

Eid Special

Let Them Smile on Eid Day

by Kazi Aulad Hossain

There are numerous rich, wealthy and well-to-do persons in our country who can each very easily afford to present a new set of dress or at least a shirt or "panjabi" to many of our unfortunate, indigent children/adults before appearance of the Shawal crescent.

IMMEDIATELY after a month-long fasting during the lunar month of holy Ramadan Muslims all over the world celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr, the greatest Muslim religious festival, with the appearance of the crescent moon of Shawal. But there is one striking feature which must be taken into careful consideration and that striking feature is that Muslims become mirthful and start celebrating the Eid festival only after they have formally offered their deepest gratitude and thanks to Benign Allah through offering two "rakats" of Eid-ul-Fitr congregational salat (prayer) for enabling them to observe 'Siam' for full 30 days during the preceding month of holy Ramadan. The literal meaning of the word 'Eid' is joy or happiness and to many Muslims such joy or mirth knows no bound. The merry making should, however, under no circumstances cross the limit of

decorum, decency and discipline for Islam does not approve of in discipline in the name of religion.

This Eid unlike Eid-ul-Azha is called Eid-ul-Fitr because it is incumbent on all well to do Muslims to pay an amount of money at a prescribed rate to the poor and the indigent in the society so that they can also celebrate Eid in a better way. There are people, not few in number, who from the beginning of the month of Ramadan start thinking of festivity connected with Eid, and preparation of delicious dishes on Eid day. Matter relating to celebration of Eid 'in a befitting manner' all on a sudden becomes a very important topic of discussion for such persons. This is however, contrary to the teaching of Siam (fasting) and spirit of Islam.

There are millions of helpless and poor people in Bangladesh and we have also

rich and wealthy persons in our midst. We have side by side persons in our country who were born with golden spoon in their mouths. When a millionaire/billionaire or a tycoon tries to please his spouse or consort on the eve of Eid day by presenting a beautiful and attractive necklace of gold studded with precious gems like diamond and ruby, does he ever think for a moment that there are millions of naked, half-naked, ill-fed and ill-educated children in this poor country who will not even have the good luck to put on a new shirt on the ensuing Eid day? I humbly feel they do not have time to do so. We owe them a duty and that cannot be properly discharged through payment of a few chips in shape of 'fitra' to the famished and ill-clad children or half-fed poor persons standing in a queue at the entrance of the community mosque or in the outskirts of 'Eidgah' wearing a

melancholy look.

The grand edifice of Islam stands on five strong pillars viz: (1) Kalima (Faith), (2) Salat (Namaz), (3) Siam (Fasting), (4) Zakat (Poor Due), and (5) Hadj (Pilgrimage). Almighty Allah will, however, appreciate performance of a Muslim more who would help construct the said edifice of Islam on the said five pillars in a better way, who would help beautify and decorate the edifice, and last but not the least, who would help implement the spirit of Islam to Benign Allah's satisfaction in his own life as well in the lives of other fellow Muslims as enjoined by Lord Creator through the aforesaid five great Pillars of Islam.

Let us divert our attention for a moment to Ayat 7 of Sura Hadid (Iron) of the Holy Qur'an where Benign Allah says in clear terms:

Believe in Allah
And His apostle
And spend (in charity)
Out of the (substance)
Whereof He has made you
Heirs. For those of you
Who believe and spend
(in charity), — for them
Is a great Reward.

The dictionary meaning of the word charity is disposition to do good to others. A wealthy person's wealth actually belongs to Almighty Allah and in the same way a moneyed man's money belongs to Allah. The wealthy man or the moneyed man is simply its trustee on behalf of Allah Gafur-ul-Rahim. He must give a portion of it for the benefit of the needy.

There are numerous rich, wealthy and well-to-do persons in our country who can each very easily afford to present a new set of dress or at least a shirt or 'panjabi' to many of our unfortunate, indigent children/adults before appearance of the Shawal crescent. And in that case these unfortunate people will not only smile on Eid day, they will be happy and joyous also on that day of days.



Can we not make her smile?

