

Rupchanda-Star Lifestyle Amateur Chef Cook-Off champion Tanzeela Amin Aureen, left, receives a certificate from The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam, right, while Rupchanda's head of sales and marketing Shoeb Md Asaduzzaman, centre, looks on at The Daily Star Centre in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: SAZZAD IBNE SAYED



Winners get awards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The final chapter of the first ever Rupchanda-Star Lifestyle Amateur Chef Cook-Off was closed yesterday, with the winners receiving their prizes in an award giving ceremony at The Daily Star Centre in the capital.

The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam gave out certificates to all 25 finalists along with Rupchanda's head of sales and marketing Shoeb Md Asaduzzaman. The champion and two runners-up were the last to pick up their awards.

The grand finale was held on June 20 at The Daily Star Centre, where Tanzeela Amin Aureen was crowned champion for her dish of rice and meatballs with tomato gravy. She made her way to the finale by winning the appetiser session.

The first runner-up was Farhana Faruque Naz, who progressed by winning the creative cooking session. The second runner-up, Rokeya Begum, won the regional specialties session. The two other finalists were Raisa Tarannum Hashib and Reema Islam.

The cooking part was the third round of the search for Bangladesh's best amateur chef. The first two rounds consisted of submission of applications and a selection of 25 contestants through interviews.

Yesterday, each of the 25 contestants was given a Rupchanda gift hamper and a free copy of The Daily Star's Eid Fashion Album. Inside the Eid Fashion Album pack was the Eid Recipe Book, made up entirely of the dishes submitted by the 25 contenders.

ALCWC sits today amid rifts among leaders

HASAN JAHD TUSHER

The Awami League Central Working Committee (ALCWC) sits today with its leaders divided in different segments, one blaming another for organisational weakness and the debacle in the five recent city corporation polls.

The ALCWC, the ruling party's highest decision making body, is expected to discuss the party's shortcomings and the latest political situation at the meeting at Gono Bhavan at 5:00pm.

The meeting may see a lot of heated debates over roles of certain leaders, especially AL General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam, AL insiders said.

A major segment of ALCWC heavily criticised Ashrafur for staying "aloof", which many leaders think weakened AL in the last four and a half years and saw the defeat in the city polls.

Ashrafur's supporters, in defence, are highly critical about Communications Minister and AL Presidium Member Obaidul Quader, rumored to be the one to replace Ashrafur. They say Quader and his followers are creating division in AL.

Another group of leaders are critical about presidium members Matia Chowdhury and Nooh-ul-Alam Lenin, both of whom have a background of left-leaning student politics

and are identified as "pro-communist" leaders.

They blamed the two for weakening AL's structure by bringing forth in 2009 new faces, who failed to deliver.

The "core AL" segment, comprising Quader and Joint General Secretary Jahangir Kabir Nanak, once top Bangladesh Chhatra League leaders, blame leaders of the pro-Ashraf segment for weakening AL by not looking into it, said AL insiders.

"Ashraf sleeps all day long and he remains out of reach all the time. He does not come to the party office or go to his ministry office," notes a senior leader, adding, "a big party like the Awami League cannot depend on a leader like him. He should be changed."

Following the party's defeat in the city corporation polls, Ashrafur was not even seen anywhere. Being the LGRD minister, whose line ministry is responsible for the city corporation polls, he was not involved in any networking, his critics in the party say.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina herself became so unhappy with Ashrafur's indifference that she blasted him last week which led to a rumour that Ashrafur had resigned from his party position.

Talking to The Daily Star, Hanif, a special assistant to the prime minister, brushed aside the allegations of any division.

Jamaat-Shibir men's new technique of terror

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Posing as mourners at a funeral, some 30 Jamaat-Shibir activists vandalised two buses and torched another in the capital's Kalshi area and then disappeared during the third day of hartal called by Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday.

Agitated bus workers held 37 of the actual mourners, mistaking them as pro-Jamaat Islami Chhatra Shibir activists, and two pickup trucks the mourners were using and handed them over to police.

However, within an hour, a ruling party lawmaker gave an undertaking and got the detainees and trucks freed, Pallabi Police Station Officer-in-Charge Abdul Latif Sheikh told The Daily Star.

