

RS Mailbox

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Wanderlust

I have noticed that in the recent issues of RS, Adnan Bhai's "Celebrating Bangladesh Series" is missing. This series of write-ups on unsung but beautiful sites was really helpful at a time when people were getting really restless of their everyday hectic urban life and incessantly flipping through the traveller's guide of Mauritius and Hawaii for spending their vacations. This joint venture from RS and Adnan Bhai really opened up our inner eyes. Not only is the new generation getting to know their country better, but we are also putting forward the long concealed beauties of our country to snotty foreigners who invariably term our beloved motherland as "bottomless basket". All credits to Adnan Bhai for his valiant effort of visiting each site personally and briefing us with each and every important aspect of the journey, the site, the locals etc. Trust me, his hard work really pays off and also manages to re-induce the patriotic fervour in our weakened souls. So 3 cheers and kudos to both RS and Adnan Bhai. So keep this series going, please!

Navid

Blown Away

I am a newcomer to this fantastic supplement of The Daily Star. All I can say that its "insanely mind blowing" wrapped around with a heavy dose of fun. I particularly liked the "crisis" game review. Each section including the cover story was too good to overlook. I hope Rising Stars keeps that up.

Monty, Chittagong

The week in re(ar)view

In hammer we trust

Workers and government officials have been trying to bring down the Rangs Bhaban for ages. Last Saturday it happened though not in the way expected.

The 17th floor of the very tall building caved in killing several workers and trapping many. Destroying something so big requires almost as much planning as building it. But the authorities concerned decided to take a gung-ho approach and rely on the almighty hammer. The technique was simple - anything that stands shouldn't.

Safety measures were non-existent. On August 8, a 20-year-old labourer fell from the 12th floor and died instantly.

In the modern world, high-rise buildings in busy metropolises are demolished by experts using dynamites in the most safest and quickest way possible. Considering how carelessly the hammer wielding took place, it's a good thing we don't use dynamite. Otherwise it would be goodbye Bangladesh.

Time flies by killing flies

When you do the crime, you must do the time. And time is spent by punishment. Now punishment is a tough word and a tougher act unless you are in a Bangladeshi prison.

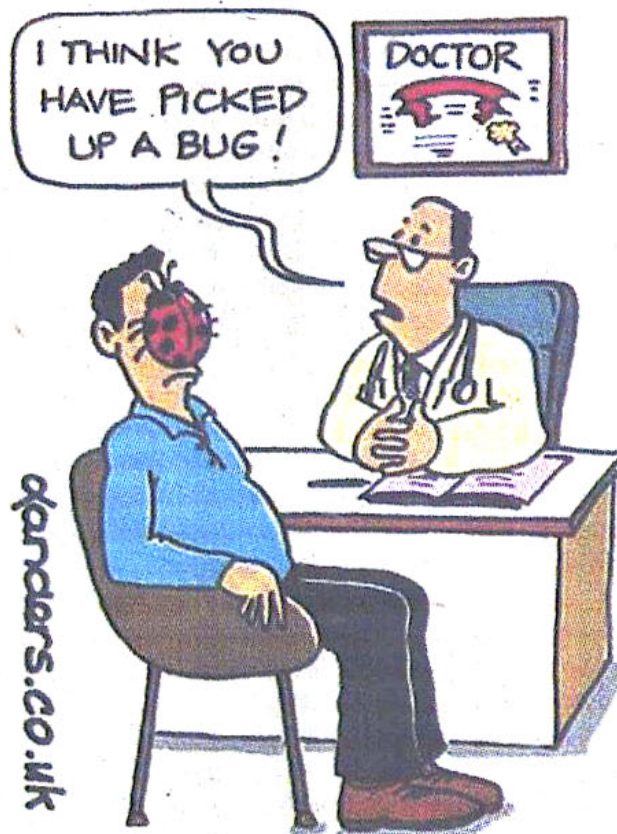
If you are a convict and are unable to carry out heavier tasks for reasons of ill health or old age, then your punishment is that of killing flies.

There are over 84,000 prisoners in 67 jails across the country, 22,000 of whom are convicts. There are at least 600 convicts in the country who are killing flies in the prisons they live in.

