

# TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Rafes with his offering.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

## The Eight Metals

The other day I was waiting in Shyamoli for a friend when I noticed a man selling rings on the sidewalk. Some of them looked different from normal rings because they contained no stones, and I soon realized what they were. I had heard of *Ashtadhatu* rings before, but this was the first time I saw them being made and sold.

*Ashtadhatu* means "eight metals" and - in theory - is an alloy of gold, silver, copper, lead, tin, zinc, iron and antimony. Statues made of *Ashtadhatu* are considered sacred and pure in India. Many people believe that wearing such a ring brings health benefits, including relief from rheumatism and digestion problems.

The man, who had shreds of various metals in different containers, finished fitting a ring in a customer's finger. Then he glanced quickly at my camera before looking at me. I asked his name.

"Rafes Fakir," he said.

I asked him how he made the ring. He showed me a pre-made brass ring with a hole in the center where the *Ashtadhatu* alloy is fitted.

But how was the alloy made? Didn't he need a fire to weld the metals together?

No, he said, because the metals were soft and could be mixed into an alloy by simply beating them together.

He pointed out the components: *pitul*, iron, *shisha*, mercury, *dosta*, *tama*, silver, *rang*. They were in small pieces in separate containers, and

they all felt malleable when I squeezed them.

I ordered a ring for 50 Taka (I suppose price is the main reason gold has been replaced in the combination.) Rafes cut little pieces of the metal shreds into a container and mashed them thoroughly. Then he used a hammer to beat the alloy into the ring's hole, finally using a file to smooth it out nicely.

The ring, which has to be worn on the right hand for the *Ashtadhatu* to make contact with food, fit snugly on my ring finger.

Rafes is 58 years old and hails from Madaripur. Father of six and grandfather of three girls, he is the third generation in his family to do this work. His father taught him this work.

His only son is studying for his school certificate exam. "Will he follow in the family tradition?" I ask him. "He is too young to decide now," he replied.

Rafes has sold *Ashtadhatu* rings on the sidewalk for seven years, working from 8am to 2:30pm seven days a week. He splits his time between Shyamoli and a spot near Suhrawardy Udyan.

I asked him the question uppermost in my mind.

"How do you know that it works?"

"That is for the customers to decide," he says with a modest smile. Then he adds, "I have been selling these rings for seven years, and who can stay in business that long with a product that does not work?"

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## Opt for long-term public pvt partnership projects

Says UK-based expert

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh should opt for long-term projects while constructing infrastructures under the public private partnership (PPP) framework as short-term projects might not be suitable, said a top expert of a UK-based professional services provider yesterday.

"Bangladesh should think long-term when it comes to building infrastructure under the PPP framework. It is a long-term issue," said Richard Abadie, global leader of capital projects and infrastructure of PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC).

His comments came at a plenary session styled "PPP in Bangladesh: Applying international best practices" on the first day of a two-day "PPP Global Investors' Forum: Bangladesh 2012" at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel in the capital.

The PPP Office, under the Prime Minister's Office, and the Board of Investment jointly organised the event.

The aim was to showcase the government's initiative to project the progress of its policies and framework and also to create an environment conducive to the projects taken up by PPP investors.

Richard Abadie said there should not be any short-term planning for infrastructure projects on political consideration.

The expert called for multi-party support to build infrastructures on PPP framework as constructing projects under

the arrangement takes a considerable amount of time and involves risks.

He said globally there were many genuine players who were financing infrastructure projects. Bangladesh will have to target how much money it wants to attract under its PPP programmes, he said.

Richard Abadie said risk allocation was at the heart of PPP and risks associated with PPP should be sensibly allocated between the public and private firms.

Projects will not be completed within the stipulated time if risks are heavily tilted towards the private firms, he said.

"There must be transparency and fairness in the contracts," he said.

John Grant Hauber, principal specialist at the Asian Development Bank on PPP, said Bangladesh came a long way by drafting laws and policies on PPP.

"The government must be congratulated for the achievement. But this is just the beginning."

He called for better coordination between the PPP Office and the line ministry for the better implementation of projects.

Muslim Chowdhury, additional secretary to the finance ministry; Syed AH Uddin, chief executive officer of PPP Office; Faruque Hossain, deputy secretary, PPP Unit of the finance ministry; and AKM Abdullah, financial sector specialist of the World Bank; also spoke at the programme.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina looks at photographs taken during the Liberation War of Bangladesh by renowned Indian photojournalist Raghu Rai (also in the picture) who presented the photo album to the premier at Gono Bhaban yesterday.

## NEWS IN brief

### Man falls to death in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man died after falling from a makeshift pandal at Koshaituli in the old part of the capital yesterday.

Thirty-year-old Mojammel, an employee of Rashed Decorator, all of a sudden fell from the top of the pandal around 3:30pm while he was working to set it up.

Doctors declared him dead after coworkers rushed him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said Jasim, his coworker.

No case has been filed in this connection.

### 500 Jamaat-Shibir activists sued over Zindabazar clash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Police filed two cases against over 500 Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Chhatra Shibir activists with Kotwali Police Station on charge of assaulting law-enforcers and blasting crackers during a clash with the police in Sylhet city's Zindabazar on Wednesday.

The accused include Sylhet city Jamaat Ameer Ehsanul Mahbub Zobayer, former amir Ziauddin Nader, district (north) Amir Hafiz Abdul Hai Harun and former city unit Shibir president Anwarul Wadud.

Sub-Inspector Zakir filed the assault case while SI Ashrafuzzaman lodged the cracker blasting case against the Jamaat-Shibir activists, said Officer-in-Charge Aatur Rahman.

