

Dhaka Day by Day

Close Encounters with Crawlies

By Farah Ghuznavi

Most people regard creepy crawly insects as something to be stepped on when necessary. There are, of course, exceptions to this. The grandmother of a friend of mine, who moved to town some decades ago in order to go on to higher education, was so soft-hearted that she couldn't bear to kill the various insects which inhabited the hostel room she lived in. Instead of stepping on the cockroaches, she would gently place cups and bowls over them, in order to trap them. Her roommates would arrive home at the end of the day to find cups and other items all over the room, with trapped roaches waiting under them, which they would then have to kill before they started washing up the crockery.

But if, for most people, stepping on the occasional insect is a normal enough event, there are those for whom the need to do so goes much deeper. In such cases, killing bugs is not a necessity, but a compulsion. This refers, of course, to those of us who are terrified of the little monsters. For those who live in our part of the world, encountering some truly hideous insects is an occupational hazard. Gerald Durrell, the naturalist, would no doubt appreciate the opportunities we have, but some of us would rather do without them!

In fact, a friend of mine, Philip, who was planning to visit Bangladesh a few years ago almost changed his mind about doing so after going to an exhibition at the Museum of Natural History in London. The exhibition was entitled "Creepy Crawlies," and after visiting the section on the Indian subcontinent, he came and asked me if all those bugs were found in Bangladesh. "All those and many, many more!", I assured him. "I have to think about this trip for a little longer," he said dubiously, growing appreciably paler.

Some people argue that Dhaka's insect population are growing larger, stronger and more immune to pesticides etc each day. I would say that the bugs living in mufassil towns aren't doing too badly either. Fortunately for us, few insects have as yet been able to build up a resistance to being stepped on!

A few years ago, I was on my first field trip with a group of foreign visitors. The woman who was sharing my room also shared my hatred of cockroaches and suchlike. To our horror, we found that because it was the height of summer, the heat meant that a swarm of flying insects were attracted to our room every night when we put on the single light bulb in the room. We decided that we would only put the light on when we had to put up our mosquito net, but even so we had to go on an insect killing spree each evening after we had done so. A small mountain of insect corpses would be removed from our room each morning. As far as technique went, initially my companion, Sara, would be squealing while swatting at the bugs, but she abruptly stopped doing so when I pointed out that she didn't know what might fly into her mouth!

But of course there is an important dividing line between disliking insects, and being phobic about them, as another friend of mine is. Her phobia concerns spiders, and when she was alone in her flat one evening, and she found a spider near the door of her dining room, there was no-one to rescue her. She was so terrified that she could not bring herself to get past the spider and leave the room. She ended up spending the whole night on her dining room table, awake!

Similarly, a colleague of mine is frightened of lizards (which, strictly speaking, do not count as insects but reptiles; but then, such considerations of classification do not count for much when you are scared silly!). When she was woken up one night by a lizard falling on to her from the ceiling, she panicked so badly that she started kicking around trying to make sure she got it off the bed. I don't know about the lizard, but her poor husband certainly found himself on the floor shortly thereafter, to his total bewilderment! Thus, insect phobias not only complicate the lives of those who have them (and will go to extraordinary lengths to avoid such insects), they can also have unforeseen effects on the lives of those who live with them!

Sharier '95

Sylhet Disaster Forum formed

A regional coordination body has been formed to cope with the flash flood in the greater Sylhet region, reports UNB.

The body, Sylhet Disaster Forum, came into being following a workshop on "Alternative Early Warning System" held at the central training centre of FVDB in Sylhet recently, said a press release in the city yesterday.

The workshop was coordinated by BUET Professor Ainun Nishat, Dean of Social Science Faculty of Shahjalal University in Sylhet. Prof. Habibur Rahman will act as resource person for the effort.

Various NGOs are members of the network. It will be associated with the Dhaka-based Disaster Forum to work in the Surma, Kushiara and Borak basin.

Jalalabad Assoc

Another report adds: The Jalalabad Association, Dhaka, has expressed concern about the latest flood situation of greater Sylhet at an emergency meeting of the association recently.

The meeting reviewed the relief and rehabilitation programme of the government.

Meanwhile, the association has launched a relief fund. Persons interested to send cash and other materials have been requested to contact the office of the association at 22 Kauran Bazar (1st floor) between 10 am and 4 pm every day.

Donation is the form of cheques and bank drafts issued in favour of "Jalalabad Association Relief Fund" have also been solicited.

Indian Foreign Secy meets Mostafiz

The visiting Indian Foreign Secretary Salman Haider called on Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman at his residence yesterday morning, reports UNB.

During their talks, the Foreign Minister drew the attention of the Indian government to the urgent need for a solution to the sharing of the Ganges water.

He also explained the principle of the government and the people of Bangladesh on the Ganges water.

Mostafiz opined that Bangladesh and India can play a leading role in paving the way for regional cooperation among the member countries of SAARC.



Minister for Health and Family Welfare Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf (L) offering munajat after inaugurating the EOC unit at the Mersarai Thana Health Complex in Chittagong on Saturday.

Programmes on Int'l Day against Drug Abuse

By Staff Correspondent

In observance of the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Drug Trafficking, various socio-cultural and voluntary organisations have drawn programmes including discussion, seminars, walkathon and essay contest.

