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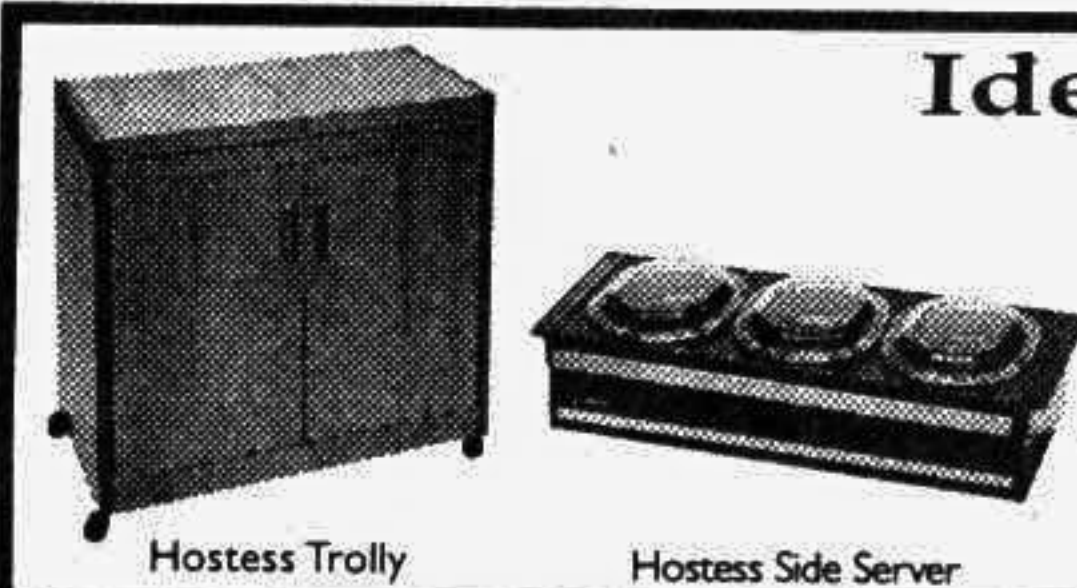
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# Ain't it amazing, whole city is shopping

By Mir A Zaman

Stifling traffic congestion, and mad rush at the colourfully-decorated and brightly-lit shopping malls define the last few evenings of Ramadan in the city. For one reason or the other, the shopping streak almost inevitably stretches well into the early hours of Eid day. Every year when other parts of the capital are in silent slumber, shopping malls like, Eastern Plaza, Alpina Plaza, Nahar Plaza, Dhanmondi Plaza and many others remain wide awake.

"It's amazing. It seems the whole city has forgotten to sleep. At two-thirty in the morning, you still have the rush, especially at the shoe stores," Imtiaz, a senior officer at a private enterprise, recollected experience of late-night shopping at New Elephant Road.

People like him almost deliberately keep something left for the last minute.

"Even if I'm through with my shopping on the eve of Eid, I make it a point to go there at around midnight. It's fun."

Most people, however, make it a point to have things under control well before that. Many leave the capital to spend the Eid vacation with families in the country side. It's the sooner the better for them. There are other considerations, too.

"The best time to do shopping is during the first two weeks of Ramadan. The actual rush begins from the third week. Before that you can do shopping without having to worry about things like where to park your car, the infuriating traffic congestion, etc.," said the young housewife. "Besides, you get a good bargain."

Beyond doubt, her wisdom comes from experience.

"The market actually heats up after the 15th of Ramadan. In the first couple of weeks, it is more or less quiet," said one



Wait till I grow up

Eid shopping is fun for adults, but this child fancies a thing or two too, as she eyes up the colourful bridal dress.

salesman at one of the shops at the New Market. "There are a few who, to avoid the mad rush later on, do their shopping in the first two weeks."

The shop, an outlet of sort for a consortium of local textile mills, sells sari, lungi, gamchha etc., and attracts people buying clothes for zakat.

"It's a fixed price shop and we can bet on quality," the man continued.

A salesman's cliché, obviously.

"They are consummate liars," said a young teacher of a private university, indignation pronounced in her tone. "A few

months back I bought a sari from a shop in Eastern Plaza. The salesman had said he would take the sari back if there was any problem with the colour or the material."

She wore the sari and went to a party. When she came back home she found out she had become a photocopy of the sari. Colour from the sari spread all over her body."

