

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Nursery display at the Mela

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Brikkho Mela

BRIKKHO Mela, the annual tree fair, takes place in Agargaon through June. It is a haven for tree and nature enthusiasts where many nurseries and arboreal institutions offer up a surprising diversity of treats.

The main attraction is trees, from tiny seedlings to grown ones with fruits. Many are suitable for rooftop fruit gardens. Bewildered by the variety, I try to simplify. "If I could start with three fruits trees on the roof, what should they be?" I ask at the Bangladesh Green Roof Movement. "Guava, lemon and kamranga (starfruit) are the easiest," I am informed.

One also needs large containers (drums) and good soil for growing the trees.

Exotic varieties are plentiful. Several nurseries display Egyptian sweet fig, longan, dragonfruit, passionfruit (also called Tang) and avocado trees. Thai varieties of local favourites including jambura, tetul, sofeda and mango are popular. Prices can vary from several thousand taka for a ready-made fruit-bearing longan tree to three hundred for the fig.

In an Agricultural Extension stall I find a woman selling dried oyster mushrooms. Behind her, large ganoderma mushrooms - useful for medicinal purposes - grow on chunks of wood. With advice and materiel from here, she says, one can also grow shiitake, reishi, milky white, and button mushrooms. However, mushrooms are finicky and need precise humidity and temperature.

At a bonsai stand are banyan and ashwath bonsais. With the right technique, a bonsai can be "grown" in two to five years. Local bonsai artists now prefer working on native species -

hijol, for example, works well - rather than foreign ones.

Several stalls are selling honey. Some bottles contain kalijeera, mustard or lychee flower honey. Herbal remedies, as well as medicinal plants, are also available, as are organic and inorganic plant food.

At another stall I watch a demonstration: how to grow several varieties of boroi on the same tree. Branches of the different varieties are grafted into the common root using a technique called cleft grafting. This technique can also be used to grow multiple citrus varieties on the same tree.

Timber saplings are also sold. While the usual suspects mahogany, acacia, teak and eucalyptus are present, a relatively new variety called lumbu is popular. It is fast-growing, takes up little lateral space, and yields strong wood.

Some information confuses me. A large poster listing vulnerable and endangered trees in Bangladesh includes aloe vera (Ghrito Kancho), chikrashi and agar. I am baffled. Aloe vera is grown throughout the country and consumed year round, while agar and chikrashi are also planted widely for commercial purposes.

As I leave the fair, two thoughts come to mind.

The first concerns agricultural innovation. While I have read about this innovation in the papers, this is a great place to see it in practice.

My second thought comes from observing the attendees from all walks of life who thoroughly enjoy the fair. Economic forces can take people away from nature. But no one can take nature away from people.

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Another rail link with India gets nod

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India has given the go-ahead for the construction of an 18-km-long railway line connecting Agartala with Akhaura in Bangladesh, said a top railway official yesterday.

The Indian railway is also conducting a survey to extend the railway line up to Sabroom, the southern border town of Tripura, for connectivity with the Chittagong Port.

B N Rajsekhar, additional member of the Indian Railway Board, said in Agartala yesterday that the project, second after the Kolkata-Dhaka rail line, would be completed at a cost of Rs 267 crore in two and a half years.

A six-member delegation led by Rajsekhar yesterday inspected the alignment of the railway line and gave the final nod on it.

Rajsekhar said the project was held up for a long time and got a fresh lease of life after Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visited New Delhi last year.

Two months ago, the Planning Commission asked the railway board to finalise the alignment of the rail track, he said.

The Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region would bear the cost of constructing the Indian part of the rail link while the foreign ministry of Bangladesh would finance the construction on its side, Rajsekhar said.

A separate station would be built at Nischintapur, a border village, about 10km from Agartala, where all facilities like custom clearance of goods and visa clearance of passengers would be put in place.



Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, distinguished fellow of Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), speaks at a media briefing on the National Budget 2011-12 organised by CPD at Brac Centre Inn in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

PHOTO: STAR

JU teachers, students stand by Limon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Songkhudho Nagorik Samaj, a joint platform of teachers and students of Jahangirnagar University (JU), staged a protest programme against government repression on Limon Hossain yesterday afternoon in front of the city's National Museum.

A Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) team shot college student Limon in the left leg while he was on his way to bring his cattle home at Chhaturia village on March 23. The leg had to be amputated.

Teachers, writers, cultural activists and journalists at the programme demanded the

government to withdraw cases against Limon and give him compensation and a chance to get back to normal life.

Jahangirnagar Theatre staged a street drama "Chakrabuha" protesting Rab's shootout and government statements about Limon and his family members' alleged involvement with a criminal group.

The samaj held similar programmes on June 3 at the venue and will continue doing so every Friday till the government realises their demands, said the samaj convener Masud Imran, assistant professor of JU.

They called upon people from all walks of life to join them.

Obituary

METRO DESK

Gazi Md Kamruzzman Kamal, a Bangladeshi student in Greece and former student of Fine Arts department of Rajshahi University, was found dead at a hotel in Mikonos Island of Greece on May 31.

Kamruzzman, born in Modhukhali of Faridpur, left behind his wife, one son and one daughter and a host of relatives and well-wishers, said a press release.

His body arrived here by a Qatar Airways flight on Thursday. He was buried at Baliakandi of Rajbari district after a namaz-e-janaaza on Thursday. His qulkhawani was held there after Juma prayers yesterday.

He went to Greece around eight years ago for higher study. Greece police recovered the body from the store room of the hotel. A case has been filed with the police in this connection.

Death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Today is the 50th death anniversary of noted politician and educationist

Sayed Ataur Rahman, father of former lawmaker Sayeda Shahina Khan, says a press release.



A train specialised in rescue operations falls to its side while salvaging two compartments of a goods train that derailed at Mobarakganj Rail Station under Kaliganj upazila in Jhenidah yesterday.

PHOTO: AZIBOR RAHMAN

Medicare at stake

FROM PAGE 20

the working days and even during hours when doctors are supposed to take care of patients.

The representatives even check patients' prescriptions to see whether doctors prescribe the drugs manufactured by their companies, in violation of what some experts said medical ethics and marketing code.

Besides talking to doctors about their new drugs, their efficacy and use, the promoters offer gifts, including foreign trips, to the doctors. There are many takers of such gifts.

"It is an unhealthy competition," said Prof Rashid E Mahbub, former President of Bangladesh Medical Association, adding that it

encourages doctors to prescribe unnecessary drugs just to satisfy the gift-giving pharmaceutical companies.

He said no one other than a doctor is allowed to see patients' prescriptions, as it violates medical ethics and patients' right to privacy. Such practice exposes patients' diseases to medicine promoters, which is not ethical.

"This is complete hooliganism," said Vice-chancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Prof Pran Gopal Datta.

He said when hospital authorities restrict entry of medical representatives during working hours, they simply buy tickets as patients to see the doctors. "There they tactfully exam-

ine the prescriptions of patients."

The Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries (BAPI) has a code of marketing practice. But it is not followed at all, said Prof ABM Faroque, dean of the faculty of pharmacy at Dhaka University.

According to Bangladesh Health Watch Report 2009, the latest available, the country's pharmaceutical companies have about 20,000 medical representatives to promote and market their products.

According to another estimate nearly all of the country's 246 registered pharmaceutical companies have drug promoters.

The medical representa-

tives defend their work saying they meet the doctors to see the status of the use of their drugs.

Representatives from pharmaceutical companies including Popular, SK+F, Beximco, and Incepta told this correspondent that they need to assess the prescription status of the drugs of their companies. It is allowed in the business, they claimed.

A medical representative has a target to sell even up to 450 products of the company he or she is working for.

And common market promotion practice is to visit the doctors at hospitals, diagnostic centres, and the doctors' chambers, the promoters said.

The number of represen-

tatives of a pharmaceutical company range from 150 to 1,200.

When asked about controlling such promotional activities, General Secretary of BAPI Abdul Muktadir said if they control the promotional activities, it will halt the competition and ultimately that will create opportunities for only a handful of companies.

"More competition means more good products at lower prices," he said adding that the situation will be under control soon after the economy matures.

He also said prescription examination by medical representatives is a part of market research, and it does not violate patients' rights or their privacy.

