

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Salad platter, Sylhet.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Iftar Bazar

Each afternoon of Ramzan presents an opportunity for the photographer in me. As early as two hours before sunset, people set up stalls in many streets. They sell *Iftari* - food for breaking the fast. The vendors devote much energy to preparing and presenting their offerings. Wearing colourful clothes, they cook the food with pomp and flair, often shouting out in unison. Customers, looking forward to breaking their fast, enjoy the carnival atmosphere while picking out their favourite items.

So, whenever I get the opportunity, I visit Iftar markets.

Perhaps the most colourful and vibrant market is the one in Chawk Bazar. I visited it on first Ramzan, reaching at 3pm. The crowds were already thick and everyone pushed and shoved. The wall of people appeared impossible to penetrate but I kept my head down and dived in. The market began at one end with the fruit stalls selling pineapples, melons, papayas, jackfruits. Across the street were dozens of snacks including *ghugni*, a mash of chick peas served with half a dozen sauces. The meats come a bit later: roast pigeons and quails, legs of lamb, whole chicken kababs, giant skewers of *shutli* kabab configured in an X, and fried kababs including *shami*, *jali* and *shashlik*. I found two stalls selling the dish called *boro baper polai khai*. Each vendor claimed his grandfather invented it. The dish, whose name is translated roughly as "that which the boss's son eats" is a concoction of shredded chicken, chick peas, boiled eggs and a motley of spices and seasonings. It was clearly a hit because I could barely manage a clear shot

through the two- or three-deep crowd thronging the stalls.

After an hour in the market I ran out of machismo. Claustrophobic, out of breath and drenched in sweat, I stepped away and breathed easy.

Smaller neighbourhood markets, such as Rampura, Shantinagar and Badda offer the usual standards including *halim*, *jilapis* and *piyajus*. While they might lack the variety and crowds of Chawk, these markets are friendlier for me as I concentrate on photographing the food items. The sellers banter with me, ask to be photographed, and then ask their *karigor* - the cook - to pose with them.

I visited the Baily Road market on the same day as a RAB cleanup effort. As I photographed *halim* being ladled from a large pot, the customer told the shop-owner: "Watch out, the photographs will get you into trouble in the courts." Seeing his shocked expression we all burst out laughing.

I made a surprising Iftar discovery in Sylhet when I saw a colourful mixture piled high on a large platter. It looked different than the usual fried or chick-pea items. It took me a while to recognise it as a salad! Made from finely chopped cucumbers, shredded carrots, diced tomatoes, the salad was garnished beautifully. As I stood admiring it (and trying to get a decent photograph) several people stop by and bought packets full. We always hear about how greasy and unhealthy many common Iftar items are; this was a welcome change.

Ramzan is almost over. Most *Iftaris* will retire until next year. Until then, enjoy them!

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BIWTC special vessel service starts on July 14

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) will launch a 14-day special service, which includes seven vessels, on July 14 for Eid holiday makers travelling from Dhaka to the southern region.

The special service will continue till July 27 and at least one regular and one special vessel will operate every day, said Nurul Alam Akand, deputy general manager (commercial/passenger) BIWTC Barisal.

BIWTC sources said four paddle steamers PS Mahsud, PS Ostrich, PS Lepcha, and PS Tum, and three screw wheel motor vessels MV Modhumoti, MV Bangali, and MV Shela will ply between Dhaka and Chandpur, Barisal, Jhalakathi, Hularhat of Pirojpur, and Morelganj of Bagerhat.

Special vessel fare will be the same as the usual fare.

ADVANCE SALES OF TRAIN TICKETS AT KAMALAPUR

Many return without tickets on second day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The second day of advance sales at Kamalapur Railway Station disappointed many people, with tickets running out before the last person in the queue could reach the counter.

Scores of people who did not get tickets waited for hours, some since the sehri time.

"I came at 7:30 in the morning and saw many waiting in the queue. I stood at the end of the line. After more than five hours when my turn came, the counterman told me that tickets were sold out," said Mizanur Rahman, who was looking for tickets to Rangpur.

For Jahangir Alam, it was more of regret than disappointment. "I came here after sehri... If I had been ahead of a few more people in the queue, I would get the ticket."

Tickets were sold out before 2:00pm.

However, on Thursday, the first day of advance sales, almost all who lined

up got tickets.

