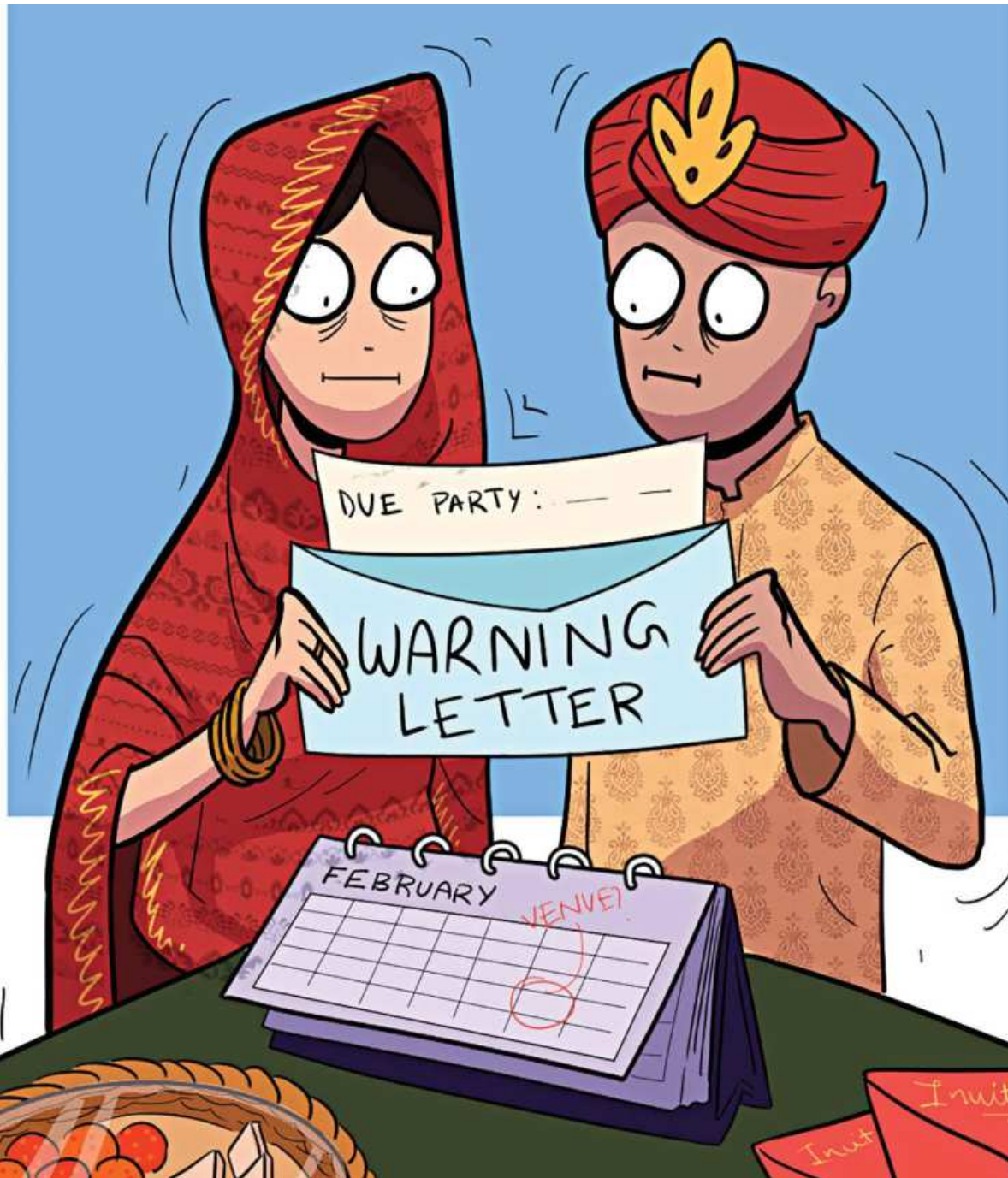


Pandemic-era marriages invalid if reception not held by Feb '22



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The marriage certificates of those who tied the knot in the past two years will not be valid unless the couples hold a reception by February 28, 2022, the Lok Ki Bolbe division of the Chapasthan government said in a press release.

Couples who thought they had averted major wedding expenses by arranging socially-distanced weddings amid the Covid-22 pandemic, and have settled into their married lives, will now have to go back to square one and throw a grand reception to mark their union.

