

Dhaka Day by Day

Quality of Mercy is Nowhere to be Seen

by Farah Ghuznavi

As a popular song by singer/composer Bhupen Hazarika goes:

Manush manusher jonno, jibon jiboner jonno

Ektu sahanubhuti ki, manush ditey parey na, o bontho

[As one person to another, as one life to another]

Can people not show a little compassion, my friend?

Looking around Dhaka these days, this refrain keeps coming to mind. We Dhakaites seem singularly lacking in such compassion when it comes to our dealings with our fellow beings. Those of us who live in relative comfort in the midst of abject poverty, frequently don't seem to be losing any sleep over it. Not only that, there are times when the depth of our oblivion to the situation surrounding us still manages to shock me, no matter how hardened I consider myself to be regarding such people.

An example was a recent conversation with someone I attended school with. Her father is extremely wealthy, and is currently building his fourth house. She was arguing with me that there was no problem of unemployment or underemployment in Bangladesh, because "Graduate unemployment would not be a problem if people would just learn to take what they are offered. If they pass their B. A. and M. A., and they can't find the job they want, why can't they just work as peons in some office?"

The fact that many people have had to work very hard and have sacrificed a great deal to get those degrees, and therefore find it unacceptable to take a pen's job instead, was to her an indication of arrogance on their part. The fact that she would never expect any members of her family with similar qualifications (or less!) to settle for that, was completely beside the point!

Similarly, she said, there were plenty of jobs to be had for the poor, particularly women, if they did work such as breaking bricks. Again, when I pointed out the fact that it is back breaking work, for which most people get paid a pittance, with women getting

even less money than men do for the same amount of work, to her it was an example of my being unreasonable rather than it being any objective truth.

An even more extreme case was the woman whom I met a few years ago, who had just returned from visiting her grandfather's village home. It was her first time going outside Dhaka, but she felt well qualified to assert that malnutrition was really the fault of the poor themselves, because they have such bad eating habits. Do you know, the entire time that I was there, I saw the servants in my grandfather's house eating rice with chillies! Why don't they eat it with some meat or fish, it would be so much better for their health. Don't they know that they will get ulcers from eating chillies all the time? In the face of such ignorance, the lack of common sense which should inform one that the reason that they are eating chillies rather than meat is because they can't afford the



latter, what can you say? When she followed this story up by complaining about how many beggars there are in the city, and how they make it difficult for you to go shopping in Gulshan properly ("something should really be done to get rid of them soon"), I decided to cut my losses and escape from the conversation. The mammoth task of trying to set this woman straight on the realities of life for the poor of Bangladesh was, really, I freely admit, quite beyond me!

When I meet people like this (which is a lot more often than I'd like), I often have feeling of unreality. Are they living in the same world, let alone the same country, as the rest of us? I think not. It also reminds me of Marie Antoinette's comment just before the French Revolution, that if the poor could not afford bread, "Let them eat cake!" The idea held by some, that the poor are poor because they are lazy (rather than because of the uneven distribution of wealth) is no more true today, than it was then. And considering the fate that ultimately met Marie Antoinette, perhaps we in Bangladesh should think about the poverty surrounding us a bit more often, and our own "needs" a little less!

Two killed in road accidents

By DMCH Correspondent

At least two persons were killed and another four injured in three separate incidents in the capital and Narsingdi.

One person died while three others were injured when an autorickshaw collided head-on with a speeding minibus in front of the Bangla College at Mirpur yesterday afternoon.

The autorickshaw passengers and the driver were seriously injured and rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where Nasima, 23, was declared dead.

Nasima's husband Mohammad Salamat Ullah, 32, and her son Fahim, 2, and the autorickshaw driver Mohammad Abdul Hannan, 30, were admitted to the DMCH.

Among the injured Fahim's condition is stated to be critical, hospital sources said.

Although, police seized the minibus but its driver managed to escape.

In another road accident at Narsingdi, a pedestrian was crushed under the wheels of a speeding truck at Sayednagar at 4:30 pm yesterday.

The victim Rubel aged about 30 was sent to the DMCH where the attending doctors declared him dead.

A fish seller was injured when a group of muggers stabbed him at Dhalpur, Demra yesterday early afternoon.

The victim Makbul Hossain, 20, received stab injuries in his abdomen and was admitted to the DMCH.

Makbul alleged that a group of muggers waylaid him and demanded money when he was going towards his residence. As he refused them the miscreants stabbed him and snatched Tk 3000 from him.

Rallies continue against Kashmir incident

Rallies and demonstrations protesting the destruction of a Muslim shrine in Kashmir continued yesterday in the city, reports UNB.

