

386,723 businesses pivot to delivering groceries online in Dhaka

NONE-OF-YOUR-BUSINESS CORRESPONDENT

DHAKA: While the Covid-22 outbreak has led to many businesses closing their shutters, many in the city have pivoted towards delivering groceries to the citizens in lockdown.

"I don't know what happened. I had all 57 ride-sharing and food delivery apps installed on my phone because I can eat for free half the month thanks to their discounts. However, I woke up yesterday to about 289 notifications freezing up my phone and they are still coming one after another. It has been two days. All the service centres are closed and now my phone is permanently stuck, only showing notifications," said Jahid Hossain, 32, a single man living in North Badda.

The sudden pivot of so many companies might seem surprising to many but earlier in May, the country's leading online grocer ChillDeal.com.bd's laid-back approach towards its customers meant too many failed orders and piling up of refunds.

"Initially, we were under the impression that ChillDeal was a giant player in the field no one could compete against. I mean, if you



look at their marketing and public relations, anyone would agree. After all, they promised to be the first company to deliver diapers to the International Space Station but thankfully, this has given us the opportunity to step up,"

said Ahnaf Bashir, founder of Horizontal Vertical, a coaching centre that now delivers groceries.

We tried reaching out to ChillDeal but unfortunately, after being put on hold for

180 minutes listening to diaper ads, our correspondent gave up.

Aside from the usual startups and logistics services delivering groceries, CNG autorickshaw drivers and rickshaw-pullers have also stepped up, organising through a Facebook group. However, not many were sympathetic to their cause. Noman Akash, CEO of Techstosterone, a former IT firm that is now a delivery service provider, thinks that the government should step in and ban all these types of services. However, he disagreed that the industry needed any regulation.

"We [delivery companies] are already taking utmost care to ensure that the parcels reach our customers safely. Regulatory measures would only hinder the process and bog us down with bureaucracy. What safety measures are they ensuring? There is a reason we have such investments in communication and management for a smooth service. You get what you pay for," said an exasperated Noman Akash, CEO of Techstosterone, a former IT firm that is now a delivery service provider.

Upon asking how many of their riders were tested for Covid-22, Noman disconnected the call and was unavailable for further comment.

A CELEBRITY HAS JUST DIED AND YOU SHOULD ALL GET YOUR POSTS READY TO FEEL INVOLVED

ENTERTAINMENT CORRESPONDENT

Stop the presses folks, a celebrity has just died.

The singer, 103, who had multiple fatal diseases society chooses to play down, passed away last night leaving millions of people absolutely shocked.

The death dominated the news cycle for a good three days, with people waxing lyrical about the famed voice behind "I will keep liking all your posts to remind you of my existence even though you clearly told me you want nothing to do with me".

The next step in the mourning will be a procession of counterculture narratives which will serve to remind the world of how fallible and flawed their celebrity was and the problematic nature of hero-worship.

"I cannot believe he is dead. It's the end of an era," a fan said, parroting an old trope, which people have come to associate with expressing grief or loss.

"It's like a part of my childhood died," another fan said, showing just how easy it was to make people think in certain, conventional ways.

Since news of the death broke fans have been posting their condolences on social media. For a brief moment, the world has found itself disassociated with the daily concerns of life, which is a good thing.

A debate also broke out about what some lines from some of the singer's songs meant, with many confusing projecting their own insecurities as interpretation.

Finally, a few sharp listeners also pointed out how the singer was actually faking his death. "It's no coincidence that they joined Club 103. All those in that club... it's really shifty how they died. Plus when they sang, 'I know you love someone else, but let that someone else be me; I will come back from my death just you wait and see...' I think it proves that this isn't over," a fan said.

Satireday staffer quits as line between reality and satire no longer exists

Damning resignation letter from writers show how far they spiralled months into satire-writing career

AANILA KISHWAR TARANUM

Dear Editor,
Three weeks ago, I wrote a piece for your page on American conservatives, nay, white people. However, the piece had lost relevance before it could live out its originally predicted shelf life. Much like the vegetables now rotting due to the complete destruction of supply chains across the country, my satire piece perished before it could go from your email inbox to the presses.

My work is full of references and exaggerations. It tries to exaggerate reality just a little. Doesn't go too far, packs a few easter eggs from previous pieces which no one but six-and-a-half people notice. I used to think the humour would go just far enough to point out the glaring flaws in our world, but it would still be too ludicrous to come true one day.

I'm not sure if that sounds like humble bragging about how nuanced my writing is. If it does, I assure you, I have some gripe with the pieces I have been writing, and would like to spare zero praise for myself.

If I am succeeding at exaggerating my words just enough to show how severe some social or infrastructural issue is -- all under a thin veil of humour -- why does reality keep catching up to my "nonsensical" jokes? Am I not stretching my imagination further, or are the things I am writing magically coming true? Am I being possessed by the Shaka Laka Boom Boom pencil's evil twin?

When Covid-22, as we like to call it in Satireday, first broke out in the country, the idea of everyone going to work in hazmat suits cracked me up. "It'd be like a uniform. No one would be able to make fun of that one dude for wearing football boots to work every day," I thought, cracking myself up



at how ridiculous it would be if at the final stage, we'd all have to work inside a formless void in hazmat suits, avoiding any and all human contact.

Now we're all stuck at home, logging into some server I can't see, working with a few colleagues I have forgotten the faces (and for some, names) of. Time is barely moving, and I see little difference between my life and an everlasting void now.

The state appears convinced that the virus can be beat by sheer willpower as they proceed with reopening the economy. People are out buying iftar and PPE all from the same streets. The crackdown has become less focused on the virus, and more

on free speech.

In the USA, people are protesting for their right to haircuts, convinced that white privilege will ward off any disease.

I can't make this up anymore. The line between reality and satire has been erased, and we are now living in those ridiculous worlds Sukumar Ray used to craft in his poetry. There was one poem called *Ekushe Ain* where the government would fine people for walking on the streets. That state would also imprison poets and writers, cracking down on their freedom of speech.

Perhaps Sukumar Ray, too, was possessed by the Shaka Laka Boom Boom pencil's evil twin. Perhaps the line between reality and satire has always been blurred, and I am merely new to this craft.

A wise man once told me that the only way he can cope with journalism/writing as a career is by binge drinking, and I see his point now. With immeasurable regret, I have to hand in my resignation letter, because I believe there is nothing left for me to satirise.

This world has lost every sense of normalcy, and I hope those UFO sightings mean some higher power will come to rescue or destroy us. We'll either have a Koi Mil Gaya moment or a War of the Worlds moment -- at least there will be some excitement.

Warmest regards,
Correspondent who never decided on one particular byline.

This is the full text of the letter we received from one of our MANY writers. While she raises some valid points, we believe this may also be a negotiation tactic as we have not paid her in months.
-- Ed note



STAIRWAY TO CONTAGION

There's a feeling I get when I walk up the steps
And my spirit is crying for leaving.
In the shops I have seen
Shoppers crowding, obscene
And the wheezing of those who stand looking
Ooooooh it really makes you shudder...

