

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Nizamuddin with Pakra.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

A Tale of Horses

Horse-drawn carriages are a timeless feature of old Dhaka. You can find them transporting passengers from Gulistan to Sadarghat for twenty taka. Holding their own among trucks, rickshaws, and thelagaris, they add exotic colour and sounds to the road.

But who takes care of these horses? Where do they live? And die?

I find the answer when I run into a horse being washed and fed near Siddiq Bazar on a rainy Friday morning. Its empty carriage stands nearby. As I start photographing horse and carriage, a man comes up to me. "There are more around the corner," he beckons. Following him into a twisted alley I come upon several more horses, happily eating piles of fresh grass.

A large black and white horse stands at a corner by himself.

"Pakra here is big for a three-year-old," says the man, Saifuddin. "My brother owns these horses."

Soon I am talking with Nizamuddin, who owns eighteen horses in the neighbourhood. His business is inherited. "My grandfather, originally from Madras, started this business in Kolkata. My father moved to Dhaka in 1950," he says.

Nizam's day of glory came in 1983, when he won the second place in a horse-carriage race in Manik Mia Avenue. President Ershad himself presented him a shield.

I ask about his horses. What work do they perform?

"Six are used for running my three carriages," he says, "and the rest serve at functions and festivals: weddings,

parties, circumcision ceremonies..." He charges a few thousand Taka for weddings, enabling the groom to make his entrance on a horse. Bride and groom can also ride away from a completed wedding in one of his carriages.

The horses need basic items for their work. Horseshoes for their feet, called "Nal," are made locally, but the four pins attaching them to the feet are imported. Each shoe lasts about a week. There is a blanket to cover the backs of the horses; a harness ties them to the carriage.

Several horse aficionados have gathered around us. I learn there are 29 carriages and 200-300 horses in Dhaka. One issue repeatedly comes up: the dearth of space for horses. "We have to park them in alleys and small streets, where we are constantly hassled by others. These horses need open space with grass to graze, but there is none."

What happens when they get sick? "We take them to the Animal Hospital nearby. But even there, there is little space for keeping them. When they die, we have trouble burying them," they complain. The burial site is in Kajla near Jatrabari.

We approach Pakra to take pictures. The crowd mills around. A boy of ten or eleven stands next to Nizam, who poses with him and Pakra. "This is my son, Ador," he says. Ador studies in class five. Can he ride? "Of course," he said, "my father taught me."

And yes, Ador thinks riding bigger horses like Pakra is a lot more fun.

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Bangladesh lags far behind in tourism: Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister GM Quader yesterday said Bangladesh's tourism industry lags far behind that of other countries, as the industry did not get significant attention.

The domestic tourism, however, gets momentum extensively although the presence of international tourists is very low, he said.

Talking about statistics on revenue from the tourism industry, he claimed the available statistics are not dependable as they underwent methodological errors.

GM Quader was speaking at a press conference styled "Kilimanjaro conquest and tourism of Bangladesh" organised by North Alpine Club Bangladesh (NACB) at the city's Liberation War Museum. The country's first conqueror of Mount Everest, Musa Ibrahim, has recently climbed Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa, 19,341 feet above the sea level.

Terming the promotion of tourism as the promotion of peace across the globe, the minister stressed the need for launching a social movement to promote the industry.

Praising Musa's courage for having conquered Mount Everest and Kilimanjaro, NACB president and Prothom Alo deputy editor Anisul Haque said those successes, which brought the country reputations, are a proof of enhancement of the nation's capacity.

Sharing experience of his Kilimanjaro expedition, Musa Ibrahim said, "I had to climb around 17,000 feet up the mountain walking for five days. Very often I felt sick and was in dilemma whether I could reach the peak or not".

"If the weather betrayed, it would not be possible to arrive at the peak," he added.

Survey on beggars starts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The authorities of social welfare ministry yesterday started a survey on the beggars in the city to rehabilitate them.

The government enlisted ten non-governmental organisations (NGO) to carry out the survey.

Around 1,000 workers of these NGOs collected basic information of the beggars, including their name, guardian's name, residence address.

They selected 400 spots in the capital to collect information from them.

They will collect information of 10,000 beggars. Of them, 2,000 beggars will be selected for rehabilitation.

The beggars will be registered under different categories, including seasonal or irregular, challenged, women and children.

Eyewitnesses said some NGO workers had to offer money to the beggars to get the information as some of them were reluctant to cooperate.

Now around 40,000 beggars live in the city, said ministry sources.

NEWS IN brief

BNP leader hacked to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Unknown criminals hacked to death a union level BNP leader in Sherpur upazila on Thursday night.

The victim, Md Alauddin Mondol, 35, was senior vice-president of Sughat union of the upazila.

Sherpur Police Station Officer-in-Charge Aminul Islam said Alauddin used to transport people on his motorcycle at charge.

The criminals killed him and snatched the motorcycle when he was taking an unknown passenger to Sughat from Mirzapur Bazar at night, he said.

