

# Dhaka Day by Day Crossed Wires

by Farah Ghuznavi

With the state of Dhaka's telephone system deteriorating on a daily basis (or so it seems to those of us who are hard-pressed to successfully contact someone on that gadget), it is hardly surprising that almost everyone has some kind of strange experience to relate in this regard.

A friend of mine, Shoma, was convinced that she had the most bizarre story to tell when she described how she had dialed the number of one friend, and ended up with a wrong number. That in itself was not particularly surprising, but it then turned out that the number she had reached via a cross connection belonged to another friend of hers, whom she had not spoken to in a long time. Though Shoma's friend recognised her voice immediately, it took confused Shoma some time to realise who she was speaking to!

When she asked her if she had reached the correct number, her puzzled friend said, "Of course you've reached the right number, Shoma. What do you mean?" Shoma mentioned the name of the friend that she had originally called, and this really irritated her other friend, who thought that she was trying to play some kind of childish prank on her. Meanwhile Shoma herself was quite disturbed that this apparent wrong number actually knew her name. She again said, "Look, I'm sorry but I don't know you." As far as her friend was concerned, this was adding insult to injury, and she raged, "First of all, you haven't the decency to call me in six months, Shoma, and then you try and pretend you don't know me! What do you think you are playing at?"

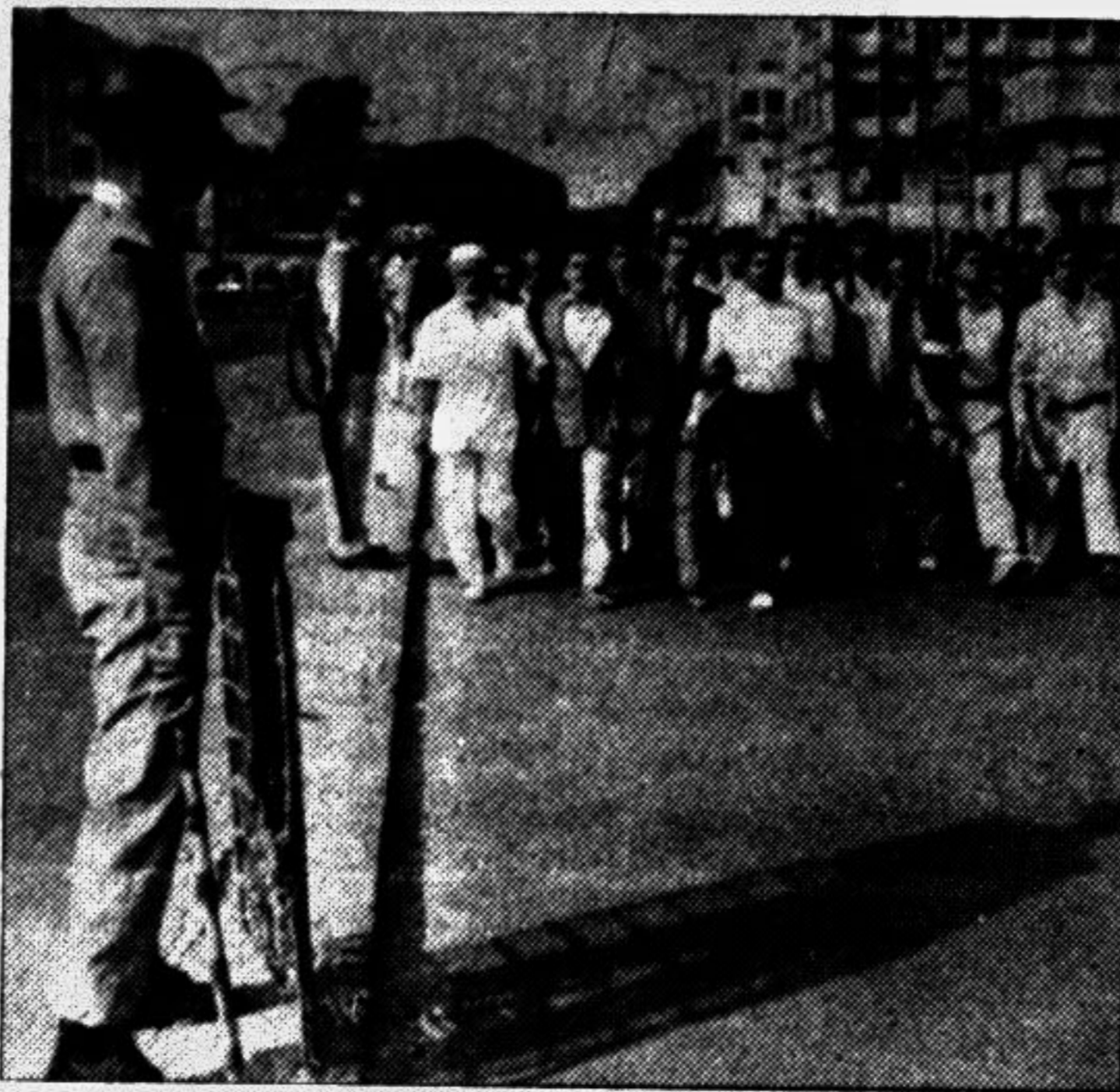
Shoma did eventually manage to explain her way out of the situation, but it took a great deal of explaining to pacify her friend! When she told me this story, she was convinced that it was the most bizarre coincidence that the cross connection had ended up connecting her to another person she knew. However, she was duly disappointed when I informed her that I had recently had a cross connection with a friend living in the US, who had originally called her parents in Dhaka, and was rather surprised to end up talking to me as well!

