occasion of her solo exhibition held in September 1993.

"I believe sculpture is inspired by human, being's individual expression of worship — be it of mystery, man or god. It brings the lifeless bronze, marble or stone to life. Imagination brings joy or sorrow to a piece of stone," she explains her passion. "Whatever I am today, I am thankful to my parents, because it was my parents who decided that I should be admitted to an art institute rather than rot in other academic institutions. My mother always wanted to be an artist, in a way she fulfilled her desire through me," she says.

Inspired by her mother's social role, she curved her 'The World still has a locked door,' a wood carving. Her mother when she was taking part in some election while Belly was still a mere girl, was awarded key as her symbol. With a key she would open all doors for her kind she thought. "Today women can become heads of state, but the average woman must still stand a pace or two back from her male counterpart. The work of a sculptor is heavy, some say it is a

man's job. This doubles my happiness. I take great pleasure in doing a man's job combined with the joy of serving womankind," she explains her ways of work.

Besides her awards, she took part in exhibitions and projects like, water sportsground sculpture project for the 14th Asian Games, Beijing, China. Then in second National Arts and Crafts Exhibition held in China, China, Contemporary Dyeing and Weaving, Ceramic and Decorative Art in exhibition, Hong Kong, and also in Modern Chinese Decorative Art Exhibition, Singapore. She participated, "The Goddess of Art" for the second Beijing International Television Week in collaboration with her tutor, Professor Li Deli.

Curving sculptures, for Belly, is something that satiates the hunger in her. But this talented, young sculptress, with degrees from Beijing is totally disillusioned now. She is frustrated and unsure of her future here. "I've been here for almost a year now. I could get no work in my line of art and recently I've been trying to arrange an exhibition of my works but with no success at all," she points out her frustration.

Belly has set up no workshop here, her nine years of hard work and a lifetime of passion i.e her sculptures are 'almost' (in the literal sense) dumped in her apartment and some at her brother's. Recently Shilpakala Academy has selected her 'Cry for Freedom' wood curving to be exhibited at a national exhibition. I hope this is my beginning here," she concludes.



The honorary consul general of Finland Zeaul Huq and Mrs Huq welcoming the ambassador of the People's Republic of China Zhang Xujiang at a reception in a local hotel on December 6, on the occasion of the 77th independence day of Finland.

Newly-designed passports soon to resist forgery

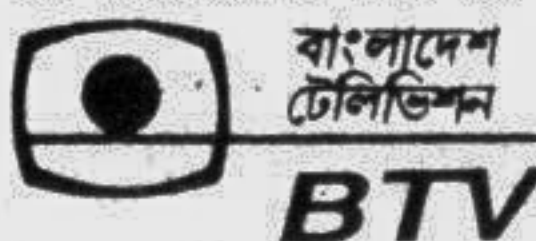
Programmes have been taken up to resist forgery of passport by printing it in new design commensurate with international standard and security measures, said the home minister yesterday, reports UNB.

Home Minister, Abdul Matin Chowdhury said the government had taken up a project to print passport in the country to meet the growing demand, particularly in the wake of increase in manpower export.

He disclosed this at the

foundation laying ceremony of the Immigration and Passport Department building involving an estimated cost of Tk 3.68 crore at Agargaon in the city.

The home minister specially mentioned that our manpower export to Middle East and East Asian countries had been increasing day by day and the demand of passport also increasing accordingly. The government has already formulated Passport Policy in keeping with the need of time.



- Monday**
- 4.30 Opening
 - 4.45 Cartoon show: Captain Planet and Planetears
 - 5.10 News in Bangla
 - 5.25 Sports programme
 - 6.30 Moder Garab Moder Aasha
 - 7.00 Open University
 - 7.25 Nazrul songs
 - 8.00 News in Bangla
 - 8.25 Janmabhumi
 - 8.30 Population programme
 - 9.00 Magazine programme for women: Ghare Birae
 - 10.00 News in English
 - 10.30 Comedy series: Murphy Brown
 - 11.00 Comedy serial: Coach
 - 11.30 Khabar/The News

Aarong opens branch in Canada

Aarong, the biggest handicraft chain of Bangladesh, crossed the Atlantic and opened its branch on Saturday in the city of Vancouver, on the western coast of Canada, reports UNB.

This is the second international branch of Aarong outside the country. The first one was inaugurated in London last month, said a press release of the BRAC yesterday.

Established in 1978, Aarong, a marketing outlet of BRAC, is playing a vital role in bringing the local support services and marketing facilities within the reach of the poor rural artisans.