The victim's body was found in Omarpara area.

Retired army man killed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

A retired army was chopped to death inside his sawmill at Baniajuri Bus Stnad of Ghior upazila yesterday.

The deceased is identified as Liakat Ali, 65, a retired army soldier and owner of Molla Timber Sawmill, of Sholdhara village of the upazila.

Police said they could not ascertain the cause of the death immediately.

Quoting family members, police added Liakat was living at the sawmill alone. Two workers of the sawmill were missing after the incident.

13,000 children trafficked in 5yrs

UNB, Dhaka

Speakers at a roundtable said over 13,000 Bangladeshi children were trafficked to different countries of the world in the last five years.

Quoting a government report, they said the trafficked children are being compelled to stay in forced labour, sexual torture and domestic work, which caused their mental sufferings.

The speakers made the remarks at a roundtable titled 'Nationally Standard Counseling Services to Trafficked Survivors' organised by Dhaka Ahsania Mission at Jessore DC conference hall on Thursday.

Man held at airport

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Airport armed police arrested a man while trying to steal a passenger's luggage at Shahjalal International Airport yesterday, police said.

They challenged Emdadul Haque Bhuiya, 52, who was trying to leave the airport area with three luggages of passengers of a flight of Emirate Airlines that landed from Dubai around 9:30am.

At a primary interrogation, Emdad admitted his involvement with a luggage theft gang. A case was filed with Airport Police Station in this connection.



A craftsman gives finishing touches to an idol of a goddess as the Hindu community's largest religious festival, Durga Puja, is to begin tomorrow. The photo was taken from Rishikesh Das Road at Bangla Bazar in the city yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

Youth kills friend over money

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kishoreganj

A youth killed his friend and concealed the body under earth of his room over money at Charsholokia in Kishoreganj town on September 26.

Police recovered the decomposed body of the victim from under earth of the killer's house on Thursday.

The deceased is identified as Rubel, 30, son of Md Nuruzzaman, of the area.

Police said they recovered Rubel's body from his friend Rafiq's house after victim's wife complained to police as he went missing since September 26.

Police arrested Rafiq from his house and admitted the killing of his friend.

Rafiq killed him as he did not give Tk 20,000, out Tk 1 lakh proposed for starting a cloth business, police added.

SMS 'misguides' Dental college admission seekers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Confusion over the venue of Dhaka Dental College (DDC) admission exam sent the admission seekers on a last minute scramble yesterday.

The confusion arose from a reply short message service after registering with DDC. The message read: "Congrats! (Name of the admission seeker), registration completed for DGHS admission exam. User (--), password (--), Centre (Dhaka Dental College)."

Taking "centre" to mean examination venue, most of the examinees went to DDC right before the exam at 10:00am, only to find in shock that the venues were Government Bangla College and Intermediate Science College.

"For a few moments I wondered whether I

would finally be able to sit for the exam after finding my seat in the new venue," said a female candidate on condition of anonymity.

She said there was only four minutes left for the exam to start when she finally received another SMS confirming her venue to be Government Bangla College.

However, DDC Principal Prof Dr SM Iqbal Hussain found nothing wrong with the SMS.

"The students should have come to DDC beforehand to know about their seat plan, put up on the notice board. Never has the medical admission test been held at DDC," he added.

The female candidate was lucky to have her car to reach the college on time for the one hour-long exam. However, the same cannot be said for the remaining candidates, numbering around 5,000.

Roads to be repaired before Eid

Says Abul Hossain

BSS, Gazipur

All major roads and highways will be readied for smooth traffic before holy Eid-ul-Azha after repair works nationwide, said Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain yesterday.

"The present condition of roads and highways is largely a blatant result of the corruption and negligence by the BNP-Jammat alliance government that used cheap and sub-standard materials for both repairs and constructions," he said while visiting the renovation works of Dhaka-Mymensingh road at Mouna intersection.

Abul Hossain alleged that the works that were going on in Dhaka-Mymensingh road was not a repair work. "Instead, it should be called reconstruction," he said in an oblique reference to malpractice of the past.

The minister, however, regretted for the temporary sufferings of the people, but vowed to provide a good road infrastructure and a modern transport system soon across the country, including capital Dhaka. He said the present government would start the work for metro rail in Dhaka during its tenure.

Our Heartiest Felicitations to the People's Republic of CHINA on the Occasion of its

62nd National Day

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WEATHER TODAY

Temperature may rise slightly

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at one or two places over Chittagong, Sylhet and Barisal divisions and weather may remain mainly dry with temporary or partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country in 24 hours till 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may rise slightly over the country, said Met Office.

The sun sets in the capital today at 5:47pm and rises tomorrow at 5:50am.

Country's highest temperature 36.3 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sylhet and lowest 24.5 degrees at Chittagong.

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	34.4	27.6	74	62
Chittagong	30.0	24.5	87	83
Rajshahi	33.2	25.0	83	76
Rangpur	34.5	26.2	80	71
Khulna	34.5	26.6	80	80