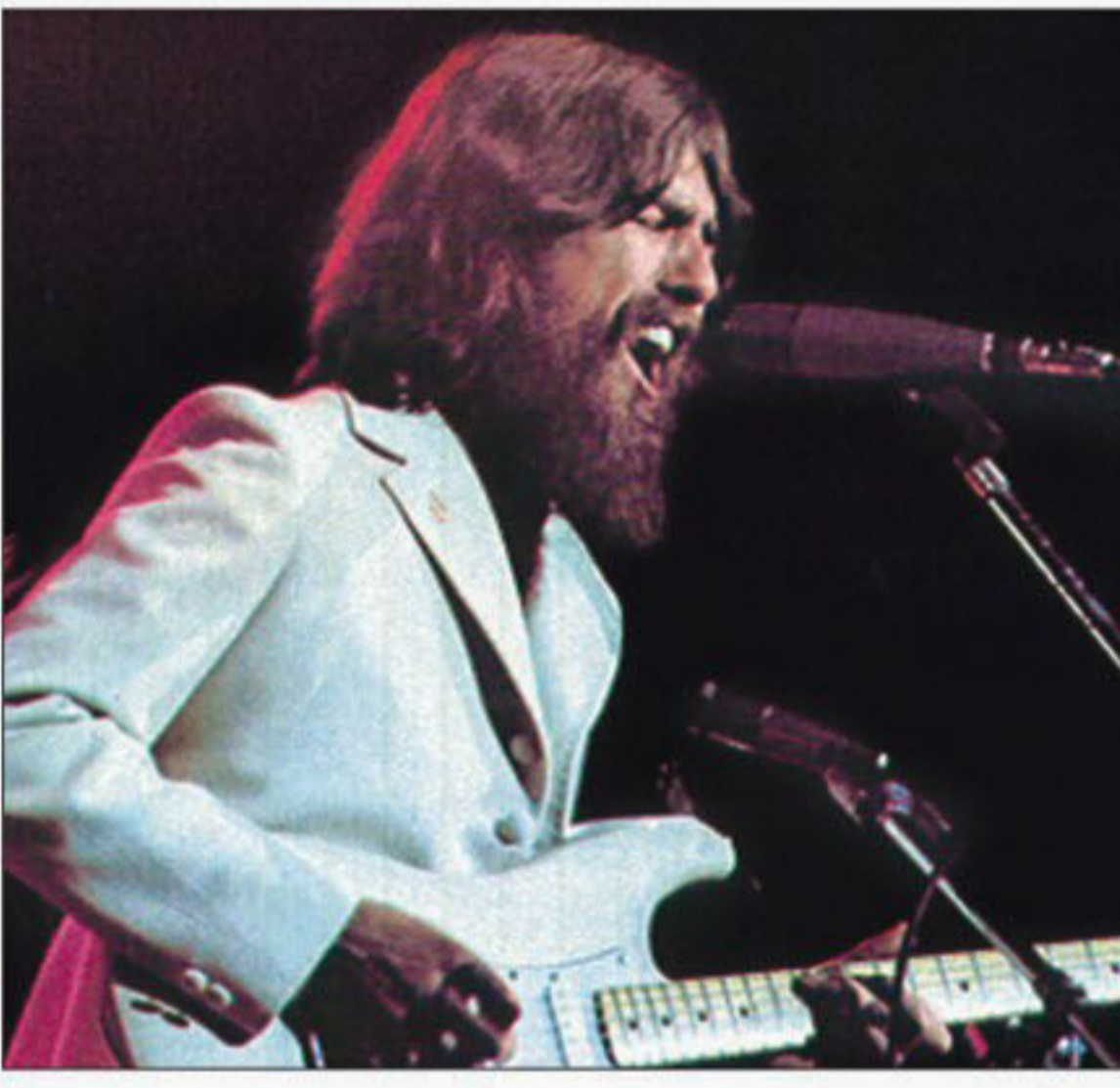




UK-Bangladesh 40 years trivia

THIS year, Bangladesh celebrates 40 years of independence! We all know that the relationship between Bangladesh and the UK has grown stronger and deeper since 1971 but were you aware that...

- During the Liberation War, weekly demonstrations, rallies and fundraising events were held in Trafalgar Square and Hyde Park in London, as well as other cities in the UK, calling for the independence of Bangladesh.



