

A CUP OF TEA WORTH ENDURING DHAKA TRAFFIC

|| MD FOISAL AHMED ||



DHAKA VIBE

Some relatives are not fond of the idea that Raja's source of income is selling tea. Raja, however, does not let the negativity get to him.

PHOTO: STAR

The thought of driving an hour and a half in a city beleaguered by unending traffic congestion to do anything is stress-inducing. Munia and her friends -- all university students -- drove all the way from Mirpur-10 to Dhaka Airport Railway Station just to have some tea.

Then again, "Raja Mama'r Cha" is no ordinary tea. "It's the kind of tea for which you can drive for two hours," Munia said, looking up from her cup of cashew nut tea. "It's not just me -- this place brims with school and college students from all over Dhaka."

It's true. In front of the tea stall behind Airport Railway Station, people queue up to relish Raja's exotic hot drinks. At first glance, the stall looks like a tea shop straight out of the Middle East. Everything about the decoration reflects mainstream Arabic

aesthetic. From the pictures, to showpieces, to even the brass-made utensils -- Raja brought everything from the UAE. "I left for Dubai to work at a restaurant in January this year.



But I had to come back after just three months; I couldn't cope with life there... it was too harsh for me," Raja said. But the entire experience in Dubai did not go to waste. "During my time there, I learned how to make traditional Arabic tea. I decided to come back home and start a tea stall with the recipes," he said. True to his plan, Raja started his stall in mid-August. The responses validate his hunch that the business would

work. "I come here with my friends all the time. I don't think I've ever had tea this good," said Afsana Mimi, a self-proclaimed tea aficionado.

negativity get to him. "It's honest work. I love my business and I'm satisfied that it keeps my family well-fed," a beaming Raja said. "It's an honour for me that people come to my humble tea shop from such distances. I try to ensure they get the best experience here," he added. And it shows -- there's always a crowd in front of the stall and orders arrive after a necessary waiting time.

At Tk 15 per cup, the cashew nut flavoured "Special Raja Tea" is the top selling drink. It's brewed with cashew nuts, almonds, raisins, a bit of Horlicks and different kinds of coffee beans. His menu also includes "malai (clotted cream) tea", "tetul (tamarind) tea", "malta (orange) tea" and more. Raja serves his hot drinks in clay cups, and that's not just because it is the environmentally responsible thing to do. "This soil pulled me back from Dubai. These clay cups are my homage to it," he said.

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Metro rail monument for seven Japanese Holey Artisan victims

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Dhaka Mass Transit Company Limited (DMTCL) will construct a monument in memory of the seven Japanese citizens killed in the militant attack at Holey Artisan Bakery on July 1, 2016, as they were involved with a metro rail project.

"The governments of Bangladesh and Japan jointly took the decision," MAN Siddique, managing director of DMTCL -- the state-owned company implementing metro rail projects, told The Daily Star recently.

Initially, the monument would be set up at exhibition and information centre of Mass Rapid Transit Line-6 at Uttara and later it would be shifted to Natun Bazar station of MRT Line-1, once completed. All seven Japanese nationals were involved in the MRT-1 project, Siddique said.

DMTCL and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) have already signed a memorandum of understanding in this regard and as per the MoU, DMTCL will finance and build the monument using project funds, a DMTCL official said.

Another official of DMTCL said the monument will be constructed in consultation with JICA and Italian-Thai Development Public Company Limited. One of the contractors of MRT-6 will build the monument.

The money will come from MRT-6 project, he said, wishing anonymity.

On the night of July 1, 2016, armed militants stormed Holey Artisan Bakery in the capital's Gulshan and killed 20 hostages, mostly foreign nationals. Two police officers were also killed during the 12-hour stand-off.

Of the victims, the seven Japanese -- Hiroshi Tanaka (80), Hideki Hashimoto (65), Koyo Ogasawara (56), Nobuhiro Kurosaki (48), Yuko Sakai (42), Makoto Okamura (32) and Rui Shimodaira (27) -- were private consultants.

