

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Radio Break at a Tea Garden.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Radio Days

The small wooden table sat on one corner of the drawing room. On it was an imposing box the size of a small suitcase. Beige cloth of rough texture covered the top half of its front. Beneath the cloth was the important area: two dials on each side separated by a glass panel with numbers written along its length. When you turned the left dial, a vertical red bar moved horizontally along the panel traversing the numbers. The right dial was a volume control.

That was my first radio, a fixture of the house I grew up in. When war broke out between India and Pakistan in 1965, this radio was the center of nightly gatherings of my extended family. My father operated it every evening so we could hear the news. As he slowly turned the left dial, the red bar traversed the panel and the speaker hummed, crackled and whistled until reaching the frequency of either Radio Pakistan or All India Radio. At that point magic happened: you heard spoken words or music.

This oversized radio was an old engineering design, relying on vacuum tubes that glowed, sometimes overheated and broke down. It was heavy and needed to be plugged into electricity. The tubes were eventually replaced by transistors which were smaller, consumed less energy, and remained cool. In the late 1960s by father bought a lightweight, battery-operated, portable transistor radio and the old vacuum tube radio was soon forgotten.

My coming of age was inextricably tied to the radio. During the Liberation War of 1971, it was a critical link to the world. We spent five of the nine months of war in a remote village in Sylhet, taking shelter at my grandmother's ancestral home. Grateful for the safety of our pastoral refuge, we nonetheless missed modern

amenities. But we did have a radio. After sunset we eagerly waited for news from British Broadcasting Corporation, All India Radio, Voice of America, Radio Moscow, and most importantly, Shadhin Bangla Betar Kendro, the secret radio station of independent Bangladesh. When M.R. Akhter Mukul read *Chorompotro*, a monologue rich in humour and bravado, its tales of the success of our liberation forces and the disasters plaguing the enemy emboldened us and made us laugh during those dark days.

After independence, as a teenager I veered towards music and foreign stations on the radio. One day I was listening to shortwave when I heard a new term: "DXer." I was intrigued. Turned out, DX-ers were dedicated radio listeners, scanning the frequencies, searching for radio stations from afar. When you found one, you wrote a letter to the station with the time, frequency and content you had heard. In return, the station sent you a colourful postcard (QSL card) confirming that you had indeed heard the station. DXing proved to be an absorbing hobby for me and I collected hundreds of QSL cards.

My interest in radio changed when I went to London for studies. I now sought out the best radio stations for rock music. One was Radio Caroline broadcasting from a ship in the high seas outside British jurisdiction. It was free of influence of record companies or the government, playing song after good song.

My next move was to the US in 1977. Although FM radio - offering high-quality stereo sound - was popular there, I never quite engaged with it. That was the end of my radio days.

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Writ petition seeks ban on cattle markets in certain areas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Supreme Court lawyer has filed a writ petition with the High Court, seeking its directive on the government to stop setting up cattle markets in Covid-19 affected areas - including Dhaka, Chattogram, Narayanganj and Gazipur cities.

Eunus Ali Akond submitted the petition as public interest litigation on Thursday via email, praying to the court to stop setting up such markets to protect people from the pandemic.

In the petition, he said National Technical Advisory Committee (NTAC) on Covid-19 had recommend authorities to not set up cattle markets in areas heavily affected by the novel coronavirus.

However, authorities have allowed markets in those areas, ignoring NTAC's recommendation, which is a violation of the law and constitution, the lawyer stated.

Advocate Eunus told The Daily Star that the HC may hold hearing on the petition on Monday.

President's brother Abdul Hye dies of Covid-19

UNB, Dhaka

Abdul Hye, younger brother of President Abdul



Hamid, died of Covid-19 at Combined Military Hospital, Dhaka early yesterday. He was 67.

Abdul Hye, also a freedom fighter, breathed his last around 1:15am, said President's Press Secretary M Joynal Abedin.

Hye, also assistant personal secretary to President Hamid, tested Covid-19 positive on July 2. He left behind his wife, a son, two daughters and a host of relatives and well-wishers. He will be buried at his family graveyard in Mithamain today.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed condolence at death of Abdul Hye.