The nearly 700-year-old shrine of Shaikh Nooruddin Noorani and an adjacent mosque at Char-e-Sharif were burnt to the ground during fighting between the Indian security forces and the Muslim militants on Thursday.

Jatiya Ganatantrik Party (JAGPA) brought out a torch procession in the capital Sunday evening, condemning the demolition of the shrine and other acts of violation of human rights in the valley.

Later, party chief Shafiq Alam Proddhan, addressing a rally at Purana Paltan crossing, urged the world community, particularly the United Nations, to take actions to stop bloodshed and destruction of property in Kashmir.

He accused India of violating human rights in the Himalayan region of Kashmir, in the name of combatting the secessionist movement.

Bangladesh Islami Chhatra Shibir also brought out a procession in the city, protesting the desecration of the holy place in the Indian-controlled Kashmir.

Kamal attends janaza

Health and Family Welfare Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibn Yusuf Saturday attended the namaz-e-janaza of late Shamsuddin Ahmed Shamsu at Goalanda thana parishad premises in Rajbari district, reports UNB.

Shamsuddin Ahmed, 40, district president of Bangladesh Nationalist Farmers Party, died Saturday morning at his village home, said an official handout.

Later, the deceased was buried at his family graveyard.



A protest rally brought out by JAGPA in the city yesterday. — Star photo

VE Day celebration to usher in global peace: Biswas

President Abdur Rahman Biswas yesterday called for ensuring global peace and security through negotiations and reconciliations, reports UNB.

"There can be durable peace through discussion and understanding," he told newsmen at the airport on his return from a ten-day official visit to UK where he attended the VE Day celebrations, marking the 50th anniversary of the end of the World War II in Europe.

Heads of the state and government and representatives of some 60 countries attended the celebration held in the British capital last week.

Road bridge on verge of collapse

The Baghdad bridge on the Dhaka-Aricha highway near Banijuri bus stand of Gheor thana in Manikganj has developed a crack, threatening its collapse at any time, reports UNB.

The horizontal crack on the old bridge was noticed yesterday.

Deputy Commissioner of Manikganj visited the bridge and asked the local Roads and Highways Department to take necessary steps immediately.

The R&H Department has introduced one-way traffic to lessen the pressure on the bridge. But this has been causing traffic jam.



Death anniversary of Abdul Ahad

By Staff Correspondent

The first anniversary of death of the music legend Abdul Ahad, Tagore song vocalist and composer, will be observed today.

Ahad, first Muslim student, who studied at Shantiniketan Sangeet Bhavan during Tagore's life-time, later joined His-Master Voice, the famous recording company of Calcutta, as a trainer. After the Indo-Pakistan partition, he joined Dhaka Betar in 1948.

Many celebrated vocalists, including Hemanta Mukhopadhyay, Pankaj Kumar Mallik, Santoshi Sen Gupta and Suchitra Mitra recorded songs under his adept musical direction.

Late Abdul Ahad has a number of books and musical notes to his credit.



Commerce and Information Minister M Shamsul Islam speaking at the prize distribution ceremony organised by the Film Viewers Forum in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Buddha Purnima celebrated

Buddhist devotees and monks in saffron robes walked through the city streets in a peace march yesterday morning marking the most sacred religious festival of the community, reports UNB.

Buddha Purnima was celebrated yesterday by about 10 lakh Buddhists of the country with various functions reflecting the spirit of reverence and festivity.

The day was a public holiday.

Buddha Purnima, the full-moon day in the month of Baishakh, commemorates three most significant events of Lord Buddha's life. On the same day he (Lord Buddha) was born, attained supreme enlightenment and passed away.

President Abdur Rahman Biswas in a message felicitated the Buddhist community with a word of praise for their contribution to the welfare of the country and countrymen.

Biswas hoped that as patriotic citizens they would continue their active participation in country's advancement in future.

In a separate message, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said the government ensured full freedom and rights of all communities and set a shining example of religious harmony in the country.

The Prime Minister hoped that Gautam Buddha's universal message of peace, amity, service to others and non-violence would be reflected in a bigger way in the present strife-torn world.

She appreciated that the Buddhists of the country had all along been showing sincerity in nation-building activities and hoped that they would further come forward for greater contribution to the struggle for uplift of the country with the spirit of their won religious tenets.

Awami League president Sheikh Hasina in her message said the Buddhist community in Bangladesh has made valuable contribution in different fields of national life and during the War of Liberation in 1971.

The Buddhists of Bangladesh, mostly based in Chittagong, three districts in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Cox's Bazar, Comilla, Noakhali and Patuakhali, celebrated the festival with day-long programmes.

