



## Words don't matter: Linguist concludes after researching 'restriction', 'lockdown', 'shutdown' and 'holiday'

### STAR TALK-THE-TALK CORRESPONDENT

Loam Chomchom, a local linguist, recently published a peer-reviewed article in an international language-sciences journal following months of research during the pandemic.

The research was based on language and its myriad applications used by policymakers in Chapasthan during the Covid-22 pandemic.

Chapasthan had previously earned worldwide linguistic paradox fame following an opposition party's months-long blockade and "hartal", during which life went on as usual.

This correspondent got hold of Loam Chomchom after two months of repeated emails and phone calls for just a five-minute interview because yours truly is bad at math and could not calculate exactly what 14:30 meant.

"It was not until the pandemic had continued for a year and policymakers were enforcing public holidays -- which really meant everyone should stay at home -- or strict restrictions, or shutdowns where markets were open but schools were shut, that the idea struck me: to really look at the nature of these words and what it meant to the public," said Chomchom, visibly annoyed that I was over an hour late.

He calmed down when I told him an on-time Chapasthani was right up his alley of linguistic paradoxes.

"The Chapasthan policy-makers first imposed a public holiday when the Covid-22 virus was very new and people were terrified, so they actually did not celebrate no holiday but stayed at home. But by the end some people caught on to it and rushed to the beachside town to observe the public holiday. Here is what one of my respondents had to say when I asked him why he took his entire family for a vacation in the middle of a pandemic: 'God will protect us, we have left the matter up to

God and I have read that the virus does not spread much outdoors, plus our very own government, who we trust so much, did call this a public holiday. What does one do during a holiday?'"

The real confusion started when the pandemic rolled on to another year and people starved for entertainment were put under what the government called "strict restrictions on movement". For the first week, everything looked serious, everything was closed but soon enough the government opened up malls because Chapasthan's biggest festival was around the corner.

So, people were confused yet again. "Do they go shopping? Do they now go shopping while maintaining strict restrictions? And how do they go? Public transport was closed. Did these restrictions apply to only those who were poor and needed buses because those with private cars were zooming by?" asked Chomchom.

The restrictions then gave way to a "shutdown". That continued for a while, always with a window in between for people to rush out of the city. With days to go before the shutdown ended, the government then imposed a "strict lockdown". But to bridge the gap between the shutdown and the strict lockdown, they imposed an "interim lockdown" during which people could shop for toothpastes and shower gel, but not for shoes and mobile phones.

"What do these terms mean?" asked a confused Chomchom, who had made it his life's work to explore the relationship between signifiers and signified.

When the "strict lockdown" eventually went into effect, people were detained for going out because some thought it would be similar to a previous "lockdown" and others thought it was a "holiday" and wanted to see how it was going, because they did not have other sources of entertainment.

"It is my conclusion, after a lifetime of research, that words do not matter," said Chomchom, and thanked me for being so punctual.



## Chattogram, Sylhet at war after mother with heritage from both places wins Ms Dhaka award

### GLOBAL CITIZEN CORRESPONDENT

The internet has been up in arms after a stay-at-home mom decided to show the world who the real champion is.

Most people have been applauding her boldness and courage for showcasing mom-power to the wider world.

Everything she has done so far has won applause and moms around the country have been rallying around her achievements. They appreciate how much she has done to elevate the image of stay-at-home-mums in the eyes of the world.

The internet however was torn, when her mom-identity was stolen by a certain

media house in Sylhet, which claimed that her parenting techniques and her heritage and style were uniquely Sylheti, thus putting Sylhet on the global map.

One of the leading dailies of Sylhet published an article titled "Sylheti Contestant's brainy play-time idea had top judges on the fence, but internet was all praises".

Chattogram-bashis would have none of this. Their news portals immediately picked up on this fatal fault and were quick to claim how she is an actual Chatgaiya and her children are growing up with the wonderful value system only a Chatgaiya could instil.

In a recent episode of MasterMom Dhaka, Mishwar prepared a brainy

playtime idea where she let her child play out in the rain and make sandcastles with the dirt outside. Now the judges going by the norm in the country could not quite stomach the idea. They questioned how she would protect her child from the imminent fever and runny nose as all other contestants went the traditional route of covering their and their child's heads with their hands and running for safety.

Netizens rushed to her rescue and defended her saying children must learn to be resilient and this was indeed a fun play-time idea.

Mishwar herself identifies as a Dhaka-born mother of three, with heritage from both Sylhet and Chattogram.

## There lie multiple hidden treasures under every street: WASHA

### MAHBUB ALAM MUNNA

Some of us heard of the story of the old farmer telling his sons to dig up their field to find hidden treasure.

While his sons, and most of us, did not take the farmer's words seriously, the Water and Sewage Hoarding Authority (WASHA) evidently took the moral of the story to heart.

Or at least what they thought was the moral of the story.

Since its inception, WASHA has believed there must be some hidden treasures underneath every street. Whenever a new street is constructed, WASHA comes to take care of it with some spades, shovels and whatever digs well.

