

# Dhaka Day by Day

## Fortune-telling by a Bird

by A S M Nurunnabi

Fortune-telling means the forecasting of future events or the delineation of character by methods not ordinarily considered rational. Evidence suggests that forms of fortune-telling were practised in ancient China, Egypt, Chaldea and Babylonia as long ago as 4,000 BC.

Predictive methods of fortune-telling include interpretation of the movement of heavenly bodies as influences on earthly events and utilisation of such things as playing cards, tea leaves, crystal balls, dice, fire, water and scattered salt. Fortune-telling as a process of character analysis can take such forms as graphology (Study of hand-writing), physiognomy (study of facial characteristics), phrenology (study of the contours on the skull) and palmistry (study of lines on the palm of the hand).

A new dimension to the common fortune-telling techniques, as indicated above, may be found in many places in Dhaka city such as Gulistan area, Kawranbazar, Mirpur, Sadarghat, Swarighat, etc. The tools of this innovative trade mainly consists of a cage, housing a green parrot and quite a good number of envelopes containing messages in each on a small piece of paper depicting a person's character traits and nature of possible future luck.

The manager of this show sits on one side of a small mat or a plastic sheet. On the other side of this are spread out in neat arrangement all the many envelopes containing the fortune-telling messages. The green parrot sits atop the cage placed nearby. The bird can't fly away as its wings are partly clipped.



Parrot picks up your fortune! — Star photo

When a customer seeking to know about his fortune comes up, he pays a small fee, say Tk 2 to the operator of the show. The latter then prods the bird to come forward and pick up one of the envelopes spread out before it. After the bird performs this act, the operator takes out the envelope from its beak and then proceeds to read out the message contained in the envelope.

The customer hears with suspense the crucial message which is couched in such terms that invite multiple interpretations. One thing is, however, sure that there are some encouraging words which leave the customer somewhat happy. Since a bird is shown as instrumental in the fortune-telling role, there remains some scope for many to harbour belief in the messages conveyed through the envelopes. No comment is called for on the rationality or otherwise of such procedure of fortune-telling.

I came across a practitioner of this profession in the vicinity of the Dhanmandi Residential Area. He was a disabled old man in his late sixties. I was told that he was formerly a government employee, hailing from Barisal district. During the Liberation War, he reportedly suffered injuries to his right leg. In his cripple state, he chose this kind of profession as a means of subsistence. He further told me that the green parrot which he uses for his profession was purchased by him at Tk 500 from Mirpur. He takes his position at a convenient point on a Dhanmandi footpath from morning till late evening and earns not less than Tk 50 per day from his profession.



Reconstruction of sewerage line in city's Hatirpool area is in progress. This picture was taken yesterday. — Star photo

## Law against women, child repression hailed

Leaders of different social organisations for the enforcement of women's rights in the country congratulated the government for enacting a new law providing death sentence for killing, raping and murdering of dowry and for indulging in woman and child trafficking.

Talking to BSS yesterday they said that enactment of the Women and Child Repression (Special Provision) Bill, 1995 by the Jatiya Sangsad in its last budget session was the victory of the movement against repression on women and children in the society.

They, however, observed that mere enactment of any legislation was not adequate to deal with crimes involving women and children, rather proper execution of the law was the most important task. All quarters irrespective of political affiliations, social and religious leaders, mosque imams and law enforcing agencies should come forward for proper application of the provisions of the law, they observed.

They urged the government to embark upon massive publicity campaign to create mass awareness about the law. They also demanded punishment under the new act and wide publicity of such punishment.

President and general secretary of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, Begum Sufia Kamal and Ayesha Khanom congratulating the government on the enactment of the law said that the incidents of woman and child trafficking was being carried out by criminals having inter-regional network. They suggested that the regional countries particularly the SAARC should take up practical steps to combat trafficking of women and children.

Regarding those women and children who had already been victimised by criminals and sent abroad, the president and general secretary of the parishad suggested government initiative to bring them back home and take measures for their treatment and rehabilitation.

President of Bangladesh Mahila Samity, Dr. Nilima Ibrahim appreciated the government for enactment of the law. She said her organisation is always appreciative of enactment of good laws.

Dr. Nilima however, stressed on the proper application of laws. Otherwise, it would be ineffective. She pointed out that the government had enacted laws to check social crimes like hijacking, snatching and toll extraction and said in fact such incidents have increased.

General Secretary of 'Nari Andolan', Khondkar Ayesha said mere enactment of any laws was not adequate to curb repression and cruelty on women and other social vices. The law in question should be enforced properly, she asserted.

