

asian diary BY ARJUNA



Making Hay while Snow Falls

IN Harbin, the capital city of Heilongjiang province in the northeastern part of China, residents used to dread the coming of winter. Who wouldn't? In this coldest part of the nation, the winter months bring in temperatures that sink to a bone-chilling low of 50 degrees below zero centigrade...

equivalent to my whole year's earnings from the farm," he proudly tells people. The windfall has also been shared by many of Tian's neighbours. About one-third of the farmers in my village work at the festival," he says.

And they simply find the experience out of this world and never seem to get their fill of the sledding," Mr Song said. The activities are not confined to fun and frolic. Costume fairs, trade exhibits, conferences and other economic projects are annually planned by the Harbin office of industrial products...

China Features, the nation's exclusive features service, helps in publicizing the festival. According to one of its reports, the yearly event showcases the Chinese's famed hospitality. For instance, perhaps out of gratitude for the benefits to the people, a tea plant director provides free accommodations for three days during the festival...

But all this started humbly enough as the brainchild of a Harbin resident in 1963. As Mr Zhang describes it, "he first poured water in a bucket, which quickly froze. He left a hollow space in the ice for a candle or to hold flowers in place. The bright colours of the candles and the flowers were perfectly complemented by the pure whiteness of the ice surrounding them."

"I used to regard cities like Hangzhou and Suzhou as the most beautiful places in China," says Anne de L'ain, a French tourist. "Now I tell my friends not to miss the mid-winter show in Harbin. Anyone who has ever seen the ice lanterns here can't help but fall in love with them. They are simply marvelous."

To further entertain tourists, such new activities as hunting, skiing and fishing have been added to the wintry itinerary. Harbin is no longer a deserted, bleak place in winter, as the festival gate receipts confirm. "During the '93 festival, we hosted more than two million domestic and foreign tourists, and our city's total population is only five million," says Mr Zhang.

The people of Harbin have indeed turned ice and snow into a fortune. Now when they talk about "snowbanks" in Harbin, they are not only referring to piles of snow, but also to the piles of money the snow can make for them. And their faces light up like — well, like ice, lanterns at festival time.

LADY Clementine Churchill once hurled a dish of spinach at her husband Winston because he did not accept her advice. My wife did not resort to such gesture of virulence but politely suggested once that I should not advise her on culinary issues as my job was only eating and not preparing food.

As an advisor, I may not have added to vices, but have not yet been able to shower advice of some effectiveness. Raja Habu Chandra wanted to cover the surface of earth to get rid of dusts. At the advice of Gobi he just invented shoes or chappals to keep feet free from dusts.

Like others, I do not like to flatter or advise on personal issues. A small girl in the United States earned the love of president Lincoln by advising him to maintain beard which could cover his deeply contoured cheeks. But my boss has a lovely photogenic face, lying somewhere between football and American basket ball in shape.

Advisors everywhere are a special breed, staying between beasts and birds like bats. They are something like shrimps or potatoes, could be used both as curry or outlets and be used in cooking cucumbers. In ancient and medieval times, powerful potentates and princes indulged in the luxury of appointing intelligent and knowledgeable people as their advisors and courtiers. Versificers were called poet laureates, Milton and Friedman were best known advisor-poet laureates.

Distant Drum M N Mustafa

leave it to his female beloved to get elated. Poet Hafiz in his romantic sojourn elevated this beauty spot of his beloved to the apex of spiritual ecstasy when he said: Agar aan turk-i-Siraji Badast ard dil-t-mara Bakhtaley hindbaksh baksham Samarkhand ba Bukharara.

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French, Voltaire was provided bread and board free. The advisor failed to demarcate the inner and outer limits of his advice. Once, while correcting the Emperor's French poem, Voltaire unwittingly changed some words which annoyed the Emperor. For laying commoner's hand on royal verse, Voltaire's services were dispensed with and he was asked to leave the palace.

As always happened with most advisors, Birbal wanted to go down in history not as a court jester but with glory as one sword-brandishing general. At his request, the Emperor appointed Birbal as general and sent him to fight in a battle. But here Birbal's sword proved weaker than his tongue and he fell unamused at the enemy's hand.

As regards my claim as being the half advisor, allow me to quote Poet Ghalib who was taken to custody by one Colonel Brown during the Sepoy Mutiny. Asked whether he was a Muslim, Ghalib replied in the affirmative, asserting that it was only half. Asked as to how he said that as a true Muslim he did not eat pork, but he drank wine which reduced him to a half Muslim.

During the Polish revolution few years ago, the government and the trade union leaders used to sit across a big table to negotiate. Its diameter was 20 feet. Asked as to why the table was so big, it was said that the world record of distance of spitting was 18 feet. If the negotiators spit at each other in anger, they could at best reach up to 18 feet, leaving at least 2 feet safe zone.

I am happy that my boss does not compose poem and I am not required or able to correct them. During the Polish revolution few years ago, the government and the trade union leaders used to sit across a big table to negotiate. Its diameter was 20 feet. Asked as to why the table was so big, it was said that the world record of distance of spitting was 18 feet.

I like to flourish in the safer two feet zone as an advisor, seeking no unwanted glory like Birbal or humiliation like that of Voltaire. As regards my claim as being the half advisor, allow me to quote Poet Ghalib who was taken to custody by one Colonel Brown during the Sepoy Mutiny.

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How Much is a Word Worth?