Apart from MRT-6, which has seen 38.35 per cent progress as of November, Japan will finance MRT-1 -- set

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A RARE SIGHT... sitting on a TCB truck filled with onions, two salespersons await buyers yesterday. At times, they even offered consumers to buy whatever amount they preferred, but to no avail. People said quality of the essential spice was not good and many were either getting soft or rotten, inset. The salespersons, however, claimed that these were hybrid onions, hence softer. Out of the three tonnes, they were able to sell around half a tonne throughout the day. This photo was taken in front of Jatiya Press Club.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



INDIAN CITIZENSHIP (AMENDMENT) ACT

It may encourage minorities to leave: Oikya Parishad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Hindu Bouddha Christian Oikya Parishad -- an organisation for religious minority communities -- yesterday expressed concern over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, passed by the Indian government recently.

Speaking at a press conference, Oikya Parishad leaders said the new law may "encourage" members of minority communities to leave Bangladesh hoping for better security in India.

Oikya Parishad held the press conference at its office in the capital's Paltan area to provide the organisation's reaction on the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

On Wednesday, the controversial bill was passed at the upper house of the Indian parliament -- making non-Muslim illegal migrants eligible for Indian citizenship.

The decision sparked violent protests in different parts of India, forcing some state governments to impose curfew and suspend internet and messaging services. It also earned criticism in Bangladesh and other parts of the world.

Amid such situation, Indian President Ram Nath Kovind on Thursday gave his

assent to the bill, turning it into a law.

Speaking at yesterday's press conference, Oikya Parishad General Secretary Rana Dasgupta said India could solve citizenship issues through bilateral or multilateral discussions instead of creating a religious division.

"India is known as a secular democratic country around the world, but the policies of its current [BJP-led] government may jeopardise that image," he added.

In a written statement, he also said a large number of people from minority communities -- Hindus, Buddhists and Christians -- left Bangladesh over the years, but the organisation has no data on how many Muslims from Bangladesh moved to India.

About the minority rights situation in Bangladesh, he said minority population is gradually decreasing in the country although the government claims that the number has been rising slightly in the last few years.

"We want to see some visible actions from the government for protection of the rights of minorities, as the ruling

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With winter setting in, freshly harvested cauliflowers are being delivered to bazaars. As supply increases, everyone will be able to enjoy them at affordable prices. This photo was taken yesterday from Savar's Genda area.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

DHAKA TODAY

DISCUSSION

On the prevention of HIV
Organiser: Prothom Alo
Venue: CA Building, Karwan Bazar
Time: 10:30am

REPORT LAUNCHING

On Dhaka's air, environment and liveability
Organiser: Bangladesh Institute of Planners
Venue: Planners Tower, Banglamotor
Time: 11am

DISCUSSION

Marking Martyred Intellectuals' Day
Organiser: Sammlita Sangskritik Jote

Venue: Martyred Intellectuals Memorial, Rayer Bazar
Time: 4pm

MIME FESTIVAL

Bijoy Mukhabhinoy Mela
Organiser: Rupkalpa Cultural Centre
Venue: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy
Time: 6:30pm

WORKSHOP

Learning Video Production and Editing
Venue: ENK Center
Time: 11am

'Bring culprits to book'

Union leaders demand proper compensation for Keraniganj fire victims
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government must take proper steps to punish those responsible for the deadly fire at a plastic factory in Keraniganj on December 12 that has so far claimed 13 lives, demanded members of Bangladesh Trade Union Centre (BTUC) yesterday.

They also demanded that the victims' families be compensated and the injured be treated properly. The demands were made at a rally in front of Jatiya Press Club.

"How did the factory run illegally for so many years?" asked Shahidullah Chowdhury, president of BTUC. "The government must take actions against factory authorities and different regulatory organisations," he added.

The fire-ravaged factory, with around 15,000 sq ft floor space, had a single gate for entry and exit and no emergency exits whatsoever. It had six large rooms inside, but everyone there had to use that one gate to get out.

So far, 13 workers have died of burns. Of the injured, 10 are on life

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