

Dhaka Day by Day

In Praise of Gram Bangla

by Fayza Haq

What a difference in displays! One felt this when one compared two photographic exhibitions, one held at the Alliance Francaise and the other at the Press Club. Both had the same medium and the same subject. They were held about the same time. But their presentations were vastly different.

Thirty-two-year-old Basher's exhibition, which was held at the Alliance Francaise gallery, was accompanied by a cosy press conference, with Dr Shahidul Alam providing all the answers to difficult questions. It was naturally somewhat crowded on the opening day. But on other occasions it was a pleasant outing for the family.

Overseas, as known too well, Bangladesh is known for its floods and famines. Basher was determined to show a different and more lyrical aspect of the country. In his solo exhibit, he had used 125 reels and spent Tk 14,000. In the 35 pieces on display were shown scenes from Manikganj, Chittagong, Gazipur, Munshiganj, Savar and Comilla — areas that the photographer had visited during the week-ends.

Basher's photos were full of optimism and expectations of *Gram Bangla*. A village home, made from aluminium sheets, was presented in an idyllic way. The motifs of peacocks, pineapples, hearts and diamonds, along with the intricate pattern on the window grill made one forget the heat and congestion of such a dwelling. The child's figure offset the harmony of the simple geometrical patterns.

Fishermen's nets, hanging from above, casting lacy shadows on the water below; a little girl sitting on a cart's edge with her father's lungi-clad limbs protecting her; a young woman fetching food and water for her father who has been working in the fields; children playing at a riverbank while a solid tree trunk stands a silent guardian; a father feeding his toddler with his fingers; a little girl leading a young kid to suckle from its mother — all these were images of a contented village life where people lived, worked and rested at a relaxed pace.

There was dust, monsoon rain and toil but never any sign of despair or depression. Drenched women, working with bricks, smiled as they made their way along the village path. Children looking up from their looms, couples

bathing without a care in the world in the warm afternoons, a mother standing under a covered veranda and waiting for her family to come home — were all reflections of peace, tranquility and harmony. The countryside was just not a sleepy one — it was buzzing with energy and tenacity as the people went about their work with determination and courage. Even the woman sifting the flour is bathed in a gentle enveloping light of contentment. Moments in the lives of the villagers have been captured with love and accuracy.

The exhibit called *Ruposhi Bangla* at the Press Club, had all 150 photographs by 31 photographers crammed into a single room, with no fan on, and with the windows shut, when I came to view it. Only the names of the prize winners were marked. There was little to distinguish one work from another except for the intrinsic contents and quality of work. None of the works were framed. One wondered why something of such national importance was so makeshift, even though it was sponsored by Bata.

The first prize winning photograph of the *Ruposhi Bangla* collection was a coloured one by Shahidul Shikdar and it brought in a child in a lungi standing under a papaya tree near a thatched hut. The ethereal freshness of the countryside, with its simplicity and wholesome energy has been captured with accuracy. There were two second prizes, one for the vultures (black and white) by Mahub Hussain Khan, and the other for a branch of *krishnachura* tree seen against a back-ground of a lake (colour) by Mir Farid. Anisur Rahman got a third prize for his black and white depiction of men crossing a bamboo bridge. A similar award went to M Alam who had shown fishermen crossing a path through a paddy field. The men all wore an intense look of hard work and dedication. This was indeed a rare opportunity to witness so many diverse works of the numerous press photographers of Bangladesh. Like Basher these photographers too did an admirable job of delineating the harmony and joy to be found in rural Bangladesh.

There has been a complaint by some photographers that while painters get regular patronage to some extent, photographers are ignored and bypassed, although they too delineate reality and beauty.



JUJA to boycott VC's news

By JU Correspondent
Jahangirnagar University Journalists' Association (JUJA) decided Tuesday to boycott news of the Vice Chancellor of the university, protesting a showcase notice, served by the JU authorities on a JU correspondent of a national daily, says a JUJA press release.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the JUJA executive committee with its president Saiful Islam Shamim in the chair.

Earlier, the JU disciplinary board decided to serve the notice on the JU correspondent of The Daily Inqilab for his report on the alleged torture of a JU female student.

The board charged the Inqilab correspondent with tarnishing the image of the university and asked him to reply on April 25.

3 die in city incidents

By Staff Correspondent
Three persons were killed and four others injured in separate incidents in the city Tuesday.

Iqbal, 10 and Billal, 8, two brothers, sustained bullet injuries on their heads during an exchange of fire at South Shahjahanpur.

Billal succumbed to his injuries at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Our DMCH Correspondent says, Iqbal was in a critical condition.