An even more extreme experience occurred with another friend, Sharmin, whose

brother was amazed to receive a call from a man who informed him that it was her husband calling. Since Sharmin is not married, this was something of a surprise to her brother! But what really confused him was that not only did this man ask for Sharmin, he mentioned her by her (correct) nickname as well as her "proper" name. When Sharmin answered the phone, the man stated that it was Ejaz calling, and then became quite enraged when Sharmin told him that she didn't know him. "How can you not know me, Sharmin? I'm your husband, remember?" His outrage was genuine, and as it turned out, he was indeed the husband of some other Sharmin, with the same nickname as this one, but it took several minutes of conversation for everyone to figure this out.

Not that all crossed lines lead to this kind of trauma, since a colleague of mine recently had quite an amusing time with a cross connection she encountered. It was an example of Dhaka's time-honoured tradition of random romance on the telephone, with a man trying to convince a woman that he was very interested in "making friendship" with her. After many coy denials from the woman, he was finally beginning to make some headway with her (she had reached the level of serious intimacy where she was discussing some of her hobbies with him — an indication of lifelong commitment, as any Bangalee telephone genius knows), when my colleague's evil genius prompted her to intervene. She giggled on the line.

The woman heard the sound and accused the man of having a friend listening in on the line to make a fool of her. He earnestly and vehemently denied it, and after her ruffled feathers had been soothed, things proceeded apace. However, some time later, my colleague laughed again. This time, nothing the harassed lover could convince the woman concerned that this was not some kind of cruel practical joke, and after giving him a thorough opinion on his morals and character (or lack thereof), she slammed the phone down decisively. My colleague was unrepentant about the role she had played, merely stating that the path of true love had never been known to run smoothly.



Pro-hartal activists brought out a procession on city's Topkhana Road during hartal hours yesterday. — Star photo

## What's on today . . .

**Science lecture:** Dr Ferdousi Begum will deliver a lecture on the 'Role of Genetic Engineering in Agricultural Development'. Venue: National Museum of Science and Technology (NMST) auditorium. Time: 4 pm.

**Rotary Club of Dhaka North West:** The regular weekly meeting of the club will be held. A fellowship dinner will follow. Venue: Dhaka Club Ltd. Time: 7 pm.

**Rapport training course:** A three-week training course on accounting sponsored by Rapport Bangladesh Limited will begin. Venue: Rapport seminar hall. Time: 5:30 pm.

**Rotaract Club of Notre Dame College:** The regular meeting of the club will be held. Venue: Room-201, Notre Dame College. Time: 5 pm.

**Publication ceremony:** The Weekly Kalambazi will be launched. Venue: National Museum children's auditorium. Time: 5 pm. Chief guest: Justice Sultan Hossain Khan, chairman Bangladesh Press Council.

**Film show:** The film 'Muktir Gaan' will be screened. Venue: Central Public Library auditorium. Time: 3 pm, 5 pm and 7 pm.

**Lions Club of Dhaka Angels City:** The regular meeting of the club will be held. Venue: Purbani hotel. Time: 5 pm.

### Chandpur mishap Biswas, Khaleda condole loss

President Abdur Rahman Biswas yesterday expressed his shock at the tragic death of several passengers and injury of many others in a train accident near Chandpur on Monday, report agencies.

In a message the President expressed his sympathy to the members of the bereaved families.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia also expressed profound shock at the loss of several valuable lives in the Chandpur accident which occurred in between Hajiganj and Meher railway stations.

In a separate message she expressed sympathy to the bereaved family members and prayed for eternal peace of the departed souls.

### Hasina condoles Mitterrand's death

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League (AL) president Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed her profound shock at the death of former French President Francois Mitterrand.

She recalled Mitterrand's assistance to Bangladesh during floods and other natural calamities.

### FEMA's demand

The Barisal Regional Committee of FEMA held a review meeting yesterday of its election monitoring activities at the local Bikalpa Unnayan Karmashuchi's (BUK) office, says a press release.

The FEMA representatives coming from all the districts under the division appealed to the Election Commission to publicly declare that the organisation's volunteers will be given accreditation cards to monitor all aspects of the election.

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### Physiotherapy confce Jan 14

The first national conference of the Bangladesh Physiotherapy Society will be held on January 14 at 9 am at the RIHD auditorium, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, reports BSS.

