

Dhaka Day by Day

Embellishing Old Carpets

by Lavina Ambreen Ahmed

Rana Carpet House - the sign announces and continues confidently: "Carpets, mats and curtains are washed, colour-treated and repaired by expert workers. Also, new and old carpets are caught and sold here." The un-mindful customer might turn from right to left in search of the carpet paradise, only to find out that the shop or rather the tiny tin shed with neatly stacked carpets, virtually stands next to the signboard. In front of the Ming House Chinese Restaurant, opposite to road no. 7, Dhanmondi.

If the appearance of the little joint seems disappointing and not win your 100 per cent trust, the friendly customer service more than makes up for it. For, the first ten minutes the two young salesmen will zealously try to convince you of how they can change your dull and dirty old carpet into the brand new. Carpet cleaning is one of the many trades that has secured a firm position in the ever competitive and innovative street side commercial ventures of Dhaka.

While adroitly working on a carpet, the workers talk about their involvement in this trade and describe their job process. "We were unruly adolescents from poverty-stricken families, in dire need of money but without a clue of how to earn it," reveals Parvez Alam, the older and the more composed one.

Then, this middle-aged man from Chittagong named Alam literally picked them up from the streets and taught them how to wash and fix carpets. As his co-worker Habibur Rahman, with a baseball cap resting on his head and neon tracksuit bottom rolled up to his knee recalls, "I studied only upto class-V-as my parents couldn't afford my schooling. I was wasting away my youth till 'Alam Sahib' offered me work."

On the other hand, this carpet trade is what enabled Parvez to get his HSC certificate in 1992. "I studied and worked at the same time, without the income coming from this occupation. I would not have managed to do so," he confides.

For them, cleaning carpets was not a choice, but something that just came along their way, bringing relief in their over-burdened households. They consider their instructor as their saviour and are greatly indebted to him for

showing them a way of making a decent living. It takes two to three months to pick up the trade, but considerably longer to become an expert on proper colour mixtures, they inform. Giving the old carpets a new look is no easy task however and the poor cleaner diligently has to go through five phases, before the carpet is really 'cleaned'. At first, the carpet is left out in the sun for a while, then dust and dirt are removed from it by rigorous hard-brushing. Next step involves washing it thoroughly, then after it's dry, colour is applied carefully, so as not to ruin the original colouring and texture of it. Lastly, it's dry washed and *voila*, the carpet is ready to adorn your home again!

Powder colours are purchased from Moulvibazar, where they are comparatively cheap, states Habib with his long matted, paint-smeared hands. The big carpets are transferred to the main factory in Shegunbagicha. The Dhanmondi branch is merely an outlet of the factory, opened for about two months now.

The carpet fixers get 50-75 orders every month and each order is ready for delivery, within a week or sooner. Taka six is charged for every sq ft of the woven mat, which they believe is a perfectly fair price. They earn a steady monthly salary of Tk 3,000 from their employer. Yet, the assiduous duo is far from satisfied with their occupation. Why? "We have to put in long hours every day. We work from 9 am-6 pm at the shop, then leave for the factory, where we remain till 10-11 pm sometimes," they complain. With few holidays the job can be quite stressful and monotonous for them.

So, it didn't come as a surprise when they both disclosed their decision to leave the job at the earliest opportunity "we've been engaged in this work for the last three years or so", they exclaim, making the three years sound like 30 years. "It was a great learning experience but we are prepared for a change now," they add and also express their desire to continue their studies. Habib wants to enroll in a night school while Parvez has hopes of getting a BA degree, atleast.

The streets were busy with the regular rush hour traffic. People came in and out of the nearby Garden Market. The carpet cleaners scan the masses, their expressions hopeful, on the look out for prospective customers.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia inaugurated newly-built boarding bridges and holding lounges at the Zia international Airport prior to her departure for Copenhagen yesterday. —PID photo

International Women's Day celebrated

By Schrezad Latif

About 3,000 men and women showed up Wednesday in the city to celebrate and show their solidarity for the International Women's Day. The people present were from almost every walk of life: garment workers, tourists, women activists, students, entrepreneurs, lawyers, engineers, farmers, etc. Over fifty non-government organisations, most of whom have united under the Beijing NGO Forum umbrella included groups such as Ain O Shalish Kendro, Prabartana, Chattagram Union of Hill Tribe Women, Gonosahaja Kendro, Saptagram, Bangladesh Women's Health Coalition, Democratic Women's Forum, National Garments Women, Nijera Kori and the United Nations Family participated in the rally that started at the Shahid Minar and ended at the TSC roundabout.

A cultural and educational event took place at the TSC roundabout after the rally which was led in an organised and peaceful fashion. Slogans chanted included "Down with oppression from *fatwaba*", "Those who oppress women are not human but animals" and "Stop Violence Against Women".

The sun beat down relentlessly on the rapidly attentive crowd and passers by many of whom were rickshaw and auto-rickshaw drivers, chaipatti sellers, ice-cream vendors, maulavis, *tokais* and even beggars. All stopped to listen, watch and, of course, sell their services or peddle their wares.