— Star photo

Socialising Effect of Eid

by Abu Imran

Besides the socialising effect, the economic effect of Eid is no less important. This time, the business community expected that the turnover/transaction centring Eid would be around 1200 (twelve hundred) crore taka. This big amount of money pumped into the market would create unthinkable scope for economic uplift like job creation, income generation, more profit, circulation of money etc. etc. meaning a temporary boom in the economy. This money would have been lying idle otherwise.

ALMOST all societies have some kinds of festivities and festivals to break the monotony of life. This is done by observing a particular day or days in enjoyment, merry-making etc. For example, new year's eve (1st January) is celebrated the world over, but sometimes in a manner that is not desirable since it causes untold miseries to many. As soon as the clock strikes past 12 midnight, many people, particularly the young ones drink, dance, even go wild, commit violence. On this new year's eve, even in Bangladesh report of violence, eve-teasing etc. were heard. Such behaviour is quite contrary to the spirit and essence of having a change, merry-making or enjoyment.

Unlike the above, festivity in Muslim society is observed in highly solemn and dignified manner ensuring happiness to all and inconvenience to none. And this has to be, because all the festivities have religious base. And where there is tinge of religion, there is little change of devil influence and hence little or no evil. Eid is one of the greatest festivals of the Muslims. It is preceded by the month-long fasting during which period Muslims undergo a rigorous training of self-restraint, self-denial to obtain highest form of piety by abstaining from food, drink, sex and all such deeds as may be deemed as evil from dusk to dawn everyday. The underlying objective is to help live the faithfuls a pious life then and for the next eleven months in line with the month-long training and do greater good to the greater number to bring peace and happiness in the society. Eid being the day of ending the fast, it gives special pleasure to

them following a month-long rigorous routine. Eid means happiness, but happiness with a difference. Here there is no scope to go wild or vulgar because the day starts with compulsory two rakat special Eid prayer after sunrise. This is a sort of thanksgiving prayer to Allah. People from all walks of life congregate in big fields to say their prayer in their best dresses according to their means. Particularly the children have nice and colourful dresses and seem very happy. And the system is such that almost all people are made to afford something new for them and their families.

This Eid is called Eid-ul-Fitr or the Eid in which a certain quantity of main cereal or its equivalent in cash is required by the haves to be paid to the have-nots before Eid prayer so that the poorest of the poor can also have some modest dish on Eid day and share the joys of the occasion with others. Besides this, the rich also pay their zakat money (a sort of wealth tax) to the poor which help them to meet their extra needs so much so that all seem to appear in good and clean dresses in the prayer field. The two Rakat prayer is followed by Khutba or sermon by the Imam who among other things, praises Allah, reminds the faithfuls to carry on the spirit of piety they have obtained during the month-long fasting. He puts emphasis that after fasting, feasting and merry-making beyond limit should not be the consideration. The lessons learnt of piety, tolerance, fellow feeling, caring and sharing should not evaporate into the thin air as soon as the prayer is over. After the sermon, formal prayer (Doa) is offered and Di-

vine blessing sought for helping the people to live a good life and also for salvation and permanent bliss in the life hereafter. These create positive effect on the people so much so that after doa, people not only exchange greetings and embrace each other but even forget enmity and become friends. As they leave the prayer ground for their respective homes, they greet and embrace their friends and acquaintances on the way, visit neighbours' relations' and friends' houses, where they are treated with delicacies, the prime one being semai or their sweet pasta. Gifts are exchanged. Children get gifts from their elders.

