

## Dhaka Day by Day

### Hartal Hazards

by Farah Ghuznavi

It is probably safe to say that most Dhaka-dwellers (no matter how voracious their appetite for trouble) have had their fill of strikes, hartals and other political disruptions over the last year or so. Unfortunately for all of us, the political crisis that has the country by its throat has left us with no end in sight, so it seems that these hartals etc are going to become a permanent feature of our lives for all time to come (regardless of how the elections go!).

Under the circumstances, it would seem worthwhile to take a closer look at the long-term effects of hartals. Much has been said about the economic (factories closing, work-hours lost) and social (increasing lawlessness and insecurity) costs of these hartals, and those of us who have a shred of rationality left (unlike the benighted politicians on either side) are easily able to understand the implications of these. However, what many of us have yet to realise is that there are even more sinister implications than those that have already been mentioned.

For example, what is one to do with the excess (and at some times, excessive) time that hartals provide us with at home? A few cockeyed optimists have suggested that this may help arrest the 'decline in family life' brought about as a result of the pressures of modern life, which leave family members with little time to spend with each other. However, recent anecdotal evidence (soon to be supplemented with empirical data) has indicated that this is far from the truth! In reality, the excessive periods of time that people are being forced to spend together (spouses with each other, parents with their children) are creating a great deal of stress in family life. People who have become accustomed to 'quality time' are now having to spend 'quantity time' together, and whereas the extended family once provided a buffer against excessive togetherness exacerbating tensions between various family members, the nuclear family of today is clearly heading for a meltdown. In other words, the ties that bind are beginning to gag.

Another worry is the question that with idle minds being the devil's workshop, these disruptions are also leading to the development of criminal tendencies within the family. People are going mad over the

question of what to do once you have finished reading the Encyclopaedia Britannica for the fifth time (as we have had ample opportunity to do over the last year). An interesting side-effect has been the massive increase in phone bills for many Dhaka families, especially those with teenagers. This has led some people to speculate that continuous hartals (i.e. forty-eight hour strikes, seventy-two hour strikes) may push marginal families living in Dhanmondi, Gulshan and Baridhara into financial ruin.

Another apparently harmless pastime, that of playing cards, has unfortunately developed (in some cases) into an addiction to gambling. This has had a knock-on effect which is even more socially harmful, as those individuals who at times of famine etc would have become black-marketeers are now being able to direct their anti-social and speculative tendencies into fleecing innocents of their money through poker and other such games. To compound things, all this is taking place within that much-maligned institution, the family! As a result, some worried sociologists have predicted that in the near future, families may require extensive counselling to deal with the togetherness which is so threatening to family harmony.

Of course, some people may feel that I am taking an unnecessarily negative view of the side-effects of political strife. It is true that some selected groups have benefited from this turmoil. For example, one group of business persons has made a good business by hiring out ambulances to provide a 'taxi service' to those wealthy individuals who feel that they simply must get around (it would be unnecessarily negative to speculate on the effect of this on patients or the cynicism this may engender in ordinary citizens). Finally, the unalloyed good news is that the general health of many individuals has improved due to the increase in walking (and hence, much-needed exercise) that has resulted during hartal periods (whether pacing within the house, or venturing outside). No doubt that will result in greater life expectancy for some fortunate persons. The only problem that leaves us with is, if our current situation is a foretaste of things to come, does living longer not simply mean suffering longer?



### DU Gha unit exam March 15

The admission test of the combined Gha unit of Dhaka University will be held on March 15, reports UNB. In the admission directory, the date for the Gha unit examination has been mistakenly printed as April 15 instead of March 15.

### World Wetlands Day observed

Department of Zoology and Centre for Nature Studies of Jahangirnagar University observed the World Wetlands Day recently, reports BSS.

A bird watching session was organised for teachers and students on the occasion at the wetlands of JU. There are 140 species of birds including 22 migratory species on the Jahangirnagar University (JU) campus. A field level discussion on birds was also organised in this connection.

### BPATC workshop concludes

A ten-day training workshop on Gender Analysis in Development Policy and Planning: A Workshop for Training of Trainers concluded recently at the Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) at Savar, reports BSS.

The workshop was jointly organised by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) of Sussex, UK and BPATC. A Z M Shamsul Alam, rector of BPATC, Nilufar Begum, member directing staff of BPATC, Dr Naila Kabir, course director and Diris Capistrano, programme officer of the Ford Foundation spoke at the closing session of the workshop.

### Comrade Prasad Roy dead

Comrade Prasad Roy, a member of the central committee of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) and president of Pabna district committee died at his Pabna residence yesterday. He was 70, says a press release.

Born in 1925, Prasad Roy joined the Communist Party in 1948. He was detained several times. In 1950 he was seriously injured in the 'Khayra' Ward shootout inside Rajshahi Jail. He was one of the organisers of the War of Liberation.