"Pandemic marriages are all good and well, but there is a way that things have been done in this country for decades. If two people get married, the wider society will have to know and be invited to witness the event. Otherwise, the marriage is invalid... it is scandalous. What will people say?" asked the press release from the Lok Ki Bolbe division, the members of which have an owning interest in at least one community centre or wedding venue.

This move has impacted newlyweds and recentlyweds in different ways. Their names have been changed to protect their privacy.

"Of course we need a reception," said Rabeya Hasan, who married Akbar Hasan soon after the first case of Covid-22 was confirmed in the country. "I had a wedding venue booked for December 2022. That way, my wedding would have been spread across nearly three years -- and there would be enough time to go to Kolkata for the clothes, Dubai for the gold.

"But now, because of the new rule, I've had to buy jewellery in a hurry and purchased gold worth just Tk

10 lakh!" Rabeya said, barely able to hold back her tears, but having to anyway as she did not want to ruin her La Prairie eyeliner.

Another couple were distressed by the situation for altogether different reasons.

"Our parents have been pressuring us to hold a reception after the positivity rate declined," said Nishat Tahsin, who married Abid Ahmed in July 2020. Both Nishat and Abid were happy to have an inexpensive wedding and relieved that they did not have to put up a show and interact with so many people, most of whom they did not like.

They even took advantage of social distancing norms and had a baby as soon as possible.

"We thought we wouldn't have to meet many people even after the birth. We had even talked our families out of the reception idea, saying we need to save for the baby. All that's out the window now, because we have to get married in the next two months, or have our union cancelled. Then we will have to face the wrath of the 'Kemon Dekhay' division for having a child out of wedlock," Nishat said.

"So, instead of saving, we now have to splurge on gym memberships because both of us have to get in shape immediately for the wedding pictures. My idiot husband's idea of sympathy weight gain to make me feel better does not sound very smart now!"

The new rule however delighted one recently married man, who did not even want his fake name on record because he says he uses many names in his day-to-day life.

"We got married very fast, because we were caught up in the empty streets during the early days of the pandemic and the clear skies. I haven't told my wife about the deadline. In fact, I think we should take that break from social media that we have been talking about."

Fare solution for air pollution?

MAHBUB ALAM MUNNA

Dhoka, the highly developed city of Chapasthan, has yet again been ranked second in the list of most polluted cities of the world.

The rich and powerful of Chapasthan are happy that their kingdom could achieve one of the top positions, regardless of what index we are talking about.

"We were born to be either first or second in all competitions and indexes as we are that valiant nation that was born to reign the world, not to be reigned," one of

the richest citizens, but one of the poorest residents of Fulshan, said. "As we develop even further, it is only natural that our position in that list will also develop."

"Man, my parents are worried about my future. But, Dhoka's air is so polluted that I cannot even see my girlfriend's face in rickshaw, let alone my future! I have no future in this city," a boy from old Dhoka expressed his new fear.

Meanwhile, keeping pace with air, the fare of air tickets has 'developed'. Although you may not see any direct relationship between air pollution

and fare evolution, there is some 'science' behind it.

"The price hike of air ticket is another notable sign of hidden development. A developed nation tends to spend more on everything. We are a developed nation. So, why would you spend less?" the unfair fare minister threw the question to those who "complain about everything".

"Being second in a worldwide competition is undoubtedly a never-before-seen achievement for us. We cannot let it be lost so cheaply by improving the air. However, we took

an initiative to reduce air pollution. I think, planes are the reason our city's air gets polluted. So, by raising the fare of air tickets no one can use this vehicle and thus leave our air unharmed," the fare minister explained his revolutionary plan.

A movie producer has been planning a movie called "Don't Breathe" as he found that taking a breath in this city is more difficult than climbing Everest. A sequel is also in the works called "Don't Move" as he found that due to breathing problems in this city, a person would not even be able to

move to another country because of the price of air tickets.

That new problems give birth to a new idea has been proven, at least in the case of Chapasthan -- cutting off heads to cure headaches has been an outstanding solution for decades.

"I still don't see how air pollution is related to fare solution," a student of a reputed private university said in disbelief.

"The solution is to reduce the number of vehicles on the streets," he said, then zoomed off in his sports car when the light turned green.