Sylhet residents show the way

Locals purchase sacrificial animals online for Eid-ul Azha directly from farms, to avoid crowds at cattle markets

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

Though the district administration was planning to set up temporary cattle markets ahead of Eid in Sylhet, locals apparently are showing better judgement by purchasing sacrificial animals directly from farms after selecting cattle online to avoid crowds amid the pandemic.

To attract buyers, most farms are also increasing their presence on social media, showcasing photos of animals and inviting people to visit their farms.

The cattle market or "haat" organisers, who usually remain busy during this time of the year with bidding and setting up markets, also did not show much enthusiasm in arranging haats due to reluctance of buyers.

Meer Mohammad Mahbubur Rahman, deputy director of local government in Sylhet, said, "We were planning to set up temporary cattle haats at all 105 unions in the district... We did not get much response from local haat organisers."

They are, however, setting up cattle markets. "Besides permanent cattle markets in the district, we have permitted 47 temporary cattle markets including three in the city."

When asked about people's initiatives to avoid crowds during purchase of sacrificial animals, he said not everyone is familiar with the internet or purchasing cattle online,

which is why they are permitting haats.

"But we are also encouraging online purchasing and selling," he said, adding that the Livestock Department opened a Facebook page where they are trying to connect cattle sellers and buyers.

Till Wednesday afternoon, the page was followed by only 183 people.

Dr Kazi Ashraf Islam, district livestock officer in Sylhet, said, "We are communicating with cattle sellers and trying to inspire them to sell via our online page. As the idea is new, and people buy only a couple of days before Eid, we are getting less response now."

While they are not getting much attention from buyers or sellers, cattle farms are continuing their business online through networks, customer relationships and better offers.

Once a buyer visits the Facebook page, they can communicate directly with the seller after selecting a cattle, drop by at the farm and complete the transaction as per their convenience, said farm owners.

Sahed Ahmed Enam, proprietor of Bismillah Agro at Silam of Dakshin Surma upazila in Sylhet, said, "We reared 30 cows for Eid and have already sold 15 of them."

"We are getting good responses from social media. Due to the pandemic, people are becoming

more interested in visiting the farms to buy cattle of their choice," he added.

Atique Ahmed of Baraikandi of Sylhet Sadar upazila, purchased a cow from the farm.

"I used to purchase cattle directly from haat every year. Due to the pandemic, I searched for cattle online, visited the farm and purchased one."

Syed Ripon Ahmed, an owner of Khan Agro of Khadimnagar of Sylhet Sadar upazila, said, "Not just for health safety, it's also better for customers to buy directly from farms."

"We look after the sold cattle till the night before Eid. Even if the cattle become sick, we give our customers a refund or a chance to change, which is impossible in regular haats," he added.

Meanwhile, Sylhet City Corporation called tender for one temporary haat in the city, said Bidhayak Roy Chowdhury, chief executive officer of SCC.

Abdul Karim Kim, coordinator of Sankhubdho Nagorik Andolon in Sylhet, criticised the move and said amid the pandemic, the government should try to not arrange cattle markets in the city to avoid crowds and tackle the spread of coronavirus.

Asked, the deputy director of local government added that they will set up the haat, maintaining health guidelines and social distancing.



Farm owner Rifat Mohammad Iqbal is a busy man. With only a few weeks left before Eid, not only he has to tend to his cattle, but also maintain his Facebook page "Chatgaiya Agro", where he sells sacrificial animals. A buyer can visit the page, select a cattle and contact Iqbal over the phone for a purchase and confirm delivery or pickup -- all in real time -- that too maintaining physical distancing. This photo was taken from Uttar Kattoli of the port city on Wednesday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Tk 530cr collected through registration of deeds in June

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Directorate of Registration has collected about Tk 530 crore as revenue by facilitating registrations of 2,47,780 deeds between May 31 and June 30.

Inspector General of Registration Shahidul Alam Jhinuk sent a letter to the law ministry on Thursday about the matter.

In the letter, he said sub-registry offices across the country have completed registrations while strictly following health guidelines, and collected Tk 529.81 crore in the period.

He also said 22 officials and staffers under the body have contracted Covid-19, and among them, 13 have recovered and one died.

Robbers held within days of filing case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special team of police in a drive arrested four robbers from different areas of Dhaka on Thursday night, less than a week after a case was filed.