Former deputy leader of parliament Professor A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury will inaugurate the conference.

### Talk on CHT Saturday

Tribal people of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) will submit memoranda to Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina on Saturday demanding immediate steps to resolve the long-standing problems in the region, reports UNB.

They will also hold a discussion at the Jatiya Press Club at 10:30 am on ways to

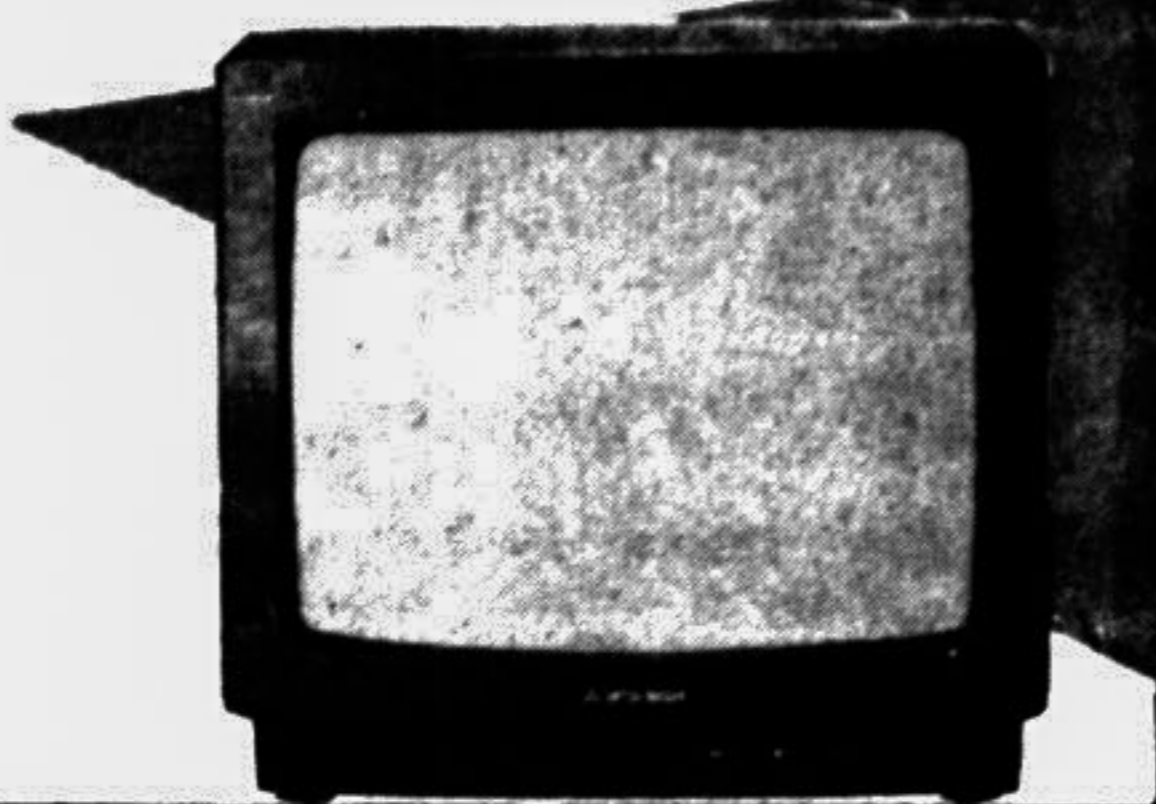
restoring peace in the region. Pahari Chhatra Parishad and Pahari Gano Parishad Santras Pratirodh Committee (PPSPC) will organise the discussion.

Former Minister barrister Nazmul Huda will be present as the chief guest at the discussion to be presided over by PPSPC president Alok Chakura.



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১৪" টেলিভিশন	১৫,৮০০/০০	১৪,৫০০/০০
২০" টেলিভিশন	৪,৫০০/০০	২৩,০০০/০০
২১" টেলিভিশন	২৪,৫০০/০০	২৬,০০০/০০
২৫" টেলিভিশন	৫০,০০০/০০	৪৮,০০০/০০
২৯" টেলিভিশন	৭৫,০০০/০০	৬৮,০০০/০০
৩৩" টেলিভিশন	১,৩০,০০০/০০	১,২০,০০০/০০
রেফ্রিজারেটর ৭.৫ সিএফটি	২০,৫০০/০০	১৯,৫০০/০০
রেফ্রিজারেটর ৮.৫ সিএফটি	২৩,০০০/০০	২২,০০০/০০
রেফ্রিজারেটর ১০ সিএফটি	২৬,০০০/০০	২৫,০০০/০০
ওয়াশিং মেশিন ২.৫ কেজি	১২,৫০০/০০	১২,২০০/০০
ওয়াশিং মেশিন ৩.৩ কেজি	১৫,৫০০/০০	১৪,২০০/০০
ডি সি পি	১,৫০০/০০	১০,৫০০/০০
ক্রম এসি	৪০,৫০০/০০	৩৯,৫০০/০০

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