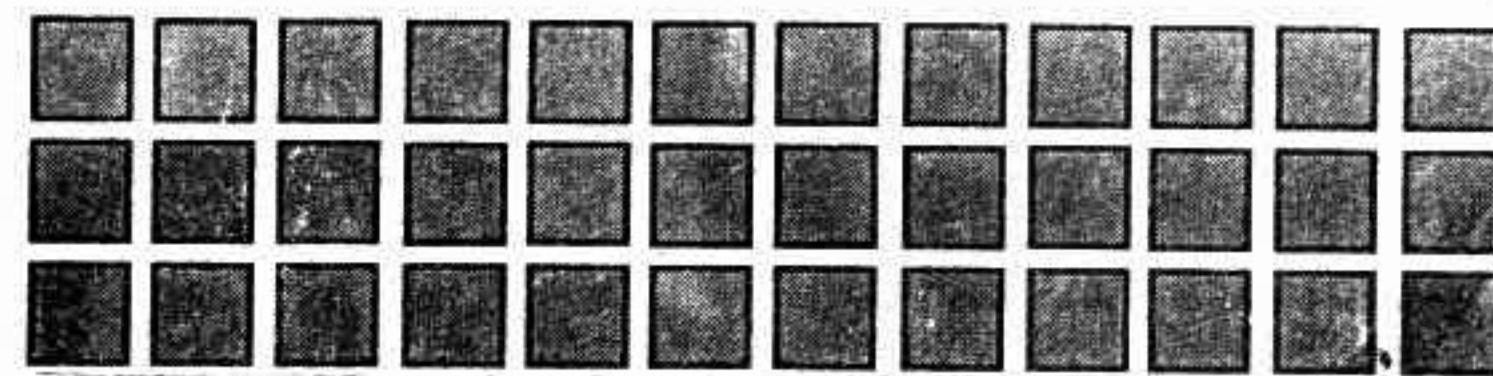
The whole atmosphere looks festive, joyful and happy. None seems to be unhappy in general. Even the beggars can make their hay as people are liberal in expending their alms on Eid day. Employers both in the government and private sector generally give extra salary package or Eid bonus which helps the working class people to meet the extra expenses. This also fosters better management-employee relationship.

Eid therefore has much socialising effect in removing the differences, enmity and promoting friendship and strengthen the bonds of Islamic brotherhood. Those who hardly meet being time constrained even once in eleven months, could meet in the prayer field or by calling on him and getting a return call at least on Eid day. These with least doubts renew their contacts and re-invigorate their fellow-feeling. This is not limited to neighbourhood but extends beyond the international borders until it becomes universal giving it a colour that the Muslim's world over belong

to an 'umma' local, regional and international barriers. And this is what is desired by Allah in the holy Quran that Muslims should never disassociate themselves from the Umma.

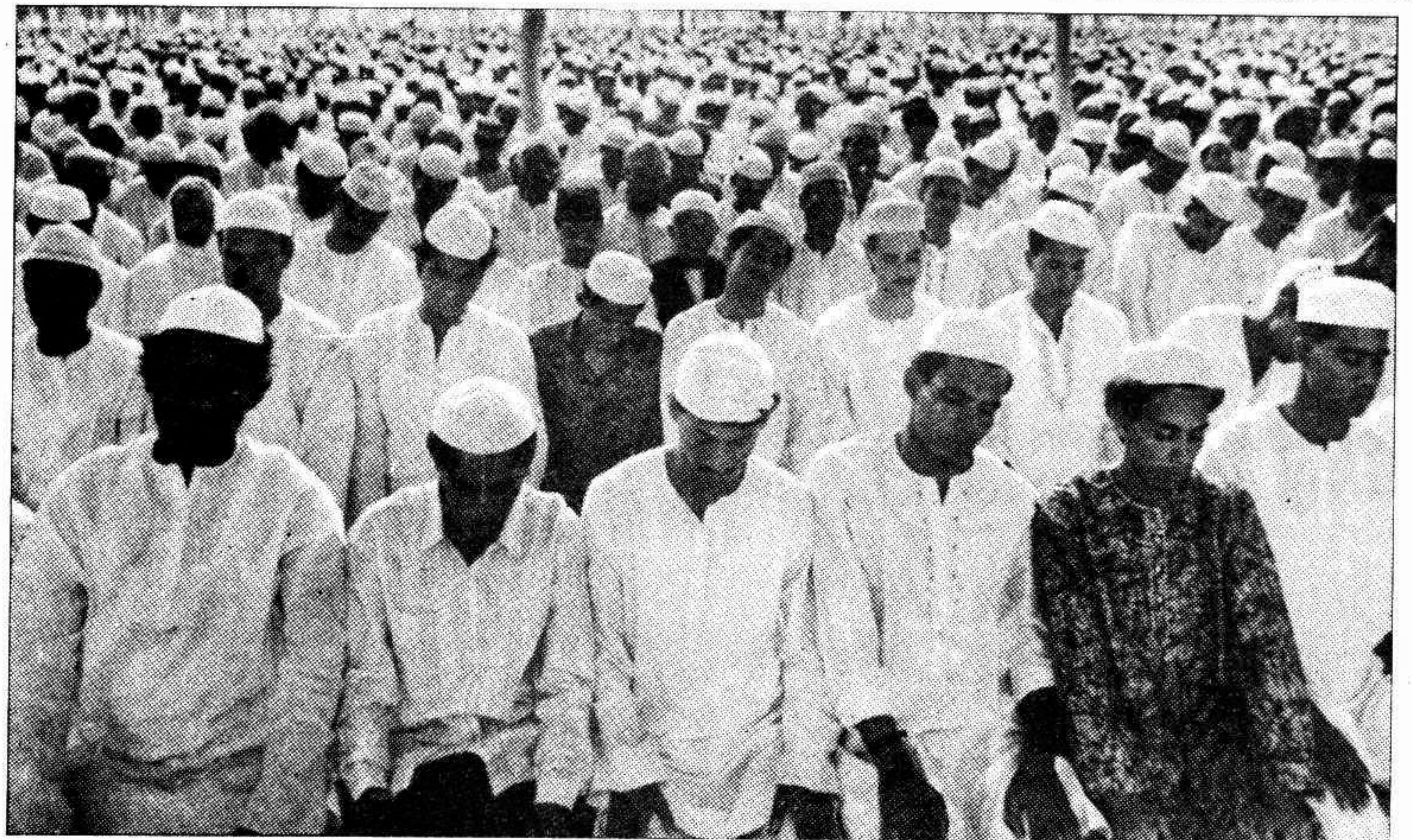
Besides the socialising effect the economic effect of Eid is no less important. This time, the business community expected that the turnover/transaction centring Eid would be around 1200 (twelve hundred) crore taka. This big amount of money pumped into the market would create unthinkable scope for economic uplift like job creation, income generation, more profit, circulation of money etc. etc. meaning a temporary boom in the economy. This money would have been lying idle otherwise. A boost in economy has also a favourable social impact because the number of unemployed people will be lessened and to that extent at least violence, crime etc will be minimised as there are people who to meet their bare needs often are compelled to resort to unfair means like stealing, hijacking etc. etc.

