

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Behind Taslima's smile, a hard life.

PHOTO:
IHTISHAM KABIR

Water Women

I see them whenever I visit Shakhari Bazar, old Dhaka. Wearing bright saris, they gather around tubewells, filling Kolshis with water. The shiny aluminium Kolshis have their own queue next to the tubewells. After a Kolshi is filled, its owner lifts it, places it on her waist, hooks her arm around its neck, and walks off. The next Kolshi takes its turn.

Who is she? Where is she going? Why? I stop by and chat with the water women looking for answers.

In some neighbourhoods of old Dhaka, the water supply delivers unclean water: murky or smelly, unfit for cooking or drinking. The supply just a block or two away may be fresh, however. The tubewells connect to water lines at these fresh water points. Water women pump up clean water and deliver to flats in the unclean water zone.

Some customers boil the water; others don't. Some have larger families and require several Kolshis every day. Demand is high in the summer, but in rainy season, many customers resort to using rain water.

The women have to work 8-10 hours per day, but hours are unpredictable because the water supply may be interrupted. Long interruptions mean waiting until night to deliver their water.

I wait until a woman fills her Kolshi and then try picking it up. It weighs a good 15-20 kg. No part of the work seems easy, yet I have to ask: "What is the hardest part of this job? Filling it, or taking it to your destination?" "Bhaiya, the hardest part is climbing up with it," she replies.

Indeed, payment is based on how high the women have to climb. For delivering to a flat on the 5th or 6th floor, they get paid 200-250 Taka per month per Kolshi. Ground floor flats pay about 100 Taka.

"Do you get anything besides money? Snacks, for example?" I ask. This strikes a sad chord. "Who wants to show kindness these days, Bhaiya?" asks one of them.

The women all live across the Buriganga River in Kamrangir Char. They commute by boat (5 taka roundtrip) or rickshaw-van over the bridge (10 taka.) They are all ages, including an ancient one who makes a show of ignoring me. "Seen many reporters and my pictures in the paper. Didn't help one bit," she grumbles.

I ask another woman her name. She smiles. "My name? My name is known all over the world, you have heard it many times. It is Nur Jahan." The others I meet are Kohinoor, Jyotsna, Taslima, and Sanowara.

Taslima is the youngest woman working today. Someone mentions her child. "So you have one child?" I ask. "Yes, it is hard enough raising just one!" she replies. Her sister babysits her daughter, a six-year old called Nupur.

Despite the hard work, they are quick to help each other with Kolshis and readily accommodate neighbours filling their drinking bottles at the tubewell. Their camaraderie, banter and laughter stay with me long after I leave.

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EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS

Habibur raps home minister's no-sorry stance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former chief justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman yesterday said he is disappointed because the home minister does not regret extrajudicial killings rather she defends them on grounds of "self-defence".

"There is not a slightest bit of remorse, nor is there any instance of punishment," he said while delivering a memorial speech on the occasion of Rabindranath Tagore's 150th birth anniversary.

Bangalee Samagra, a museum that preserves works of the enlightened Bangalees, organised the event at an auditorium of National Museum.

Alluding to the Indemnity Act, 2003 which protected officers of Operation Clean Heart, the legal expert said, "A black law was passed in 2003 to give sweeping indemnity."

Muhammad Habibur Rahman, former chief adviser to a caretaker government, talked about various aspects of laws of the British rule in the Indian sub-continent and Rabindranath Tagore's views on them.

Rabindranath severely criticised the colonial laws, he said. Many laws of the country are still influenced by the British laws. The authorities repeatedly spoke of amending those, but there have not been real efforts to that end.

The jurist said the highest courts of many countries are making arrangements for compensating the victims of violation of the rights recognised by their constitutions.

"In contrast, we are making ways to indemnify rights violators," he said.

Poet Ahmad Rafiq, who chaired the programme, said Rabindranath took measures to minimise the gap between urban and rural people and established banks to give credits to farmers and the poor.

People should read more of Rabindranath's works to know his revolutionary thoughts on social issues.

Finance Minister AMA Muhiith, Dhaka University Emeritus Prof Anisuzzaman, drama personality Atiqul Haque Chowdhury also spoke at the event.

Youth murdered in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unidentified criminals hacked a youth to death at his residence in the city's Jatrabari on Thursday.

The dead was identified as Abu Sayeed Hasan alias Chika Sayeed, 32, of Golapbagh.

Police said they recovered the bloodstained body around 8:00pm from the tinshed house.

A neighbour of Sayeed said victim's pregnant wife Rozina went to visit a doctor at Sutrapur with a neighbour around 3:00pm. Sayeed was staying in the house while she left.

Rozina said after returning to home she found her husband dead. She couldn't ascertain the cause behind the murder or named any suspected killers.

Seeking anonymity some other neighbours of the deceased said police recovered a blood-spotted local machete and some Yaba tablets from the spot. They claimed that the victim was a drug addicted.

Police couldn't find any motive behind the murder till filing of this report around 7:00 pm.

Abani Shankar Kar, SI of Jatrabari Police Station, said the victim's wife filed a murder case in this connection.



PHOTO: STAR

Umbrellas go up as people come out from city's Circuit House Mosque after Juma prayers as it continuously drizzled yesterday.

2 Jubo League men held after attack on journos

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

Police arrested Mohonganj upazila unit two Jubo League activists on Thursday night following vandalism and attack on journalists at Mohonganj Press Club on Wednesday night.

The arrested are Saidur Rahman and Masum.