Ayesha said had there been the rule of Islamic social system, there would have been no need for enactment of new laws to prevent crimes against women and children.

Ayesha said the confidence of the people in and credibility of law enforcing agencies must be ensured first.

Bangladesh Women Journalists Forum (BWJF) hailed the government for enacting such an important legislation.

President and General Secretary of the BWJF Sitara Musa and Rasheda Amin, however said enactment of any law was not adequate to deal with crimes, unless it is enforced by practical measures.

The leaders of the woman journalists forum suggested that the government should publicise the good aspects of the law through radio and television and hold meetings and seminars to create mass awareness about the law.

They also suggested distribution of hand bills, posters and screening of short films against repression on women and children special care should be taken so that no innocent person falls victim under the new provision, they added.

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## Young novelist awarded

Young novelist Shahidul Islam Mintu received Kristi Shahitya Sangsad Award for the year 1995, reports BSS.

A five-member jury comprising famous novelists of the country, selected Shahidul Islam Mintu after taking into account at least 100 novels by the young writers. Mintu has to his credit 24 novels, 17 of which were published during *ekushey bot mela* this year. Mintu is the chief reporter of a news agency.

The prize giving ceremony will be held on July 24.

## One commits suicide

By DMCH Correspondent  
A female garments worker reportedly committed suicide in her house at Hatirpul in the city Sunday night.

Fatema Begum, 20, wife of one Nasir Ahmed, allegedly hanged herself with a ceiling fan. She worked in a garments factory in the Kawranbazar area. Her family life was disturbed for last few days, sources said.

Dhanmondi police recovered the body Sunday night. An unnatural death case has been filed with the Dhanmondi thana.

## BCL to open relief centre at DU

The pro-Awami League Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) will open a relief centre at the Madhu's Canteen of the Dhaka university, reports UNB.

This was announced at a rally held at the DU TSC premises yesterday.

Addressing the rally the BCL leaders called upon the student community to come forward to help the flood-affected people.

They also blamed the government for not providing adequate relief materials to affected people and plundering the relief materials.

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Tender documents including detailed specifications, requirements and terms & conditions can be purchased from the Cash Section of BIWTC, Accounts Deptt at 5, Dilkusha Commercial Area, Dhaka-1000 during office hours on cash payment of tender price (Non-refundable) showing under respective Tender Number. Earnest money @ 1% of the bid value must be furnished in the Form of Bank Draft/Pay Order/Bank Guarantee in favour of BIWTC. Tender will be received up to 11-00 hours and opened at 11-30 hours on the same day in presence of the bidders, if any. No tender documents will be sold by post and on the opening day. BIWTC reserves the right to accept or reject any tender without assigning any reason whatsoever.

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4. Bangladesh Ordnance Factories authority reserves the right to reject any or all of the tenders without showing any reason thereof.

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## New admission rule GCO sit-in at DU tomorrow

The Ganotantrik Chhatra Oikya (GCO) at a rally urged the Dhaka University authorities to abolish the discriminatory admission rule which it alleges, favours the children of the university teachers, officers and employees, reports UNB.

Addressing the rally in front of the 'Aparajey Bangla', the GCO leaders said the 'discriminatory system' should be rescinded because of the mounting pressure of admission on Dhaka University.

The GCO organised the rally to register its protest

## DCC opens 35 flood relief centres

By Staff Correspondent

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has opened 35 relief centres in the capital where some 15,000 flood-affected people have taken refuge until yesterday.

The centres has been set up at 10 zones of the DCC where about 30,000 people had been hit by the flood, a DCC press release said adding 23 medical teams were working at the relief camps.

The DCC authorities yesterday requested the army to supply boats for the rescue of the marooned people as nearly 30 kilometers of roads in the city had already gone under flood waters. They would also ask the Red Crescent Society for relief materials today.

The DCC Mayor Mohammad Hanif yesterday visited the flood-affected areas of Maghbazar, Mahishpara, Jahanbox Lane, Ambagan and Sherebangla Nagar and distributed food stuff among the affected people.

against 'favouritism' of the university authorities in regarding admission.

'This is unfair to let the system work when a student has to contest 20 candidates for admission to the university,' said JSD (Inu) backed Chhatra League leader Obaidur Rahman Chunnua.

Dhaka University authorities have recently relaxed an admission rule so that the children of the university teachers, officers and employees can take admission to the university by only sitting for admission test. The admission test is a mere formality for the wards.

Some 200 wards have taken admission to the university under the rule last year while 120 more are expected to be admitted this year, said an official who preferred not to be named.