Jail sources say every fly killer has to kill the insects for four to six hours a day sta-

tioned in locations where flies like to hang out. Fridays are off to give flies a chance to multiply.

How they kill the flies are up to the convicts. Bare hands or swatters are the usual weaponry. Many convicts feel that guns would be more appropriate and effective but



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so far authorities have declined the request.

In the past there were other duties of 'Khor Chali' [wood choppers], and of donating blood, which are no more. Jail officials said 'Khor Chali' was dropped from the list

recently due to the danger associated with making axes available to inmates. No kidding!

Fly swatting convicts will have a good future when released in the so-called civil society. They can easily find jobs in restaurants where they can keep the flies out of your soup.

Gain confidence of patients

President Iajuddin Ahmed attended 10th International Surgical Congress in Dhaka on 8 December. There he urged the surgeons to do something so that patients regain their confidence in our medical system.

This is because a large good number of Bangladeshi patients fly abroad for treatment and spend a huge amount of foreign currency every year.

There's a surefire way to regain the lost confidence. It is so simple that you don't have to be a brain surgeon to figure it out. The idea is for surgeons to simply stop killing the patients either by mistreatment or by providing a ridiculous bill.

Toons are tied

Transparency International, Bangladesh (TIB) has arranged a show titled "Cartoon against Corruption" at Drik Gallery in Dhanmondi. Speakers spoke about cartoonists not being able to speak out. That's mainly because cartoonists don't speak, they draw.

Part of the focus of the show was that cartoonists could fight corruption by highlighting it with their work if allowed to create freely. We don't see why cartoonists have

anything to worry about as long as they leave out the touchy subjects of race, gender, social stigma, religion, the government, security forces and people in power.

By Mood Dude and Gokhra

The ultimate index of Bangali lifestyle

K for Kewl

The ultimate aspiration of a Bangali student is to be kewl, and they will go to any lengths to achieve this. The numerous Mohawks, low-slung jeans, cheap metal jewellery, plastic sunglasses, the 'fast and the furious' stickers on their cars and painfully faked accent all sums up to the unflinching ingredients in the recipe of 'kewl'. It's so desperate that it's actually funny.

L for Lungi

Lungi can be considered to be the official Bangali dress code. Every man from all walks of life wears lungi at one point or the other in their lives. From the rickshawalas and mamus who wear it all day to the better-off uncles who don it at night. New Market and other places have exclusive outlets that sell lungis at a range of prices and designs. It's high time we have designer label for lungis and export our local fashion to other countries. We might actually

drive 'Tolce and Gabanna' out of business.

M for Mamu

In Bangladesh, every man over 18 is a mamu to somebody or the other. Mamu is the common term for affectionate respect for anyone slightly older or the same age as you. The funny thing is those mamus have mamus of their own. Some people call this the cycle of life. No one knows where the chain actually starts or ends. Since mama means one's maternal uncle, this once again proves our theory that every Bangali is related to every other Bangali. Hence, our national unity. We can honestly say we are one big family. Some use it to get goodies at a 'discount' price.

N for Nilkhet

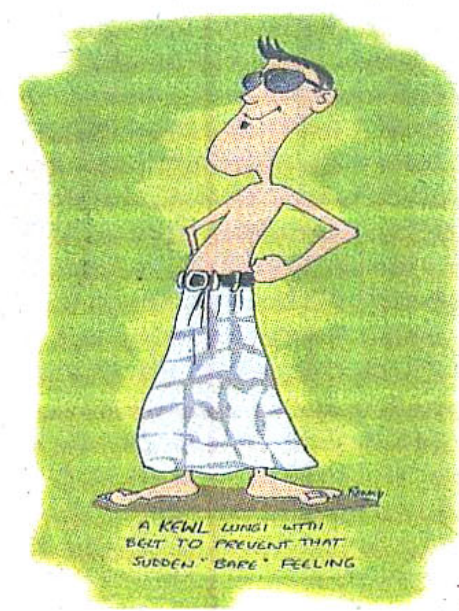
Nilkhet is the ultimate market for everything second-hand and pirated. From exam answers which you can buy before the exam, to result certificates which you can fake; Nilkhet is the

beating heart of the Bangladeshi educational system. The thousands of straight A's and perfect GPAs would collapse at the blink of an eye if Nilkhet were not there. Incidentally, you can also find foreign magazines ranging from gaming to cars, pirated local discs and all manner of second-hand gems in print.