The Aarong now provides stable employment to rural artisans and craftsmen numbering about 24,000. Most of the employees are women.

College teachers' ultimatum

The Bangladesh College Teachers' Association warned of a greater agitation if the government fails to implement their demands by December 31, reports UNB.

Leaders of the non-government teachers' association at an emergency meeting yesterday declared the ultimatum.

Bangladesh Council of Scientific & Industrial Research
Mirpur Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1205

Corrigendum

Employment Notice of 10 November, 1994

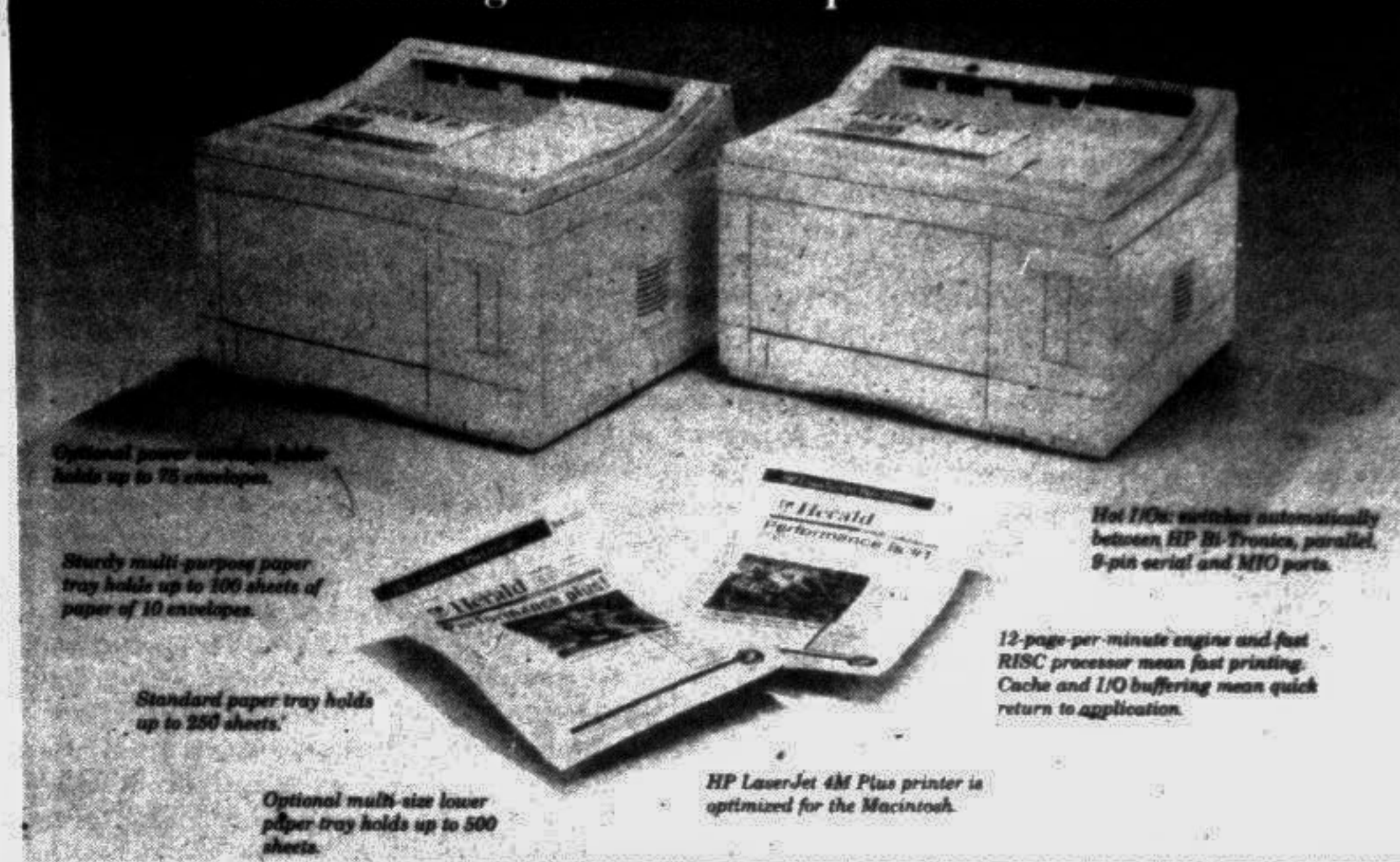
Applicants having M. Sc degree in Nutrition, Physical and Inorganic Chemistry are also eligible for the post of Scientific Officer.

M Tajul Islam
Secretary



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