What followed was even more embarrassing. When she took the sari to the shop, let alone getting a new one or her money back, the salesman simply denied having made such a promise.

"They were so rude. Ironically, the name of the shop is *Mone Rekho* (Remember Me) ... you bet I will," fumed the young woman.

Such setback is not rare. Yet, it's always the sari that tops the list of the Eid-shoppers. *Shalwar-kameez*, *punjabi-pajama*, and in recent times, exotic fashion-wearers like *lehenga*, are not far behind.

A *lehenga*, priced at a staggering 125,000 taka, became talk of the town for a few days earlier this month. Not everyone fancies buying such an expensive dress for the Eid. However, the boutiques in the city

have, more or less, had brisk business, so far.

"This year it has so far been excellent," said a salesman at a boutique in Dhanmondi. "We are quite happy."

An 'expert' buyer was actually appreciative of this year's market.

"Strangely, I have so far had a peaceful shopping," said the young housewife. "This year, I didn't have to bargain for long. It seems all they want is to sell."

The street-side markets with a big clientele in the lower-middle and lower class of the society had a roaring business.

"We sell dresses worth 25,000 taka a day," said the 'salesman' at one 'shop' in the market on the walkway along the Chandni Chowk under the foot-bridge. "Sometimes, it's a lot more than that."

His was not the only shop doing 'good' business. Even the small ones on the pavement along the Hawkers Market and Gausia Market have had their shares of brisk business.

"Everyday I sell goods worth four thousand taka," said Ronnie. "That means a profit of around one thousand taka."

The traders like him buy three-piece (*shalwar, kameez and urna*) and two-piece (without *urna*) from Gausia Market.

"We usually ask three hundred taka for the three-piece set. We settle for 150 or 160," he shared his trade secret.

Ronnie, who used to work for a studio and was involved in production of the super-hit movie *Aab-e-Hayat* before quitting after a difference of opinion with the studio owner, has no complaints.

"I earn enough for myself and the family," he said. "I hope I will be able to buy some new clothes for my sons."

He has got two, one is three and the other just born. For them, he plans to get the best. He will surely have many shops to choose from.

# Unceremonial burial for DU's proctorial rules?

By Mahbub Zaman

Believe it or not, a male student of Dhaka University has to seek prior permission of the dean concerned even to discuss an academic issue with his female mate. If the boy makes any attempt to talk to a girl without permission, he has to pay a fine.

Again, a student is not allowed to play a musical instrument during university hours, if she or he has not secured prior permission to do that.

Right to call a strike or joining it called by others?

Simply out of question. Those who call the strike would be expelled from the university and those who would join the strike abstaining from classes would just lose their scholarships or stipends.

Well, the said provisions are still there in the Dhaka University's Proctorial System framed 78 years back. So what if the world has changed beyond recognition since then, some of these rules have not been amended since 1973.

The good news for the young students of the day is that the rules concerned had never been applied. The question remains, what is the use of keeping them in the rules book. Why not update them before a new millennium begins in less than a year?

"Students are not even familiar with rules that may still have some relevance to maintaining discipline on the campus. These rules are seldom applied even though there is an office for just that purpose," said a senior teacher while talking to The Daily Star.

Most of the students and teachers of the university do not even know the contents of the proctorial rules, which are a part of the Dhaka University Calendar Part II.

Section (5) rule-IV of the of the "Proctorial System" says "No clubs or societies or student organisations other than recognised unions or associations shall be allowed to be formed."

"No parties or entertainment shall be held within the premises of the university nor shall a student play musical instrument or use a loud speaker

in the university premises during the university hours without the previous permission of the proctor."

A breach of this rule will be treated as breach of discipline. The reality is far from the rules.

There are at least 12 student organisations active on the DU campus. Processions and rallies are an integral part of the day-to-day life of the university. A group of 10 to 15 students even brought out a procession recently demanding release of notorious movie mogul Aziz Mohammad Bhai.

Section 6 of the rule prohibits students from calling or joining strikes. But strikes called by student organisations and sometimes by ordinary students are also a common feature of the university. No body bothers to attend classes when a strike is called, because somebody is always putting the main gates under lock and key.

Needless to say, nobody has ever been punished for enforcing a strike in the university.

Section-7 of the Rules bans any meeting other than those organised by the university or by different departments of the university, without prior permission of the proctor.

Failure to obey this rule could also lead to expulsion. But nobody has ever been expelled for this, although meetings and processions are the order of the day all over the campus.

