

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Aamra, a sour treat. PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

That Sour Taste

When I was living in the US, my father, now departed, occasionally visited from Bangladesh. Dividing his time between me and my siblings, he would quickly become restless, ready to return home. This was because he missed the familiar: his paan, fresh Bengali fruits and vegetables, and the people. For my part, I often took him shopping to the grocery store so he could pick and choose different types of food, particularly fruits. During summer, the stores were filled with the sweetness and flavours of peaches, plums, nectarines and strawberries. But I could sense he was missing something.

One day he asked me: "There are many sweet foods here, but people don't appreciate the sour taste, do they?"

Fast forward a dozen years. It has taken me several years of living in Bangladesh to appreciate those words. In the West, sugar and its cousin high fructose corn syrup dominate snacks and non-mealtime offerings for youngsters. Starting with sweetened cereals in the morning, through cookies, soda and chocolate milk during the day and dessert after the meals, there is no escaping sweetness. The sweet tooth stays for life. The sour taste is represented by a small minority including rhubarb pie, sour gelatin candy and cranberries (although cranberry sauce, a Thanksgiving staple, is sweet.)

In contrast, the Bengali tastebud's lifelong attachment to sour starts at a young age. Here it is *achar*, *chotpoti*, *phuchka* and *jhalhuri* that make the youngster's day. Local fruits such as *tetul*, *aamra*, *boroi*, *jolpai*, *koromcha*, *chukka* (*hoilfa*), *bhubi* (*lotkon*), *amloki*, *bilimbi* and *kamranga* tempt young and old alike.

Our traditional meals often accentuate the sour. When I was growing up in Sylhet, all meals included a side-dish called *khatta*. This is a soupy sour curry, usually prepared with a sour fruit or vegetable as base. If the season offered no alternative then there was always *kochur khatta* made from *kochu* and *tetul*.

Other than ripe fruits, most other sweet foods we know depend on the refined sugars extracted from sugar cane, corn or beets. I suppose during ancient times sweets were restricted to those who could afford honey, but that changed with the invention of sugar, and, later, corn syrup. The amount of sugar eaten in the West is staggering: the average American consumes about 150 pounds of sugar annually. Most people would shy away from eating ten spoons of sugar, but the same people would not think twice about drinking a can of soda which contains as much sugar.

But developing a taste for the sour has advantages. Sour foods are usually less fattening and contain Vitamin C. Many of them contain antioxidants. Diabetics can partake with confidence.

After returning to live in Bangladesh I have reacquired a taste for the sour. I was assisted by generous doses of salt, rock salt and various spices. So nowadays I look forward to *belfoir khatta* and my heart misses a beat at the sight of ripe *bhubis* or green mangoes during monsoon. As for *tetul* – ah, well, perhaps that's a separate discussion?

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Fair polls under non-party admin only solution

Fakhrul tells Thakurgaon rally; terms 10th parliament a 'circus tent'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Accusing Awami League of stripping the people of voting rights, BNP Acting Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said the current political crisis would not end until a free, fair and credible election was held under a non-party administration.

He said it had been proved at home and abroad that free and fair elections under Sheikh Hasina's government were not possible. Quoting foreigners, he said AL won the so-called election but Bangladesh lost through the 10th parliamentary polls.

As part of a daylong visit to villages hit by election violence in Thakurgaon sadar upazila, his constituency, Fakhrul was addressing a rally at Dholarhat Eidgah Ground.

In a scathing attack, he said the governing party had transformed the parliament into a "circus tent" where



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Ekushey Boi Mela opens today

DU CORRESPONDENT

The month-long Amar Ekushey Boi Mela 2014 begins today on the Bangla Academy premises and on a part of Suhrawardy Udyan in the capital to accommodate more book stalls.

This year a total of 299 publication houses, government, non-government and autonomous organisations and socio-cultural bodies are participating in the fair through 534 units of stalls.

Of those, 432 units were allotted to 232 publication houses at Suhrawardy Udyan and the rest to 67 publication houses, including 24 for children and juveniles.

This year, special visiting hours for women and children will be available on four days.

The fair will keep open for all from 3:00pm to 9:00pm on working days and from 11:00am to 9:00pm on weekends. On February 21, International Mother Language Day, it will remain open from

8:00 in the morning till 9:00pm.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the month-long exhibition of books at 3:00 in the afternoon. Cultural Affairs Minister Asaduzzaman Noor will be present as special guest.

The inauguration ceremony will be broadcast live by Bangladesh Betar and Bangladesh Television.

In the opening session, Bangla Academy Director General Shamuazzaman Khan will deliver the welcome address, while Professor Emeritus Anisuzzaman, chairman of the academy, will preside over it.

Regarding BNP's rally scheduled to be held at Suhrawardy Udyan today, the DG asked the political party not to create any disturbances on the fair grounds.

On the opening day, the winners of the Bangla Academy Literary Award 2013 whose names were announced Thursday will receive Tk 1 lakh each, a crest and certificate from the prime minister.

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Unilever top official Sanjiv Mehta arrives today

CITY DESK

Sanjiv Mehta, executive vice president of Unilever South Asia, and managing director and CEO of Hindustan Unilever Ltd, will arrive today on a four-day visit to Unilever Bangladesh Ltd.

