Fun facts about Valentine's Day

Compiled by Tabassum Mokhduma

EVERY year on February 14th, Valentine's Day are observed throughout the world. Here are some interesting tidbits about the day dedicated to love:

· There are at least seven saints with the name Valentine. No one is sure to which Valentine the holiday owes its name, but one likely candidate is a priest who lived in the third-century Rome. On February 14, 270 A.D., Roman Emperor Claudius II beheaded him for performing marriage ceremonies despite the Emperor's decrees outlawing them.

· "Claudius the Cruel" outlawed marriages when Roman men began refusing to go to war in order to stay with their wives.

· Another Roman martyr named Valentine was jailed and passed time by writing love letters to his captor's daughter, signed "Your Valentine".

· During the middle Ages, Europeans believed that birds chose their mates each year on February 14. Legend has it that Europeans began to emulate the ornithological practice.

· It is believed that lovers first began exchanging mementos in the 17th century, perhaps heeding the words of Shakespeare's Hamlet, "Sweets to the sweet".

· The oldest known Valentine card was made in 1400s, and it is now on display in the British Museum.

· Cheaper postage and mass-produced cards in the 17th and 18th centuries added to the increasing popularity of Valentine's Day.

· Esther Howland was the first American to make commercial Valentine's Day cards out of scraps of ribbon, lace and pictures.

· Presently there are 192 million Valentine's Day cards exchanged annually.

· Approximately one billion Valentine's Day cards are sold in the US each year, according to the Greetings Cards Association. This makes Valentine's Day the second most popular card-sending after Christmas, which accounts for almost one in every four individual seasonal cards sold in USA.

· It is traditional to sign a Valentine's Day card with Xs to represent kisses, but what's the origin of this practice? It's believed to have started in medieval times, when people who couldn't write were allowed to sign documents with an X, which they then kissed to prove their sincerity. Over the time, the X's became associated with kisses.

· In order of popularity, Valentine's Day cards are given to teachers, children, mothers, wives and sweethearts.

· Red roses are single most popular flower to give on Valentine's Day. Although they make all look the same to the untrained eye, there are actually more than 900 varieties of dark-red and medium-red rose, according to the rose lovers' web site, everyrose.com.

