

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

The Amazing Gamcha

IN February 2013, I went on a birding trip to Tanguar Haor. It was a long day's boat journey starting from Sunamganj town. As we travelled down the Surma, the cool morning gradually warmed up and the sun's rays bore down from a cloudless sky. Although I am accustomed to spending time outdoors and came prepared with sunblock, I had left my hat behind thinking it unnecessary. My hours exposed on the boat's deck - mostly looking for birds to photograph - made me increasingly uncomfortable. Noticing this, Enam Ul Haque and Majeda Haq, my hosts on the boat, loaned me a gamcha. Once I had it wrapped around my head, it shielded my face and head from the hot sun and provided soothing comfort.



Gamcha vendor at Bangla new year celebration.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

The gamcha - a long, thin piece of cotton clothing with a plaid pattern - is used in many ways in our country. I grew up seeing it on the head of many who carried goods on their head: the luggage-carriers at railway stations, tea garden workers and farmers. A rolled up gamcha stabilizes the load and cushions the head. In addition to protecting the head and face from the sun, its use as a headband prevents sweat from stinging the eyes. It can be used to tie around items in order to carry them - a jackfruit or a couple of bels, for example. During monsoon, I have seen village children use it as an improvised fishing net. It has various first aid uses, such as a bandage or a tourniquet.

Our gamchas come in bright colours, particularly yellow, red and white. The hand-woven cloth is thin and coarse. They dry quickly, allow good ventilation and absorb liquids well.

The use of the gamcha is widespread in the subcontinent, where, in many parts, it is also known as gamocha (ga - body + mocha - wipe) reflecting its use as a towel and wipe. For example, it is an important part of Assamese culture. This year, a team in Assam constructed a 1000 metre long gamcha winning a place in the Guinness Book of Records.

I had used a gamcha in a different form years ago when I was living in the USA. A similar piece of clothing, called a bandanna, is used there in outdoor activities such as camping and backpacking. A bandanna is a square piece of light cotton, usually with a paisley pattern. Tied around the neck, it becomes part of an outdoorsman's outfit.

Recently, I noticed the gamcha at the Bangla new year's festivities being used as a fashion item. Young men wore it wrapped around their forehead for a genuine native look. Movie actors in Bangladesh and India have worn it over the years for style. Such Bollywood stars as Amitabh Bachchan, Salman Khan and Shah Rukh Khan have appeared in movies wearing a gamcha.

In Arab countries a similar cloth, called a kaffiyeh, is used for protection from sunburn, heat and dust in the desert.

So the next time you are on an outdoor adventure, consider taking a gamcha along as an antidote to the heat and humidity, and, of course, for style!

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CITY CORPORATION ELECTIONS 2015

Manjur's camp files harassment complaints against cops, 'pro-AL men'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Alleging that Manjur Alam's campaigners were being harassed and intimidated, Chattagram Unnayan Andolon filed two complaints with the Election Commission yesterday demanding punitive measures against two policemen and men claiming to be Bangladesh Chhatra League and Jubo League activists.

Bandar Police Station SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

CTG MAYORAL RACE AL, BNP weighing fears, weaknesses

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

With the deadline for campaigns expiring tomorrow, both Awami League and BNP camps in Chittagong are weighing their fears and weaknesses in the April 28 city corporation election.

Since the unveiling of AL-blessed mayoral hopeful AJM Nasir Uddin's manifesto, the party leaders are in a state of discomfort because of Chittagong city AL President ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury expressing dissatisfaction with the charter of promises.

Such remarks in public have brought the intra-party feud to the fore and also created mistrust among the leaders and activists of Nagorik Committee, under which Nasir is vying in the city polls, said party insiders. An AL leader said Mohiuddin should not have expressed his dissatisfaction in public which would give a "wrong message" to the leaders and

POLLS CAMPAIGN Japan worried at violence

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Japan has expressed concern over a series of violence during the ongoing election campaign and hoped that all concerned would play role in ensuring free, fair and peaceful city corporation elections.

"We expect all the stakeholders to exercise utmost restraint and strive to play a constructive role to ensure the election campaign and elections to be conducted in a free, fair, and peaceful manner," the Embassy of Japan in Dhaka said in a statement yesterday.

It noted with concern the SEE PAGE 5 COL 6



Bahauddin Babul, mayor candidate of the Dhaka North City Corporation election, campaigns in Khilgaon Chowdhurypara yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



Saddam Hossain Laskar, 29, in front of the Rana Plaza disaster site in Savar recently.

A missing arm doesn't stop Saddam

MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

Saddam Hossain Laskar is striving to lead a life of dignity. He does not want to be dependent on others, even if fate has it that he lost his right arm in the country's worst industrial disaster, the collapse of Rana Plaza.

Laskar represents many other youths in Bangladesh. He had registered for his master's final exams after joining Sarker and Brothers, an agent of Nestlé Bangladesh Ltd, as a distribution sales representative on April 4, 2013, exactly 20 days before the disaster struck.