Sudip Chakrabarty, deputy commissioner of Gulshan division Police, made the disclosure yesterday to reporters.

On July 10, the robbers allegedly entered the house of one Mujibur Rahman in the capital's Aftabnagar, tied up members of the family and left swiftly with valuables.

Mujibur did not file any complaint at first, but Gulshan Division Police learned about the incident from local sources. Following police request, Mujibur registered the case with Badda Police Station on July 12.

Police also managed to recover all the looted valuables, Sudip told journalists at a briefing at Badda Police Station.

He said the arrestees are professional robbers, and the ringleader is accused in eight cases. "It was one of the fastest operations; we managed to recover looted valuables and arrest the criminals within days of filing the case," he said.

Govt bans fishing nets with mesh smaller than 6.6cm

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a bid to save jatka (fish fry) and increase production of hilsa, the government has banned all kinds of gill nets with mesh smaller than 6.6 centimeters or 2.6 inches.

A gazette was published on July 15, under the Protection and Conservation of Fish Rules, 1985.

Fishermen generally use 13 kinds of nets to catch hilsa. Mentioning names, the gazette said nets meant for catching hilsa must have mesh size of 6.5cm.

Masudara Momi, deputy director of Hilsa Management Wing of the Department of Fisheries, said, "If we can save 30 percent of total jatka every year, hilsa production will increase up to one lakh tonne," she said.

Sabrina on fresh 2-day remand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed JKG Health Care Chairman Dr Sabrina Arif Chowdhury on a two-day fresh remand, in connection with a case filed over the issuing fake Covid-19 reports.

Metropolitan Magistrate Masud-Ur-Rahman passed the order after Md Liakot Ali, an inspector of detective branch (DB) of police and the investigation officer of the case, produced her before his court with a five-day remand prayer.

Sabrina was produced before the court on completion of her three-day remand.

In the remand prayer, the IO said Sabrina, being the chairman of JKG Health Care, was directly involved with issuing fake Covid-19 test reports. So, she needs to be remanded to gather more clues about the matter and to know whereabouts of others responsible for committing such offences, the IO said.

On the other hand, Sabrina's defence lawyer submitted a petition seeking her bail along with cancellation of the remand prayer, saying their client was not involved with such offences.

Sabrina told the court that she is no more the chairman of the organisation and was not involved with such incidents.

After hearing both sides, the magistrate turned down her bail and issued the remand order, also directed the IO to interrogate her in presence of a female police personnel.

The case, filed with Tejgaon Police Station on June 24, was handed over to DB for investigation.

Earlier on July 12, police arrested Sabrina, about three weeks after the scam came to light.

Following her arrest, the health ministry suspended her from the post of registrar at the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases, over violating rules.



Maybe it is because people are spending more time at home and have a little more free time on their hands, there seems to be a growing interest in home decor. A number of streetside shops on High Court Street near Doyel Chattar in the capital, that sell flowers -- both plants and artificial -- as well as pottery and other kinds of decorative items, are seeing a growing number of customers in recent weeks.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Indian national held 'over Neo JMB links'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of police claimed to have arrested an Indian national, for her alleged involvement with militant outfit Neo-JMB.

The arrestee is identified as Ayesa Jannat Mohona alias Jannat Tasnim alias Proga Debnath (25).

Based on a tip-off, a team of CTTC unit conducted drive in the capital's Sadarghat area and arrested Mohona, SK Imran Hossain, assistant commissioner of CTTC unit, told The Daily Star yesterday.

They also recovered an Indian passport, a Bangladesh birth registration certificate, a Bangladeshi national identity card and two phones from her possession.

In primary interrogation, Mohona said she is an Indian national and hailed from Keshabpur village in Hugli district of West Bengal. Quoting Mohona, Imran said she converted to Islam from Hindu religion while she was in ninth grade, in 2009. She was later drawn into religious education.

"She met members of Neo-JMB's female wing on different social media platforms. She later met with Neo-JMB female wing chief Asmani Khatun alias Asma and started working as a member," he said.

AC Imran said she recently collected a fake birth registration certificate and using the certificate, she also collected a Bangladeshi NID card to become a citizen. "Mohona even married an expatriate Bangladeshi national recently via phone call, in Oman. She started living in Bangladesh from August 10 last year," he said.