

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Morning Walk in Victoria Park

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

One Morning in Victoria Park

WHAT I like best about old Dhaka are the unexpected pleasures it offers. You never know what surprise waits for you when you turn a corner.

Early one morning, I go to Victoria Park formally named Bahadur Shah Park in memory of martyrs of the Sepoy Rebellion in 1857 to see the obelisk. This obelisk was constructed in 1884 by the European friends of Nawab Ahsanullah in memory of the Nawab's son who died young. I want to take advantage of the morning's light to photograph the obelisk. I am looking forward to working in peace and quiet. In my mind's eye, I can already see the soft light filtering through the leaves of the Debdaru trees surrounding the obelisk.

But...surprise! When I enter the park, it is humming with energy. A veritable army of walkers marches to the beat of a silent drum along an oval track. Many wear T-shirts sporting emblems of walking clubs. I catch my breath at this display of vigour.

Men and women of all ages and sizes charge forward. They walk briskly and purposefully; some also stretch and swing their arms in sync, and a few break out into a run. Most are dressed conservatively. There are no shorts and many women wear elaborate burkha or chador combinations.

In the space around the obelisk, a group of young men are exercising, doing sit-ups, push-ups, pull-ups and other calisthenics. Their performance resembles a well-choreographed dance. As I look through my camera's viewfinder to compose a photo, I am

started by a boisterous sound coming from my right. The laughter therapy quickly amplifies and reaches a crescendo before the dozen laughers sober up.

At another spot, a dozen men gather around their Ustad (master). He leads them through a series of exercises, stretching and flexing just about every moving part of the body starting with the fingertips and ending at the toes.

The walkers have formed several clubs. Two large ones are "Bahadur Shah Park Pratobhromonkari Shongho" and "Bahadur Shah Park Pratobhromonkari Shomity", conveniently shortened to "Shongho" and "Shomity". Walking starts right after Fajr prayers and the last walkers leave at 11pm. Some walkers have come here for three or four decades.

About nine hundred active members of Shongho and Shomity are here every day. After the walk, chairs are provided for members to relax and enjoy a short adda. The clubs also arrange social events such as musical functions. A member informs me that between eight and nine thousand people walk here daily.

As I step out of the park, I notice a Daab (green coconut) seller positioned strategically at the gate. How sweet that water must taste to the thirsty enthusiasts! I suddenly remember the obelisk. I had no chance to photograph it. But that is alright, because it means a future visit to old Dhaka with the possibility of yet another surprise.

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Dr Kamal fears political conflict

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent jurist and Gano Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday said the country is heading towards a political conflict.

"Attitudes, speeches and postures of top leaders of both the ruling and opposition alliances appear that the country is moving towards confrontational politics," he said.

He was speaking at a meeting of the party presidium at his Baily Road residence in the capital, said a release. Dr Kamal said the people should remain alert against the situation.

The politics of hartal and eviction will further increase the sufferings of people, he observed. He also urged the politicians to shun the path of negative politics.



PHOTO: STAR

Jatiya Adivasi Parishad forms a human chain in front of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban on the occasion of Human Rights Day yesterday demanding constitutional recognition of indigenous people.

AL grassroots leaders asked to spread info on Khaleda's wealth

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Central leaders of Awami League (AL) at a regional workshop here asked the grassroots leaders to circulate the list of the wealth found at BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's cantonment residence to people.

The list sent by Khaleda for returning her household items at the cantonment house was also read out at the workshop and grassroots leaders were repeatedly asked to circulate it at root level.

The meeting was arranged to resolve difficulties of its grassroots leaders at Rajshahi yesterday.

All central leaders, including the prime minister's Adviser HT Imam, raised questions on Khaleda's wealth at the workshop, which was also organised to expose the government's successes in its tenure.

The grassroots leaders did not get a chance to talk but submitted written questions that were answered later by Imam who was presiding over the programme held at Rajshahi Zila Parishad auditorium.

Talking to reporters later, Imam said the household items were so inconsistent with Khaleda's sources of income she showed on her election documents that they were forced to raise questions.

AL Organising Secretary Abu Sayeed Al Mahmud Swapan said the list of Khaleda's wealth must reach people, who want to know how a political party was born out of a conspiracy.

Students vow to resist graft

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Over one thousand school and college-going students vowed to resist repression against women and corruption at a youth rally and cultural function at Savar yesterday.

