

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

Colours of Our Lives

Most of my years abroad were spent working as an engineer in Silicon Valley where I built software for digital imaging and video. Colour has always been an important - and sometimes contentious - part of visual engineering. Accuracy of reproduction is a thorny issue. A lesson came from early days of colour television, when the Americans, French and British all came up with their own colour TV systems. NTSC, the American system, was quickly dubbed Never Twice Same Colour, while the French SECAM became Something Essentially Contradictory to American Methods. The British PAL system was Peace At Last!

But these are all abstract thoughts and ideas. When I returned from the USA to live in Bangladesh, I found myself immersed in real colours. On my first Pohela Boishakh here after many years abroad, the colourful attire - particularly that of women - dazzled me. Later, during my first Eid in Bangladesh in two decades, I noticed men, too, had started wearing colourful Punjabis.

Since then, I have heard many expats and tourists comment on our use of colours, including the husband of a European ambassador who said he loved the colours so much that sometimes he wanted to jump out of his car and embrace people on the street wearing colourful clothes.

During Eid, the bus and train stations and launch terminals are dotted with children wearing festive clothes. Adding to the magic are the henna-dyed hands and feet of women and children.

But bright colours are not restricted to clothing. Nature, too has endowed Bangladesh with an



Colours of the spice-seller.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

abundance of colour. Summer's brilliant reds - krishnachura, shimul and mandaar flowers - are followed by rainy season's soulful variations of green. Winter brings the golden hues of mustard fields. These are punctuated year-round by the rhythmic green and yellow of the rice fields.

Then, too, we have a penchant for applying colours liberally to our everyday things, starting with rickshaws. Buses and trucks are often painted with loud, garish patterns. Every Eid, certain alleyways of old Dhaka are painted with scenarios of celebration and piety. Sometimes a large flower or a scenic graffiti is painted on random walls, signed by the painter. (For some mysterious reason, most painters are called Nayan.) Some World Cup soccer flags from two years ago still remain in Dhaka alleys.

Increasingly, I notice colourful buildings in smaller towns and villages. And one day, walking through Mirpur, I came upon a house shimmering like an island of colour in an otherwise grey neighbourhood. Village weddings are often announced by construction of elaborate multi-coloured gates. Festivals and religious observances such as Holi, Rash and Buddha Purnima are often accompanied by a show of colours, as are the elaborate constructions for Urs in many places.

Making a living in Bangladesh is not easy for her people. Yet they work towards creating a brighter future for themselves and their children. Colours are an antidote to the hardships of the life led by many. Perhaps they also represent dreams of a better future?

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India shortens sensitive list

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India yesterday decided to reduce the number of items on the sensitive list for trade with Saarc countries, aiming to expand trade of goods in the region.

"The government has approved the pruning of sensitive list to increase trade with Saarc countries," sources said.

Shifting of items from sensitive list to general category would do away with duty impediments and boost trade, according to officials.

Under the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (Safta), which went into force in July 2006, India's imports are classified under two lists--the Most Favoured Nation list and sensitive list.

India's sensitive list for Least Developed Countries (LDC) like Bangladesh has just 25 items. And the same for non-LDC like Pakistan has over 800 commodities.

It was proposed to cut 30 percent of products under the sensitive list for non-LDCs under Safta. According to an official, the decision would benefit Pakistan more than any other Saarc member.

The commerce ministers of India and Pakistan had agreed in April this year that discussions would continue at official levels to draw a roadmap for further reductions in the Safta-sensitive list.

In order to normalise trade with India, Pakistan had shifted from a small positive list regime to a negative list, which will facilitate trade of many more (about 6,500) goods.

SALARY, EID BONUS Many in Patuakhali, Sylhet go without

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With Eid-ul-Fitr only a few days away, teachers at some primary schools in Sylhet and employees at a health complex in Patuakhali are yet to get their salaries and Eid bonus.

Our Sylhet correspondent reports, around 700 teachers at some government primary schools in Beanibazar upazila did not get their salaries this month because of alleged negligence of the upazila education officer.