The event was conducted by Farida Akhtar of the joint NGO forum for the Beijing Conference and the Declaration for the Beijing Conference was read out by Shirin Akhtar of Karmajibi Nari and JSD. Charon Sanskritik Chakra, Prantik and Nabapran

Andolon Nari Unnayan 'Shakti, among others, performed passion-filled songs.

Nataraj, a cultural organisation led by Rosie Hasan, performed a short dance drama entitled 'Ar not, ebar jagar pala'. Speakers at the event included Professor Jahanara Haque, Ayesha Khanom, Sultana Akhtar Ruby, Khushi Kabir, Mahmuda Begum and Professor Latifa Akan.

They touched on almost every aspect of women's issues in Bangladesh from the FAP (Flood Action Plan) to the use of harmful contraceptives to a uniform family code, to stopping oppression and violence against women to Dhaka University women's agitation against the Sunset Rule.

Eime Watanabe, Chief of the UNDP in Bangladesh, spoke on behalf of the UN Family and expressed her solidarity with all the organisations present. Ain O Shalish presented a powerful skit on the unjustness of religious laws and emphasised a Uniform Family Code.

The highlight of the event was at the finale where Begum Sufia Kamal was honoured for her life's work and her boldness in standing up against oppression and injustice against women in Bangladesh. The entire event was laced with protest, but the optimism of the women and men involved was apparent throughout. Not as optimistic, however, was the backyard of the TSC where one could hear the faint murmur of slogans such as 'women's rights contradicted religious law'. Slogans that were contrary to all that International Women's Day stands for. The murmur in the background, however, was overpowered by the celebration of the women at the fore.

British theatre troupe due today

The acclaimed Shared Experience Theatre Company of Britain visits Bangladesh from March 10 to 16 under the auspices of the British Council, says a press release.

The company will perform Helen Edmundson's adaptation of George Eliot's classic novel 'The Mill on the Floss'. Performance will be held at 7 pm on March 14 and at 3 pm and 7 pm on March 15 at the National Museum auditorium. Tickets will be available from the British Council, Dhaka.

The Shared Experience is on a tour of India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. While in Dhaka the company will conduct workshops with the University drama students and Group Theatre Federation as well as performing 'The Mill on the Floss'.

Art contest

By Staff Correspondent

Fine Arts Institute, Dhaka University chapter of Bangladesh Chhatra League has planned elaborate programmes to mark the 76th birth anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on March 17, says a press release. The programmes include, children and juvenile art competition, discussion, prize giving and cultural function.

The best- adjudged artists will be awarded Bangabandhu Gold Medal.

Artist Hashem Khan will inaugurate the competition today at 10 am at Fine Arts Institute premises, while poet Begum Sufia Kamal will be present as chief guest and distribute prizes.

FEDERAL TAX ASSISTANCE FOR AMERICANS

On March 14-15 a specialist from the Internal Revenue Service will visit Dhaka to assist those with United States Federal tax filing obligations. Call the US Embassy Consular section at 884700, ext. 794 or 271 for more information.

ATTENTION

The new building of German Cultural Centre is now situated at the North-Western corner of the Dhanmondi Club playground.

NEW ADDRESS

German Cultural Centre
Goethe - Institut Dhaka
GPO Box - 903
House No. 10, Road No. 9 (new)
Dhanmondi R/A - Dhaka
New Tel: 310578-9, New Fax: 880-2-810712



OLD ADDRESS

German Cultural Centre
Goethe - Institut, Dhaka
GPO Box 903
23, Dhanmondi R/A,
Road No. 2, Dhaka

CONCERN

BANGLADESH

PROGRAMME MANAGER

This senior management, Dhaka based, appointment carries responsibility for the management of a programme designed to improve the social and economic status of very poor women through training and group formation. Presently a total of 200 regular and up to 100 contract staff are employed by the programme in seven project areas. The successful candidate will also be expected to prepare and propose strategic plans for the future direction of the programme.

The primary criteria for selection will be relevant management experience (minimum 5 years) and demonstrable knowledge of and commitment to women's development issues. Applicants should be university graduates and ideally have a Masters Degree. Excellent interpersonal and organisational skills are required as well as the ability to speak and write English and Bangla fluently.

Women applicants are particularly encouraged to apply. The organisation has specific policies for secure travel and accommodation arrangements for project visits.

The salary scale, which reflects the seniority of the appointment is Tk 27,300 to 32,263. Employment conditions include 18 days Annual Leave in addition to National Holidays, Contributory Provident Fund, Festival Bonus, Gratuity and Medical Grant Scheme.

To apply please forward a letter of application enclosing biodata, references (min. 2), a description of previous work experience and current or most recent salary, as well as a passport size photograph to: The Field Director, CONCERN, House # 63, Road # 15A (new), Dhanmondi, Dhaka - 1209 by post within 15 days of this advertisement.

Shortlisted candidates will be called for interview and provided with a copy of the Job Description. Canvassing will disqualify.

Art gallery at Sheraton Hotel opens

Dhaka Sheraton Hotel has recently opened an art gallery in the hotel's lobby to promote Bangladeshi art and artists to overseas guests. The lobby gallery has a collection of water colours and oil paintings by renowned artists of Bangladesh, says a press release.

