

Dhaka Day by Day

Eccentricity or Insanity?

by Farah Ghuznavi

A friend of mine some time ago told me (very worriedly) that she feared for her future mental health in terms of the genetic legacy that her family had bequeathed her, given that she had so many relatives who appeared to be quite mad. I think that most families have skeletons in their closets with regard to some of their members, and the larger the family, the greater the number of skeletons is likely to be! If the aforementioned person or persons are only mildly strange, they are written off as merely "eccentric." However, if their lunacy is of the more serious and unmistakable type, then families will go as far as to hide (and in some cases, deny) their very existence (which is quite hard to do in Dhaka's hot-house atmosphere, where people make it their business to get as much dirt as possible on everyone else!).

DON'T YOU SEE... I'M NOW READY FOR BOTH HEAT WAVES & COLD WAVES!



Of course, given how strange some people are, one can hardly blame their families of wanting to block out their existence. I visited one set of my cousins some time ago, to find them looking extremely tense. Since they are normally very easygoing people, I was curious as to what was causing the problem. I was told that another of their uncles had been visiting them, and had just left (fortunately — in view of the story I than heard — I can state that I myself am not related in any way to this man!). It turned out that this gentleman, whenever he visited my cousins, was in the habit of going into the toilet and using their toothbrushes!

They had found this out after someone had accidentally walked in to find him brushing his teeth with one of the toothbrushes from the rack on a previous visit. The worst thing was, because the cousin concerned was so horrified, he had subsequently been unable to identify which toothbrush the uncle had been using! And given that these cousins live in an extended family set-up, that meant throwing away sixteen toothbrushes at one go!

Since then, they have been understandably tense whenever this uncle comes to visit and "uses" their bathroom, since it invariably means that a wholesale purchase of toothbrushes must follow. After hearing this story, I expressed my sympathy

for his wife, who had to live with this behaviour on a regular basis, and was told to save my sympathy. My cousins then wailed that this lady, whenever she visits them, insists on lying down on the dining room table and holding court from that position! Since my poor cousins are too polite to tell these people what they really think of them, they appear to be stuck with this situation.

A colleague of mine, Disha told me a story that makes the earlier one pale in comparison. She has an uncle who fancies himself to be a "pir" of some sort, and not only refuses to use crockery which has been used by anyone else, but also insists on telling everyone he meets that his followers are so devoted that they wash his feet and then drink the water! Though Disha is fairly sure that this is another of his tall tales, it does not make pleasant listening, and she has been quite firm in telling him that if he plans to visit them, he must bring his own crockery with him (the underlying message being that he should preferably not come to visit them at all).

Needless to say, she is not popular with the "pir". Another example of eccentricity is provided by a cousin of mine, Niaz. He has become increasingly fundamentalist in some of his attitudes over the last few years, and has arbitrarily declared a number of western food items to be "haram". Curiously, these include ginger biscuits and wine gums (which, as we all know, do not contain any wine). His long-suffering family have had to put up with this for some time, including the memorable incident that occurred during a visit to London, when he threw away a pot which had been used to warm up some McDonald's burgers (on the grounds that those beefburgers were "haram", and anything that had come into contact with them was contaminated as well). Certainly no-one would try and claim that McDonald's burgers in London are halal, but was it really necessary to go to such extremes? Things reached a climax, and a massive family rebellion finally took place, when he outlawed Coke. Obviously, everyone else in the family definitely felt that it was "the real thing"!

British envoy visits KU

British High Commissioner Peter Fowler visited Khulna University March 2. He exchanged views with the heads of the disciplines of the university at a meeting, says a press release.

3 VOA Fan Clubs distribute clothes

Three Voice of America (VOA) Fan Clubs distributed clothes among the slum dwellers at Khilgaon raigate in the city Friday, reports UNB.

The clubs are: Metropolitan VOA Fan Club, Superior VOA Fan Club and Star VOA Fan Club, said a press release.

Local Ward Commissioner Kamal Chowdhury, social worker Nurul Huda and S Rahman Ranju addressed the function. Metropolitan VOA Fan Club President M Awlad Hossain Bhuiyan presided.



The Bangladesh Awami League brought out a procession in the city on the first day, yesterday, of the opposition's non-cooperation programme across the country. — Star photo

Dhaka to stand by Palestinians' cause

Sofullah, ambassador-designate presented his credentials to the State of Palestine headquarters in Tunis recently, an official handout said here yesterday, reports BSS.