The detainees said they had boarded the trucks with the body of one Amena Begum, mother of a Tejgaon College teacher, from Mirpur section 13 around 6:30am to go to Kalshi Graveyard, some 2.5 kilometres away.

They, however, did not notice who else, other than the locals and the deceased's relatives, had boarded the vehicles, they added.

After the burial was complete and prayers were being offered, around 30 men, mostly youths, some carrying cameras and one a banner, separated from the group of mourners, said Ismail Miah, a staff of Kalshi Graveyard.

They went to the graveyard's entrance chanting "hartal" and "Allahu Akbar" and carried out the attack on an adjoining bus station, he said.

The deceased's family members had informed him a day before that they would be coming for a burial, added Ismail.

The buses belonged to a company named ETC. Kalu Hossain, the company's staff, said the attackers beat them up when they tried to prevent the attack.

Bangladesh in grip of radical ideology

TARIQ A AL MAEENA, Gulf News

While most media attention lately has focused on the divisive conflict of ideology between the Muslim Brotherhood and secular parties in Egypt, there is another such conflict going on in another part of the world, albeit with far little global press coverage.

This is happening in Bangladesh, a country with a population of more than 150 million, of which 90 percent is Muslim. The conflict has become increasingly violent, with lines drawn in blood. It centres around which ideology the country should adopt: secular or Islamist?

While Sheikh Hasina's government has been credited with pushing ahead reforms, there are roadblocks set by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) -- the main opposition. This political party has been accused of encouraging radical and fundamental groups to exploit the religion card to oppose some of the government's decrees.

One such group is the Hefazat-e Islam, which came into focus in 2010 to counter the government's promotion of a secular education policy. More recently, its demands have become even more direct. In March this year, the group released a 13-point list of demands to the government. Included in the list were:

1. Abolishment of all laws in conflict with the values of the Quran and Sunnah, enactment of a blasphemy law to prevent defamation of Allah, the Prophet (PBUH) and Islam with the death penalty as the highest form of punishment, and prevent the spreading of hate against Muslims.
2. An end to all alien cultural practices like immodesty, lewdness, misconduct, culture of free mixing of the sexes, candle lighting in the name of personal freedom and free speech.
3. Abolishment of the current ungodly education policy, and making Islamic education compulsory at all levels -- from primary to higher secondary education.
4. Halting the installation of more statues at road intersections and educational institutions to prevent Dhaka, the city of mosques, from becoming the city of statues.
5. The government must immediately refrain from preventing the faithful from carrying out their spiritual duties. Specifically, all the hassles and obstructions at Baitul Mukarram and all mosques in Bangladesh must be removed which prevent the faithful from offering prayer. Also stop creating obstruction for people to attend religious sermons and other religious gatherings.
6. The government must stop the spread of Islamophobia among the youth through depiction of negative characters on TV plays and movies in religious attire and painting negative stereotypes of the beard, cap and Islamic practices on various media.

The group has been emboldened by the support of the Jamaat-e-Islami, a political party whose platform has always been to run the country on Islamic principles and the Sharia. Together they have allied with the BNP.

FAITH IS PERSONAL

Power and religion do not and should not mix. Faith is individualistic, and we have seen in other countries how religion is often distorted for personal gains or triumphs. Today's events in Egypt are a prime example of how a democratically-elected government began to adopt fundamentalism in its governing doctrine and eventually lost the capacity to govern. Historically, there is no success story of governments that adopted rigid religious values to rule.

It is not the religion that is not palatable. It is not lack of faith. It is often the interpretation and application of extreme ideology that is rejected by most people. That ideology is also used to promote the party line and deviates from the simplicity and peace promoted by religious doctrine.

The current state of Islamophobia around the globe must also be attributed to the rise of religious fundamentalists who seek to promote their headline creed from the corridors of power and will not hesitate to use violence to spread their message.

Swadesh Roy, a respected and renowned journalist in Bangladesh recently expressed alarm at the rising movement of religious parties. He writes, "The two Islamic fundamentalist groups have remained afloat mainly due to the support of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) -- the main opposition in the country's current government.

All they want is to win the elections, and hold the seat of power, making it so that no development takes place, and change present-day democratic politics into something that works in their favour.