Meanwhile, president and general secretary of the Communist Party of Bangladesh in a press release condoled his death.

A condolence meeting will be held at 4 pm at the central office of the party on February 11.

### Photo exhibition

A week-long photo exhibition was opened at the Teacher-Student Centre of Dhaka University yesterday, reports BSS.

Photographs on the historic Language Movement are on display at the exhibition organised by University Photography Academy (UPA).

The exhibition is open to all from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm everyday.



Dristi, a Dhaka University-based organisation brought out a procession in the city yesterday in observance of its ninth founding anniversary. — Star photo

### What's on today....

**Film show:** The film 'Jiban Theke Neya' will be screened. Venue: Russian Culture Centre. Time: 2:30 pm.

**Rally on traffic jam:** The Unnayan, a DU based organisation will organise the rally. Venue: Aparajeyo Bangla. Time: 10 am.

**Discussion on Ramadan:** The Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd will organise the programme. Venue: Sonargaon Hotel. Time: 4 pm.

**Children's art contest:** The Rotaract Club of Notre Dame College and Inner Wheel Club of Motijheel will organise the contest. Venue: Sunny Dale School. Time: 11:00 am.

### ..... and tomorrow

**Press conference:** The Social Investment Bank Ltd. will meet the press. Venue: Melanee Hall, Sheraton Hotel. Time: 4:30 pm.

**Lions Club of Dhaka Pallabi:** The club will organise a seminar on Educated Nation Prosperous Future. Venue: Bangladesh Lions Foundation auditorium, Agargaon. Time: 3:00 pm.

### The British Council

#### Vacancies

The Dhaka Library is going through a period of transformation. We are planning to introduce new services for children and schools and are constantly improving our facilities. Do you want to be part of this?

A number of posts in the library will be coming vacant in March 1996. We are looking for people who are creative, dynamic and who enjoy working with people. Successful applications also need to have good communication skills, an excellent command of English and computer skills, particularly in WordPerfect, Lotus 1-2-3 and Access.

The salary is in the range of Tk 9,083.00 to Tk 13,910.00 per month. Travel and medical benefits are provided and a language allowance is payable.

Short listed candidates will be called for interview and will be expected to take a test of English and computing skills.

Applications with one photograph should be forwarded to:

**The Director**  
The British Council  
5 Fuller Road  
Dhaka

By 19 February 1996

### Condolence meet

CHITTAGONG, Feb 7: Speakers at a meeting paid tributes to late Alamgir Kabir, former Inspector General of Police and a noted social worker, reports BSS.

The meeting held under the auspices of Chittagong chapter of Samajik Punaruddhar Samity was presided over by its president Prof Salma Chowdhury while deputy inspector general (DIG) of Police, Chittagong range Abdus Salam was present as chief guest.

Deputy commissioners of Chittagong, Metropolitan Police Malik Khashmi and Abdur Rab, Prof Abul Kashem, Dr Moeenul Islam Mahmud, Serajul Alam, Nazir Ahmad and Syed Murtaza Ali also addressed the meeting.

