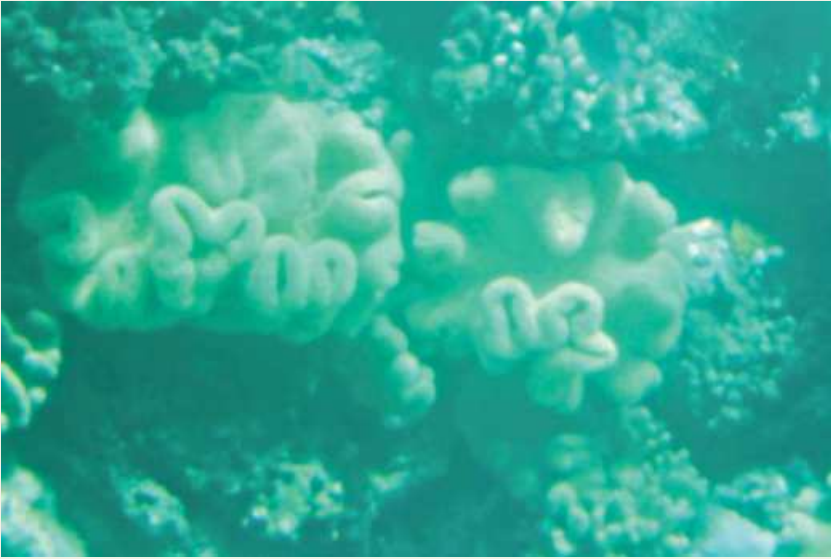


TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Great Barrier Reef, Australia.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Captain Cook's Voyages

Recently I read a biography of the famous English explorer Captain James Cook (1728-1779). He was an expert sailor, surveyor and cartographer who mapped thousands of miles of the Southern Hemisphere over three epic ocean voyages.

Cook was the first British explorer to set foot on the east coast of Australia, which he named New South Wales. He was also a pioneering European explorer in other Pacific islands including New Zealand, Hawaii, Tahiti and Easter Island. Before his voyages to the Southern Hemisphere, he had mapped the coast of Newfoundland and the St. Lawrence River as a Navy officer.

On his first South Seas voyage, he started out crossing the Atlantic Ocean and went around the southernmost tip of South America to reach the Pacific Ocean. After a break at Tahiti he proceeded to circumnavigate the two islands of New Zealand. Then he travelled west towards Australia, which was at that time unknown to the rest of the world.

He sailed north along the east coast of Australia, marvelling at the fertile land and amazed at its flora and fauna. One day the crew spotted a mysterious large creature on the grass in the distant. It disappeared quickly, hopping like a rabbit and leaving grassy dung behind. After several more sightings, they described the animal to some natives they had met. What was it called?

"Kangru," was the reply. This, according to some, means "I don't know" in their tongue, but the name stuck.

On June 11, 1770 east of what is now the city of Cairns, he ran into trouble in the Great Barrier Reef. His ship *HMS Endeavour* hit a reef, punctured its bottom and got stuck. After twenty-three gruelling hours of effort, and jettisoning numerous heavy

items such as cannons, the ship came free. It was the most serious incident of the voyage so far. Cook and several of his men could not swim. Although the water was only four or five feet deep at high tide, all would die if the ship sunk. Cook, however, faced adversity with calm determination.

This particular episode resonated with me. Two years ago, I went to the Great Barrier Reef from Cairns, on my way to Michaelmas Cay Bird Sanctuary. From a glass-bottomed boat, I saw colourful, intricate corals, fish, turtles, plants and other life-forms that comprise the largest living ecosystem in the world. Our shallow boat had to steer slowly and carefully to avoid hitting corals; it is hard to imagine Captain Cook's challenge navigating through here.

After freeing the ship, Cook continued northward through treacherous waters. At the northeastern corner of Australia, the ship turned westward and sailed through the Torres Strait towards Indonesia. In Batavia (Jakarta) the ship was repaired but her crew became very ill from mosquito bites and bad food. The ship set sail but lost one third of her crew to malaria and food-borne diseases.

When Cook returned to London, he earned the respect and admiration of explorers and scientists. He also had an audience with King George III.

Cook led two more expeditions to the Southern Pacific. On the last voyage, when his ship was moored at Kealakekua Bay in Hawaii, a boat belonging to his ship was stolen by the local natives. Events deteriorated leading to an unfortunate attack during which Cook was killed.

(Captain Cook: The Life, Death and Legacy of History's Greatest Explorer by Vanessa Collingridge.)

