

TANGENTS
BY IHTISHAM KABIR



A formal place setting.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

The Dining Room

One of my most memorable jobs was being waiter. My cousins in Chicago had invited me to spend the summer after college freshman year. Looking for summer work there, I responded to a newspaper advertisement and was hired after an interview. My title was Waiter at the restaurant of Metropolitan Club on the 67th floor of Chicago's Sears (now Willis) Tower.

Called the Dining Room, this restaurant was spectacular. Floor to ceiling glass on all sides offered a magnificent bird's eye-view of the city. Inside, you entered a rarefied world of privilege. The exclusive club included powerful politicians and business leaders. Members brought guests here for food with a view. Business was done, power brokered, deals made and hands shaken - all over a first-class meal.

There were two menus. Those with golden spines, including prices, were for members. Menus with silver spines - without prices - were for guests.

This was forty three years ago. The cheapest item at lunch was an omelette costing eight dollars (thirty-two dollars today.) A filet mignon was thirty dollars (today's dollar calculation is too painful!)

Cheesecake flown in daily from New York was six dollars a slice. It was absolutely divine. Since it cost so much, we served only perfect wedges. Damaged pieces - with a broken corner, for example - were rejected. No waiter - myself included - could resist the temptation of damaging an occasional cheesecake piece for there was no rule preventing us from eating damaged pieces.

There were two chefs. The main chef oversaw the kitchen like a lord. The sous chef, called Junior, was a terror: quick to yell at waiters, for example, if they let a hot dish become cool before serving it. One day I

incurred his wrath by missing an "86 on sole" notice and taking an order of sole *amandine* from a diner, who then had to be informed that we had run out.

Rules of table service paid attention to the diner's comfort. The place setting for formal meals was precise - the diner worked in from the outermost silverware with the first course. Dishes were cleared as soon as the diner finished eating. Cups were placed on the diner's right with the handle at forty-five degrees, so it could be lifted without rotation. And so on.

Chef briefed the waiters before opening, so that when taking orders, we could describe the dishes knowledgeably to diners. By and large the waiter's job was to enable seamless, informed dining while remaining inconspicuous - none of today's "Hi I'm George and I will be your server today" stuff.

Among the club's members was Dr. F. R. Khan, the legendary Bangladeshi engineer who had designed Sears Tower. One day he invited me to his office at Skidmore Owings and Merrill. When I arrived he was friendly and approachable. He gave me a priceless advice that I tried to follow in my engineering career: the best engineers not only solve technical problems but also sell that solution to the customer.

After summer I returned to my university. Connections with my co-workers quickly faded. Looking back, it was my cousins' generosity that afforded me this memorable and unusual experience. With changing times, many dishes of the Dining Room have gone out of fashion and rules of table service have changed. My biggest surprise, though, was finding today's Dining Room menu prices on the web!

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Ambitious project to cut travel time and cost

Govt plans to build 50 major bridges across country

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

To improve connectivity and cut travel time and cost, the government has planned to build around 50 major bridges under the network of Roads and Highways Department (RHD).

For the first phase, fifteen bridges have been selected for construction. The process to conduct feasibility studies for them has already started, officials said.

The construction cost of the bridges and inauguration of the project's physical work depend on the feasibility studies and fund management, RHD sources said.

RHD officials also said it may take up Tk 8,000 crores to build the 15 bridges, the works for which may start in two or three years, if funds are managed in time.

Construction of the remaining 35 bridges will be done in the next phases, the officials said.

Currently, RHD's network encompasses 22,428 kilometres of roads, 4,297 bridges and 15,048 culverts across the country.

There is no specific definition for major bridges, but those longer than 500 metres are usually considered to be major ones.

Shishir Kanti Routh, additional chief engineer (bridge management wing) at RHD, said the bridges will



Construction of 15 bridges may take Tk 8,000cr

Works for those may start in 2 or 3yrs

35 other bridges will be implemented in later phases

The bridges will help replace travelling by ferry

help replace travelling by ferry, which can ultimately cut travel time and costs and ensure the network's reliability. Besides, the bridges will be built to enhance capacity of existing ones like Sultana Kamal Bridge in Dhaka.

Initially, RHD selected 54 bridges to be built across the country. Later, it chose 15 to be implemented at the first stage.

The 15 selected bridges are the Second Sultana Kamal Bridge over Shitalakshya river in Dhaka;

Chandraghona Bridge over Karnaphuli river in Chattogram; Arua Bridge over Atai river in Khulna; Khuruskul Bridge over Bakkhali river in Cox's Bazar; Mirganj Bridge over Arial Khan river in Barishal; Laxmipasha Bridge over Porar Dhan river in Barishal; Banaripara Bridge over Sandhya river in Barishal; Mahadev Bridge over Mahadev river in Mymensingh; Ganeshwari Bridge over Ganeshwari river in Mymensingh; Someshwari Bridge-2 and 3 over Someshwari river in Mymensingh; Nitai Bridge over Nitai river in Mymensingh; and three bridges over Brahmaputra river in Mymensingh.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in June 2010 formally inaugurated the Sultana Kamal Bridge in the capital's Demra. However, as the two-lane bridge is failing to meet demands, the decision to build another bridge beside it was taken, RHD sources said.

