

The long journey home for Eid

Commuters suffer ticket woes

THIS year is no different from others for those hoping to go home for the Eid festivities. We are weeks away from Eid but already people are spending hours on end to get their hands on advance tickets. As usual, bus operators are claiming that tickets have been "sold out" which apparently is a regular even before Eid. Passengers claim that a block of tickets for both road and rail are kept in reserve for sale to "VIPs", something that is refuted by bus operators. We fail to see how all tickets can be sold out so early on. It is also disheartening to see that passengers are being forced to fork out higher fare during this time of year. The situation is somewhat better on railway but we still find people waiting in line for tickets overnight, many of whom must take "sehri" on Kamlapur rail station in a bid to be ahead in line when the counter opens.

These are problems that we see every year. Hence the question, why authorities cannot ensure that the transport companies do not exploit the high demand for tickets during Eid? Why can't the railway and transport companies put up more tickets for sale online to alleviate both passengers' woes and cut down on the risk of middlemen getting involved to create an artificial scarcity of tickets? These are doable measures definitely and would go some way to alleviate sufferings of the people headed home to spend Eid with their loved ones.

Garbage dumped on Dhaka-Aricha highway

Stop this dangerous practice

A photo published in this paper on June 12 shows a huge pile of garbage dumped on the side of Dhaka-Aricha highway at Hemayetpur, Savar. This practice of dumping waste along this highway is nothing new. As this daily has reported several times in the past, there are several points on that highway where garbage is regularly being dumped. What is even more horrifying is that a biker recently slipped on the garbage and was killed as he was run over by a microbus. According to our source, a number of bikers fell on that same spot.

Such careless act of using the open roads as garbage disposal sites is totally unacceptable. Not only does such indiscriminate dumping of garbage pollute the surrounding environment causing serious health hazards, it also leads to increased risks of road accidents. Moreover, when it rains the road becomes dangerously slippery for the motorists due to the garbage. Already the number of road accidents on that road is high and such practice of littering only adds to this number.

It is obvious that the local authorities are not performing their duties properly. And what role is the Roads and Highways department playing to keep the road safe for traffic movement? There needs to be coordination between the two authorities in order to keep the highway garbage-free and safe.

Time and again we have raised our concerns about this abhorrent practice but to no avail. What we need to do is develop a proper waste management system. The government should acquire land for developing garbage disposal sites, undertake awareness raising campaigns among the public, etc. We believe if appropriate measures are taken, this practice can be stopped once and for all.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Stop child labour

We keep saying that children are our future nation-builders while many children across the country continue to be pushed into child labour. Many influential people are behind this. Every year, many children are sent to India, Nepal and other countries illegally to help earn money for their poor families. In those countries they have to face life-threatening working conditions. For instance, two children were recently caught and mistreated at the Hilly border by the BSE. Their families weren't able to get government support to have them released. There are countless families in Bangladesh facing similar situations.

The authorities must take stern actions to stop child labour, and create enough job opportunities for working age family members, so that their children don't have to struggle to earn for the family.

Ratan Karmakar
BAU

Elementary schools without playgrounds?

A recent survey by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics suggests that only 2 percent of children have access to playgrounds in Dhaka. More than 11,000 kindergartens in Dhaka don't have any playgrounds. How can an elementary school not have playgrounds?

Lack of access to play is a national issue that adversely affects children's physical and mental health. There is no alternative to sporting activities. It is through active participation in sports and co-curricular activities that children make sense of the world. It's therefore crucial for elementary schools to provide students with the time and space to play during the school day. Their education is incomplete without it.