- A 'Concert For Bangladesh' was held on 1 August 1971 and co-organised by the Beatles' very own George Harrison. It was organised for the relief of refugees during the war and following a devastating cyclone in 1970. The event was the first benefit concert of this magnitude in world history and featured many British pop-stars. It raised over US\$240,000.

- Following his release from prison in January 1972, Sheikh Mujib first flew to London where he met British PM Edward Heath and addressed the international media. He then flew to Dhaka via New Delhi on a Royal Air Force plane given to him by the British government.

- The UK formally recognised Bangladesh on 04 February 1972. On that date, Sir Alec Douglas-Home, the then British Foreign Secretary, received Mr Rezaul Karim, the Bangladeshi representative, at Westminster and informed him that the Queen was pleased to accord recognition of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh as of a sovereign, independent nation. Sir Alec then visited Bangladesh in June 1972. The first British Prime Minister to visit Bangladesh was James Callaghan in 1978.

- Around half a million British Bangladeshis live in the UK, the largest Bangladeshi community in Europe and US. Many of them migrated in 1960s and 70s, but the records of first arrivals from Bangladesh were Sylheti cooks in London during 1873 as part of the East India Company. They arrived to the UK as sailors to work in restaurants.

- The Bangladeshi media in the UK is one of the oldest and largest Bangladeshi media overseas.

- Bangladesh won their first ever One Day International Cricket match against England in July last year. On 11 March, the Tigers and Lions battled it out at the World Cup in Chittagong and the Tigers increased their winning tally!

London Olympics... philosophy of the bicycle

SYED BADRUL AHSAN

THE invitation from Britain's Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) was soothing for the nerves. For two very particular reasons! The first was that old feeling about Britain, that the more you get to see of it the healthier your imagination gets to be. And the second was the promise contained in the invitation, that of a detailed tour, physical as well as intellectual, of the Olympic grounds as they are and as they will be in 2012. And so there we were, eighteen of us from various parts of the globe, taking in everything we could about London 2012. There were all the organisations involved, each with a specific job to do about the stadium, which perforce came into the picture. Atkins, Populous, LOCOG, London Transport, et al, were symbolically an insight into what London promised to be come 2012 when sportsmen and sportswomen from across the globe would descend on it for an extravaganza which promised to be remembered by those partaking of its beauty.

It was just as well, for not since 1948 (and that was only three years after the end of World War Two) had London been host to the Olympics. That was, if you must know, ages ago. And here were all the architects, engineers, builders, artists, designers, transport people coming forth with explanations if you will of what London would look like in mid-2012. The river Lea had been restored to its old charm, the desolation that was once the site of the Games is now home to

plants that will be part of the greening process once the competitions commence; the animal life previously inhabiting the site had been relocated and would be brought back to its old home once the athletes went back home. The preparations for the Games have been forensic, with the soil being subjected to thorough chemical analysis, through a removal of contamination, before being put back in use. All this frenzied activity is centred around Stratford in London's East End. That, of course, takes you back to the old days, indeed back to Victorian times and even earlier, when east London was London. What goes round comes round. And so here was London, flashy in Olympic colours, creating new glory for itself.

The timing of the Olympics could not have been better. Officials at every level of the Games structure took care to remind you that Britons looked forward to the Kate-and-William royal nuptials at the end of April. And then, of course, there was the Queen's birthday. That last bit is particularly poignant when you recall that for all its changes, for all the transformation it has gone through, the United Kingdom remains linked, indeed devoted, to its monarchy. The birthday of the Queen, for yours truly, is occasion to recall certain images from the past. The first one, dating back to 1961, was when the monarch waved to hundreds of cheering Bengalis from the portico of what would become President's House and then Ganobhavan in Dhaka. The seven-year-old perched on the shoulders of

an accompanying adult was thrilled beyond measure. Thirty six years later, in 1997, that child, now in his forties, was at Buckingham Palace exchanging diplomatic niceties with the Queen.