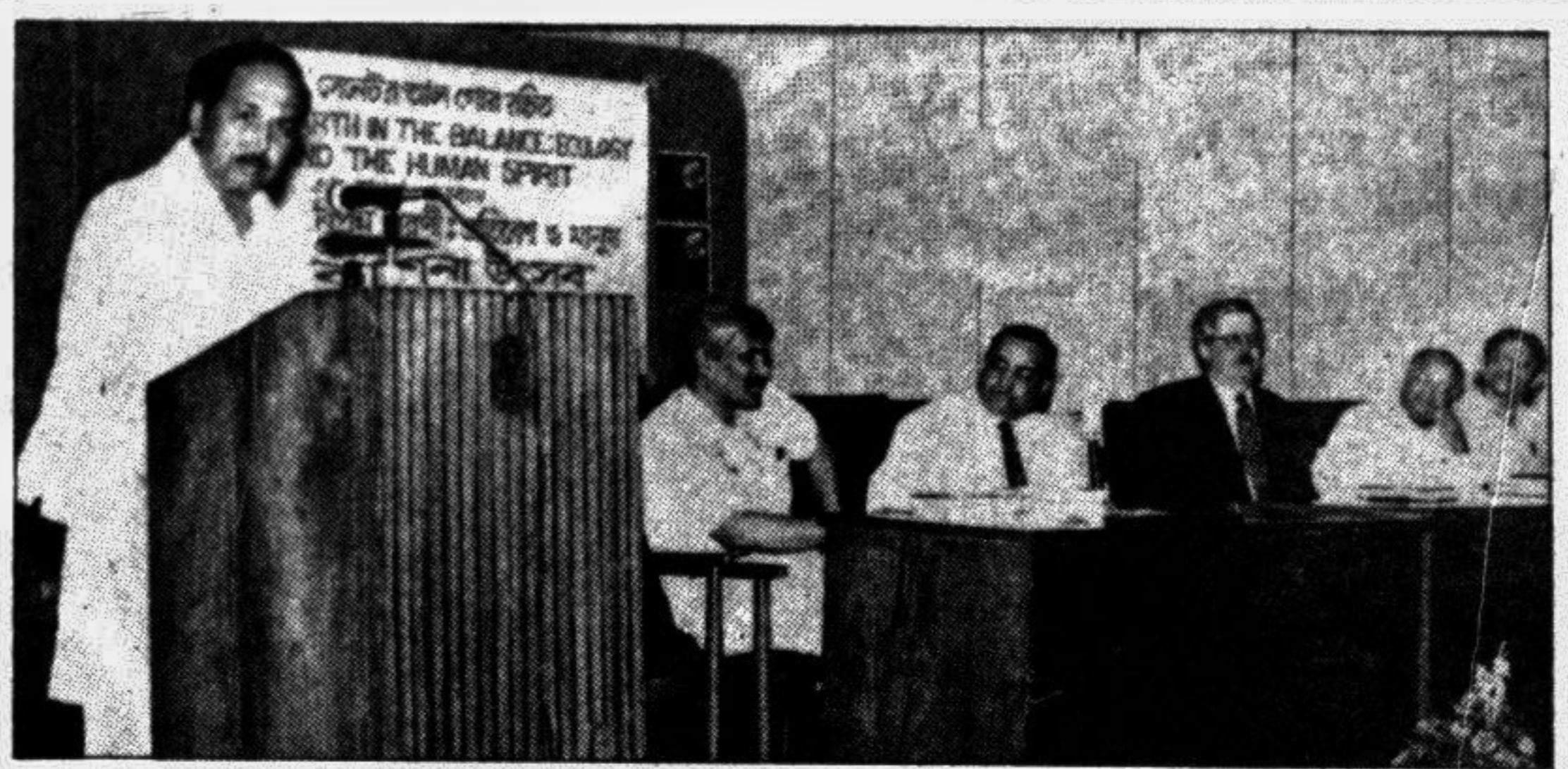
Witnesses said, the brothers were seriously injured during an hour-long gun fight between two groups of local bullies. The boys were hit while they were sitting inside their father's rickshaw garage at Amtala, Shahjahanpur.

Kajem Ali, 25, a construction worker, was killed and two other workers — Selim, 18, and Alekh, 45 — were injured when a bomb went off at Ashrafabad of Kamrangirchar at 1:30 pm.

Selim was admitted to the Orthopaedic Hospital while Alekh released after first aid.

A maid of one Qamruzzaman's residence at 5/2, Sobhanbagh died after having fallen from the third floor of a five-storied building.

The victim, Rokeya, 28, is the daughter of one Abdul Mannaf of Nalitamari in Sherpur.