In addition, our prophet (SM) desired that gifts be given to neighbours. And there is a saying that a neighbour has rights. If he is a Muslim, relation and neighbour he had three rights. If he is Muslim and neighbour, he has two rights. And if he is a neighbour only, he has at least one right, irrespective of his caste, creed or colour. And rights demand that one is justly treated. Sending gifts in the form of delicious dish or other things to neighbours on Eid-day improves good-neighbourly relationship and contributes to peaceful living. Thus the socialising effect of Eidul-Fitre is too great to be overemphasised.



Traditional Eid congregation.

— Star file photo



The Eid Fest in India is a Gastronomic Delight

Firoz Bakht Ahmed writes from New Delhi

In Chandni Chowk, Fatehpuri, Nai Sadak, Lal Kuan, Hauz Qazi, Bara Hindu Rao and Pahari Dhiraj — all Delhi areas where Muslims are the predominant community — non-Muslim friends are greeted with 'Eid Mubarak' all the way while various Hindu and Sikh organisations alongwith the local police can be seen sprinkling rose petals and 'Arq Gulab' (rose water) on their Muslim brothers.

THERE is no occasion like Eid-ul-Fitr when the joys of eating and feasting are shared. I can vouch that few occasions and places can match the charm and the bonanza of tasty food that Eid has to offer. North Indian Eid dishes are world-renowned for the great taste they have. The moment the devotees return to their homes after the Eid prayers in mosques and Eidgahs, they kick up the frenzied ca- rush to the sumptuous feast that awaits them. In Chandni Chowk, Fatehpuri, Nai Sadak, Lal Kuan, Hauz Qazi, Bara Hindu Rao and Pahari Dhiraj — all Delhi areas where Muslims are the predominant community — non-Muslim friends are greeted with 'Eid Mubarak' all the way while various Hindu and Sikh organisations along with the local police can be seen sprinkling rose petals and 'Arq Gulab' (rose water) on their Muslim brothers. It's a moving spectacle reminding of the great tradition of assimilation of the Indian cultural fabric. Muslims prepare exclusive mouth-salivating dishes for their non-Muslim friends.

