

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Pedestrian, New York.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Coming to America

Coming to America is a bitter-sweet experience for me. I once called America home - for three decades, in fact - yet it seems like a foreign country now. Living for a few years in Bangladesh has changed me in ways that only become apparent when I return to America.

America comforts me. The people have not changed in these years: direct, polite to a fault, and friendly - even in New York, which was once a gruff, unfriendly town. The burgers and the orange juice taste the same as always. I recall a family friend visiting here years ago. His warning: while on a trip to America, don't drink the orange juice. If you do, you will never leave.

America frustrates me with its obsession with size. When living here, I had enjoyed the large cars, houses and food portions. Perhaps now I have learned to live with less consumption? My dinner portion at a restaurant could nourish me in Dhaka for two days. One day, needing one pair of running socks, I search the stores but none will sell me less than three pairs.

America puzzles me. Everything here seems to be manufactured abroad. Even manhole covers in New York City's streets are made in India. Anything made in the USA advertises itself loudly because it is so rare. Yet the economy is humming and unemployment is low. The world's largest economy, back on the driver's seat, still attracts the best minds of the planet. America surprises me. One day in New York, after a long wait, I finally

get a taxi. The driver's face has familiar features. He tells me he is from Comilla. When I reach my destination, he refuses to accept his fare: "I cannot take money from another Bangladeshi." A friendly argument ensues. At the end, he relents and I win, but his generous gesture stays with me.

America tickles my intellect. After two days immersed in the four floors of Strand Bookstore my appetite for new explorations, ideas and stories grows without bound. The breadth of the subject matter and the attention to detail is astonishing (and seductive.) Yet I miss something. These stories, photographs, detailed research and analyses, thought-provoking essays - they are by, for, and of the West. Where are the stories of the people and land I have immersed myself in the last few years? Will Bangladeshi literature and ideas ever make it to world stage?

America equalizes me. In this affluent society, I am an anonymous face walking in the street, driving in the highways, or standing in the subway train. America's wealth has created a large middle class which regularly shops, dines out and takes vacations and just about everyone owns a car. The country relies on the spending of this middle class to keep it going. No cooks, maids or drivers to be hired here, unless you are filthy rich.

But most of all America amazes me with her energy, creativity, dynamism and friendliness. What a country!

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Appointing asst judges on to cut case backlog

Recruitment of 125 nearing completion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In order to deal with the huge backlog of cases in lower courts, Bangladesh Judicial Service Commission (BJSC) has started the process to appoint 53 assistant judges while recruitment of another 125 is nearing completion.

Lower court judges are appointed after BJSC selects suitable candidates by holding different tests and examinations.

BJSC asked for applications from candidates for the 53 posts, states a May circular, adding that BJSC has the authority to increase or decrease the number of posts.

State Minister for Law Qamrul Islam told The Daily Star on Thursday that the government would ask BJSC to appoint more judges to lower courts after completion of the ongoing recruitment process of the 125 assistant judges.

This is being done to reduce the backlog of cases and to ensure justice within a short time. Appointment of judges is a continuous process as the posts of judges of different tiers become vacant after their promotions, he added.

A law ministry official dealing with BJSC said recruitment of the 125 assistant judges was now at the final stage as the written test and

viva of candidates have already been completed.

BJSC will very soon publish the results of the viva, he said.

BJSC started the process of recruiting the 125 assistant judges in August last year by issuing circular seeking applications from candidates.

BJSC needs to make the new appointments to cope with the shortage of judges, since more than 24 lakh cases are pending with lower courts across the country with only around 1,536 judges to deal with them, the official said.

On December 4, 2010, the then chief justice ABM Khairul Haque in presence of Law Minister Shafique Ahmed told a function that the number of judges should be doubled to reduce the backlog of cases and sufferings of litigants.

The present government has so far appointed 308 judges to lower courts through BJSC.

Earlier in May 2008, the then caretaker government appointed 394 assistant judges through BJSC following the separation of the judiciary from the executive.



Hindus block the capital's Shahbagh intersection yesterday protesting the government's plan to enact a law on the management of the vested properties.

PHOTO: STAR

NEWSINbrief

President, prime minister greet new emir of Qatar

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina have congratulated Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani on his appointment as the new emir of the State of Qatar.

In his message, the president said Qatar will benefit from the new emir's prudence and leadership.

The president added that the bilateral relations between the two countries will be further strengthened and consolidated in the years to come.

The prime minister in her message expressed her gratefulness for Qatar's generous support towards Bangladesh and Bangladeshis working in Qatar.

Cotton trader stabbed to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unidentified criminals stabbed a cotton trader to death at his shop in the capital's Uttar Badda last night.

The victim Mohammad Jewel, 40, son of Jinnath Ali, resided at Satarkul.

Jewel's relative Altab Hossain said two people on a motorbike reached the spot around 9:00pm, started stabbing Jewel indiscriminately killing him instantly.

He was doctored dead at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The reason behind the killing could not be known immediately.

Bridge simulator unveiled in United Maritime Academy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A full mission bridge simulator with dynamic positioning system was unveiled in the capital's United Maritime Academy (UMA), a concern of United Group, yesterday by International Maritime Organization (IMO) Secretary General Koji Sekimizu.

The UMA conducts two-year pre-sea training for marine cadets of both nautical and engineering branch as per the IMO syllabus and standards set by the Department of Shipping providing Higher National Diploma under Scottish Qualifications Authority, says a press release.

AOFA's reunion held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of Azimpur Old Friends Association (AOFA), an organisation of Azimpur Colony's inhabitants, held their second reunion in Azimpur Estate Janakallayan Samity auditorium recently.