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Cops to hold countrywide anti-rape rally today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Police will hold countrywide rallies today in a bid to create public awareness against rape and all sorts of violence against women.

The rallies will be held at 10am simultaneously, maintaining health safety rules and social distance, said a press release sent by Sohel Rana, assistant inspector general of Police Headquarters, yesterday.

Significant numbers of women, public representatives, teachers, imams of mosques and people from all walks of life will participate in the programmes, it added.

The participants will urge people to come forward to resist rape and violence against women. Leaflets will be distributed to raise awareness against the heinous crimes.

The programmes of every police beat (6,912 in total) will be broadcast on Facebook live.

Police Headquarters said police are working with professionalism to bring the perpetrators to book to ensure social order, peace and public security.

39,000 yaba pills seized from export cargo at airport

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of Aviation Security (AVSEC) recovered around 39,000 pieces of yaba tablets during a security screening at the export cargo of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on Thursday night.

The pills were found inside a consignment of garment items bound for Saudi Arabia, Group Captain AHM Touhid-ul Ahsan, director of the airport, told the media yesterday.

Further details of the recovery of the contraband pills could not be known yet.

Earlier on September 9, AVSEC officials and customs authorities at the airport conducted a drive at the export cargo village of the airport and seized 12.32kg amphetamine powder specially packed in a consignment of clothes for export.

A transnational syndicate is allegedly using Bangladesh as a route to smuggle amphetamine powder to other countries, after smuggling it from India, according to law enforcers.

They are using Dhaka airport and international courier service to send the powder out of the country.

Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) said this following an investigation.

Law enforcers so far managed to arrest eight people for their suspected involvement behind the smuggling, including the "mastermind" Abul Kalam Azad alias Buntay, a chemical businessman in the capital's Mitford.

By-polls to Dhaka-5, Naogaon-6 today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka-5 and Naogaon-6 constituencies are going to by-polls today with the participation of two major political parties -- Awami League and BNP.

EC sources said necessary measures to follow health guidelines have been taken during the by-elections amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Electronic Voting Machines will be used in both the by-polls which will be held from 9am to 5pm without any break.

Kazi Monirul Islam of AL, Salahuddin Ahmed of BNP, Meer Abdus Sabur of Jatiya Party, HM Ibrahim Bhuiyan of Gonofront, Ansar Rahman Shikdar of Bangladesh Congress and Arifur Rahman of National People's Party are competing in the Dhaka-5 by-polls.

The Dhaka-5 parliamentary seat fell vacant following the death of AL MP Habibur Rahman Mollah on May 6.

In Naogaon-6, Anwar Hossain from AL, Sheikh Md Rezaul Islam from BNP and Khandokar Intekhab Alam from National People's Party are contesting.

The seat fell vacant following the demise of AL MP Israfil Alam on July 27.

On September 3, the EC announced the by-election schedules for the two parliamentary constituencies.



After recent complaints against vendors asking exorbitant prices for potatoes, Directorate of National Consumers' Right Protection yesterday launched a drive at Old Dhaka's Farashganj and fined several wholesale potato shops for hiking prices and not putting up price lists. Although the wholesalers were supposed to sell potatoes for Tk 23 per kg, they were being sold for Tk 30-35. Earlier, authorities said initiatives will be taken to drop prices within a day or two. Sources said cultivation was hampered by flood, and farmers and traders are releasing potatoes slowly into the market to make more profit.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

DURGA PUJA AMID PANDEMIC

Hard times for rhythmic instrument makers

AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

With artisans busy making and repairing musical instruments, walking around many roads in Boro Kalibari, Boro Bazar and other areas in Mymensingh city, passers-by are usually greeted with a rhythmic sound around this time of the year, ahead of Durga Puja.

But not this year though. Due to the pandemic, the festival will be celebrated on a limited scale. As a result, there is less demand for orders for dhol, dhak (big drum), mridanga (a two-faced drum played with hands), khol, dholok, dugi, khamok, naal, tabla and khonjori.

Durga Puja, one of the biggest religious festivals of the Hindu community, will be held from October 22 to 26.

Visiting the areas recently, this correspondent saw that the artisans were worried and passing time in idle.

"Usually, orders for repairing old instruments and making new ones increase in the run up to Durga Puja," said 82-year-old Narayan Chandra Das, a veteran percussion instrument maker.

He said they hardly got orders this year. Narayan runs his workshop -- "Taal Torongo" -- in Boro Kalibari area with his son and grandson. "We have been out of work for more than five months and were hoping to cover our losses during the puja."

