

Dhaka Day by Day

For Women it's First Step Here

by Gemini Wahhaj

Can Dhaka women move about on their own at night? The answer varies according to personal experience. Cousins (female) of mine have led perfectly blissful lives without ever seeing the night sky. They would say, "No, of course you can't venture out at night! What a preposterous thought. Why would you want to?"

Why indeed? Sometimes a woman has a crazy notion. She wants to take a solitary walk under a starry sky, with the cool breeze on her face. Or meet a friend for dinner. Hop on a rickshaw one evening to buy a book, go shopping in the cool of the night. The question is: are these all foolish, dare-devil acts, or is it really possible for a woman in Dhaka to move around on her own?

A (female) friend and I met to cover three art exhibitions one day, after work (6 pm). As soon as we were through the first one, it was dark.

"Well," I said, "I guess we can do the rest another day."

necessity). I started to visit people without the stress of having to get back home any minute — nine o'clock? No problem. The night is young yet. And my brother stopping having to collect me from my evening classes.

Then I started to notice a wonderful thing. There were other women travelling alone on other scooters and rickshaws — some even had the hood down!

One evening, my friend and I met another group at Shawarma House. "You're going home alone?" One of the guys said. "Good for you!" "Yes, the more women that come out, the better," said another. "You can start a Take Back the Night Campaign."

My friend and I walked out, and there were other women on Elephant Road. We were excited. Take Back the Night — that's exactly what these women were doing — silently, slowly, but it was happening all around us. "What an American concept!" said my friend, who is an American. "But so fitting here."

FIRST YOU TOOK THE POLITICAL LEAD... THEN CONTROVERTIAL WRITINGS... THEN THE UN JOBS... YOU WOMEN SHOULD AT LEAST LEAVE THE DARK ALLEYS TO US MEN!



"Yeah," she said. "This was fun, though. We had a good fifteen minutes."

This was when we both realised how preposterous our lives were becoming. How do you define yourself as a person when you're prevented from doing the things that are so essential for you, by something as intangible as the DARK?

So we started to break our own curfews. We met for dinner, and returned to our separate homes (no sleeping over out of

We still don't know if it's safe for a woman to go out at night. But, within reasonable limits, we're ready to take the risk. What we do know is this — it's a wonderful and liberating feeling. It's great to be on a rickshaw at night with the hood down, the chattering lights of Dhaka all around you, and some distant tune floating past. Adjust your pulse, wave to the other women on Mirpur Road, and look up at the sky. Ah, what a beautiful night it is!



Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury distributing relief materials among the flood-hit people of Rupganj Thana in Narayanganj district yesterday. — PID photo

Flood relief programmes

Caritas, a non-government organisation, has taken up a relief distribution programme for the flood affected people, reports UNB.

It will distribute Tk 40,00,000 among the 75,00,000 flood affected people of 15,000 families of the worst affected 40 thanas of 15 districts.

Under the programme, the organisation will also distribute emergency relief materials, including rice, pulses, potato, salt, medicines and other essentials, to the affected families.

Meanwhile Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee began its relief works in the flood-hit areas in the city Thursday.

On the first day, the committee members distributed water purifying tablets, ORS, bread and biscuits among the flood affected people.

The people who are interested in helping the flood victims have been requested to contact the committee office at Mahakhali in the city.

Another report says OXFAM Bangladesh, an NGO,

Shawkat visits flood-hit Lalbagh areas

Labour and Manpower Minister Mir Shawkat Ali yesterday visited different flood-hit areas of Khalifaghat, Rasulpur and Kamrangirchar under Lalbagh thana and distributed relief goods among the affected people, reports BSS.

Mir Shawkat Ali, talked to the people and enquired about their condition.

Addressing a gathering of the affected people he urged them to face the calamity with courage. He assured them that the government of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has always stood and will stand by the distressed people in their crisis. He also assured them of extending further help and support.

Altat Hossain meets Khaleda

Former chief of the air staff Air Vice Marshal (Retd) Altat Hossain Chowdhury, who recently joined BNP, met with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at 30 Hare Road last night, reports UNB.