### Boy dies in electric pole fall

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A boy died as an electric pole fell on him in Maddhya Nandipara area of Khilgaon in the capital yesterday.

The victim was Murad Hossain, 5, son of rickshaw puller Moinul Islam of the area.

Police said the electric pole fell on Murad when some workers were erecting it in front of his residence.

The body was sent to Dhaka Medical College morgue for an autopsy.

A case was filed with Khilgaon Police Station in

### Health assistant found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

A health assistant was found dead in a room of Porsha Upazila Health Complex in Naogaon yesterday.

The deceased was Abdul Matin, 54. He worked at the health complex.

Police said a staff at the complex found Matin hanging from a grill of a window around 8:00am.

Police suspect that Matin have committed suicide. The body was sent to Naogaon Sadar Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

An unnatural death case was filed with Porsha

### WVA arranges Int'l Meena Bazar in capital today

METRO DESK

Women's Voluntary Association (WVA) will arrange an International Meena Bazar at Chairman Bari Field in the capital's Banani from 10:00am to 7:00pm today to raise charitable funds, said a press release.

Since 1954, the WVA has been arranging such Meena Bazar every year with the participation of ladies from different embassies and high commissions. Entry cards will be available at WVA office at House 405/A, Road 27 (Old), Dhanmondi

### Say freedom fighter, not 'Birangona'

Discussion told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday demanded that the government recognises the women victims of the country's liberation war as freedom fighter instead of Birangona (war heroine).

"They [the women victims of harassment by the Pakistani occupation forces] are freedom fighters," said women's rights activist Maleka Begum.

She told the discussion in the capital's National Museum organised by Chandrabati Academy.

Maleka Begum, also a faculty member of the Department of Women and Gender Studies at DU, urged all to help uproot the communalism from the country.

Renowned writer Selina Hossain urged the government to arrange a reception in recognition of contribution of the "war heroines".

Sufferings of the women have not been ended for not recognising their role that they played during the country's liberation war, she said.

Sammilita Sangskritik Jote President Nasir Uddin Yusuf Bacchu chaired the programme.

### ASHULIA FACTORY FIRE

## List of missing workers sought

Tk 20 lakh to each family of deceased also demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a rally yesterday demanded that the government publishes the real list of the victim workers who remain missing after a devastating fire at Tazreen Fashions Ltd on November 24.

They also demanded that the government ensures compensation of Tk 20 lakh to each family of the dead in the incident.

The government should implement the existing laws properly to prevent this kind of fire incidents in the country's garment factories, they said.

Citizen Rights Movement (CRM) organised the rally near BGMEA building in the capital.

CRM Secretary General Tushar Rahman alleged that an anti-liberation

and development group in and outside the country is active to destroy garments and other industries of the country.

Green Club of Bangladesh General Secretary Ashish Kumar Dey at the rally said the BGMEA building was constructed without permission from Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakha (Rajuk) and it violated wetland protection law.

Corruption, land grabbing and irregularities will be recognised by the state, if the Hatirjheel-Begunbari Khal Project is inaugurated without demolishing the 15-storey BGMEA building in the middle of the Hatirjheel.

Initiative for Peace Chairman Shofikur Rahman and Secretary General Ifma Hussain also spoke.



Bangladesh Mahila Parishad stages a rally of female farmers at the Central Shaheed Minar in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Resist tomorrow's blockade

Urges AL-led grand alliance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ruling Awami League-led 14-party alliance leaders yesterday urged the party men to resist BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami's "destructive" activities including tomorrow's road blockade programme across the country.

They said leaders of the opposition alliance have been trying to protect the war crimes accused and destroy victory of the Liberation War by staging agitation programmes in the month of victory.

They told a discussion on the celebration of 42nd Victory Day event at Suhrawardy Uddyan in the capital.

The discussion was held as a part of AL's month-long Victory Day celebration programme, which started on December 3.

The BNP-led 18-party alliance will observe road blockade programme tomorrow demanding restoration of the caretaker government system.

Speakers also said anti-liberation forces are conspiring to foil democracy through violence.

"We want the verdict for the war crimes trial in the month of victory as this what the people want," said Mohammad Nasim, senior AL leader.

Workers Party of Bangladesh President Rashed Khan Menon said BNP and Jamaat are openly trying to wipe out the victory of the Liberation War by the road blockade. Jamaat and Jamaat-backed Islami Chhatra Shibir are trying to remove the existence of Bangladesh through violent activities, he added.

He criticised the silence of US Ambassador to Bangladesh Dan W Mozena on his proposal that the government sit with Jamaat and Shibir.

Journalist Abed Khan said the spirit of Liberation War has been attacked by activities of Jamaat and Shibir and their collaborator -- BNP.

"Those who talk in favour of war criminals must also bear the liability of war crimes," he said, adding that now it is apparent that the country has been divided into two parts centring the Liberation War -- one in favour of it and the other opposing it.

AL Dhaka City unit General Secretary Mofazzel Hossain Chowdhury Maya also spoke at the programme among others.



### Light fog likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country in 24 hours till 6:00pm today.

Light fog may occur over the river basins of the country during late night till morning, Met Office said.

Night and day temperature may rise slightly and day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

The sun sets in the capital today at 5:12pm and rises tomorrow at 6:30am.

Country's highest temperature 29.0 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Madaripur and Khepupara and lowest 10.2 degrees at Ishurdi.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max:	Min:	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	26.7	13.8	65	61
Chittagong	26.6	14.9	86	72
Rajshahi	25.7	11.2	93	82
Rangpur	25.5	14.6	83	80
Khulna	28.5	13.6	98	80
Barisal	28.0	12.5	88	84
Sylhet	26.0	16.3	90	85