"If Islamic fundamentalist groups come to power through the election, it will be disastrous for the country. Bangladesh will stop continuously developing; its society will be in a state of chaos. Politicians, business leaders, and development partners of the country have to think seriously about the use of the 'religion card'.

"Now is probably the best time to try and keep religion and the state separate. Many countries have strong laws against using religion in elections. Bangladesh too, should introduce a similar law with the help of development partners."

I couldn't agree more, Roy. Religious freedom should be left to the individual to exercise and should not be governed through rules developed by a party whose fundamentalism is in question.

Faith is personal and not a mandate.

The article was originally published in Gulf News on July 13. Tariq A Al Maeena is a Saudi socio-political commentator. He lives in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Follow him on Twitter at www.twitter.com/talmaeena

Koica to train 15 Bangladeshis in autism care

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Korea will provide training to 15 Bangladeshis, including physicians and special education teachers, to enhance their capacity to treat autistic children in Bangladesh.

As a part of the training programme (from 2013 to 2015) on "Competency Enhancement of Diagnosis and Treatment of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Child for Bangladesh", the Korea International Cooperation Agency (Koica) yesterday sent the 15 Bangladeshis to participate in the 17-day training in Korea.

The Korea Human Resource Development Institute for Health and Welfare will provide the training, a Koica press release has said.

The participants are comprised of physicians, special education teachers, therapists of developmental disorder and officials from the social welfare ministry, Centre for Neurodevelopment and Autism in Children under Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed (CRP), and Autism Welfare Foundation.

Koica developed the multi-year training programme to provide specialised service in the field of ASD through sustainable training in terms of ASD diagnosis and treatment.

The aim of the training is to improve the quality of service and to introduce advanced and modern practices available in the field of ASD diagnosis and treatment.

The training programme will be tailored to the circumstances of Bangladesh and stage of development.

A total of 50 participants from ministries concerned and specialised organisations will join the training programme in three years.