BNP Chairperson Begum Zia welcomed Chowdhury to her party and said that BNP would be benefited through his joining.

She hoped that the former air chief would devote himself to strengthen the party.

Chowdhury said he has joined BNP because of its politics of production and development.

Mahmudul Haq Rubel who has been elected as an independent MP in by-election after death of his father Sirajul Haq from Sherpur-3 parliamentary constituency formally joined BNP expressing his solidarity with the ideals of BNP and its leadership Begum Khaleda Zia.

GCO urges students to protest DU rule

Concomitrik Chhatra Otkya (GCO) Thursday urged the students of Dhaka University to raise their voice against the "discriminatory" admission rule regarding the admission of the wards of teachers, officers and employees of the university, reports UNB.

The leaders of the GCO was exchanging views with the members of Dhaka University Journalists' Association (DUJA) yesterday evening at the association office.

"General students should raise their voice against the 'illegal' admission rule which deprives the rights of general admission seekers," said GCO leader Kazi Sazzad Zahir Chaudan.

They also called upon the students to make the GCO-sponsored strike on the campus on July 25, a success.

GCO, a conglomerate of eight left-leaning student organisations, will hold a rally at the "Aparajeyo Bangla" at 11 am on July 24 to register their protest.

Mannan meets Sheraton staff

By Staff Correspondent

State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Abdul Mannan stressed on improving the management of the Sheraton Hotel to make it a profit making organisation.

While exchanging views with some 400 staff and executives of the Dhaka Sheraton in the city Thursday as the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Hotel, the minister urged all concerned to work unitedly.

The Minister expressed his surprise at the resignation and termination of some 12 staff of the hotel by its management in the last two months resulting in the dissatisfaction among the hotel employees and said that he would look into the matter and try to resolve the issue.

He termed the hotel as a pride of the nation and pointed out that hotel business was profitable and there was no scope to incur loss in Sheraton Hotel.

General Manager of the hotel Roth Larsen was present on the occasion among others.

New Lions gov dist 315 B1

By Staff Correspondent

The newly elected Lions governor Lt Sh Kabir Hossain took over charges of Lions Clubs International District 315 B1 from Lt MA Salam Talukder Wednesday.

He took over the chair in a simple ceremony at the BLF Bhaban at Agargaon in the city.

Lt Hossain, governor for the year 1995-96, in the occasion, requested the club members to put in their best efforts to serve the distressed humanity as is being done traditionally with particular emphasis to mitigate the sufferings of the people in the flood affected areas.

Pointing out, the recent incident of visa of 'fakr Lions', he emphasised that the Lions community in Bangladesh would help the administration to find the real culprits and to arrest them.

Some district governors, past dist governors of other districts and Lions greeted the newly elected governor in the function.



The Theatre Art, a drama group, brought out a colourful rally on the occasion of its founding anniversary in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Nirmul chief returns

By Staff Correspondent

The convenor of Ekatattur Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee Begum Mushtari Shafi returned home yesterday ending her over two months' tour of Europe and America.

Nirmul leaders received Begum Shafi at Zia International Airport after she returned in the afternoon.

In her brief speech in the airport, she demanded ban on the politics of Jamaat-Shibir and barring the war criminals from participating in the upcoming general elections.

Death anniversary observed

By Staff Correspondent

The Bangladesh Crime Reporters Association observed the first death anniversary of journalist Haris Mahmud yesterday afternoon.

To observe the day the association held a discussion and milad mahfil at the office of the Bangladesh Photo Journalist Association.

