

Cool Guy

It is hard to find a cool guy these days. However, I remember a different kind of "cool" guy in Dhaka in the late seventies (I used to live at Pallabi then) long before "cool" became the hype. He was the typical BRTC bus driver! BRTC was then the king of public transport in Mirpur. A typical morning bus would be unusually crowded- office workers with anxiety for being late, female students with handkerchiefs on their nose hating every moment of the ride, young mothers with sick children (probably en route to hospital), and of course, students like me. The typical driver would be in his mid-thirties to mid-forties. I didn't realise then but now I do pollution due to leaded fuel and stressful driving probably limited his productive job span. Some sort of pulmonary disease might have later shortened his career or even life. He was always unusually calm though. In the midst of the crowd and chaos of a public bus, he was the "coolest" person, always attentive to his duties. I was always amazed at how skillfully he negotiated the roundabout at Mirpur No. 1, and I never saw a BRTC bus involved in an accident back then. That was about sixteen years ago. I now teach at a large university in the United States and is a very tough job indeed. Professors here are required to teach, do research and also be involved in institutional and professional services (no time for preparing statements on the behalf of the ruling or the opposition party!). Sometimes I remember the BRTC driver -- no face but the memory of the ride, still vivid after so many years. I suddenly feel a lot of respect for him just like my students respect me for being a dedicated teacher who is chauffeuring them toward their goal: a better life.

MH,
Kansas State University, USA

Electric Shock

The other day, I attended a session in Gulshan about safety measure awareness. One of the trainees gave an account of an accident, which was shocking, and at the same time hilarious. It seems that one of his neighbours received an electric shock at home, falling senseless to the ground. Within half an hour, many gathered at his home. The man was badly hurt and probably to avoid further problems, as a first aid technique, one of the onlookers brought out a light bulb and held it to the patient's mouth. This was of course nothing but an example of a superstition that many seem to believe. However, I think the guy just wanted to see if the bulb would actually light up, since the unconscious man's body was 'filled' with electricity, so why not just use it?

Shamiul Haque
Department of English, DU

Chittagong Diary

The other day I entered a cyber-café on a warm afternoon located on the ground floor of a hotel in Agrabad, Chittagong. As I started checking my mails, I happened to smell tobacco, which for some reason was quite disturbing. Nevertheless, I kept working and after a while I noticed a man sitting beside me leisurely puffing a cigar. Cigars and cigarettes never agreed with me and I was probably one of the few happy ones, when the law against smoking in public was passed in the country. I looked around the room searching for any placard reading "No Smoking".

However, I found none. I tried to ignore the smoker but could not bear it any longer. I finally asked the man to stop smoking. The man didn't stop. Appalled, I stopped my work and headed towards the manager or the owner of the establishment. I asked if they had actually allowed smoking in the area. The man said yes they did, and was stammering the rest of his explanation. That was when the café became tense as everyone waited for the drama to unfold further. When the manager could not say much, in his semi-professional and diplomatic terms, a customer finally spoke up. It

The Cigar Story

seems that the café owner really didn't have anything to do. If he wanted his café to run properly, then he would have to allow smoking amongst the customers. He even got up to point towards the overflowing ashtrays. Well, I believe this is the way even the restaurants run, not only in Chittagong, but also in parts of Dhaka.

Rafiqul Islam Rime
Agrabad, Chittagong