The programmes were: Chanting of the sacred verses from the Tripitak by Buddhist monks, hoisting of national and religious flags atop all monasteries, breaking of fasting, probhat feri or barefoot march at dawn, prayers, Buddha Puja, Panchashil, offering to monks, religious meetings, blood donation, cultural functions and illumination in the evening.

In capital Dhaka, the festival

First return Hajj flight arrives

The first return Hajj flight of Bangladesh Biman arrived in Dhaka yesterday morning, reports BSS.

Three hundred-one Bangladeshi hajjis were on board the first return flight, an official handout said.

The return flight will continue up to May 23 for bringing the hajjis who performed Hajj under government management, 3,795 persons performed Hajj this year under government management.

Minister for Religious Affairs Md Keramat Ali, Secretary Religious Affairs Anwarul Islam, Bangladesh ambassador to Saudi Arabia Mir Nasiruddin and Hajj officers in Makkah visited the camps of Bangladeshi Hajjis at Arafat and Mina during Hajj and enquired about their welfare. The hajjis were found hale and hearty.

The Religious Affairs Secretary returned yesterday in the first flight, while the minister will return tomorrow.

The first Hajj flight left Dhaka for Saudi Arabia on April 13. Besides the government management, another six thousand people went to Saudi Arabia to perform Hajj of their own, it is learnt.

Belal's death condoled

CHITTAGONG, May 14: M A Malek and Moynuddin Kaderi Showkat, president and general secretary respectively of Chittagong Newspaper Council today expressed deep shock at the death of Muhammad Belal, chief reporter of the daily Purbokone, reports BSS.

In a statement here today they said Chittagong has lost a devoted journalist in the death of Muhammad Belal.

They prayed for the peace of the departed soul and expressed sympathy with the bereaved members of the family of late Belal.

Farhad memorial clinic to be set up at Boda

By Staff Correspondent
A medical centre will be established at Boda in Panchagar, the village home of the late leader Mohammad Farhad, the former general secretary of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, says a press release.

Reena Farhad, the widow of Mohammad Farhad, will lay the foundation stone of the clinic, to be named 'Farhad Memorial Clinic' after the late leader, at 5 pm today.

Dr S Khalilullah, Director of the Dinajpur Atomic Medical Centre, will be present at the function as special guest.

WP to announce fresh plans tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent
Workers Party will announce its fresh action programmes on the issue of Farakka and water crisis from a rally to be held at Shibganj in Chapainawabganj tomorrow, says a party press release.

Rashed Khan Menon MP, general secretary of the party, will announce the programmes after leading a march towards Kansat, in Chapainawabganj, commemorating the historic 'Farakka Long March' led by Moulana Bhashani 19 years ago.

At the last leg of the march programme, a memorial plaque will also be laid at Kansat tomorrow.

Meanwhile, Workers Party president Anwarul Islam and general secretary Rashed Khan Menon MP, in a joint statement yesterday expressed deep anguish and condemned the destruction of Char-e-Sharif, Kashmir.

They feared that this would disturb the communal harmony in the sub-continent. They also expressed the view that such an incident justified the necessity of self-rule by Kashmiri people.

The Workers Party leaders hoped that the Indian government would refrain from taking such steps and go for a political settlement in the region.

In Memoriam

4th Death Anniversary of Prof Dr M Ahmed Sharif, renowned Ophthalmologist and Philanthropist.

We request his wellwishers to pray for his departed soul.
Mrs Sadat Afza Sharif
Dr Ahmed Jamil Sharif
Tahmina Sharmin Sharif.

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Weather

Thundershower likely

Light to moderate rain or thundershower accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at most places in Barisal division, many places in Chittagong and Khulna divisions and at a few places over Dhaka and Rajshahi divisions during next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

During the period, moderate to heavy falls are likely at places over Barisal division and the regions of Noakhali, Chittagong and Khulna.

According to the Met Office, day temperature may fall by 1-2 degree Celsius over Dhaka, Barisal, Chittagong and Khulna divisions, and may remain unchanged over Rajshahi division.

There will be little change in the subsequent two days, the weathermen forecast.

In its extended outlook for another five days, Met Office predicts that the weather may improve at the end of the period.

The country's highest temperature, 36.4 degrees Celsius, was recorded at Dhaka and the lowest, 23.8 degrees, at Comilla.

The sun sets today in Dhaka at 6:34 pm and rises tomorrow at 5:16 am.

Maximum and minimum temperatures and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	36.4	26.4	66	75
Chittagong	32.6	26.0	64	73
Rajshahi	34.2	25.6	81	90
Khulna	31.5	26.0	83	92
Barisal	31.0	25.6	90	90
Sylhet	-	-	-	-
Cox's Bazar	31.4	-	66	92