BDR museum opens

A museum for Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) has been established at its headquarters at Pikhana, reports UNB.

Director General of BDR Major General Ejaz Ahmad Chowdhury yesterday inaugurated the museum.

Historical mementos of this 200-year-old frontier force have been kept in it.

Obituary

Dr Abdul Baten Khan, a prominent educationist and former member of Bangladesh Public Service Commission and Atomic Energy Commission died of cardiac arrest, at Suhrawardy Hospital yesterday afternoon, reports BSS.

His *namaj-e-janaza* will be held at the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque after *Jumma* prayers today, from where his body will be taken to his village home for burial tomorrow.

Weather

Light rain likely

Light rain and thundershower is likely to occur at one or two places over Dhaka and Rajshahi divisions and the regions of Comilla and Sylhet in the next 12 hours ending 6 pm today, reports UNB.

Weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country during the period, Met Office forecasts.

Day's temperature is likely to remain nearly unchanged. Thunderstorm activities may continue in the next 2 days. Weathermen predicted little change in the following week. The country's highest temperature 34 degrees Celsius was recorded at Teknaf and the lowest 13.8 degrees at Srimangal. The sun sets today at 6.5 pm and rises tomorrow at 6.12 am.

The British Council Presents

Shared Experience Theatre Company in George Eliot's

"The Mill on the Floss"

Tuesday 14 March '95 7 pm
Wednesday 15 March '95 3 pm & 7 pm
at the National Museum Auditorium, Shahbagh, Dhaka

Tickets: Available at the British Council, Fuller Road, Dhaka.

Sponsored by: British Airways & Dhaka Sheraton Hotel



Chehlum

Chehlum of Azizus Samad will be held today after *Magreb* prayers at 147, Green Road. Friends, relatives and admirers are requested to attend, says a press release.

Late Azizus Samad was the founder of Dhaka Fisheries Limited. He was the eldest brother of renowned journalists Ataus Samad and Atiqus Samad and father of noted freedom fighter Shaheed Lt Ashfaqus Samad, Bir Uttam.

Chehlum

By Staff Correspondent

'Chehlum' of Mohammad Bazlar Rahman, a noted advocate of the Bangladesh Supreme Court, will be held at his 9, Indra Road residence in the city today after *Jumma* prayers, said a press release.

Quran Khwani, *milad mahfil* and feeding of the destitute have also been arranged at the same venue of the day.

Advocate Rahman died at the PG Hospital on February 1 last at the age of 70.

Relatives, friends and admirers of late Bazlar Rahman are requested to attend the *chehlum* programmes.

NORTH SOUTH UNIVERSITY

The First Government Approved Private University
12 Banani CA, Kemal Ataturk Avenue, Dhaka.
Phone: 883369, 606047. Fax: 883030

ADMISSIONS

into Undergraduate programs
Summer semester starts May 1995

Applications are invited for admissions into undergraduate programs starting May 1995.

- BBA
- BS in Computer Science, and Environment Studies
- BA in Economics and Public Policy

At least 124 academic credits are required for each degree. Students who need to raise their English and Math skills to the required level has to earn more than 124 credits. Generally, it takes four academic years to complete degree requirements.

Admission Fee is Tk10,000; Tuition Fee is Tk3,250 per credit; Computer Lab Fee is Tk1000 per semester; Student Activity Fee is Tk. 1000 per semester.

The minimum qualifications for admission to undergraduate programs are

1. Academic Qualifications
 - a) At least a high second division in the SSC and HSC examination, or University of London GCE O-level in five subjects and A-level in two major subjects. Applicants without A-levels are generally required to complete 12 credits of coursework at NSU to compensate for each A-level. This requirement may be reduced
 - i) after academic departments have had the opportunity to assess individual students
 - ii) and for students with more than five O-levels
 - b) A USA high school diploma or equivalent, and
2. Acceptable scores in NSU's admission test, or a minimum score of 1200 in the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and at least 550 in the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL).

Application forms are available for Tk 350 at NSU Accounts, 12 Banani C A, Kemal Ataturk Avenue, Dhaka 1213. To receive application form by mail, write to the Office of the Registrar along with a bank draft or money order for Tk 350 in favour of North South University. Please print the name and address of the applicant.

Completed application forms must be submitted to the Office of the Registrar by March 29. A complete application includes: 1) application form, 2) two passport size photos, 3) copies of certificates and mark sheets, and 4) two letters of recommendation from the students' previous teachers.

A three hour Admission Test consisting of multiple choice and essay questions in English and Mathematics will be held at 10:00 AM on 31 March 1995

Financial aid: Full or partial tuition waivers are awarded to applicants based on assessment of merit and need. Application forms for Financial Aid are available at NSU Registrar's Office.

Curriculum Approval: NSU curriculum was designed by experts from University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign), USA and approved by Bangladesh University Grants Commission.

Academic Credits & Collaboration: NSU has signed formal Agreements with US Universities e.g. George Washington University, Colorado State University & University of Southern Indiana. Credits earned at NSU are transferable to these and to other North American Universities as per their academic policies.

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