O for Oshanti

Bangalis are a restless lot. We like rebelling against everything. Considering we've been around for thousands of years, there aren't many things left to rebel against. The irony of a Bangladeshi winning the Nobel Prize for Peace was not lost on us. We fight amongst ourselves, bicker over history, backbite about each other and clash in the streets. Every once in a while, we actually have a reason for it.

By Sabhanaz Rashid Diya and Aaqib F. Hossain

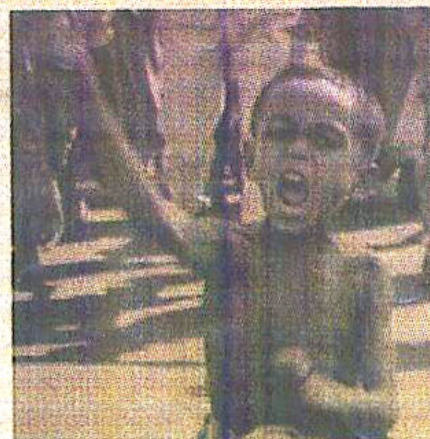


The Liberation War Museum: The True Accounts of our War

FROM COVER

There were other distressing pictures as well, of women raped and killed, the atrocious torture inflicted on captured freedom fighters including a separate section on the painful plight of the refugees who fled to India and lived under inhumane conditions. In the silent corners of the Liberation War Museum, these displays leap out from the walls and hit you in the heart, giving you a faint taste of the desolation and agony felt by those who suffered in the war.

The Museum exhibits continue with the sector commanders who played important roles in the Liberation War, and also greatly stresses on the part played by the common people: notably the women, children, students, peasants and others who formed the backbone of the Mukti Bahini; as well as those who supported the cause in their own way and deserve to be remembered in our history. There are countless pictures of women protesting in the streets in 1952 and 1969, as well as records of many brave women who trained with weapons and fought in the Mukti Bahini,



many of whom died during the War. Also, proper respect and recognition is paid to the women who were raped and killed, and others who were taken to the camps and forced to satisfy the lust of the Pakistani beasts.

The excavated bones of the intellectuals who were coldly and systematically taken and slaughtered in the Mirpur Slaughterhouses is contained within the museum while it also clearly names the Razakars and others who collaborated with the enemies in this task, some of whom ironically were recently a part of our government! And finally, there are pictures of the surrender of East Pakistan, mementos of the Bir Sreshthos, and the elation by all who became part of a liberated Bangladesh!

The role of the media and the international view of the genocide in 1971 are also properly portrayed in the museum. It gives due credit to Indira Gandhi, Senator Edward Kennedy and other politicians in some European countries, UK, Japan, Soviet Union and Australia who supported our cause, and boldly states China's and Nixon's decision to ignore the genocide that occurred in Bangladesh and support Pakistan. The Museum acknowledges the non-resident Bangladeshis protests in foreign countries, the many journalists who stayed back in

Bangladesh despite the war, and also BBC, Daily Telegraph (UK), Voice of America, German TV, All India Radio and Shadhin Bangla Betar Kendro. It also pays homage to many musicians, philosophers and poets who supported our cause, all of which contributed to spreading awareness and encouragement during the War.

As of May 2004, the Liberation War Museum has almost 11000 artifacts, although they are able to display only around 1300 because of lack of space. It regularly organizes school trips and cultural programmes to spread awareness among our generation and also houses a unique bookshop and research centre where one can learn more about the War. The Museum is planning to expand and include virtual tours with light and sound, and you can be of assistance by donating to the Museum or giving them any information or artifacts regarding the War which you think might be of value. For more information, please log on to www.liberationmuseum.org.bd which is, by the way, an amazing website and a must see. Most importantly do visit the museum and we guarantee you will learn a lot about our identity and the history of our struggles.