"A newly constructed road is like a newly born baby to us. Just like the baby is a treasure to its parents, the road is a treasure to us, which must be found. We believe, there lie great treasures under every public street, which people trample every day. Should it go undiscovered?" a WASHA official asked.

But the people walking, driving and rickshaw-riding on those very streets have not taken too kindly to WASHA activities.

"We want WASHA to stop this gold digging, I mean street digging. People and vehicles cannot move, water gets stuck and sometimes passers-by plummet straight to the centre of the earth," said a local resident who lives next to a road that has been under WASHA's observation for a potential treasure hunt.

"Also, why do they always do this when it rains?" asked the indignant inhabitant.

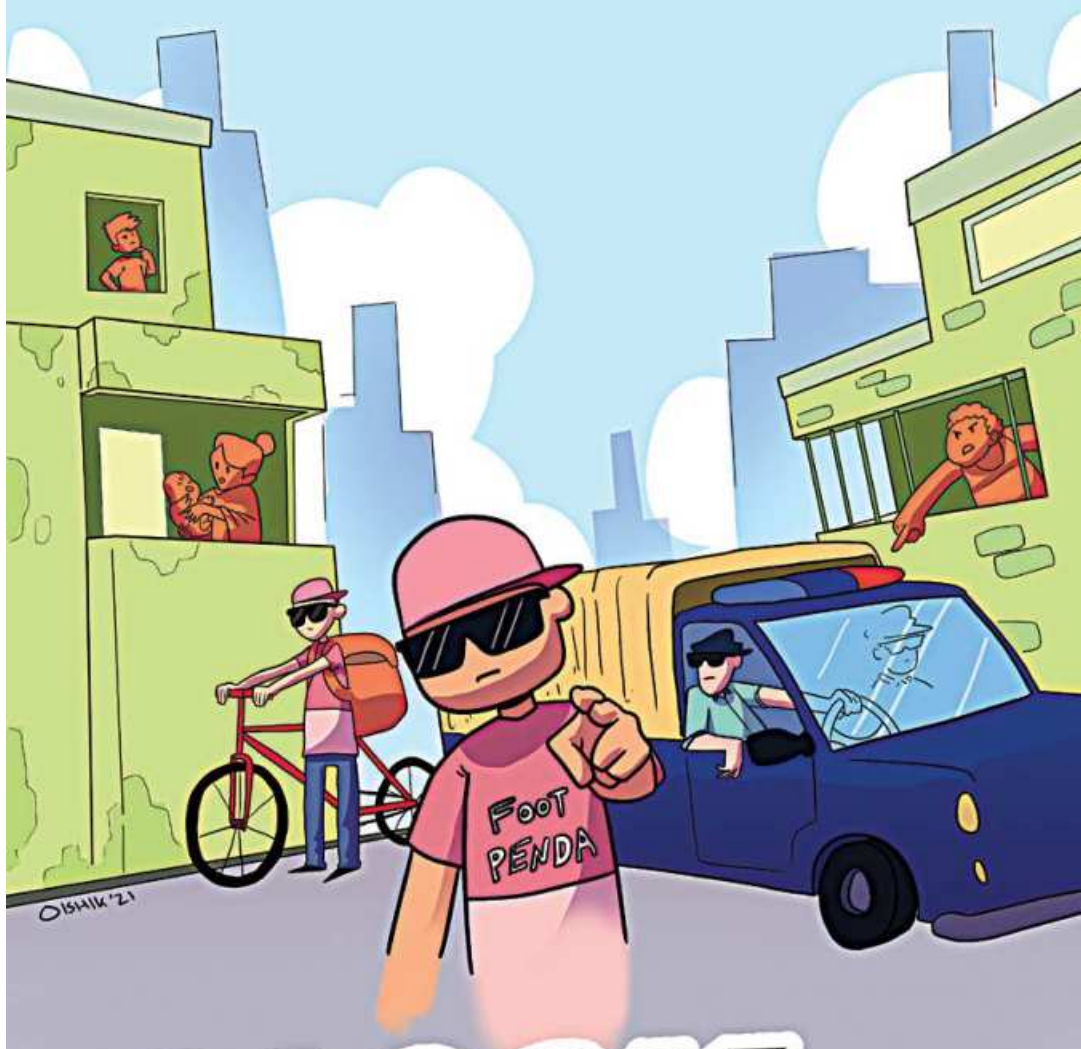
WASHA however is reluctant to stop their never-ending treasure hunt.

A single street being dug multiple times shows the immense perseverance of WASHA.

"Maybe we haven't found the treasure yet, but we will definitely find it one day. Every street is of the same importance to us, be it in the farthest corner of the city. The world's biggest companies dig soil to find gold, diamond and other expensive materials. We are trying to reach their level. People's hardships are temporary; our efforts are permanent!" said another WASHA official.

"It has public benefits. If we dig up the treasure, we can invest it in the city's waterlogging problem. If we stop, how will the problem be solved? You can't spell waterlogging without WASHA."

When asked about why the digging is done almost exclusively during the rainy season, he said, "It's science. When there is a lot of rain, the treasure may float to the top, like other material we are supposed to deal with."



# 2 LOCK 2 DOWN

SHUT DOWN EDITION ONLY IN DHAKA