Faruk Kadoumi, foreign minister of the State of Palestine received the letter of credence on behalf of President Yasser Arafat. While presenting the credentials, the ambassador said, Bangladesh has always been maintaining a firm and principled position on the Middle-East question. He reiterated that Bangladesh is committed to a lasting, durable and comprehensive solution based on the UN Security Council resolutions, the Arabs and Palestinian sovereignty on all occupied lands and for restoration of legitimate and inalienable national rights of the Palestinians.

Bangladesh ambassador reassured continued support and every possible assistance and cooperation of his government in fulfilling the legitimate aspirations and just goals of the Palestinian people.

8 arrested for felling trees

Eight persons were arrested and sent to court in Chittagong division recently for illegally felling of teak and other trees within reserve forests, reports BSS.

A Deputy Ranger, of Karerhat arrested two accused persons for illicit felling of teak trees within South Kolla block reserve forest on March 2 and sent them to court the following day, a press release of the forest range said.

Three other persons were arrested on February 28 for illegally felling teak trees within reserve forests.

Three more illegal tree fellers were arrested and sent to court on February 14 last.

The press release said that four separate cases had been started against the accused persons in the forest court, Chittagong.

The court rejected the petitions for bail and sent them all to jail hajat.



Police picked up this man from city's Paltan area yesterday. — Star photo

PM's initiative hailed

Bangladesh Jatiya League yesterday expressed satisfaction at the initiative taken by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia to solve the political crisis, reports BSS.

The request of the Prime Minister to President Abdur Rahman Biswas to arrange meeting of political parties to solve the political crisis is very timely, said a press release.

It said at present our economy is shattered, people are depressed and fearful of uncertain situations. We feel that as early as the round-table meeting is convened, it will save the country.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Sammyabadi Dal (Marxist-Leninist) yesterday termed the Prime Minister's request to the President to take initiatives for resolving the existing political stalemate as a significant step.

Secretary general of the party comrade Dilip Barua in a statement said the present political situation calls for the talks between the government and the opposition in order to lessen the anxiety and apprehension of all sections of the people.

He, however, called upon the democratic and progressive forces in the country to remain vigilant so that any conspiracy cannot foil the proposed talks at the early stage.

Lawyers boycott court

The members of Dhaka Lawyers' Association yesterday boycotted the court in support of Opposition's non-cooperation programme against the government, says a press release.

They organised a procession in the court area and later held a rally.

The speakers in the rally urged the President to scrap February 15 polls and demanded fresh elections under a neutral caretaker government.

They also demanded resignation of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and her government. The rally strongly condemned attack on Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina in a public rally at Bangabandhu Avenue on March 7.

The rally, presided over by Advocate Faizur Rahman Khan, was addressed, among others, by Adv Sahara Khatun, Sarder Suruzzaman, Aisaruddin Ahmed Khan, Kamrul Islam, Abdullah Abu, Altafuddin Ahmed, Mir Habibur Rahman and Mokhlesur Rahman.

The rally also congratulated the newly-elected executives and members of Dhaka Bar Association, added the release.



A Jatiya Party procession in city's Mahakhali area during the non-cooperation programme yesterday. — Star photo

JCD's tribute to Babloo, Moinuddin

A students' rally organised by the Dhaka University unit of Jatiyatabadi Chaatra Dal (JCD) was held yesterday in front of the DUCSU office in observance of the 9th death anniversary of former JCD general secretary Mahbulul Haq Babloo and central member Moinuddin, reports BSS.

Earlier, the JCD brought out a procession and paraded the campus.

Addressing the rally, senior vice-president of JCD central committee Moniruzzaman Monir paid deep respects to late Babloo and Moinuddin and prayed for the peace of the departed souls. He urged the members of JCD to face politically the killers of Babloo and Moinuddin.

The rally was addressed by JCD leaders Abdul Khalek, Shaifur Rahman Shaifque, A-B-M. Mosharraf Hossain, Rafique Sikder, Monir Hossain and Nasir Uddin, Ahmed Ashim.

Speakers condemned the opposition programme of indefinite non-cooperation movement.

BJWA concerned at political crisis

An emergency meeting organised by Bangladesh Journalists and Writers Association in North America (BJWA) on Thursday strongly condemned the politics of intimidation, violence and strikes in Bangladesh and urged the leaders of the country to solve the present problem through dialogue, reports BSS.

The speakers, comprising journalists, writers, poets and cultural activists urged both the opposition and the government to avert the attitude of confrontation in the greater interest of the nation. Presided over by Professor Shawkat Ali, president of the BJWA, the meeting held in New York was conducted by the general secretary of the organisation, Abdul Malek (Assistant Editor of the Weekly Thikana). The meeting was addressed by Najmul Ahsan, Editor of the Weekly Parichay, Professor Abul Kalam Azad, MA Khaleq, Dr Humayun Kabir, Azad Shishir, Abu Sayeed Sagar and AHM Abdul Matin.