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KNOT SO TRUE
RUBANA HUQ

I am going to break the rules and write about myself today. Columns are not supposed to be a "Dear Diary" space, but for once, I want to use it to reach out to people who want to go back to school. I did. I first went back to school to do my Master's twenty years later than schedule and then submitted my doctoral thesis nine years after I completed my MA. In total, I am twenty-nine years late in doing what I should have done long ago. All this while, I knew that I would somehow make it someday. The distance between then and now was covered by the corporate turf and with family. All that while, I was busy being a mother, a wife, and a business woman. I thought it would be OK to share my story today, risking any

And I wanted to be a topper. Knowing that I was always "aspiring" to ace as a student, my father used his unique parental technique to challenge me in pure Sanskrit and tell me: "pholeno porichiyotey", which meant, the proof was in its pudding, or quite literally in this case meant, the plant was known by the fruit it bore. So, when I surprised him twice, first with my SSC results and then with HSC, my father bought me a paper weight with snowflakes inside and told me that "Delhi durast hai", meaning, I had a long way ahead of me, and I would have to prove myself for a long, long time. When I surprised him again two years later, he got me a "two-in-one" (where I could play tapes and tune in to the World Music channel of Bangladesh Betar), which got stolen within a week and I ended up owning a second hand replacement from a friend who felt sorry for me. My mother was of altogether another species, with a separate story. She belonged to another world who thought children were meant to be fed

intuition or a crystal ball that impacts Divinity. So, I waited, played along with Life as it surfaced. In the process, I started calling myself a grand peeler, watching the layers of my life falling into the curry pan, being cooked in slow flame, giving out smells, teasing, but yet, not being able to be served on a platter. I had no idea when my life would stop and take a final turn. But the best part was in not having lost faith at any point of time.

While I continued to believe that I would pick up my pieces again, I enjoyed wearing the graduation robe (during MA) along with many, who were half my age and received the gold medal. Following that, with a view to find an appropriate scope for PhD I worked hours over weekends in a small publishing house in Kolkata, which was a springboard to fame for many literary gems. Writers Workshop, the publishing house was founded by Professor Purushottama Lal in 1958. Many, including Vikram Seth, Agha Shahid Ali, Anita Desai, Kamala Das, Adil

Like me, many haven't lost faith in adult education yet. In fact, I just read about a 74-year old PhD scholar. The oldest doctoral graduate of Sichuan University conducted his doctoral dissertation defence at the age of 74.

Partition.

The challenge was enormous. It seemed as if I was attempting the impossible. I was running (and till date doing the same) a full time business, a demanding home and a super hectic social scene, all of which presented their multiple demands in different shades and colours. In the process, I often broke down, cried, but always picked myself back up again. Result was spectacular. Today, my 300-pages, bound in hard cover has made me way richer than I was ever before.

Like me, many haven't lost faith in adult education yet. In fact, I just read about a 74-year old PhD scholar. The oldest doctoral graduate of Sichuan University conducted his doctoral dissertation defence at the age of 74. A History enthusiast, Huang Zushen just got his doctorate at Sichuan University four years after his retirement. Huang's 300 pages of thesis was on how the American military's support influenced China's air force development during the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese aggression. As his graduation gifts, he got the newest iPad and iPhone from his children. At the end of it all, Huang wants to be an academic.

Another story recently aired by Al Jazeera was about about 27 women above 60 years of age attending school 120 kilometre-west of Mumbai. Gulag Kedar 64 and Kantabai More, 74, were two students, draped in bright pink sari as uniform, sharing their dreams on screen. Well, what do these women hope to achieve by going to school now? I don't quite have an answer to this question, but I do know that they too are allowed to yearn. Just like me.

Men and women our age and beyond, must nurture dreams and chase their own rainbows.

After all, dreams don't have any shelf life and they don't come with an expiry date.

The writer is Managing Director, Mohammadi Group.



critique:

Back in our days, our parents associated academic excellence to students who "stood." "Cheleta combined ey stand korechey" meant that the boy or a girl had scored great grades and had topped his/her class or had at least made it to the top twenty-list in the public examination. There was more to tell. Either we were student of Arts, or Science, or later on, Commerce. The phrase "combined" meant that the student had made it to the list which included both boys and girls. Making it to the "combined" list for a girl was exceptional, as boys, during our times were considered more gifted than us.

and fattened while late night reading was to be discouraged, irrespective of exam preps, as it affected their eye sight. So, as a child, I had to carefully reposition my pendulum of ambition. So, when one day, my university days came to an abrupt end, I was damaged but not broken. Eventually, I braced myself for a fight. As a result, what was meant to be a fight, turned out to be a journey, with people all around me telling me that I was meant to teach and that I would have my PhD someday. . . .