Section-5/ rule-VI is supposed to deter vandalism. The proctor is supposed to take suitable action against any student who wilfully damages, disfigures or destroys university properties or garden or does not observe the rules for facilitating movement within the university and for keeping the university neat and clean and for proper parking of cycles and vehicles."

But it seems proctors have never seen any student doing any such thing, even though university property including classroom furniture, windows etc., are regularly smashed. Not so long ago, burning of cars and

other vehicles passing through the campus was not such an uncommon occurrence.

The Proctorial System section 2, Rule (I) says that the proctor is responsible for discipline and conduct of students within the university campus outside the halls. According to Section-5 (II) the proctor has the power to impose a fine up to Tk 25 at a time for a breach of discipline or misconduct in the university outside the halls.

According to the same section if the proctor is of opinion that a fine of Tk 25 is not sufficient he has the power to expel a student from the university for a period not exceeding six months to be counted from the date of the order.

If, however, the proctor thinks the case requires expulsion for more than six months, then would refer the case to the VC for action.

Belatedly, the Dhaka University authorities have taken an initiative to change the nearly obsolete proctorial rules. The university authorities have formed a six-member committee in an emergency syndicate meeting to suggest possible reforms in the rules.

Headed by Prof. Abdul Momin Chowdhury, the other members of the committee are Prof. Kazi Shahidullah, Prof. A.F.M. Yusuf Haider, Prof. A.M. Nur-Un-Nabi, Dr. Shahid Akhter Hussain and Dr. Mahmuda Islam.

Talking to The Daily Star, Prof. Monwar Uddin Ahmed of Economics department said that some sections of the existing proctorial regulations were really ridiculous and there was no positive spirit in the rules.

"The regulations should be rewritten to suit the needs of students," the psychology and opinion of general students," he said, "only then will it be possible to have a congenial educational atmosphere on the campus."

He suggested that the rules would be more effective if all the teachers were concerned with the proctorial system. "We have to change our attitude rather than change laws," he said.

# DMCH all set to get burn unit

By Naimul Haq

The Dhaka Medical College Hospital is going to have a 50-bed burn unit to be set up at a cost of Tk 6.84 crore. The unit will start functioning in about six months, official sources said.

The money for the unit was allocated in April last year.

Initially, a three-storey building for the burn unit will be constructed near the new OT complex at DMCH, doctors said. The country now has only five surgeons to treat burn patients. The number of doctors is far below the requirement, said Dr S L Sen, a consultant plastic surgeon at the hospital.

The existing eight-bed burn unit is very poorly equipped and it never received proper attention despite such a high incidence of burn cases. Most of these are burns from acid and fire," he told The Daily Star.

"The unit lacks necessary facilities and for this we are unable to provide proper treatment to many patients. In fact, we have been trying to develop the services for the past 10 years but fund constraint did not allow us to do so."

Giving statistics, Dr Sen said, "During 1992-97 over 10,700 cases of acute burn injuries were treated at DMCH, the only place for such treatment in the country. Facilities for plastic surgery in the private sector are very limited."

Meanwhile, the Unicef and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) are working to set up a foundation which will coordinate all aspects of helping acid attack victims in Bangladesh.

Dr John Morrison, a Unicef consultant, said, "We are in the process of establishing a foundation which will coordinate

and work on the problems of acid attack victims in Bangladesh. Once the foundation is established, it will start raising funds from home and abroad to help the acid burn victims in particular."

Dr Morrison added, "The focus of the foundation would be raising funds to help acid burn victims, improve medical facilities for their treatment, and lastly initiate social mobilisation to educate people to prevent accidents from fire."

Talking to The Daily Star, plastic surgery specialist Prof D Paolo G Morselli from Italy said, "The field of plastic surgery needs desperate focus in Bangladesh. We are ready to train local young doctors."

Morselli, a seven-member surgery team to provide free treatment mostly to burn in-

jury patients at DMCH. During their two-week stay here, they performed plastic surgery on more than 400 patients and left behind a lot of equipment and materials for the department concerned.

"There is no need to send patients abroad. If properly equipped and trained, doctors here can provide full-fledged treatment. We can provide training to local doctors," said Morselli who was on his sixth visit to Bangladesh.

On an average, five acute cases of burn come to DMCH everyday. But most of them cannot be admitted due to lack of bed and facilities.