Weather

Light rain in Sylhet likely

Temporary rain or thundershower accompanied by gusty wind is likely at one or two places over Sylhet division in the next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

Met Office says weather may remain mainly dry elsewhere across the country.

No appreciable change in day temperature is expected throughout the country.

Country's highest temperature 35.5 degree Celsius was recorded at Khulna and the lowest 15.5 degrees at Srimangal.

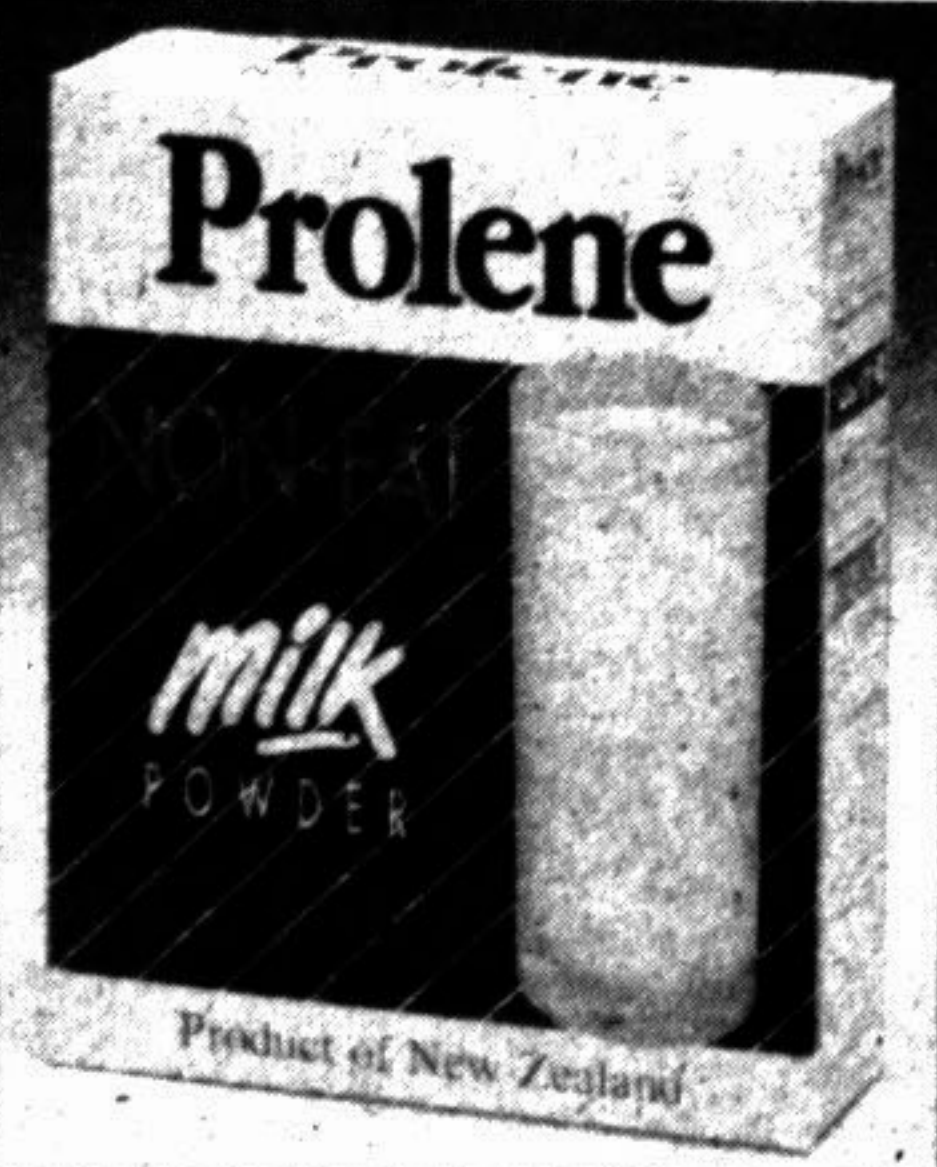
The maximum and minimum temperatures and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	33.2	22.0	78	83
Chittagong	30.0	20.0	82	76
Rajshahi	34.0	17.0	72	42
Khulna	35.5	22.0	82	-
Barsal	34.2	22.3	83	53
Sylhet	30.0	17.5	73	67
Cox's Bazar	-	20.2	79	-

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