Beanibazar Upazila Teachers Association General Secretary Saifuddin Khaled Zafri said although the government issued a circular asking the authorities concerned for payment by August 13, the teachers could not draw their salaries till August 16. Upazila Education Officer Ziauddin Ahmed said they sent the bills to treasury on time. Meanwhile, 32 employees at Dumki Upazila Health Complex in Patuakhali district are about to be deprived of Eid festivities as they did not get their salaries, reports our Patuakhali correspondent.

The employees including three doctors have not been getting their salaries since July as the ministry concerned did not release the fund.

NEWS IN brief

National Eidgah ready for Eid jamaat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Preparations have been made to hold the main Eid-ul-Fitr jamaat at National Eidgah in the capital on Eid day.

Necessary arrangements including waterproof shed, fans, sitting place, toilets and ablution facilities have been set up at the Eidgah where more than 1 lakh devotees including the president, ministers, judges, lawmakers and diplomats will say their prayers.

If the weather is favourable, the first jamaat will be held at the Eidgah at 8:30am.

In case of inclement weather, the jamaat will be held at Baitul Mukarram National Mosque at 9:00am.

Besides, arrangements for around five thousand women will be available at one side of the Eidgah

Non-govt school, college teachers to wear black on Eid day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The teachers and staff of non-government secondary and higher secondary institutions yesterday declared that they would wear black ribbons on the upcoming Eid day protesting non-inclusion of the institutions on the latest list of Monthly Pay Order (MPO) beneficiaries.

The institutions include non-government secondary, higher secondary, madrasa, college, diploma institutions, vocational and technical institutions.

They were addressing a press conference at the headquarters of Bangladesh Besarkari Shikkhak Karmachari Parishad in the capital.

The parishad President Mohammed Hanif Ullah said they are financially incapable of celebrating Eid-ul-Fitr, Durga Puja, and Buddha Purnima.

They also declared that they would stage an indefinite sit-in before Jatiya Press Club from September 2.

The parishad General Secretary AKM Zahurul Islam Chowdhury, among others, spoke.

Body of unidentified man recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The body of an unidentified man was recovered from Dhamrai upazila of Dhaka yesterday.

Masud Hossain, sub-inspector of Dhamrai Police Station, said they recovered the body from Joypura area around 10:00am.

Police suspect that the victim might have been strangled by criminals.

The body was sent to Dhaka Medical College



PHOTO: STAR

An unusually jam-free Farmgate intersection yesterday as thousands of Eid holidaymakers have already left the capital. The photo was taken at 3:00pm.

WEATHER TODAY

Change in temperature unlikely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at a few places over Khulna, Barisal, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions and a few places

over Dhaka, Rajshahi, Rangpur with moderately heavy falls at places over the country till 6:00pm today.

Day and night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country. The sun sets in the capital today at 6:29pm and rises tomorrow at 5:36am.

Country's highest temperature 35 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sylhet and Syedpur and lowest 22 degrees at Rangamati.

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	33.1	26.2	67	69
Chittagong	33.0	26.0	76	82
Rajshahi	34.0	26.8	93	71
Rangpur	33.8	28.5	70	73
Khulna	33.2	27.0	84	83
Barisal	32.0	26.6	70	83
Sylhet	35.0	25.8	76	75
Cox's Bazar	32.0	24.8	76	76

Jorina's dream stampeded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jorina wanted her daughters to be educated. After the death of her husband many years ago, finding no other means to survive Jorina began begging to make her dreams a reality.

Every month Jorina would go to her village in Lalmonirhat to give her daughters money that she saved from begging in the capital.

Her two school going daughters -- Mousumi Akhter, 14, and Maleka Akhter, 11, -- and 18-year-old mentally challenged son live in Lalmonirhat.

But Jorina's dreams to see her daughters educated came to an abrupt end when she became a victim of a stampede for zakat, Muslim religious charity based on one's wealth, in the capital's Fakirapool on Thursday evening.

"There is no one educated in our family. Jorina wanted to educate her daughters and to bear the expense, she had been begging for the last six to seven years," said Rabeya Begum, Jorina's sister.

Another woman Helena Aktar, 50, died at her makeshift house in Motijheel after being injured in the stampede. Her daughter Laili, who was injured in the rush for Zakat, was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The third woman who was killed in the rush was identified yesterday as Sahara Khatun, 65.

A case was filed in this connection against those giving zakat.

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