"We felt the need for strengthening the capacity of the hospital and already arranged to train doctors as a part of technology transfer," he added.

# Opposition eyes series of post-Eid hartals

From Page 1

before the elections.

The opposition parties also gave a 30-day ultimatum to the government for accepting the demands or face tough street agitation. The deadline expires February 5.

Some of the leaders at the meeting suggested a series of agitation programmes including hartals to resist the pourashava elections but others left those for further review today.

The proposed programmes included a four-day non-stop hartal across the country from the day before the pourashava elections until those are over, completed sources told. The Daily Star last night in such an eventuality, countrywide hartals would be observed from February 22 to 25, the sources explained.

Besides, the sources said, the meeting also discussed proposal for a nationwide hartal on January 26, the last day for submission of nomination papers for the pourashava polls. Suggestions for another hartal came to force the CEC to quit. "It could be sometime after the Eid," one source said.

Another source hinted that the hartal of January 26 might be announced today while the rest after the Eid-ul-Fitr.

The meeting also proposed that other programmes like laying siege to EC, street demonstrations, public rallies and processions also be taken up, the sources said.

M. Shamsul Islam and Anwar Zahid of BNP, Kazi Zafar Ahmed and Kazi Feroz Rashid of JP, Quamaruzzaman and ATM Azharul Islam of Jamaat and Fazlul Haq Amin and others of IOJ attended yesterday's joint meeting at Kazi Zafar's Banani residence in the morning.

Top leaders in the four-party opposition alliance also gave their instant reactions to the EC announcement of the election schedules.

In a statement, BNP secretary general said the announcement came ignoring the opposition demands which once again proved that the government wanted to win the pourashava polls with the "controversial" CEC in charge.

"Unless our demands are accepted, we'll be forced to boycott and resist the polls and launch an out-governments agitation along with the people," Bhuiyan said.

JP chief HM Ershad, in a similar statement, also criticised the "unilateral" announcement of polls schedule and "indifference" to the four demands.

"The JP can't participate in the elections because the government has destroyed the atmosphere for the polls by rejecting the demands."

Jamaat leader Quamaruzzaman, talking to The Daily Star, was also critical of the EC move for going ahead with the pourashava elections. "We can't accept the poll schedule..."

Fazlul Haq Amin of IOJ also made a similar statement.

# Independent commission for privatisation suggested

By Staff Correspondent

A national independent commission should be formed to review the success and failure of privatisation process in the country.

The commission should include representatives from major political parties and both the private and public sector enterprises.

The suggestions were made at the concluding session of a seminar on privatisation in the city yesterday. The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) organised the seminar at CIRDP auditorium.

The reports of the commission should be presented and debated in the parliament and across the country to ensure full exposure and support to its recommendations.

The keynote paper titled "Outcome of Privatisation: The search for a policy" was prepared by CPD Executive Chairman Prof Rehman Sobhan and M M Akash of Dhaka University. The paper was presented by the latter.

The speakers observed that privatisation process in the country did not progress despite a favourable policy.

They pointed out that when a party remained in power, it supported privatisation and when out of power it opposed the same.

The debate on outcome of privatisation will continue in the future, they said. Both the public and private sectors have successes and failures in the country. So there is no clear cut formula to be followed by the government.

Prof. Rehman Sobhan said, "The result of privatisation of industries was very disappointing as crores of taka were drained out closing the factories and throwing large number of people out of work."

He underscored the need for a parliamentary probe into the matter to reveal what has happened and where the money has gone.

Shahidullah Chowdhury of Trade Union Centre said the government should modernise the industries before privatising them. "Because no body is ready to buy an old industry incurring losses over the years."

He blamed the policies of both nationalisation and denationalisation without any assessment of their consequences.

"When the government nationalised the factories, those were not prepared for it, and when it denationalised, those were not capable of competing in a market economy," Shahidullah said. "They had to compete with world famous companies."

M M Akash, giving a brief review of the performance of industries still under public sector and those already denationalised, said the performance of both the sectors was 'mixed'.

"The available data do not provide any robust evidence that privatised enterprises im-

prove their performance," he said.

Referring to a study, Akash said that out of 498 enterprises disinvested by the government in 1993, 133 were found closed, 141 not traceable, 174 were not operational and only 214 were operational.

He stressed the need for further study on ways to improve performance of the privatised units and whether existing public sector enterprises could be reformed at all.