A publication ceremony for the Bangla translation of Al Gore's *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit* was held at a Bangla Academy on Sunday. Minister of Environment and Forests Col (Retd) Akbar Hossain is seen speaking at the ceremony as the chief guest. Also seen in the picture are (from left): Dr. Atiq Rahman, Director of Centre for Advanced Studies; Professor Monsur Musa, Director General of Bangla Academy; Mr Donald M Bishop, Director of USIS; Syed A N M Wahed, Director General of the Department of Environment, and Mr Gholam Moynuddin, Director of Textbooks, Bangla Academy. —USIS photo

DESA system loss down by .83 per cent, JS told

Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Khondoker Mosharraf Hossain Tuesday informed the Jatiya Sangsad that the average rate of system loss of Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA) was 30.51 per cent till February of the current fiscal, reports BSS.

The minister said the rate of the loss was 0.83 per cent less compared to the rate of the corresponding period of last year which was 31.34 per cent.

Mosharraf was answering a question from Begum K J Hamida Khanam of Gazipur.

Reply to another question from Md Niamatullah of Savar the minister said a total of 6,346 villages had been brought under the rural electrification programme during the period from April 1, 1991 to March 1995.

The minister said that the government had approved the proposal for a feasibility study for tapping methane gas from the coal deposit in Jamalganj and Khalaspeer mines.

Replying to a question from Mohammad Golam Rabbani (Joypurhat), the minister said two geologists from the British geological survey visited Bangladesh in March this year under a 30,000 pound sterling ODA assistance programme to

study the feasibility of the project. He said the government is expecting their recommendations by the first week of the next month, he said.

The minister said if prospects were found positive and funds could be lined up, work on the project for extracting methane gas from the coal mines could then be completed within two years.

Outgoing Finnish envoy meets Biswas

The Ambassador of Finland Marjatta Rasi yesterday made a farewell call on President Abdur Rahman Biswas at Bangabhaban, reports BSS.

Talking to the outgoing ambassador, President Biswas lauded her contribution to further strengthening the excellent bilateral relations between Bangladesh and Finland. He said Bangladesh attaches great importance to her relationship with Finland.

Also said that because of unilateral withdrawal of Ganges water by the neighbouring country, our rivers are losing navigability and have silted up. The economy and the environment have been seriously affected in the northern region and this issue should be resolved immediately as per international law, he said.

HC issues rule against detention of LDF leaders

A High Court division bench has issued show-cause to four people, including the Home Secretary, to reply within three weeks why the detention orders against four LDF leaders should not be declared illegal, reports UNB.

The bench, comprising Justice Ismailuddin Sarker and Justice Hamidul Huq, served the notice following four writ petitions filed by LDF leader Nurul Islam Chhoton challenging the detentions of Abul Hossain, Mostafa Faruk, Shaiful Islam and Motaleb Hossain.

Bangladesh envoy to Canada presents credentials

Mufleh R Osmany, Bangladesh High Commissioner to Canada, presented his credentials to Romeo Leblanc, Governor General of Canada Tuesday at Rideau hall, the official residence of the Governor General in Ottawa, reports BSS.

While accepting the credentials governor General Romeo Leblanc welcomed Osmany and expressed his happiness for the positive political and economic advances had been made by Bangladesh in recent years.

DU Senate polls: 12 centres outside Dhaka

By Staff Correspondent
The Dhaka University authorities Tuesday announced the names of 12 centres outside Dhaka for holding elections of 25 registered graduate representatives to the university Senate on April 30.

The centres are: Chittagong University College, Sylhet Government College, Victoria College in Comilla, Senate Building of Rajshahi University, M M University College in Jessore, Rajendra University College in Faridpur, Sher-e-Bangla Medical College in Barisal, Club Bhaban of Mymensingh Agriculture University, Kumudini College in Tangail, Badre Alam College in Gazipur, Narsingdi College and Tolaram College in Narayanganj.

Election will also be held at the TSC of Dhaka University on May 3 and results will be announced on May 6, says a press release.

Samad Azad protests remarks

Awami League leader Abdus Samad Azad, in a statement Tuesday, protested Deputy Leader of the House Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury's remarks in Parliament on Monday about the Opposition, reports UNB.

Azad apparently took umbrage to Prof Chowdhury's remarks about the Opposition's sit-in that holding meetings on the corridor of the House and chanting party slogans were contrary to parliamentary norms.

In his statement, Azad held the ruling party responsible for the present crisis and said that despite Opposition's sincere efforts, the BNP has really no intention for dialogue to end the crisis.

"Rather, the government adopted a time-wasting tactics in the name of dialogue to sidetrack the demand for a neutral caretaker government," he added.

He said the Awami League, under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina, had extended all out cooperation for resolving all problems to make Parliament effective and accountable to the people.

A NEW PACK.
THE SAME GREAT TASTE.



A TASTE APART.