That is part of the story of London. You do not get tired of the city, but if you do, it is fair to assume that you are as good as tired of life. That was what Samuel Johnson said ages ago. In 2011, a year before the Olympics get underway, you realise anew the thrill of the city as you travel all around and through the Olympic Park. No fewer than 15,000 athletes will be participating at the Games. Add to that figure the 4,500 sportspeople who will be part of the Paralympic Games. And watching them all will be 80,000 people from within the stadium. It is all state-of-the-art, with a lower tier accommodating 25,000 spectators and an upper one with room for 55,000. And what happens when the Games fade into memory? West Ham, looking at 60,000 spectators for football, will take charge of the stadium. Which brings up the question of regeneration. Olympic officials go to great lengths to inform visitors that the Olympic Park is a pointer to the future in that it stands as a symbol of the regeneration of East London. Newham Borough is there, but neighbouring Tower Hamlets too is quite sure to get a slice of this regeneration cake. Ah, as people close to Tower Hamlets Mayor Lutfur Rahman would have you know, on the initial two nights of the Olympics, all sportsmen, organisers and officials will dine at Brick Lane. That is cheering news

for the British-Bangladeshi community which, over the years, has played an increasingly prominent role in British life... and not just in the curry business.

In a sense, London 2012 goes beyond being sports. The venues, permanent as well as temporary, that have been built in the Olympic Park (read here the stadium, the velodrome and the aquatics centre) highlight the sheer architectural artistry brought into the exercise. So, yes, there is art

about the Games, art fashioned around philosophies. You tend to have a comprehension of such philosophies as you listen to Mike Taylor and Andrew Weir at Hopkins, the architects and engineering firm behind the velodrome. The image of the velodrome is striking. And it ought to be, for it is the philosophy of the bicycle, as the articulate men at Hopkins will tell you, that has gone into the construction of the velodrome. The wood for it has come from

Siberia, all 56 kilometres of it. As many as 350,000 nails have gone into the paneling. With natural ventilation at work, the velodrome is an arrangement with which its projected 6,000 spectators should be comfortable.

And thus you have building technology reaching for the heights. London 2012, in a larger sense, is about to be social engineering at its most aesthetic.

Syed Badrul Ahsan is Editor, Current Affairs, The Daily Star

London's Banglatown is 'Curry Capital 2012'

SYED NAHAS PASHA writes from London

FAMOUS for jalfrezi, onion bhajis and poppadoms, Brick Lane the heart of Bangladeshi community in east London has been introduced to the world as the



"Curry Capital 2012". Mayor of Tower Hamlets Lutfur Rahman was joined by London Olympic Organising Committee (LOCOG) Chair Seb Coe and officials from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) on Wednesday to cement a deal made earlier this year to promote Brick Lane ahead of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Brick Lane, the heart of the city's Bangladeshi-Sylheti community, is also known as Banglatown to some. It is now home to the largest Bengali community in the country. This deal is part of a wider agreement aimed at maximising the benefits from staging of the London 2012 Games for the borough's residents and businesses. The agreement will also see school children from Tower Hamlets offered tickets to the Games, and local residents given priority access to 1,000 jobs. The launch marked the start of promotion of Brick Lane and Banglatown as a cultural and entertainment hub for media, spectators and other visitors to the Games. Designed to help boost business and reputation of the area, the delegation was given an opportunity to see the vibrancy of the area in its full glory hundreds of restaurants, independent shops, galleries, bars, etc. Brick Lane in Tower Hamlets has been home to successive waves of immigrants, starting with the French Huguenots, who were famed for their silk

weaving, followed by the Jewish community, who settled in the borough during the 19th century. Brick Lane takes its name from the carts used to carry bricks to rebuild the city after the Great Fire of London. At the launch, Mayor Lutfur Rahman, said, "Like all of Tower Hamlets, Brick Lane is such a vibrant area and in many ways, its history embodies the Olympic spirit triumphing over adversity, welcoming new cultures and providing first class entertainment." "It's an area that deserves to be showcased to the world, and we hope the many visitors heading to Tower Hamlets next year will enjoy it in its full glory." Seb Coe, Chair of the London Organising Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG), said, "The London 2012 Games will be the greatest show on earth, and I am immensely proud to be working with Tower Hamlets and other host boroughs to make sure this fantastic event brings lasting benefits to the East End and beyond." "This means using the Games as a catalyst to deliver lasting change and also to inspire a new generation of sporting stars. It also includes supporting local businesses and making Banglatown and Brick Lane the curry capital for London 2012..." Tower Hamlets council has already carried out steps to improve Brick Lane and the surrounding area ahead of London 2012.

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G4S Bangladesh would like to wish Her Royal Highness, Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, all the best and more on her birthday.



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