The concluding session was presided over by Prof. Rehman Sobhan. The discussants included Jamal Uddin Ahmed, former deputy prime minister, K Z Islam of Nirman International, Binayak Sen of BIDS, Shahidullah Chowdhury of Trade Union Centre, S M Zakaria of Privatisation Board, Rashed Khan Menon of Workers Party, C A F Dowlah of the World Bank, Prof. Anisur Rahman and labour leader Abul Bashar.

# Private cargo ready to take off

By Special Correspondent

Bangladesh's first private cargo air service takes off finally either today or tomorrow, carrying loads for Bangkok, civil aviation sources said.

The Bismillah airlines, a joint venture with a Thai company, would carry dry and perishable goods between Dhaka and Bangkok initially.

Antonov -12, a Soviet-made transport aircraft, has been leased by Bismillah from Russia to operate its services.

The civil aviation authorities gave the clearance to the company to fly on the new route on Wednesday, the sources said.

It had received permission in 1997 to operate from Dhaka to the Gulf and former Soviet Central Asian states.

But it failed to obtain clear-

ance from the Indian authorities to fly over its territory with an aircraft capable of air dropping from its ramp. They said the aircraft must go through a check by Indian officials.

India imposed restrictions on such aircraft since dropping of a consignment of arms by a Latvian-registered AN-12 cargo aircraft over Purulia in West Bengal in 1996.

Bismillah later abandoned its plans for operating on Gulf and Central Asian routes as it found that landing in India for checking would add extra costs, sources said.

But it would not have such restrictions from Myanmar which prompted the company to choose the Dhaka -Bangkok route.

# Cabinet talks President's JS speech text

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday held a special meeting of her cabinet to scrutinise the draft of the presidential speech to be delivered in Jatiya Sangsad later this month.

President Justice Shahuddin Ahmed is scheduled to address the JS when the country's 7th parliament goes into its first session of this year on January 25.

During the two-and-a-half-hour meeting, the ministers and the state ministers discussed the sections of the draft speech dealing with the performances of their respective ministries.

The PM assigned the bureaucrats concerned with responsibilities of making a final draft of the speech in the light of the discussions held at the meeting. Prime Minister will give her final approval to the draft after it is re-written accordingly, Cabinet sources said.

After the PM's approval, the draft speech will be sent to the President.

# Pop star's wife kills herself

Farida Begum 26, wife of pop singer Ferdous Wahid, allegedly committed suicide at her Shamoli residence here Wednesday night, reports UNB.

Police said, she killed herself by hanging from a ceiling fan. Wahid was at his mother's residence at Dhanmondi during the incident.

Hearing the news yesterday morning, Ferdous informed the matter to the police. Police recovered the body of Farida, a mother of two daughters, and sent it to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

The cause behind the suicide could not be ascertained immediately. An UD case was filed with the police in this connection.

# Clinton trial starts to roll

WASHINGTON, Jan 14: Prosecutors called for President Bill Clinton's removal from office here Thursday, opening their case in the Senate impeachment trial, reports AFP.

Henry Hyde, one of 13 prosecutors appointed by the House of Representatives, opened oral arguments with a general outline of the case against Clinton.

The 100 Senators are acting as jurors in the trial of Clinton on charges of perjury and obstruction of Justice stemming from the Monica Lewinsky affair.

The prosecutors have up to 24 hours over three days to buttress the charges in two articles of impeachment that the House passed last month.

The President's defense team is to open its presentation — of equal length to the House's — next Tuesday, the same day Clinton is scheduled to deliver his annual "State of the Union" speech to Congress.

No session is to be held on Monday, a US federal holiday. Senators sat in silence as US chief Justice William Rehnquist opened the hearing and the Senate's chaplain offered a prayer.

House Judiciary Committee Chairman Henry Hyde continued to press for witnesses on the eve of opening arguments in the Senate trial, telling reporters that the 13-member prosecution team was debating whether to seek testimony from

Clinton.

"I think we're all interested in hearing from the president as a witness," said the Illinois Republican. "I don't know anyone who wouldn't be interested. The question is whether we should call him or not and that hasn't been resolved."

White House aides said Clinton was unlikely to take the stand voluntarily, and it was unclear if the Senate had the power to compel his testimony.

White House spokesman Jim Kennedy said the House prosecutors were trying to impose their will on the Senate and defy "the bipartisan spirit which has characterised the Senate's conduct of the trial."

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