Continued from page 8 ing and viewers hearing without listening. Who bothers to hear long declamatory speeches of Senecan Tragedy on TV in the 90s! Let's lay down some trivia on brevity on their table (if they take care in the PMs coverage henceforth).

his memorable address at Gettysburg in 268 words. * It took only 1322 words in the Declaration of Independence to get the Whole America started. * George Washington delivered the shortest inaugural address of any President — only 135 words to state his aims for the new nation.



The Quatuor Ludwig's performance at the American School, Barulhara on 31st January was arranged by the Alliance Francaise de Dhaka and the Embassy of France.

President of the United States. His inaugural speech contained more than 9000 words. Standing in the rain during this lengthy harangue, Harrison caught pneumonia and died soon after. So listen to what the modern teacher says: Be brief and you can claim to be like the father of your country; get too windy, and it may be the death of you, in one way or another.

Because we all, more or less (like it or not), are in the business of words. Fasting in the month of Ramadan is widely practiced. More than 80 per cent of the respondents do it in a varying extent. 47 per cent were found to fast 30 days and 40 per cent with intermittent gaps.

Religious Attitudes and Religiosity

Continued from page 8 women, the men in a large scale supported it. About 72 per cent of the respondents answered affirmatively. The nature of occupation is found to influence the extent of positive response in statistical terms.

The history of our Constitution shows that one of its founding principles — secularism — was abrogated and Islam has been incorporated as the state religion. However, there was large controversy that took place on this change.

As modes of punishment for crimes, practices like sawing will take care of his blind mother, educate his children to be honest and intelligent like their father. Even if she has to do manual labour for the rest of her life, she will fulfil all his dreams, duties and unfulfilled debts of life but she will never remarry anybody else.

Attitude towards women's leadership in politics is mixed. While 54 percent like it, the rest express disliking. The variable, occupation is related significantly in statistical terms to this response.

The Sultan Spares Shehrazade for One More Night The soldiers arrive to take Shehrazade to the executioner. The Sultan's appetite for the story remains unfulfilled. He spares Shehrazade's life for one day more so that she can complete the next night the story of the trader and let him know as what the genie does when the trader comes back honestly for his death after 40 days.

Princes Shehrazade stops narrating the story hearing the Elan of "Allah-o-Akbar" with the first rays of the morning sun. The Sultan cannot believe that such a great woman can ever exist. He spares Shehrazade's life for one day more so that she can complete the next night the story of the trader and let him know as what the genie does when the trader comes back honestly for his death after 40 days.

hands or throwing stones to the perpetrator have been opposed by more than 65 per cent of respondents. Such opposition is more registered among those pursuing white collar professions. The body of religious belief incorporates wide range. It encompasses both the life in this world and the one believed to exist beyond this.



One may like to relate the belief in fate to the notion of orientalism in broader sense. About 40 per cent respondents visit Mazaar either occasionally or regularly. Among the less educated visiting Mazaar is more frequent and the statistical relation is significant. 60 per cent respondents said 'no' or showed indifference to the question whether the Kadiani should be proclaimed non-Muslim.

Attitude towards women's leadership in politics is mixed. While 54 percent like it, the rest express disliking. The variable, occupation is related significantly in statistical terms to this response. Among the students and housewives, it has been welcome and opposite among the white collar professionals, working class and the religious preachers.

dropping on her and resorting to scare tactics against her boyfriend. When he kidnaps her daughter that is the last straw and Alexandra has to take a stand. Recently the activities of few NGOs came under attack in different villages. A number of school sheds run by NGOs and trees planted with the support of NGOs were set ablaze or uprooted on different occasions.

Pir-o-Murshad's Divine Advice

The honest trader goes to his Pir-o-Murshad, for guidance, and consolation, knowing that he is to die after 40 days at the hands of the genie — since he had innocently killed the newborn baby of the genie by throwing a seed of dried date in the well — the residence of the genie.

Sitting in a graveyard — Pir-o-Murshad gives him a philosophy of death and life and makes him realize that one is born to die — as one can see in all the graves around. He guides him to complete all his duties before death — pay all his debts to his business creditors — be honest to his wife, children and blind mother.

The loyal trader in a high pitch human drama and greatness releases his wife of the marriage contract and gives her the Mehar (dower) with an assurance that she can marry again after his death.

Television Story of the Trader and the Genie



Television

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Viewing Video

Table with columns for NAME, TYPE, CAST. Lists 11 video titles such as Sioux City, Jason's Lyric, Dangerous Indiscretion, Natural Born Killer, Society, Carnosaur-II, Balkan Runner, CIA Trackdown, The Magnificent Seven, Return Of The Seven.

HINDI

Table with columns for NAME, TYPE, CAST. Lists 7 Hindi video titles such as Karun Arjun, Gunehgar, Ab Insaf Hoga, Dir: Harish Shah, Dir: Vinod Shah, Mus: Anand Milind, Dal Pati, Dir: Mani Ratnam, Pro: Rajam Lal, Mus: Ilaya Raja, Kanoon Aur Saza, Dir: Raj Bharat, Dir: Gulshan Kumar, Pro: Gulshan Kumar, Mus: Anu Malik, Face To Face.

ENGLISH

Table with columns for NAME, TYPE, CAST. Lists 11 English video titles such as Sioux City, Jason's Lyric, Dangerous Indiscretion, Natural Born Killer, Society, Carnosaur-II, Balkan Runner, CIA Trackdown, The Magnificent Seven, Return Of The Seven.