The GCO, a conglomerate of eight left-leaning student organisations, will stage a two-hour sit-in in front of VC office tomorrow to force the authorities to abolish the new system.

## Injured youngman dies in DMCH

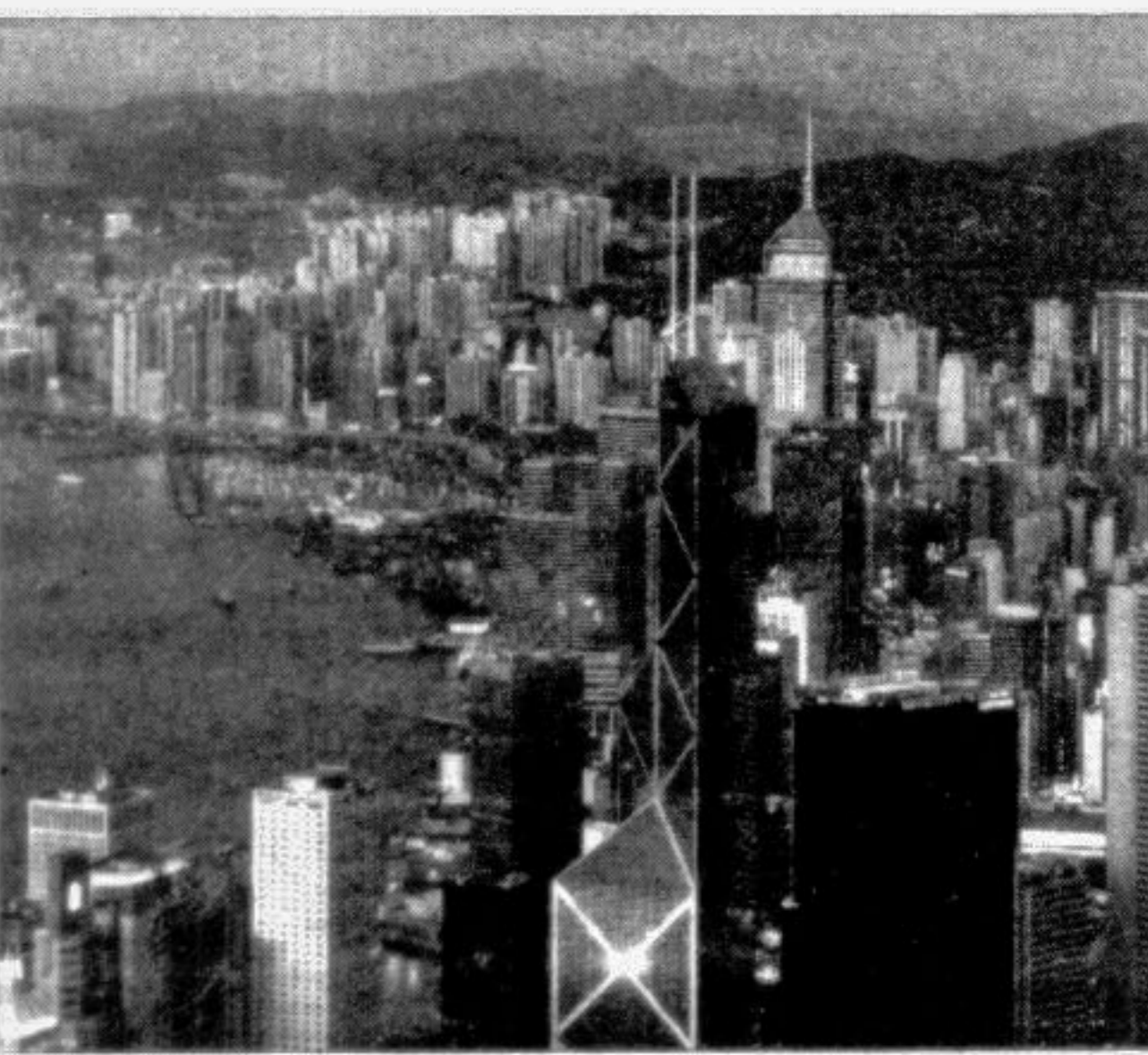
By DMCH Correspondent

A young man seriously assaulted by an unidentified group in Comilla Sunday succumbed at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday.

Abul Khair, 22, son of the one Harmof Sardar of Dharmapur, Kotwali, Comilla, received fatal injuries when a group of youths assaulted him mercilessly near his house Sunday morning, sources said.

Khair was immediately admitted to the Comilla Sadar Hospital and was later shifted to the DMCH in the evening, where he died yesterday morning.

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