RHD's Shishir Kanti Routh said they have already started the tendering process to appoint consultants for carrying out the feasibility study, concept and detail design.

They hope that the feasibility study can be started early next year, and it may take up to 18 months. Then, physical work would start, he added.

Between 2009 and 2018, RHD built or reconstructed 914 bridges and 3,977 culverts, according to official documents.

BANANI ROAD ACCIDENT
Car driver files GD against Monoranjan

Says bike took wrong lane

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The man who was driving the private car that critically injured Monoranjan Hajong in the capital's Banani area on December 3 has filed a general diary with Banani Police Station, claiming his motorcycle was going the wrong way before hitting the car.

Sayed Hasan, driver of the car, filed the general diary on Tuesday, two days before police recorded Monoranjan's daughter Sergeant Mahua Hajong's case over the incident.

Nur-e-Azam Mia, officer-in-charge of Banani Police Station, confirmed the filing of the GD.

In the general diary, Sayeed mentioned, "My car didn't run over or hit the motorcycle. Rather, the motorcycle which entered the U-loop illegally, taking the wrong side, hit my private car on the left side along the bonnet."

In the CCTV footage, it was found that Monoranjan Hajong (62), took the wrong side near Chairman Bari to come to the U-loop. Such U-turns

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Jackets, sweaters, and blankets are out of the closet. Fans are switched off, and stoves are turned on to heat up water. Demand for cold beverages are on the way down, while hot drinks are back in vogue. As trees find it harder and harder to hold on to their leaves, it's safe to say winter is indeed here! This photo was taken yesterday from the capital's Topkhana Road area.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

It's been 50 years

Demolished in 1971, renovated Ramna Kali Mandir inaugurated by Indian President



Indian President Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated the revamped temple that was demolished during the Operation Searchlight in 1971. Indian First Lady Savita Kovind was also present at the session.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Bss, Dhaka

Visiting Indian President Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated the newly refurbished Ramna Kali Mandir in the capital yesterday.

The Indian premier inaugurated the renovated building in the morning by unveiling a plaque. The Indian president offered puja at the temple afterwards, along with first lady Shrimati Savita Kovind and daughter Swathi Kovind.

He also exchanged greetings with invited guests, temple committee members, representatives of the local Hindu community and devotees.

State Minister for Religious Affairs Md Faridul Haque Khan received the Indian president at the temple, who was welcomed by blowing conch-

shells, as per Hindu rituals.

Kovind came to Dhaka on Wednesday on a three-day state visit to join the closing ceremony of the birth centenary celebrations of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Golden Jubilee celebration of Bangladesh's Independence. He left for New Delhi yesterday afternoon.

The temple had been completely destroyed by the Pakistani forces during the Operation Searchlight in 1971, informed Ramna Kali Mandir Executive Committee President Utpal Saha.

He said the centuries-old temple was destroyed along with many houses on the temple premises, while residents and devotees were brutally killed during the Pakistan

army operation.

Utpal said the temple's renovation was funded by the Indian government, while works were facilitated by the Bangladesh government.

The renovation comes 50 years after the country's independence as none who came in power after the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman took any initiatives, he said.

"When Bangabandhu's daughter Sheikh Hasina assumed office as the prime minister, we got the opportunity to perform prayers here without any resistance from the police," he said.

He also said there a memorial plaque has been installed at the revamped temple featuring names of those who were martyred on its premises during the Liberation War.

Five killed in road crashes

UNB

Five people were killed and five were injured in separate road accidents across the country over the last two days.

In Brahmanbaria, three people were killed on the spot and two were injured in a head-on collision between an auto-rickshaw and a truck in Sarail upazila yesterday morning.

The deceased were identified as Jahangir Mia (35), Mahfuz Mia (32), and Amzad (30), all brick kiln workers and residents of Shahbajpur village. The driver of the

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Infrastructure a priority for safer roads

Planning minister tells seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A balanced and multimodal-based transport system is a must for sustainable development of the country, said speakers at a seminar yesterday.

Titled "A journey towards golden Bengal of Bangabandhu: safe and sustainable transport system", the seminar was organised by Road Transport and Highways Division (RTHD) at Sarak Bhaban in the

capital. Addressing the seminar as chief guest, Planning Minister MA Mannan said currently, infrastructural development are at the centre of the national economic agenda.

"The government is emphasising infrastructural development of power, roads, waterways and airways sectors. The road infrastructures are indeed like the backbone and ribs

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