The railway authorities started the advance sales to ensure hassle-free trips of people ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr, which will be celebrated on July 18 or 19.

With the demand for tickets increasing sharply, those who bought ones looked overwhelmingly cheerful.

"I had been waiting since 3:00am. I took sehri here. Now I got the ticket; I'm very happy that I will be celebrating Eid with my family," said Robayet, a college student in Dhaka.

However, many ticket-seekers complained of "slow" distribution of tickets. If it was faster, people would suffer less, they said.

Talking to reporters, Dhaka Divisional Railway Manager Arifuzzaman said people might raise many allegations but the officials were working sincerely and tickets were sold as long as they were available.

Tickets of July 15 to 17 will be sold today to July 13 correspondingly at

Kamalapur Railway Station in Dhaka and Chittagong Railway Station.

Similarly, the return tickets of July 20 and 21 will be sold on July 16 and 17, while tickets of July 22 and 23 will be sold on July 19 and tickets of July 24 will be sold on July 20 at Rajshahi, Khulna, Rangpur, Dinajpur and Lalmonirhat stations.

An individual can buy a maximum of four tickets.

BRTC BUS

The state-run Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTC) also started selling advance bus tickets yesterday at the capital's five spots -- Motijheel, Gulistan, Kalyanpur, Mirpur, and Joarsahara.

BRTC Chairman Mizanur Rahman told The Daily Star that they had a plan to operate around 400 additional buses from the capital to outer districts starting three to four days ahead of Eid.

Normally 500 buses operate on inter-district routes, he said.



A child in the arms of a content mother who yesterday registered the youngster as a resident of Bhitarkuti, an Indian enclave in Lalmonirhat sadar upazila. A joint team of Bangladesh and India on July 6 launched a 10-day survey to enlist the residents in the 162 enclaves, 51 of which are Bangladeshi and 111 Indian, and find the population, land area and the residents' choice of nationality.

PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

Its father's handwriting

Says FF Ayub's son about suicide note; police search for GD of Ayub

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Freedom fighter Ayub Khan's son believes Liberation War Affairs Secretary MA Hannan's alleged insult had indeed provoked his father to take his own life since the handwriting in the four-page suicide note found beside the body was his father's.

"(Shahbagh) Police showed me the notes the day my father died," Arifur Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday arriving from Chittagong to receive the body.

Ayub, 62, took poison and was found in a critical condition in a Karnaphuli Hotel room on the capital's Topkhana Road on Tuesday morning. He died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital around 11:30am.

A portion of the note reads, "I gave money to Liberation

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Where ethnic diversity doesn't divide

TRIBENI CHAKMA, back from Astana, Kazakhstan

The notion of majority or minority is practically absent among the people of Kazakhstan, which has one of the world's richest diversity of ethnicities, said the country's parliament members.

In fact throughout its 25 year history, since its secession from the former Soviet Russia in 1991, no major racial or ethnic conflict occurred in the central Asian country.

Kazakhstan has more than 100 ethnic communities.

In a bilateral meeting with Bangladeshi delegates, members of Kazakhstan's parliament shared their country's ethnic policies and parliamentary system, which promote and ensure cultural harmony.

The meeting took place, following Bangladesh's participation in a forum in Kazakhstan's capital Astana on July 1-3, on the theme "Culture of Peace and Harmony in the CICA Area", organised by the Conference on Integration and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA).

Bangladesh became its fulltime member last year and participated in the forum along with 25 other national and cultural centres of CICA member countries.

However, the three-member Bangladeshi delegation led by Member of Parliament (MP) Fazle Hossain Badsha received special preference from the Kazakhstani government, which resulted in three bilateral meetings, concerning tourism and ethnic issues.

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2 workers die at Ctg port

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two dock workers died while unloading logs with the help of a crane from a vessel at Chittagong Port early yesterday.

The dead were Shafiq Ullah, 50, of Noakhali, and Peyar Ahmed, 45, of Comilla.

The incident occurred when some logs rolled off the vessel MV Le Shan and fell on the two at jetty no-5, killing Shafiq on the

spot, said Sazed Kamal, Sub-Inspector of Bandar Police Station.

Peyar died on the way to Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

The ship berthed at the port on July 8 with 577 logs, said Khandoker Siraj Uddin Ahmed, deputy managing director of Cosco Bangladesh Shipping Lines Ltd, local agent of the vessel.



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