

Dhaka Day by Day

Seamy Side of City Life

by ASM Nurunnabi

Every big city has its seamy side. Dhaka is no exception to this. The seamy side consists in fraud, cheating and other offensive practices resorted to by apparently innocuous looking persons who choose their victims in subtle ways.

Let us elaborate. A gentleman wants to go by rickshaw from Gulistan to Sadarghat. To economise on rickshaw fare, he invites a person to share the rickshaw. As the vehicle proceeds, the gentleman strikes up conversation with his co-passenger on many points of common interest. Suddenly, as the rickshaw reaches midway, the co-passenger gets down and pays his share of the fare. When the gentleman reaches his destination, he finds his purse gone from his side-pocket. The rickshaw-puller explains that the co-passenger picked his pocket while he was engaged in conversation with him.

Pickpocketing is said to be a very ancient art. From hearsay it is learnt that there is even a Gulistan-based school which imparts training to its pupils in various subtle methods of pickpocketing. This school is said to follow specific rules, discipline and code of conduct. The pupils are required to be strictly obedient to their guru and never to tell a lie. Whatever proceeds are acquired in course of pickpocketing operations in a day are handed over to the guru who apportions appropriate share.

Interesting stories are heard about the training method at this school. To test the proficiency of a student in this art, a piece of thin cloth is placed on a gourd. The student is asked to make an incision on the piece of cloth without leaving any scratch on the gourd. If the student passes this test, he is considered fit to practise the art of pickpocketing and given licence in this behalf at a swearing-in ceremony, at which he takes a pledge to observe secrecy under all circumstances. That is perhaps why it is so difficult to get any word out of the mouth of a pickpocket when he is caught.



It is also said that there are female pickpockets. The godfathers of the crime world utilise them in various ways besides pickpocketing. In the guise of customers, they frequent various shopping centres and are trained to sneak into their handbags such articles as ornaments, watches, sarees and items of cosmetics, etc.

Lately it has been observed that some women clad in burkha, and carrying babies with some bundles, stand by roadside and implore select passers-by who look well-off, for monetary help by narrating fabricated stories of distress and starvation. Some charity-prone individuals fall prey to their piteous appeals.

Even places of worship are not free from a class of fraudsters. During prayer breaks, these elements are found to collect money of various pretexts. It is alleged that there is a regular racket which raises lakhs of taka in this manner from worshippers in Dhaka. Besides, there are some groups, who with printed receipts, collect subscriptions from passengers in trains, buses and launches.

There is another class of cheats who seek changes for a five-hundred taka currency note. By devious means, they manage to obtain changes without parting with their currency note.

Cheating is even resorted to at roadside fruit stalls. You may find cut pieces of papaya sold at some of these stalls very sweet and palatable. Such cut pieces were in fact soaked in water mixed with saccharin.

There is no end to the story of mischievous practices. If you go to a library to look up a reference, you may find the relevant pages of the book have been torn out. Then there are leakages of question papers before examinations, sales of such detrimental question papers, helping some students in adoption of unfair means at examinations, production of fake certificates in getting admission and jobs, etc.

Such cheating all around only helps increase mistrust between man and man.



Manikganj Nabarupa Opera presenting Rupban O Rahim Badshah, a popular folklore on the opening day of a week-long folk drama festival at the Shilpakala Academy auditorium in the city yesterday. — Star photo

5 muggers held in city

By Staff Correspondent
Police arrested five persons for muggings in the city Thursday.

Four of them were nabbed while they were preparing for mugging near the Abahani ground in Dhanmondi at about two in the afternoon. The arrested were identified as Noor Islam, 35, Abdus Salam, 28, Md Billal, 25 and Abdur Rashid, 28.

Three cocktails and two daggers were recovered from their possession.

According to police, they are the members of an organised gang of muggers.

In another incident, police arrested one Mominul Islam when he tried to flee after snatching a gold chain from one Mahfuz Sultana on Pantha Path at about 2 pm.

The snatcher jumped into the Dhanmondi lake when local people chased him, police said.

Police raid video shop in Ctg

CHITTAGONG, June 30: A team of the Chittagong Metropolitan Police yesterday afternoon raided a video cassette shop 'Video Connection' in the city and seized 50 blue-film cassettes.

The manager of the shop Arup Sarkar, was arrested.

A case has been filed accusing three persons, including the owner of the shop.

Children's painting workshop

A three-month painting workshop has been organised for children aged between 7 and 16. To be conducted by artist Masuma Khan, Alliance Francaise has arranged it at its premises, says a press release.

The admission test has been scheduled for July 7.

BPRA confce July 6

By Staff Correspondent
The eighth biennial national conference of the Bangladesh Public Relations Association (BPRA) will be held on July 6 at the Sheraton Hotel.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is expected to attend the conference as the chief guest, while Commerce and Information Minister M Shamsul Islam will be present as a special guest.