Jubo League and Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) activists led by Mohonganj upazila Chairman Shahid Iqbal attacked the journalist over publishing a report on alleged vote rigging by Awami League candidate Habibur Rahman in Gaglajur upazila election.

The club President Anwar Hossen Nilu, Daily Ittefaq correspondent ASM Saruar Khokon and Daily Janakantha correspondent Abul Kashem were injured and admitted to Mohonganj Upazila Health Complex

in the attack.

Anwar was shifted to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital yesterday as his condition deteriorated.

Anwar filed a case with Mohonganj Police Station accusing 13 persons, including Shahid, under Speedy Tribunal Act. Others accused are Jubo League activists Saruar, Moloy, Amjad, Taposh, Roton, Sayedur Rahman and Masum and BCL activists Sohag, Solayman, Kazal, Abul Khair and Salim.

OC Sheikh Salauddin said the attackers are known terrorists.

Journalists of different print and electronic media on Thursday brought out a procession in Netrakona demanding immediate arrest of the accused and submitted a memorandum to Netrakona deputy commissioner and superintendent of police.

NEWS IN brief

Dhaka University Day on July 1

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University (DU) authority will celebrate Dhaka University Day on July 1 on the campus in the city with much festivity and enthusiasm.

The theme of this year is 'Higher education in national development', says a press release.

To observe the day, the university authority has chalked out elaborate programmes including hoisting flags at the top of all student dormitories and main buildings of the university, bringing out colourful procession, research exhibition, discussions, reminiscence and cultural session, sports and debate competitions.

Fire breaks out at Trust Bank's Dhaka Cantt branch

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A fire originated from a source unknown till filing of the report gutted a room of a floor of Trust Bank Ltd at Garrison in Dhaka cantonment last night.

Three fire units from the city's different stations doused the blaze at about 9:30pm, which broke out around 8:25pm inside the bank office.

A fire fighter, who visited the spot, said the fire caused no major damage. "Some pieces of office equipment were burnt," he added.

Punishment to rapist demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different indigenous organisations yesterday staged demonstration demanding exemplary punishment of the rapist of an indigenous student in Baro Ultachhari village of Langadu upazila of Rangamati.

Hill Women's Federation and Chittagong Hill Tracts Hill Student's Council (PCP) jointly brought out a procession from Dhaka University campus and staged demonstration in front of the Jatiya Press Club in the city, says press releases.

They said one Ibrahim raped a class seven indigenous female student at Baro Ultachari village of Langadu on June 15.

5 killed, 17 hurt in road crashes

METRO DESK

Five people were injured and 17 others injured in road accidents in Thakurgaon, Chapainawabganj, Natore, Comilla and Rangpur districts yesterday.

Our correspondent from Thakurgaon adds: A tractor driver was killed and 14 others injured in a road accident on Thakurgaon-Panchagarh Highway at Salondor in Sadar upazila yesterday morning.

Subal Chandra Barman, 32, son of Dhubal Chandra Barman of Chondonbari village in Boda upazila of Pachagarh district, died on the spot.

Police said the accident took place at about 8:00am when a pickup collided head-on with a tractor.

Injured --Amzad, Ashraful and Sirajul--were sent to Rangpur Medical College Hospital while others to Thakurgaon sadar hospital.

Our correspondent from Chapainawabganj adds: A woman was killed when a truck hit their motorcycle at Karimbazar village in Shibganj upazila yesterday.

Farida Khatun Chameli, 24, daughter of Fazle Rabbi of Chhotodadpur village in Gomostapur upazila of the district died on the spot around 11:30am.

Police seized the truck.

Our Natore correspondent reports: A bicyclist was killed while a bus hit him from behind at Ekdala in Sadar upazila yesterday morning.

Jahurul Islam, 28, son of Fayes Uddin of Shikarpur village in Gurudasapur of the district, was rushed to the sadar hospital where he died at about 12:00pm.

UNB Comilla reports: A woman was killed and three people were injured as a bus rammed a private car on Dhaka-Chittagong Highway in Daudkandi upazila yesterday.

Farida Yasmin, wife of retired army officer Col Ikram Hossain, died instantly. The injured were admitted to Gouripur Hospital in Daudkandi.

BSS adds: two unidentified persons, including a motorcyclist, were killed when a bus hit a running motorcycle at Deuti point on the Mahiganj-Sundarganj road in Pirgachha upazila in Rangpur yesterday.



WEATHER TODAY

Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at most places over Khulna, Barisal, Chittagong, Dhaka, Rajshahi, Rangpur and Sylhet divisions in next 24 hours till 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy to heavy rainfalls are also likely at places over the country, Met Office said.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

The sun sets in the capital today at 6:48pm and rises yesterday at 5:12am.

Country's highest temperature 34.5 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sylhet and lowest 24.2 degrees at Chittagong.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	27.8	25.4	91	87
Chittagong	27.8	24.2	90	90
Rajshahi	29.1	25.1	83	94
Rangpur	32.0	26.0	82	80
Khulna	28.8	26.5	96	93
Barisal	30.4	26.0	96	92
Sylhet	34.5	26.7	74	89
Cox's Bazar	29.5	25.0	88	92



PHOTO: STAR

Former BNP ministers Hafizuddin Ahmed and Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, released on bail on June 15 after being arrested during the recent 36-hour hartal called by BNP-led opposition, come out with BNP acting Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir after offering prayers at Ziaur Rahman's mausoleum in the city yesterday.