The Eid-feasting is in fact a grand finale to the month-long fasting and feasting month of Ramadan. Eid falls after 29 or

30 days of pious fasting. Every day the dazzling lights come on even before the sunset not only in Delhi's walled city areas like Jama Masjid, Ballimaran, Lal Kuan and Sulaiwan but even in the similar areas in Patna, Ranchi, Lucknow, Kanpur, Allahabad, Bhopal, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Calcutta. It's all festive spirit. Of course, one can't ignore the costermongers kicking up the frenzied ca- rousal in the all pervasive aroma of Ramadan dishes being prepared in restaurants, on vendors' pushcarts and even the road side squatters selling Seekh Kebab, Qeema Samosa and Jalebis. Shops with neatly stacked Ramadan food like Se- waiyan and Khajla bustle with human activity.

Quite a lot of eating flavour of Eid percolates from the fast- ing month of Ramadan in which after the iftar people re-lish taking sweets though not much with the tenet of fasting that asks for less intake of food. But on the day of Eid there are no bounds for those who have undergone the rigours of the month-long fasting. They gorge and guzzle to their heart's fill. Sweets of aromatic flavour are prepared especially all over old

India with 'halwais' both Hindu and Muslim having a field day! After the people reach home, women folk present them with Sevaiyan, that delectable Eid dish for which this festival de- rives its name Meethi Eid.

Another classification of Sevaiyan is the sweet Sheermi prepared with almonds, Khoya, pistachio, Keora and raisins. Yet another one is Sheer Khurma. It is also prepared with the same ingredients with milk making the only differ- ence. Well, for sweets there is no scarcity of names like Sheerin Bhavan, Chaina Ram, Ghantewala, Jalebiwala, Vishal Mava Bhandar, M.H. Burfiwala, Shiv Mishtan Bhandar, Stand- ard Sweets, Tewari Sweets, Haldiram Bikanerwala etc. Be- sides, in every nook and cranny of Delhi's Shahjahanabad Bazaars, one can see sweet marts all over the extended shops encroaching almost the entire narrow lanes and by- lanes. But no one objects in the frenzy of festive spirit.

On the day of Eid if someone wants to enjoy an inimitable Baqarkhani, Sheerin Bhavan is the ideal jaunt. It is rated at Rs. 36 per Kg. Hashimuddin, the proprietor, states that there was a time when the doyen of In- dian films, Dilip Kumar, used to come to their shop whenever he came to Delhi for shooting. At the same time he laments not having recorded the situation with a camera for posterity and of course for adding glamour to their business. Their father never believed in such things, says Naseeruddin, Hashim's brother at Sheerin Bhavan.

Historical Accounts

According to Alimuddin of Karim Hotel at Jama Masjid, Raja Jugul Kishore's feast was to be held at his palatial haveli (mansion) in vintage old Delhi's Shahjahanabad. Dilli Urdu Akhbar gives a very vivid ac- count of that along with other

famous halwais of that time: "Raja Jugul Kishore's feast was attended by, besides the em- peror, most of the nobility and the famous Hindu halwais were in great demand like Bhana Babbar of Ved Vada, Lala Jhab- barmal of Matia Mahal, Lala Sukh Lal Halwai of Chandni Chowk and Daya Ram Deen Dayal Pethy Wala of Khari Baoli. It is said that this glori- ous aspect of Eid hasn't been highlighted by the media. It was known as Dawat-e-Eid and on this wonderful day, Muslims prefer buying sweets from their Hindu halwais who are renowned for taste and fresh- ness. It goes without saying that the real taste of Eid-ul-Fitr lies in the hands of a housewife. Just enter the by lane of any Muslim area, you will be led by your nose owing to the wafting aroma of the mouth-watering Nargisi Koftey, Gorma, Shami Kabab, Geema, Badshahi Badam Pasande, Murgh Changozi, Shah Degh, Karhai Ghoshli, Tikka Aiwani, Aatish Pasande, Qalini Bade, Qeema Pakora, Longcha Kawab etc.