Khandaker Md Hamid Ranzu, freedom fighter and joint convener of Shachetan Nagorik Samaj, administrated the oath at MM Chaklader Mahila College.

Transparency International Bangladesh, Shachetan Nagorik Samaj, NGO Samannay Parishad and Bangladesh Mahila Parishad organised the programme.

Various documentaries on resisting harassment on woman and corruption were shown and prominent singers performed on stage. Discussants at the function said the youth force was always behind all movements in the country and the cultural tradition of the state was their basic inspiration.

With this spirit, the ongoing anti-corruption movement will achieve success one day along the line of success in 1952, 1962, 1969, 1971 and 1990, says a press release.

Savar Upazila Vice Chairman Rokeya Haque, Shachetan Nagorik Samaj member Abdul Khalek, woman leader Parvin Islam, among others, spoke on the occasion.

Govt plans separate pay structure for teachers

Says Nahid

BSS, Dhaka

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid yesterday said the government is working to introduce separate salary structure for teachers to improve standard of the profession.

He urged the meritorious students of the country to come in teaching profession for contributing to the education sector, said an official release.

The education minister made the call while visiting different centres where non-

government teachers registration examination is in progress in the city.

Education Secretary Dr Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury and Chairman of Non-government Teachers Registration and Certificate Authority (NTRCA) accompanied Nahid.

Some 2,69,137 candidates took part in the exam this year, of which 1,72,655 applicants set the exam for the post of high school teachers and the rest for the post of college teachers.

Dhaka-Istanbul flight this month

BSS, Dhaka

Air link between capital Dhaka and Turkish largest city Istanbul will be established on the last week of this month.

"Initially the Turkish Airlines will operate Dhaka-Istanbul flights four days in a week from this month," Civil Aviation and Tourism Secretary Shafiqul Alam Mehdi told the news agency yesterday.

The flight operations between Bangladesh and Turkey was finalised as a MOU was signed between civil aviation authorities of Bangladesh and Turkish governments at a bilateral meeting between the both sides, held in Turkish capital Ankara in November 24.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Prova Dey, mother of former principal of the Sylhet MC College Prof Srinibash Dey, passed away at her house in the city's Gopaltala of Tilagarh area on Thursday due to old age ailments at the age of 97, says a press release.

She left behind her one son and five daughters.

Her cremation was held at the city's Chalibandar cremation ground early yesterday.

Sylhet city mayor badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran conduced her death.

Death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Today is the 19th death anniversary of Ataur Rahman, a former chief minister and prime minister, says a press release.

On the occasion, his family members will place wreath and offer special monazat at his graveyard at 9:00am and organise a milad mahfil and discussion at his residence at 500/A, Road-7, Dhanmondi at about 4:00pm.

Relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to attend the programmes and pray for salvation of the departed soul.

Syed Mutahir Uddin

DU CORRESPONDENT



Today is the 9th death anniversary of Syed Mutahir Uddin, a freedom fighter and former naval officer, says a press release.

Relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to pray for salvation of the departed soul.

DHAKA

T O D A Y

Reception

The University of Manchester Alumni Association, Bangladesh will organise a reception. Venue: 40, Shaheed Tajuddin Sarani, Tejgaon, Time: 4:00pm.

Convention

Sectors Commanders Forum will arrange a national convention. Venue: Institute of Diploma Engineers auditorium, Time: 10:00am.

Workshop

Handicap International, Bangladesh will arrange a workshop. Venue: Hotel Abakash, Mohakhali, Time: 10:00am.

Rally

Bangla Mountaineering and Trekking Club will organise a rally on the occasion of International Mountain day. Venue: National Press Club, Time: 9:00am.

Workshop

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services

Trust will organise a workshop. Venue: Cirdap auditorium, Time: 3:00pm.

Discussion

Communist Union will arrange a discussion. Venue: Pragati auditorium, Purana Paltan, Time: 3:00pm.

Fair

Bangladesh Diplomats' Family Club will arrange a fair. Venue: State Guesthouse Padma, Time: 10:00am.

Seminar

Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries will organise a seminar. Venue: Sheraton hotel, Time: 11:00am.

Human chain

Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote will form a human chain. Venue: In front of the National Press Club, Time: 11:00am.

Workshop

Bangladesh Computer Council will organise a workshop. Venue: Sheraton hotel, Time: 3:30pm.

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