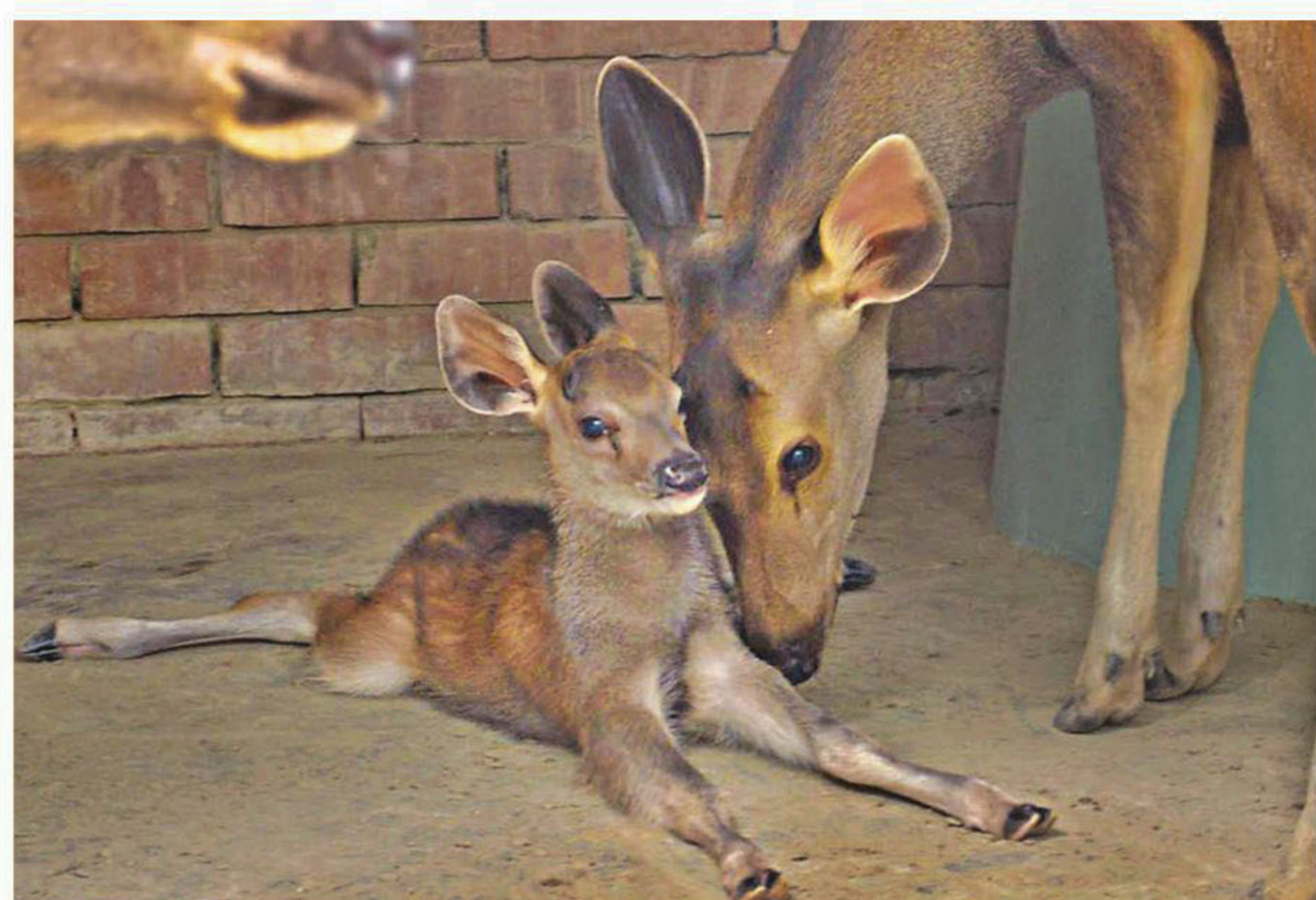


PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

A mother sambar deer with its baby, which was born in Chittagong Zoo yesterday noon. The last sambar fawn was born on June 15 last year. Currently, the zoo has four sambar deer--a male, a female and two young fawns. Sambar is a rare species of large deer, which usually gives birth to one child a year, said zoo officials.

Delicacies make Ctg city folks crowd iftar markets

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

With locals rushing to different stalls for diverse delicacies, Chittagong city's iftar market has gained momentum since the beginning of Ramadan.

Though most residents prefer to have homemade iftar, some go to the market to shop for special items like jilapi, firmi, halim, chicken tikka, kabab, pizza, roll, lassi and dodhi to make the ritual of breaking fast more pleasing.

"My wife prepares iftar items like chana, halua, paju, beguni and noodles at home. I have just come here to buy jilapi, halim and firmi," said Ishtiaq Ahmed, who was spotted at an iftar items outlet in Lalkhan Bazar.

Some exclusive restaurants and eateries in the city are drawing big crowds with their unique array of iftar delicacies.

One such popular iftar outlet is that of Rodela Bikel, a restaurant located at MA Aziz Stadium Market, which emphasises on nutrition and hygiene when preparing iftar items. A good number of customers through the shop searching for delicacies.

For quality and taste, Rodela Bikel acquires beef from Mirsarai, mutton from Kushtia, chicken from Banshkhal and red potatoes from Dohazari-Chandanaish, said Manjurul Hoque, restaurant manager of Rodela Bikel, adding that they use sunflower oil and pure ghee to prepare the iftar items.

Of its special items, jilapi is sold at Tk 300 per kg, special akhni at Tk 225 per serving, jali kabab at Tk 40, tandoori kabab at Tk 100 and kima chap at Tk 40, he said.

Chittagong Club Limited has

opened an exclusive iftar outlet on its premises.

The club officials claim that their iftar outlet is the largest in the country, selling around 200 fresh iftar items.

Besides club members, general people can have access to the iftar outlet through reference of any member, said Monzurul Alam Parvez, member in-charge of the outlet.

Another must stop is Banoful and Co, a sweetmeat shop, which has its own range of iftar creations this Ramadan.

Banoful has 35 branches in Chittagong, including 18 in the city, serving people in different localities, said Amanullah Aman, general manager of Banoful.

Handi, located in the city's Dampara, with its 35 iftar delicacies is another popular spot for iftar shoppers.



People throng Rodela Bikel, an iftar outlet, to buy delicacies in MA Aziz Stadium Market of Chittagong city.

PHOTO: STA