My wait was a long one and all along the way, I knew that my wait could have easily lasted for a nanosecond or an eternity, since in reality, there's no

Jussawalla, Jayanta Mahapatra had their first books published from there. Mature poets like Nissim Ezekiel, over a period of five years, pursued Lal to publish two of his books of poems under the Kolkata imprint. Clad in sari bound covers with gold calligraphy carefully done by P Lal, the books were artefacts. I took interest in the archive and discovered that no prior research existed on that publishing house. So, brimming with confidence, I approached Jadavpur University in Kolkata to consider giving me this opportunity of doing my doctoral thesis on the Writers Workshop as an agent of change in the fifty years following

In Gulf row, Trump is the elephant in the room

DING LONG

THE deep rift between Qatar and major Arab powers has triggered a crisis, arguably the biggest, for the 36-year-old Gulf Cooperation Council. Accusing Doha of supporting "terrorism" and financing "groups" linked to Iran, eight countries including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates severed diplomatic relations and transport links with Qatar despite the latter's vehement denial that it had such links.

China has expressed hope that the Arab states will resolve the dispute through dialogue and consultation, and maintain unity and promote peace and stability in the Middle East. China is the largest trade partner of Qatar, which accounts for nearly 20 percent of China's liquefied natural gas imports.

The unprecedented Gulf row started two weeks after US President Donald Trump visited Saudi Arabia on his maiden foreign trip. In a tweet last week,

The consequences of the continuing standoff may lead to fresh confrontations, adding to the risk of an intensified arms race.



SOURCE: JASHOW

Trump said his trip to the Middle East was "already paying off", backing Saudi Arabia and other Arab states in their move to isolate Qatar (which ironically is an US ally) to which "all reference" regarding "funding extremism" points.

The row between the Sunni Muslim-divided states points to the longstanding rift among Arab states, and highlights the difference in their understandings of and approaches to regional affairs, especially the dispute between an established big player (Saudi Arabia) and a rising one (Qatar) close to the Muslim Brotherhood and Shi'ite-majority Iran.

Riyadh's snap decision to "punish" Doha is more about reiterating its GCC leadership and showcasing its strength to Tehran. Since other GCC members such as Kuwait have engaged in mediating reconciliation, it is likely that the Qatari government, which has exercised restraint in the face of isolation, will back down and revise its role as a power broker in the Arab world.

It is apparent, though, that Qatar will have to change its "maverick" stance on Iran and political Islam to keep its GCC membership. Still, Doha might refrain from drawing a line in the sand against Tehran, which it shares natural gas

fields with, in a display of diplomatic independence.

For many political observers, Trump is the real elephant in the room—as his recent visit to the Middle East "triggered" the discord. The US president unequivocally backed Riyadh while making known his ambition to contain Tehran, which, to some extent, emboldened Riyadh and its allies to impose sanctions on Doha, laying bare the Trump administration's Middle East policy: Reinstating the anti-Iran military alliance with regional powers, particularly Saudi Arabia and Israel, and swinging behind them in the fight against terrorism without getting involved.

Obviously the United States does not want Qatar to maintain close ties with Iran and open channels with extremist groups like al-Qaida. Nor does it want to risk pushing Qatar, home to the largest US air base in the Middle East, toward Iran by imposing harsh conditions on it. Trump had offered to help Qatar and the other Gulf allies settle their disputes one day after posting the baffling tweet. But the mediation will not be easy as Saudi Arabia and Qatar both have concerns about their end of the bargain.

The consequences of the continuing standoff may lead to fresh confrontations, adding to the risk of an intensified arms race. Political Islamic groups such as Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood will face a strong headwind, yet sectarian clashes might increase, further complicating global efforts to combat extremism.

The writer is a professor at the School of Foreign Studies of the University of International Business and Economics, China.
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