The proprietors of the fa- mous Bismillah Hotel in Delhi's Ballimaran relate that the most sought-after dish on Eid happens to be the Gorma, a ghee-based dish in which all the water used for cooking is al- lowed to evaporate leaving the meat coated in a layer of 16 spices and ghee. The Gorma, said to have been served to Shahjahan, requires ingredi- ents that would have left a mod- ern day housewife's budget crippled. Along with the basic condiments, the dish also re- quires saffron, dried apricots, almonds, pistachios, mace, poppy seeds, nutmeg, cloves, yo- gurt, cardamom, cinnamon, ginger and pepper. On Eid an- other delicacy from a housewife is Shami Kabab made of minced meat, lentils, spices and delectably fried in desi ghee.

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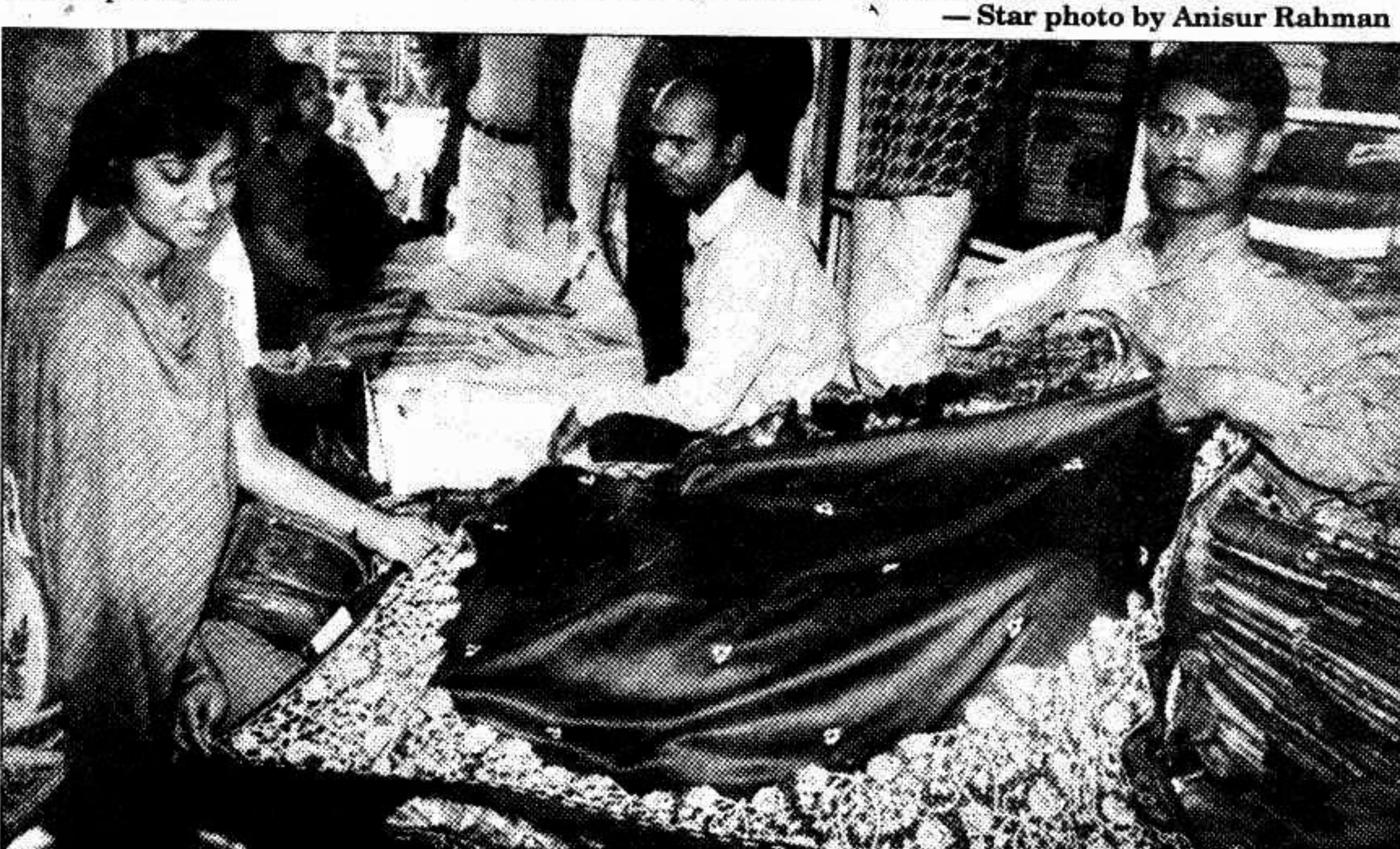
The affluent also go for ornaments on the occasion.

