

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

Catching Up *With Dipen*

Dr. Dipen Bhattacharya is research physicist at the University of California Riverside, and professor at Riverside Community College, USA. Readers may remember him as co-founder of Anushandhitsu Chakra science club, subject of our column last year. Recently he visited Dhaka and I learned about his current research.

Dipen is fascinated by the geological history of Bengal delta. He says that over the last 18,000 years, the sea level rose by 120m while the coastline receded by about 200 km. This rise was often accompanied by severe monsoons - perhaps over centuries - which caused great flooding followed by large deposits of sedimentation.

During the worst period, the sea may have reached south of Dhaka, but no signs of sea intrusion have been found north, for example, in Sylhet.

Bengal delta renews itself every 100,000 to 200,000 years, the cycle of the ice age. At the height of the ice age, oceans retreat and the weather becomes dry. At its end, oceans return, possibly invading dry land. The weather becomes wetter. Flooding brings fresh sediment deposits and the new delta starts forming. The last time the delta building process started was perhaps 8,000 to 9,000 years ago.

Why is Dipen's research relevant? A natural outcome is an estimation of the inundation that Bangladesh would face with the sea level rise that many expect in coming decades.

For this estimation, Dipen needed elevation data for entire Bangladesh. Currently available data, based on satellite images, does not show the true elevation of the Sundarbans due to its tree canopy. So the height of trees was also needed.

Dipen, working with colleague Witold Fraczek, took historical sedimentation into account since that reduces inundation. They also guessed the rate at which the delta sinks due to sedimentation.

The upshot? A one meter rise in sea level would inundate 6-7% of Bangladesh, while two meters would inundate 11%, Dipen estimates. However, he warns that his estimates carry inherent errors of a few percent due to errors embedded in the satellite data.

Even in submerged areas, patches of land will remain dry. "It is imperative to identify these future potential dry areas and incorporate them into adaptation schemes," he says, "for example, by concentrating infrastructure there."

Shifting gears, we discussed Dipen's second Bangla novel, *Ditar Ghor* (*Dita's Watch*.) A complex

Dr. Dipen Bhattacharya

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

allegorical tale with loose parallels to our Liberation War, it chronicles the struggle between a country with a culture of watch-making and a foreign force which hates measuring time.

The foreign force occupies the country. It proceeds to eliminate the measurement of time by first banning the second hand, then the minute hand, and finally the hour hand.

Along with historical and moral metaphors, Dipen also introduces quantum mechanics into the story. There are parallel universes and philosophical discussions. There are heroes, villains and collaborators, including a watchmaker who is captured by the occupying force which then threatens his young daughter to make him collaborate.

Ditar Ghor, soon to be published by Prothoma, promises to be thought-provoking and enjoyable reading.

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ZUBAIR MURDER

Hunger strike at JU today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some agitating Jahangirnagar University teachers will hold a hunger strike and protest rally on the campus today demanding realisation of their seven-point demand, including making the probe report of Zubair murder public.

Zubair Ahmed, a fourth-year student of the English department, succumbed to the wounds he suffered in an attack by Chhatra League men on January 9.

The other demands include removal of the proctorial body and ensuring punishment of the former proctor, Prof Arzu Miah, for his alleged attack on Prof AA Mamun, president of JU teachers association.

The teachers yesterday, the third day of their five-day programme, held a mass campaign and distributed leaflets among former JU teachers and students in Dhaka to rally support for their demands.



Being on a holiday, crowds of book-loving people flock to Amar Ekushey Boi Mela at Bangla Academy premises yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

SSC QUESTION PAPERS DISTRIBUTION

Probe found no irregularity

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

A probe committee of Dinajpur Education Board did not find any irregularity in the distribution of question papers among the SSC examinees at Rangpur Zila School centre on Wednesday.

"The news of handing out wrong question papers to 17 examinees was not true," KM Rafique, controller of examinations of the education board and head of the three-member probe body, told newsmen yesterday.

The committee was formed on Thursday to probe the alleged distribution of wrong question papers among some students in the Bengali 1st paper examinations.

Rafique, however, mentioned that the 17 students of Rangpur Police Lines School and College were given question papers prepared following the syllabus of 2010-2011 sessions.

The students became unsuccessful in the last year's Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations. Their school authorities had mistakenly asked them to follow the syllabus of 2009-2010 sessions to take this year's examinations.

Receiving the question papers at the examination hall, they took it as wrong question papers, the controller pointed out.

Strict laws to stop tobacco use urged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Demanding amendment to the tobacco control act, anti-tobacco campaigners yesterday said stricter laws and their enforcement to discourage smoking and tobacco consumption, the main causes of cancer, can effectively help prevent the disease.

They were addressing a sit-in programme organised by Prattyasha Madok Birodhi Sangathan, Nirapad Development Foundation (NDF) and WBB Trust before Faculty of Fine Arts of Dhaka University marking World Cancer Day.