The Department of Narcotics Control will arrange a walkathon from the Shishu Park to the Osmani Memorial auditorium at 7:00 am. The department will also hold a discussion at the Shilpakala Academy auditorium at 10:30 am. Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury will attend it as chief guest.

The federation of NGOs dealing with anti-drug issue has organised a discussion meeting at the VIP Lounge of the Jatiya Press Club at 3:00 pm. Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz will attend the meeting as chief guest while the president of the Press Club Rezauddin Ahmed, advisor of the federation A K M Firoz Noon and agriculturist Zaved Iqbal will be the special guests.

Dhaka Ahasania Mission will hold a meeting at the mission's auditorium (House No 19, Road No 12, Dhanmondi RA) at 4:00 pm.

Chairman of the University Grants Commission Prof. Iqbal Ahmed will attend the meeting as chief guest while the Director General of the Directorate of Drug Control Syed Magrub Morshed will be the special guest.

To mark the day, Bangladesh Association for Social Advancement has planned a walkathon in the city at 6:00 am, a seminar at the Press Club at 4:30 pm and a discussion at the Mohakhali Inter-district bus terminal at 7:30 pm.

Solidarity, a human rights organisation, has arranged a seminar at the VIP Lounge of the Jatiya Press Club at 11 in the morning and an essay competition for the students. Interested students have been requested to send their writings at its 111, Naya Paltan office in the city by August 20.

The SAARC Youth Forum, in observance of the day, brought out a colourful procession yesterday and marched from in front of the National Museum up to the Jatiya Press Club.

The procession was followed by a rally which was addressed by, among others, Nirmal Rozario, Ahmed Rafiq, Advocate Shahjahan, Keka Choudhury and a Sri Lankan representative Tilamvit.

Bangladesh Inter-Religious Council for Peace and Justice also organised a discussion in the city Saturday in preparation for the observance of the international day.

538 university teachers on study leave

Some 538 teachers of different universities are staying abroad on study leave, 97 of them are on unauthorised leave, Education Minister Jamiruddin Sircar told Parliament yesterday, reports UNB.

Giving a break-up, he said 131 teachers of Dhaka University, 129 of Rajshahi University, 117 of Engineering University, 50 of Agriculture University, 49 each of Chittagong and Jahangirnagar University, five of Islamic University, six of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology and two of Khulna University have been on leave.

Responding to Niamat Ullah Sabu, Sircar informed the House that 59 teachers of Rajshahi University have been

dismissed for remaining abroad on unapproved leave.

Of the 11 teachers of Dhaka University, who are also on unauthorised leave, related papers of three were placed before the Syndicate and 8 others were served final notice to join their work.

Of the 21 teachers of Engineering University, 16 were given final notice to join work, while 5 were chargesheeted. Besides, various actions were taken against the teachers of other universities for staying abroad on unauthorised leave.

At present, the number of teachers working in nine universities is 3,568, of whom 3,066 are male and 502 are female teachers.

Customs seizes C&F agents' licence

By Staff Correspondent

Customs authorities had recently seized the licence of a clearing and forwarding agency and suspended all its activities on charge of violating the Customs Act of 1969 and the Licensing Rules of 1986, according to a customs press release issued yesterday.

The actions against Messrs Navo Cargo Services Limited were taken early this month after the Customs authorities at the Zia International Airport found that Messrs N R Knitting Limited of 60, BB Road, Narayanganj, the client of the C&F agency, imported 4040 kgs of chemicals from Germany as sample and the price of the material had been shown at only US dollar 750. The official order, issued by the Joint Collector of Customs on 11 June, said a maximum of 4 to 5 kgs of chemicals could be accepted as samples. But the import of 4040 kgs as "samples" was made deliberately to evade a huge amount of duties. In case of chemical imports by the special bonded warehouse, prior permission is needed as per a 1993 decision of the National Board of Revenue subject to the clearance of customs duties, the order said, adding that the importer an question lacked such permission and its imported consignment was not entered in the passbook.

The Customs authorities also accused the clearing and forwarding agency of attempt-

ing to get clearance of the imported goods evading duties and maintaining secrecy about the chemical by special bonded warehouse which was a punishable act provided by the Article 32 of the Customs Act of 1965 and the Licensing Rules of 1986.

Recitation course

Kanithashalon, a cultural organisation, has planned to launch a four month-long training course on accurate pronunciation and recitation, says a press release.

Application for participation in the course will be made available at the organisation's office at the Teacher-Students Centre (second floor) of the Dhaka University until July 6 next, everyday except Fridays during 10 am-4 pm.

Classes for the training course would be held only on Fridays during 8 am-12.30 pm. Waheedul Haq, Naren Biswas and Mir Barkat will conduct the course.

Chehlum



The chehlum of Alhaj Kazi Kabir Uddin, noted journalist, politician and social worker, will be held at his Salimpur residence, Chittagong today, says a press release.

EOC unit opens in Ctg

Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf opened the Emergency Obstetric Care (EOC) unit at Mersarai Thana Health Complex in Chittagong on Saturday, says a press release.

Mersarai is the first thana in the country which will provide comprehensive emergency obstetric care (EOC) catered to the needs of not only the thana population but also those of other neighbouring areas. The EOC unit includes blood transfusion and caesarian operation.

The minister lauded the EOC initiative, jointly undertaken by the Government of Bangladesh and ICDDR,B, and expressed the hope that the success of this intervention will pave the way for its replication to other parts of the country.

BCIC Tender Notice



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