Narayan informed last year they had 30 orders just for dhak. This year, it's only eight for dhak and six for dhol so far.

Before, kirtan (devotional songs) performers or kirtaniyas, who perform at different temples during the puja, used to throng the workshops to repair their old and damaged instruments. They are also struggling to get work this time around.

The price of these musical instruments is almost same like last year. A dhak is being sold at Tk 8,000-12,000; khol at Tk 2,000-5,000 while dholok at Tk 2,000 -4,000.

Artisan Sandu Das of Garpara in Manikganj said he used to remain busy with making small rhythmic instruments like dugi, khamok, naal, tabla and khanjani round the year as people bought them during fairs and other festivals. "But sales almost dropped to zero this year due to the pandemic."



Two artisans working on a musical instrument ahead of the festival.

PHOTO: STAR

Ensure justice for all

Law minister urges judiciary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The judiciary will not get proper respect from people unless justice reaches them, said Law Minister Anisul Huq on Thursday.

He urged all concerned of the judiciary to work sincerely in this regard.

The minister made the comment while speaking as chief guest at a virtual meeting, organised on the occasion of inaugurating a four-storey building for the Chief Judicial Magistrate Court of Patuakhali in the afternoon.

The structure was made at a cost of Tk 26 crore.

"If the judiciary is developed, its independence will be strengthened. At the same time, the four state principles will be well established, the three state organs can function properly and democracy will be exercised rightly," he said.

"One of the targets of our state is to establish a society through democratic way where rule of law, human and fundamental rights, and economic and political equality will be ensured for all. The government's aim is to establish the rule of law in light of this constitutional commitment."

Patuakhali's District and Sessions Judge Rokhsana Parveen presided over the meeting. Kaniz Sultana, lawmaker elected from reserved seat, and law secretary Md Golam Sarwar and its joint secretary Bikash Kumar Saha, among others, spoke at the event.

Peacekeepers' safety, security imperative

Says Rabab Fatima at UN session

UNB, Dhaka

Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN Ambassador Rabab Fatima has reiterated the importance of ensuring safety and security of the peacekeepers.

She recognised the invaluable contribution of peacekeepers in saving people from the impacts of conflicts, and in tackling other unforeseeable challenges, such as the pandemic.

Ambassador Fatima was speaking at the General Debate of the Forth Committee of the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly on Thursday.

The ambassador also highlighted the importance of increased participation of women in the field of peace and security, including in senior positions.

She appreciated the continuation of work by the special political missions in the midst of Covid-19 and stressed greater and stronger efforts of the special envoy on Myanmar for implementing her mandate in addressing the root causes for the persecution of Rohingya; and facilitating their sustainable return to Myanmar.

Handmade bicycles right here in Bangladesh



Shaikat, founder of the initiative, with his handmade bicycle at the workshop in Mohammadpur.

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

FAISAL BIN IQBAL, from SHOUT

Despite coming from a civil engineering background, Md Abu Noman Shaikat found himself at the helm of Bikesmith, a bicycle enterprise where anyone can get a two-wheeler made according to their desired specifications.

Bikesmith, located at the capital's Mohammadpur, specialises in building hand-made custom bikes for people of all ages. Shaikat himself oversees all operations as the shop's founder. Concerned about unethical practices in the engineering field, he decided to entirely focus on his bike shop since its establishment.

"I believe ergonomics is essential for bikes," says Shaikat. "Physique and body structure vary from person to person. When buying a bicycle back in 2011, I noticed how the lower part of my body was longer than the upper. Hence, I needed a bike with a smaller frame and handles close to me."

"Unfortunately, most bikes in our country follow European standards, and it's difficult to find something that matched my requirements. This is when I decided to build a bike for my needs. At first, it

was something I did just for myself. Later, I started building such custom bikes for others, and that's how Bikesmith was born in 2014," he says.

Bikesmith provides its customers the opportunity to innovate and visualise their own designs. The shop then takes the desired requirements and gets started on the build. Prices vary according to design, and can cost as low as Tk 16,500 to all the way up to six-digit figures.

"I want to see Bangladesh produce the highest number of hand-made bikes in the world," comments Shaikat. "Enthusiasm is needed for this industry to take off. I plan on increasing the shop's production rate within five to 10 years."

Regarding the current cycling scene in Bangladesh, Shaikat says, "Things are looking good and will get better in the future. But in a country where people are struggling to manage necessities, I think the enthusiasm for cycling can wait."

Shaikat also suggests that the government should reconsider the high import tax rate on bicycle parts. "Right now, I think the rate is around 73 percent, which is too costly," he says.