"Some chewable tobacco products like *sadapata*, *zarda* and *gul* are not included in the anti-tobacco law but these contribute to mouth cancer," said NDF Chairman Ibnul Sayeed Rana.

Cancer Ambassador of Bangladesh Aminul Islam Sujan said cigarette companies in 43 countries provide cautionary pictures and messages on their packets to actively discourage smoking.

The government should make it mandatory for cigarette companies to provide cautionary pictures and messages covering 50 percent of the packets, he said.

The prattyasha General Secretary Helal Ahmed said tobacco contains over 4,000 chemicals which contribute to 43 types of cancers.

If the authorities concerned fail to free public places of smoking, they too should be punished. Advertisements promoting tobacco consumption should also be banned, the speakers said.

The government should make it mandatory for cigarette companies to provide cautionary pictures and messages covering 50 percent of the packets

NEWS IN *brief*

Deaths at processions: Doa Mahfils held

UNB, Dhaka

Munajats were offered at mosques across the country yesterday seeking eternal peace for the activists of 4-party alliance killed during the Jan 29-30 mass processions.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia called for the doa programme as five leaders and workers of the alliance were killed in "police firings" in Chandpur, Laxmipur and Rajshahi, said a press release.

Senior leaders of BNP attended the doa mahfils after Juma prayers at mosques across the country,

US physicians to give free health services at Savar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Doctors from USA will provide free health services to Bangladeshi patients from February 21 to March 2 at Gonoshasthaya Kendra in Savar.

Patients can avail OB/Gyne and general surgery operations during the period.

A medical team led by Naved Jafri, John Benjamin Newman and Sherwin Angus will perform the operations.

Shushasthya, a non-government organisation run by Bangladeshi physicians living in USA, will sponsor the medical team, said a press release.

Screening test will be held February 10. To avail the health services, patients can contact with the Shushasthya at 69 North Bashabo or can make a call at 7217152 from 9:00am to

Trader killed in Keraniganj

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unidentified miscreants stabbed a businessman to death in Keraniganj yesterday.

The victim was identified as Nabab Ali, 30, a resident of Golzarbagh in the city's outskirts.

Mainuddin Khan, officer-in-charge of Keraniganj police station, said that miscreants stabbed Nabab Ali in Battala area under Jinjira around 6:45am.

The police suspect that the incident might have occurred over previous enmity. They also suspect

Sack inefficient ministers

Inu urges govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haq Inu yesterday urged the government to remove inefficient ministers from the cabinet and appoint competent ones.

Asking Awami League to forsake their "go alone policy", Inu called for strengthening unity of the Awami League-led grand alliance for the continuation of the country's democracy.

The lawmaker was addressing a two-day national committee meeting of the party at Colonel Taher auditorium in the city, says a press release.

A conspiracy to halt the country's democracy is going on and the government must be more alert so that none can reap benefits from the political mistakes, he said.

Inu also urged the government to take steps in controlling the price hike of essentials and checking the share market's current downtrend.

JSD General Secretary Sharif Nurul Ambia and standing committee member Shirin Akhter also spoke at the meeting.

DHAKA TODAY

Workshop

Bangladesh Water Partnership will organise a workshop; Venue: Cirdap Auditorium; Time: 9:30am.

Seminar

Sammlita Torun Peshajibi Parishad will arrange a seminar; Venue: Dhaka Ahsania Mission Reporters Unity; Time: 10:30am.

Human chain

Paribesh Bachao Andolon, Zinda Park Rakkha Committee will form a human chain; Venue: Fine Arts Faculty, Dhaka University; Time: 11:00am.

Seminar

Ahsania Mission Cancer and General Hospital will organise a seminar; Venue: Dhaka Ahsania Mission building auditorium, Dhanmondi; Time: 11:30am.

Memorial meeting

Bangladesh Trade Union Centre will hold a memorial meeting; Venue: Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad

WEATHER TODAY

Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country in 24 hours till 6:00pm today.

Moderate to thick fog may occur over the river basins and light to moderate fog may occur elsewhere over the country during midnight till morning, Met Office said.

Mild to moderate cold wave is sweeping over Rajshahi, Rangpur and Barisal divisions and the regions of Jessore, Chuadanga, Kushtia, Tangail, Madaripur, Comilla, Sitakunda, Rangamati and Srirangal and it may continue.

Day and night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

The sun sets in the capital today at 5:46pm and rises tomorrow at 6:38am.

Country's highest temperature 28.5 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sitakunda and lowest 06.1 degrees at Srirangal.

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

City/Town	Temperature Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max:	Min:	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	26.1	12.6	64	39
Chittagong	25.5	13.5	51	53
Rajshahi	25.4	08.5	78	60
Rangpur	25.5	09.0	86	68
Khulna	25.5	10.5	74	61
Barisal	26.9	09.5	75	70