— Star photo by Anisur Rahman



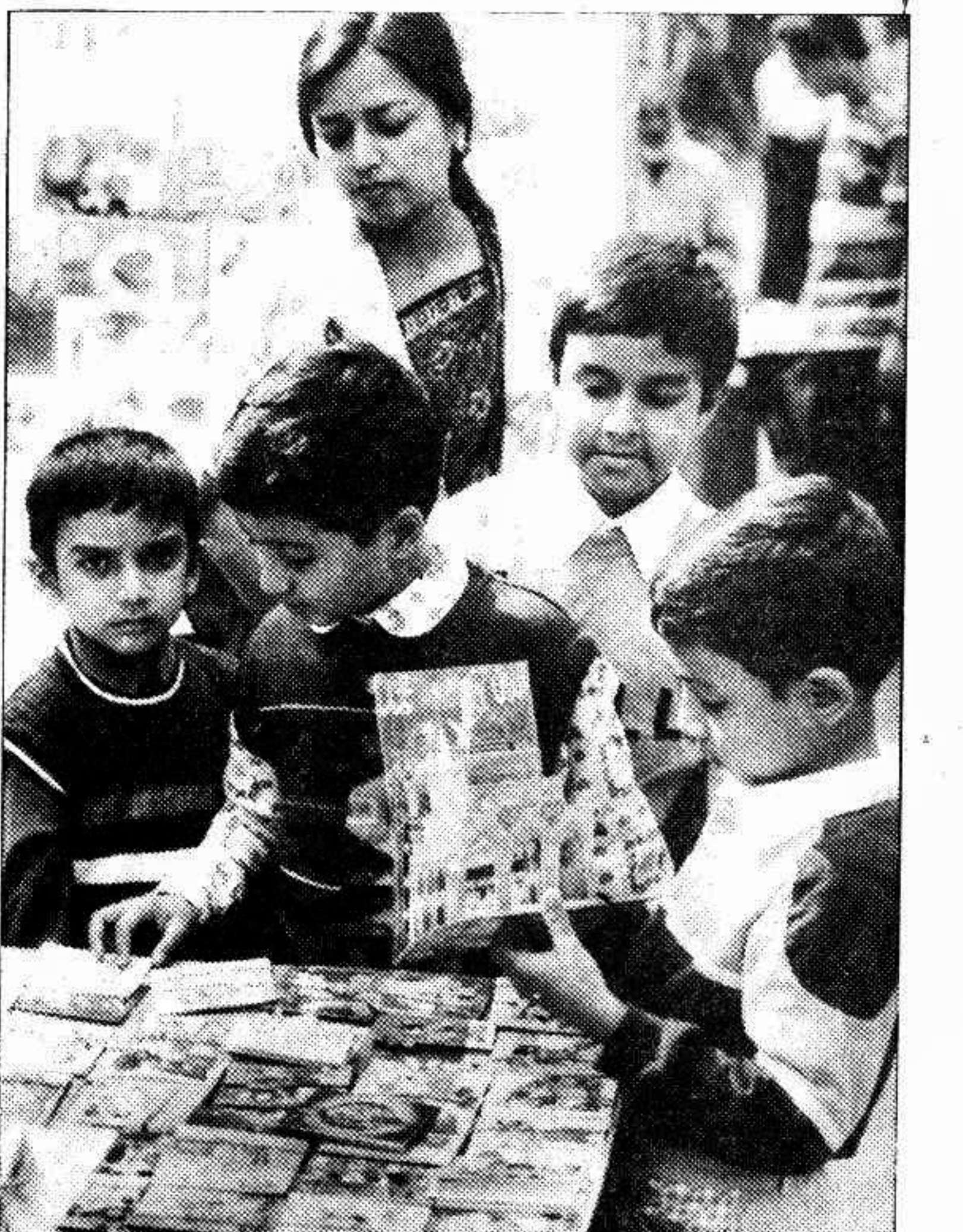
'Semai' registers a brisk sale on the eve of Eid.

— Star file photo



A costly sari is a must for the fest.

— Star photo by Amran Hossain



Eid cards on sale everywhere. — Star photo by Amran Hossain