

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Too Many Words? PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Praising Brevity

A French gourmet is invited to Turkey by a Turkish gourmet. Upon his return, his countrymen anxiously surround him. The French, after all, are serious about food. So how does Turkish food compare? "It is fantastic, delicious!" raves our Frenchman, disappointing his friends. "But...", he pauses. "But what?" they ask hopefully. "But...too many dishes," he says. The Frenchmen heave a sigh of relief. Their Turkish rivals don't know their own strength.

This story is from the great Bengali writer Syed Mujtaba Ali.

Mujtaba complains that Bengali hosts serve too many items at dinner parties. "We did not know which dish you would like, so eat the one you like most," the host counters. But that means the host does not know his or her masterpiece. "Does a novelist offer five different endings and let you choose the one you like?" Mujtaba asks, exasperated.

Indeed, our national assault on brevity starts early. When fewer words will do, students are taught to use more. As adults, these same students deliver speeches whose preambles, which should be "Dear Listeners", drag on for several minutes (and let's not talk about the substance of the speeches.) As a society we love long-winded language rather than compactness.

If that were not bad enough, some years ago a local mobile phone company started an ad campaign saying "Talk more." It made the hair on my neck stand up.

I used to think verbosity is a defensive reflex of Bangladeshis. Cramped into the small physical area of this country,

do we subconsciously stake out a vast space in the universe of words by talking more?

But now I find wordiness is everywhere. The American writer Jonathan Franzen's much-discussed novel, *Freedom*, weighs in at 576 pages. Tony Blair's recent autobiography is a whopping 720 pages. Does anyone actually finish these books?

In *Amadeus*, the movie based on Mozart's life, there is an exchange between Mozart and his patron, Emperor Joseph II. Mozart plays a piece he has composed for the Emperor. The Emperor likes it, but since he is Emperor, he feels he must criticise it. "It is good, but it has too many notes," he says, "cut a few". The precocious Mozart quickly retorts, "Then which notes would Your Majesty like me to cut?" For this the Emperor has no answer, for the piece has precisely the number of notes it needs, no more, no less.

Producing something worthwhile may require long hours of hard work but what we cherish is the final result looking effortless, every piece falling into place. Thus, seeing a graceful Olympic diver in action just for seconds uplifts us. He never has to remind us of his years of hard work. Songs by Tagore enchant us because they capture so much in just a few lines. Mujtaba's short essays scintillate with his witty storytelling.

Sure, there are times when length is necessary, but wouldn't the world be a neater place without needless words, dishes, notes - or speeches?

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11 killed, 29 hurt in road accidents

METRO DESK

Eleven people were killed and 29 others injured in separate road accidents in Gaibandha, Faridpur, Dinajpur, Jenidah and Natore yesterday.

Our Gaibandha correspondent reports: Five persons were killed and 15 others injured when a microbus and a bus collided head-on on Bogra-Rangpur highway at Boali. The deceased are Helaluddin, 45, Ruma, 26, Sifat Babu, 6, Ananna, 10 and Eti, 7.

Our Faridpur correspondent adds: Two people were killed and 12 injured in a head-on collision between a bus and a truck on Dhaka-Khulna highway at Moslondopur in Modhukhali upazila of Faridpur. The deceased are Motam Gazi, 22, of Khulna and Sajib, 23, the bus driver.

Our Dinajpur correspondent says: Two people were killed and two other injured in separate road accidents. First accident took place when a bus hit a motorcycle at Birampur upazila, killing Badiuzzaman, 18. Second one occurred when a speedy truck hit Kanduribala, 69, on Parbatipur-Saidpur highway at Parbatipur upazila.

Our Jhenidah correspondent adds: A bicyclist, Abdus Satter, 40, was killed under the wheels of a bus at Gulshanmora of Kaliganj upazila.

Our Natore correspondent reports: A rickshaw van puller, Abdul matin, 40, was killed when his wood-laden van flipped at Khezultala of Sadar upazila.



PHOTO: STAR

Behag Jamil Khan, competing in child category, performs at the 30th Jatiya Rabindra Sangeet Sammelan organised by Rabindra Sangeet Sammelan Parishad at Public Library in the city's Shahbagh yesterday.

Body of minor girl found in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered a decomposed body of a minor girl from Jatrabari in the city around 11:00 am yesterday.

Police said the body of the unidentified girl, aged around four, was floating on a water body under a bridge at West Matuail.

The girl, wearing black half pant and T-shirt, might have been killed elsewhere two or three days back, said Jatrabari police.

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Migration

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DHAKA TODAY

Human chain
Organiser: Paribesh Bachao Andolan,
Venue: Institute of Fine Arts, Dhaka University, Time: 10:30am.

Anniversary
Organiser: Weekly Samadhara, Venue: Hotel '71, Bijoynagar, Time: 4:00pm.

Protest rally
Organiser: Communist Party of Bangladesh, Venue: Purana Paltan, Time: 4:00pm.

Discussion
Organiser: Bangladesh Enterprise for Development and Security Studies, Venue: DRU, Time: 11:00am.

Website inauguration
Organiser: Barishal Web, Venue: Institution of Diploma Engineers, Kakrail, Time: 4:00pm.

Roundtable
Organiser: Bangladesh Wonders Promotion Foundation, Venue: National Press Club, Time:

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Interested candidates and families are invited to an IB Information Evening on 6th March 2011 at 06:30 pm at the ISD Auditorium.

Plot 80, Block E, Bashundhara R/A, Dhaka 1229
Phone: 01819231100, 02 8401101-7, Email: info@isdbd.org
www.isdbd.org

We Mourn

Late Shahed Noman

We are deeply shocked and grieved at the sad demise of **Shahed Noman (60)**, former Managing Director of Dhaka Bank Limited, died of Cardiac arrest on Thursday February 24, 2011 (Innalillaha wa Innaillaihe Rajeun). He was survived by his wife, two sons, relatives and friends.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, Management and all employees of Dhaka Bank Limited, we express our heartfelt condolence to the bereaved family and pray to the Almighty Allah to grant eternal peace to the departed soul.

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