NEWS IN brief

MoU with US for low carbon dev

BSS, Bonn

Bangladesh and US are going to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) very shortly to build up broader cooperation in low carbon development and other areas of climate change.

Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) Meshbah UI Alam told the news agency after a bilateral meeting with the delegation of the USA on the sideline of the UN climate talks at Maritim hotel here yesterday.

Under the MoU, the USA will support Bangladesh in the areas of Reducing Emission from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD), emission reduction from industrial units and power stations and promoting renewable energy and other areas, he said.

Man found dead on city road

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police early yesterday recovered the body of a man from the city's Shah Ali.

Locals informed police about a male body, aged around 38, with a white chequered shirt and coffee coloured trousers, lying on Bheribadh road of Nababer Bagh area, said Sub-Inspector (SI) Mohammad Moniruzzaman of Shah Ali Police Station.

The SI said the man's sexual organ was chopped off and the body bore injury marks around neck.

The victim might have died bleeding from the sliced organ, he said, adding that he was killed elsewhere and dumped there.

Police was trying to find his identity and the killers. The body was sent to Dhaka Medical College morgue for autopsy, he added.

Minor boy drowns

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

A ten-year-old boy drowned in Barnoy River at Bashvag village of Sadar upazila yesterday.

The deceased is identified as Monirul Islam, son of Razu Ahmad of Bashvag village of the same upazila.

Witnesses said Monirul was missing after he along with his three friends went to take bath in Barnoy River.

Four bullet-hit in clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Four people were received bullet injuries in a clash between two groups over the ownership of a tea garden at Baralekha upazila of Moulvibazar on Thursday.

The injured were admitted to Sylhet Osmani Medical College Hospital.

Police said the clash erupted when the people of one Ezaj Ahmed went to the garden for taking possession a part of the garden while the people of Ismat Chaudhury, owner of the garden, resisted them.

Both the groups exchanged gunfires during the clash. Manager of the tea garden was arrested in this connection, police said.

DHAKA TODAY

Rally

National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Minerals Resources, Power and Port will hold a rally; Venue: in front of Jatiya Press Club; Time: 4:00pm.

Regular meeting

Rotary Club of Dhaka Central will organise a regular meeting; Venue: Dhaka Club Ltd; Time: 1:30pm.

Human chain

Save The Environment Movement will hold a human chain; Venue: Hazaribagh Beribadh; Time: 10:30am.

Seminar

Dhaka Medical Institute will hold a seminar; Venue: Institution of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh; Time: 4:00pm.

Seminar

Bangladesh Prathomik Shikkhak Samity will hold a seminar; Venue: Maitri auditorium; Time: 10:00am.

Human chain

Initiative For Peace will organise a

human chain; Venue: in front of Dhaka District Administration; Time: 11:00am.

Orientation

Eastern University will organise an orientation programme; Venue: its Dhanmondi premises; Time: 10:00am.

Programme

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University will hold a programme; Venue: the university; Time: 9:00am.

Workshop

Society of Laparoscopic Surgeons of Bangladesh will organise a workshop; Venue: BIRDEM auditorium; Time: 8:30am.

Rally

Citizens Rights Movement will hold a rally; Venue: in front of Jatiya Press Club; Time: 10:30am.

Procession

Bangladesh Paribesh Andolan will hold a procession; Venue: in front of Faculty of Fine Arts; Time: 10:00am.



WEATHER TODAY

Rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at many places over Barisal, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places over Rajshahi, Rangpur, Dhaka and Khulna divisions in next 24 hours till 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy to heavy falls are also likely at places over Chittagong, Barisal and Sylhet divisions.

Mild to moderate heat wave is sweeping over Rajshahi and Khulna divisions and the regions of Tangail, Faridpur, Sayedpur and Patuakhali and it may continue, Met Office said.

The sun sets in the capital today at 6:46pm and rises tomorrow at 5:10am. Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	35.2	27.0	88	76
Chittagong	30.3	24.8	92	79
Rajshahi	37.0	26.5	64	65
Khulna	38.4	27.5	74	56
Barisal	35.6	27.5	79	78
Sylhet	33.3	26.1	77	83
Cox's Bazar	31.6	24.8	81	88