Dr Mizanur Rahman Shelly, chief adviser of the organisation, was present as the chief guest while Ziaul Hasan Siddique and Prof Sirajul Islam Chowdhury were the special guests.

AKM Kamrul Ahsan, president of AOFA, presided over the meeting.

During the function, AOFA awarded five personalities for their contribution to society and the country.

Zia paved way for religion-based politics

Says Shahriar Kabir

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Urging people to resist fundamentalists, eminent war crimes researcher Shahriar Kabir yesterday said former president Ziaur Rahman paved the way for religion-based politics which Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had banned.

Jamaat-e-Islami is a glaring example that the people do not like religion-based politics as the party could acquire only four percent of votes in the country, he said at a memorial discussion held at National Museum in the capital.

The programme was organised by Muntasir Mamun-Fatema Trust on the occasion of the 84th birth anniversary of Misbah Uddin Khan, a noted historian, former member of the parliament and a social worker.

While delivering his speech as the main speaker, Shahriar Kabir said Jamaat and Hefajat-e-Islam activists have been trying to cause misunderstandings regarding the word "secularism" saying that secularism means absence of religion in the society.

He added that secularism conflicts with religion in western countries but in the sub-continent, secularism does not create any bar in observing religion rather it bars religion from running the state.

Speaking on the occasion, eminent litterateur Dr Borhan Uddin Khan Jahangir said, "Jamaat or Hefajat did not build the country. We, the common people, built the country. So we should always be careful about them who are misusing religion."

Robi-Drishy debate contest begins in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A debate competition titled "Robi-Drishy Debate Competition-2013" began in Chittagong city yesterday morning.

Drishy Chittagong, a socio-cultural organisation, is organising the competition in association with mobile phone operator Robi.

The inaugural ceremony was held at Zila Shilpakala Academy.

Drishy Chittagong Executive Committee member Rashedul Ameen Rashed chaired the function while Chittagong University Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof Mohammad Iftakher Uddin Chowdhury was present as chief guest.

Some 24 teams from 18 schools in the city are participating in the competition that will continue till tomorrow starting from yesterday.

At the university level, 24 teams from 17 universities across the country will take part in the contest that will be held on July 4 and 5.

Obituary

CITY DESK



Dr Abu Ahmed Chowdhury, chairman of Samorita Hospital Ltd, died

last night.

The board of directors and all the employees of the hospital have been deeply shocked at the death, says a press release.

They pray for the salvation of the departed soul and expressed their sympathy to the bereaved family members of the deceased.

DU okays Tk 314cr budget

DU CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka University syndicate on Thursday approved a Tk 314.53 crore budget for the fiscal year 2013-14 with a deficit of Tk 24 crore.

Of the total amount, the University Grants Commission will supply Tk 259.50 crore, while Tk 31 crore will come from the university's internal incomes.

The largest portion -Tk 204.54 crore or 64.04 percent- will be spent on salaries of teachers and staff, while the education sector will receive Tk 32.99 crore or 10.49 percent, of which the research sector will get Tk 2.71 crore.

The syndicate meeting was chaired by Vice Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique.

Syndicate member Prof Farid Uddin Ahmed told The Daily Star, "The size of the research sector budget remains as small as in the previous years. With that amount, extensive research work is not possible. The allocation should be increased."

54 get Erasmus Mundus scholarship

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Fifty four Bangladeshi nationals have been awarded the Erasmus Mundus scholarship for the 2013-14.

The scholarship recipients will study in universities from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom and Norway.

Ambassador and Head of Delegation of the European Union to Bangladesh William Hanna arranged a reception on Thursday at his residence in honour of the 54 Bangladeshi scholars.

Govt to give stipend to 1.3 lakh female students

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About 133,726 poor and meritorious female students who will begin their degree (pass course) and equivalent level will be given stipend worth about Tk 75 crore and 15 lakh from the Prime Minister's Education Assistance Trust Fund.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is to inaugurate the stipend programme tomorrow, says a press release.

Each student will receive Tk 5,620 in total.

To receive the stipend, a student has to meet several conditions including having 75 percent attendance, parents' annual income is less than Tk 75,000 and is unmarried.

Students with disabilities, from hill tracts, haor, monga (seasonal and localised famine) prone regions and underprivileged groups will be given priority. Students with physically challenged parents and insolvent freedom fighters will have first priority as well.



The current state of this footpath on Bangabandhu Avenue before Maulana Bhashani National Hockey Stadium in the capital was a result of development work on sewer pipes by Dhaka South City Corporation, resulting in the sufferings of pedestrians. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



Consultation

Riverine People will organise a consultation on what needs to be done to recover and protect the Buriganga river; Venue: Bangladesh Economic Association, 4/C, Eskaton Garden Road; Time: 9:30am.

Roundtable

The Daily Prothom Alo will organise a roundtable, "Religious harmony and current reality"; Venue: its office; Time: 10:30am.

Consultation

UN Women will hold a consultation on the project, "Budgetary review on addressing violence against women

(VAW) under the MDGF joint program in VAW"; Venue: Jatiya Press Club; Time: 10:30am.

Discussion

Jatiya Adivasi Parishad will hold a discussion marking 158 years past the Santal Revolution; Venue: Dhaka Reporters Unity; Time: 10:00am.

Roundtable

The Ministry of Information and Communication Technology and the daily Samakal will organise a roundtable, "Mobile apps development: Ideas"; Venue: Bangladesh Computer Council; Time: 9:30am.