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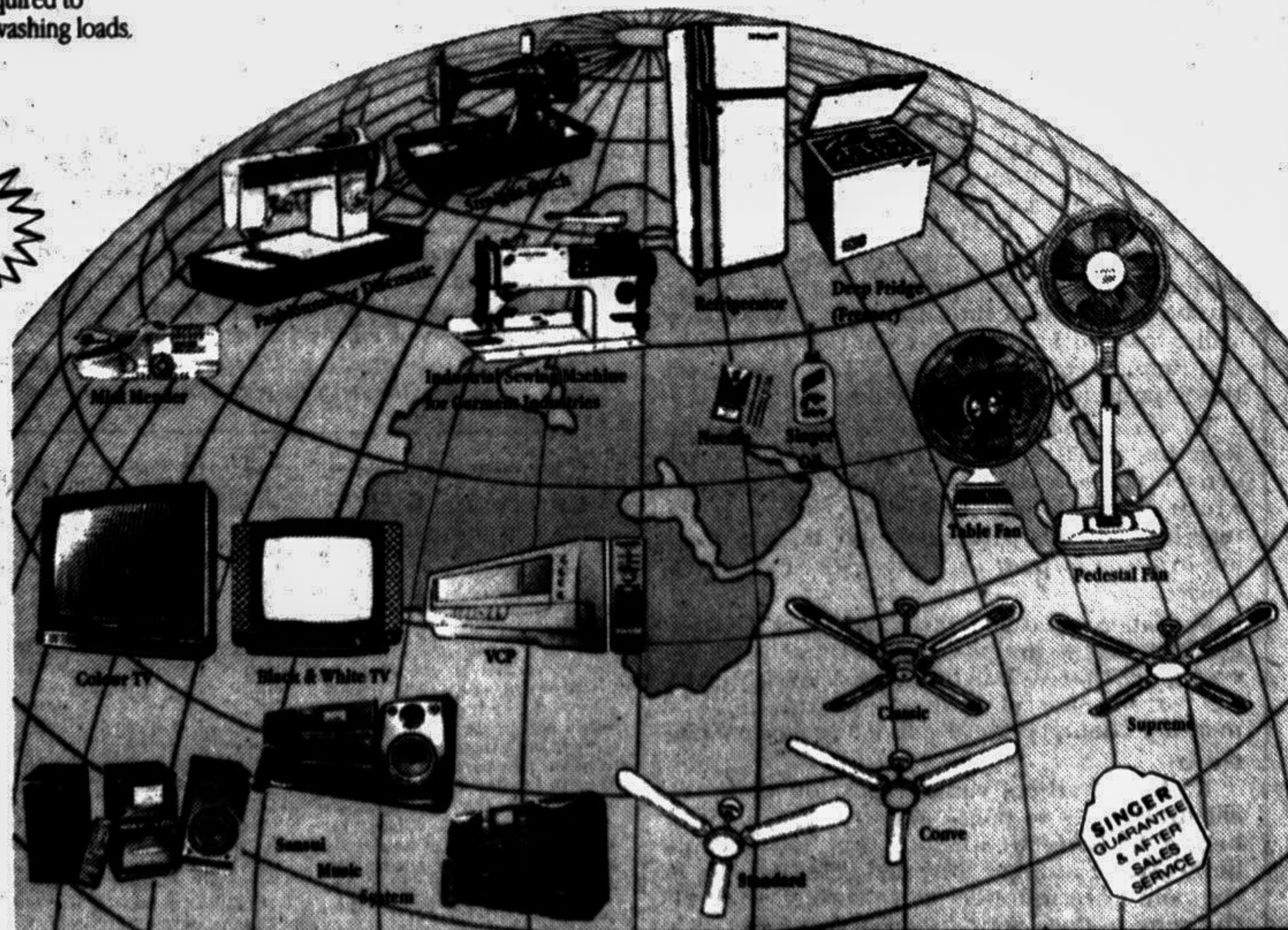


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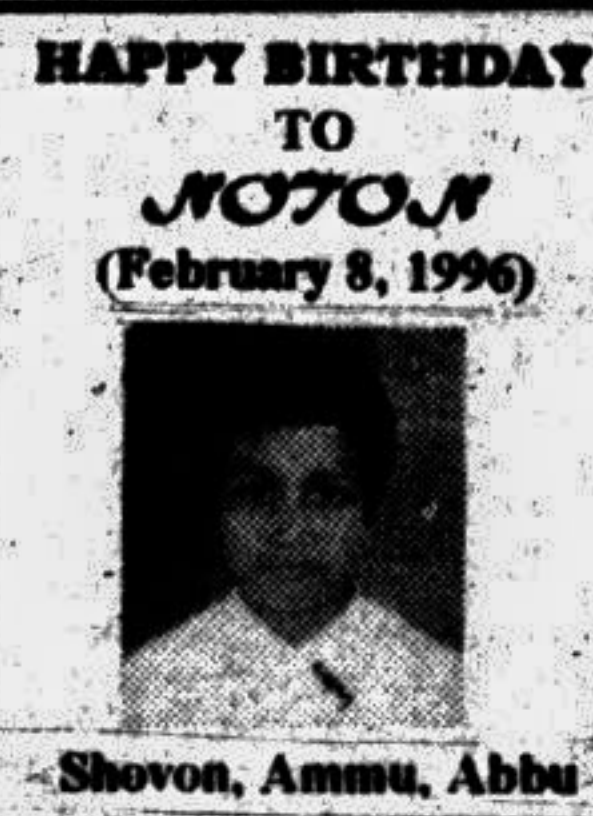
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### Weather

#### Dry weather to prevail

Weather will remain dry throughout the country during the next 12 hours till 6:00 pm today, reports UNB. According to Met Office, no appreciable change in night temperature is expected over the country.

Night temperature is likely to rise in the next two days. Giving an extended outlook for another five days, weathermen forecast a little change.

The country's lowest temperature was recorded 9.8 degrees Celsius at Srimangal and the highest 30.3 degrees at Teknaf.

The sun sets today at 5:49 pm and rises tomorrow at 6:36 am.

The minimum and maximum temperatures and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius	Humidity in percentage
	Min	Max
Dhaka	12.8	29.7
Chittagong	14.4	29.0
Rajshahi	11.4	27.4
Khulna	13.6	29.2
Barisal	12.8	29.0
Sylhet	12.8	29.0
Cox's Bazar	15.4	29.7
	Morning	Evening
	67	54
	67	61
	67	74
	68	59
	67	67
	68	45
	73	63