New Innerwheel chief elected

Zeenat Akhand has been elected chairman of the Innerwheel District 328 for the 1995-96 term, says a press release.

A member and former president of the Innerwheel Club of Dhaka Midtown, Zeenat is the wife of SH Akhand, president of the Rotary Club of Dhaka Midtown.

Seminar on role of teachers held

Education Minister Jamiruddin Sircar yesterday said teachers can play better roles in promoting education through sincerity, and by imparting practical knowledge, an official handout said, reports BSS.

He was speaking as the chief guest at a seminar on the role of teachers in the promotion of education, organised by the BCS (General Education) Coordination Parishad at the Dhaka College auditorium yesterday.

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Annual social service plans of Rotary Int'l

The Bangladesh chapter of Rotary International will launch a series of community and social service programmes beginning July 1.

The nationwide programmes include tree planting, garbage cleaning, free computer training to unemployed youths, free medical treatment, blood donation, legal support to the poor, destitute feeding, schooling, setting up of public toilets, providing scholarship to meritorious students, sanitation and immunization.

Emdad Ul Haq, Governor of Rotary International District 3280, told this to UNB Thursday

The 3280 district covers entire Bangladesh, where 91 Rotary clubs with 2,200 members work for social welfare.

The Rotary Year begins from July 1 and Emdad Ul Haq takes over as new Governor on that day for the 1995-96 year.

The highlights of July 1 programmes include opening of a Rotary Peace Park at 10, Baridhara, where Rotarians and foreign diplomats will plant saplings. The park, obtained from Dhaka City Corporation, will be maintained by the Rotary District 3280.

Under round-the-year cleanliness programme, each

of the 91 clubs will keep a street clean with help from Rotaractors, Interactors and family members of Rotarians.

The Rotary Club will start a Computer and Electronics Training Centre at Elephant Road in Dhaka from July 1. The centre will provide free-of-cost training to 24 boys and girls every three months.

Rotary clubs will arrange free treatment of poor patients at Safena Hospital at Malibagh in Dhaka. The hospital authorities have donated two beds for poor patients.

On the first of July, the Rotary Club will distribute hearing aids to 20 deaf and dumb children in the capital.

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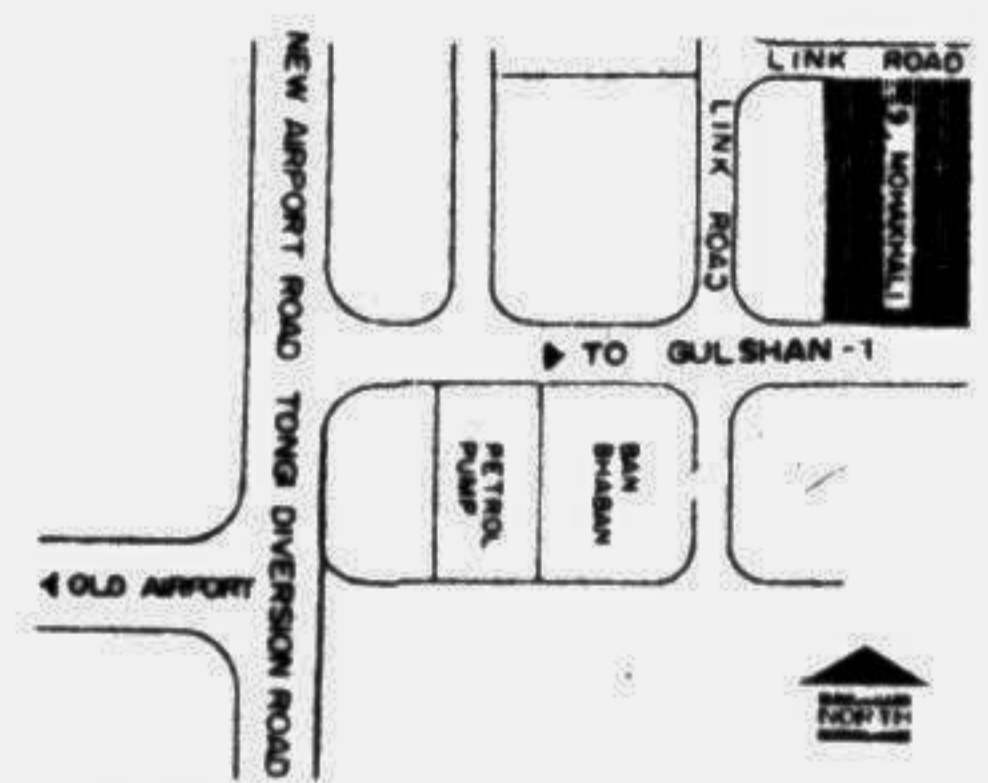
A member and former president of the Innerwheel Club of Dhaka Midtown, Zeenat is the wife of SH Akhand, president of the Rotary Club of Dhaka Midtown.

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