At 8:00am on the fateful morning of April 24, 2013, he went to his office, adjacent to Rana Plaza. An hour later, he found himself trapped amid rubble, as the nine-storey Rana Plaza pinned a part of his office building to the ground. He tried to free himself but his right arm and legs were tightly wedged.

Later during the rescue missions, he was saved and rushed to Enam Medical College and Hospital in Savar. Four days later, he was transferred to Apollo Hospitals where his right arm was amputated just below his elbow as an infection had spread. He received full treatment under the hospital's own fund. The big toe on his right leg was also operated on.

Receiving physiotherapy at the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed (CRP) as the tendons in his toe were damaged, he was able to walk again. But he returned to his village home in January 2014.

banker. But with the dream shattered, he has been living with his mother and siblings in Mirzapur, Tangail.

His younger brother runs a small grocery shop in the village; his elder brother is employed at a factory in Savar, both contributing to run their family of seven.

Saddam has to come to Dhaka every month to collect Tk 12,000 every month as a profit accrued from the Tk 12 lakh in fixed deposits with Sonali Bank from the Prime Minister's Fund. Spending a major chunk, or Tk 5,000, on his medication, he gives the rest of the money to his family.

Saddam took his master's exams less than two months after he had lost his right hand. But his result that is just 19 marks short of a first class distinction is in no way a reflection of his ordeal. The 29-year-old graduated in economics from Tongi Govt College by taking the help of a proxy writer in the exams.

Many promises were made by the government, donors and others, but not all were materialised, he said. "My case was different as I was not a garment worker. So, I did not receive enough attention."

"But I am educated. I can still work. I know computer basics and can easily do desk work at a bank or government office," said a confident Saddam.

Although he has some minor problems with his right leg, he is not confined to a wheelchair.

Now all that he hopes for is a prosthetic hand that will enable him to work, as the artificial hand he received is too heavy for comfort.

Bagerhat road crash kills five

A CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Five people, including four of a family, were killed and three others injured in a head-on collision between a bus and a pickup at Faltita in Fakirhat upazila yesterday.

The dead are Nil Kamal Das, 45, his brother Balaram Das, 35, of Dohazair village in the upazila, their nephews Shyam Das, 30, and Panu Das, 55, -- all were fish traders, and pickup driver Sheikh Ansar Ali, 40, of Labanchora in Khulna city.

The accident occurred on Bagerhat-Mawa-Dhaka highway when the Dhaka-bound bus from Khulna collided with the fish fry-laden pickup heading towards Fakirhat around 2:30pm, said Anisur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Fakirhat Police Station.

Five people were killed on the spot and three others were hurt, he added.

The injured were first taken to Fakirhat Upazila Health Complex in a critical condition. They were later shifted to Khulna Medical College Hospital.

Traffic movement on the highway remained suspended for around an hour after the accident.

Ruhul Talukder wins Sony World Photography Awards

OUR CORRESPONDENT, London

Bangladeshi youth Rahul Talukder has won Sony World Photography Awards 2015's conceptual photographer of the year title for his poignant series on the victims who lost lives in Rana Plaza collapse in Savar in April 2013.

The jury of one of the world's largest photography competition on April 23 chose Rahul, a documentary photographer from Sunamganj of Sylhet, from over 87,000 entries for "Faded history of the lost".

In 2014, Talukder was shortlisted for the Sony World Photography Awards' Student Focus Competition, one of the

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4

Woman, daughter murdered in sleep

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Unknown assailants hacked a woman and her daughter to death and left her son injured after attacking them while they were asleep in their house at Atlora village in Gazipur early yesterday, said police.

Hasuni Bibi, 50, widow of Amir Uddin; her daughter Arifa Khatun, 18, and son Shahjahan Mia, 21, were in the same room.

Hasuni's another son, Mujibur Rahman, 23, who was in another room, said he called neighbours on seeing the three covered in blood.

Arifa's cousin Marzia Akher, who along with others rushed to the spot, said the culprits might have raped or tried to rape Arifa as she was found with no clothes on.

The incident occurred around 1:00am, said Prohadpur Union Parishad Chairman Abu Syed, adding that the miscreants fled when the victims screamed.

Arifa was declared dead at Shaheed Tajuddin Medical College Hospital on arrival. Hasuni died while she and Shahjahan were being taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Abdul Motaleb Mia, officer-in-charge of Sreepur Police Station, said they could not say whether Arifa was raped until a medical report was available.

The bodies were sent to Gazipur Shahid Taj Uddin Ahmad Medical College Hospital for autopsies.



(Clockwise from top left) Bangladesh Garment Sramik Sanghati, Savar stages a demonstration yesterday in front of the site where the Rana Plaza collapsed two years ago in Savar, demanding the day be declared one for mourning and ensuring workers' safety, punishing those responsible and constructing a memorial. Flowers heap up at a memorial built at the site for the 1,134 garment workers who died and the scores of others left injured and scarred for life. IndustriALL Bangladesh Council brings out a procession in front of Jatiya Press Club in the capital yesterday demanding that adequate compensation be provided to the affected workers and their families.



PHOTO: STAR