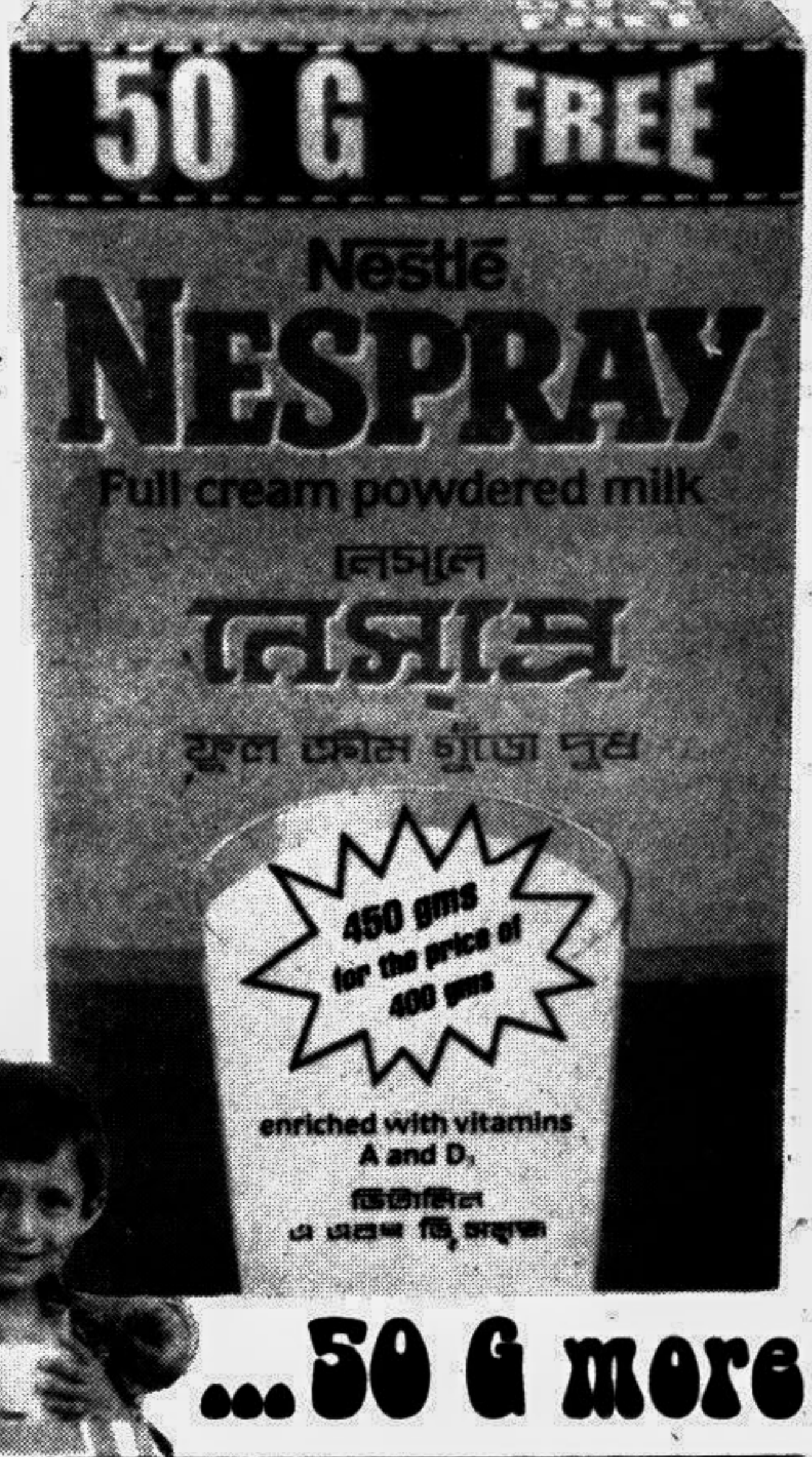
The Association president Zakaria Milon presided over the meeting while Salahuddin Ahmed, Fakrul Alam Kanchan, Shahidul Islam, Abul Mansur, Abul Hossain and Montajuddin, elder brother of late Haris.



An agreement was signed between CARE-Bangladesh and Rapport Bangladesh Limited in the city recently for a compensation study to be carried out by Rapport for 1700 employees of CARE-Bangladesh. Terrence Ratigan, director, finance and administration, CARE-Bangladesh and M Mosharrar Hossain, managing director, Rapport signed the agreement.

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