Mehta was a part of Unilever Bangladesh from

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Publication houses ready their stalls for the month-long Amar Ekushey Boi Mela which begins on the capital's Bangla Academy premises and on a part of Suhrawardy Udyan today. Inset, an army man walks a sniffer dog around the Bangla Academy ground to detect suspicious objects, if any.

PHOTO: STAR

SSC examinee gang raped at gunpoint

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Madaripur

A female SSC examinee was gang raped at gunpoint by three local miscreants while she was returning home from private tuition in Madaripur's Rajoir upazila yesterday morning.

The 15-year old girl of Badarpasha union's Nayanagar village is undergoing treatment at Madaripur Sadar Hospital. The hospital's medical officer, Dr Md Siddikur Rahman, said they had collected evidence of

the rape and a report will be prepared within two days.

The victim's father filed a case accusing Ferdous Sheikh, Roman Mia and an unidentified person of the upazila's Badarpasha village, said Rajoir Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Maniruzzaman, adding that the accused were on the run.

The victim's mother said the girl was violated in a wheat field and her relatives had rescued her and initially rushed her to Rajoir Upazila Health Complex.

10th JS new chapter in democracy

Says Speaker Shirin Sharmin

UNB, Dhaka

Speaker Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury yesterday said the 10th parliament has added a new chapter in the country's democratic journey.

"Parliament is the centre of parliamentary democracy. The 10th parliament will continue to work for building a non-communal and democratic Bangladesh in the spirit of the Liberation War," she told reporters after placing wreath at the National Memorial at Savar.

Shirin Sharmin, elected Speaker for the second time, also said parliament is a place where people's hopes and aspirations

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Fire breaks out in two Gazipur RMG factories

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Fire broke out in two garment factories in Kaliakoir of Gazipur Friday.

However, no casualties were reported in the two incidents in which huge quantity of thread, cotton and scraps of fabrics were gutted.

At Nishchintapur, a fire broke out in a room at Shamim Spinning Mills Limited around 1:30am.

The fire might have originated from an electric short circuit or the heated machines, said Kaliakoir Fire Station Senior Officer Apurba Bal.

Two fire fighting units from Kaliakoir extinguished the blaze in about one-and-half hour.

At Baroiipara, another

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Bishwa Sahitya Kendra awards 3,806 students

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bishwa Sahitya Kendra awarded 3,806 school students, who participated in a book reading programme, on the first day of the prize giving ceremony in the capital's Ramna Batamul yesterday.

The kendra is awarding 5,703 school students of 72 schools in Dhaka in the two-day long ceremony.

During the reading programme, all the awarded students read between seven and 16 books over a span of 20 weeks. A total of 30,000 students took part in the reading programme.

The programme has been encouraging students to read books for the last 35 years.

Students received books as prizes from noted personalities like the kendra founding chairman Abdullah Abu Sayeed, eminent authors Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, Selina Hossain and Anisul Hoque, architect Mobassher Hossain, magician Jewel Aich, and education Secretary Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury.

Zafar Iqbal expressed his delight at discovering the enthusiasm among students about reading books.

"There is really no alternative to reading books if you want to be an enlightened human being," Anisul Hoque told the students.

The remaining students will be awarded today.

Govt to create 55,000 IT freelancers

BSS, Dhaka

The government is going to launch the second phase of Learning and Earning Programme at upazilas to create 55,000 freelancers at the grassroots level in the middle of February, Information and Communication Technology Secretary NI Khan has said.

Talking to the news agency, he said of the total number of freelancers, 20,000 will be women who

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5 killed in city road crashes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five people were killed in separate road accidents in the capital yesterday.

Mashiure Rahman, officer-in-charge of Ramna Police Station, said Badhan Rana, 16, died when his motorcycle was hit by another motorbike in Madhubagh area around 4:00pm.

The bikers were racing in Hatirjheel area, he said.

Two people, including another motorcyclist, were also injured in the crash. The deceased and the injured are residents of Badda.

In another incident, another biker Al Amin, 35, a resident of Gendaria, was crushed under the wheels of an autorickshaw at Postagola around 12:30 noon.

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থাকবো ছায়া হয়ে

সময়-অসময়ে আপনার প্রিয়জনদের ভবিষ্যৎ আগলে রাখতেই

এলো **গার্ডিয়ান**
লাইফ ইন্স্যুরেন্স

ওদের কথা ভেবেই একটি গার্ডিয়ান লাইফ ইন্স্যুরেন্স করুন।
আপনার অবর্তমানেও আপনার প্রিয়জনদের পাশে
আমরা থাকবো আপনার ছায়া হয়ে।

প্রধান কার্যালয়: ১২২-১২৪ চেম্বার বিল্ডিং, ১০ম তলা, মতিবিল বা/এ, ঢাকা-১০০০, ফোন: ৯৫৮৮৩০৩-৪
মিরপুর শাখা: রাজিয়া গ্রাঙ্গা (৬ষ্ঠ তলা), ১৮৪ সেনাপাড়া পর্বতা, রোকেয়া সরণী, মিরপুর, ঢাকা-১২১৬

