



An art installation immortalising a favourite, treasured pastime, which was sadly absent during the pandemic.

PHOTO: PETER F

Lessons hardly learnt

To the generous spitter, the world is a wastebin. To keep himself clean in heart, lungs and gullet, he will dispose whatever is disgusting to him anywhere, occasionally on anybody, without blinking an eye.

CHINITITO

In the summer just gone by, in the days of sweating in 40 degrees Celsius, I was extremely comfortable that finally we have started bathing regularly, wearing clean clothes and possibly using some sort of deodorant. That personal hygiene has indeed reached new heights as far as our noses can pick. It then dawned on me and my anterior nares that throughout the period when Bongs emanate pongs, I was wearing a face mask, a protocol thrust on us by Covid-19. On a positive note, gold digging with our digits, preferably index, had disappeared for fear of picking up the dreaded disease. For viewers inquisitive of what is at the end of the drill, the free show is back in town. The keen observer will notice that the true maestro is also a pinch barber. Ouch! Painful it is that despite three years of intense practice, albeit under compulsion, we have not learnt to eject our personal belongings without polluting the environment. There have been several demo videos on TV and awareness audios on radio, posters and leaflets, but we are not good learners. Because we do not care to see, read or listen. Alarmingly, there is this pompous notion that such campaigns, launched in public interest, are meant for the “public”, whosoever they are. And every nitwit individual has a T-shirt emblazoned with the words, “I am special edition”. So, happy coughing and sneezing, and keep deep pulling your dribble and slobber from the

depths of your intestines. To the generous spitter, the world is a wastebin. To keep himself clean in heart, lungs and gullet, he will dispose whatever is disgusting to him anywhere, occasionally on anybody, without blinking an eye. His T-shirt says, “My wrong is right”. Those around him, known or unknown, make an effort to stay clear of the splinters, which I am told travel at a staggering 400 km/hour. I also wonder about scientists who undertake such juicy topics. Some people can remain clean surreptitiously. You discover them only after they have left your house. A memento left behind is tucked between two books, or another behind the sofa. Once I found a crumpled piece of used tissue in my back pocket after the party was over. She must have tucked it while hugging me goodbye and my focus was hardly on my bottom. They are too clean to carry the



PHOTO: CHRISTIAN LUE

dirt with them. Fuchka, chatpati, pitha, kabab, jhaal muri, juices, and such make Bangladesh roadsides a haven for adherents of small-scale culinary sensations. Some caterers use gloves but the taste buds of the true enthusiast is satiated only when served by bare fingers. Gloved hand and bare fingers are both used not only for preparing and serving food, but also for handling notes/coins and the cleaning gamcha, and again the food. Every now and then, their fingers engage in addressing itchiness in various parts of the body, a consequence of not bathing. Ramadan is one time when street food is galore. Items that torture the nostril from half a mile away and arouse our appetite are literally spread openly on the road for flies and fleas to inspect. The buyers then take turns to prod their index into a jilapee or a piaju before moving on to the next van for further probing. We should be grateful that they do not check the quality with their mouth. Who knows? Of no lesser concern is the boisterous parleying between vendor and buyer over uncovered food. Specks of spit cannot always be seen, not really tasted, but we cannot ignore them. And some people salivate more than others. This issue too had been removed during Covid due to masking. To this day, waiters in restaurants cover their face. But I have no clue what happens in the kitchen. The unhygienic vendor deservedly gets paid by his own coin when he buys from another germ-infested counterpart. And we still wonder how diseases can spread so effortlessly.

Dhaka bikers block entrance/ exit to city roads as symbol of protest

NUTBOLTU

Yesterday, an ambulance could not get onto the expressway ramp near Tejgaon because motorcyclists were blocking the road on the left as traffic came to a slow crawl. A resulting verbal altercation led to a scuffle among several bikers and the ambulance driver. The motorcyclists refused to give way even though they are not allowed to ride on the expressway. Several people were hurt but luckily there was an ambulance right there. The Transport, Roads and Potholes (TRAP) authority has spent crores on surveys and studies in Singapore, Germany and Sweden to find out the cause and solution of such congestion. After many studies conducted, it is conclusively found that motorcyclists cause 52 percent to 96 percent of all city congestion. Two studies pointed at displaced goats walking along the roads. Most studies though concluded it was due to motorcyclists finding small gaps and filling up those small gaps like plastic cups on an open manhole after rain. Speaking to several motorcyclists, our reporter found that the cause of congestion was a cause in itself. “We are protesting the genocidal war by blocking roads,” stated Abdul Akhtar, a bike sharing operator. “If you feel terrible then imagine how people elsewhere are feeling. Terrible, right?” He quickly found a gap onto a walkway and moved on. Yet another biker stated that he was protesting rising prices of onions. “It makes me cry,” said a tearful Shamim Sobhan. We asked our reporter to talk to motorcyclists near Bijoy Shoroni if they felt any different. It looked like they were blocking the entire left side of the road trying to find a space so they could go a few inches forward. But they assured us this was not a normal lane violation. They were protesting many things. They want their voices heard over the loud exhaust notes. “We are using this as a change agent, same way we are boycotting cola drinks to stop the war,” explained a hot and flustered Nabin Hasan. “It works,” he added. More motorcyclists were seen joining this cause by completely blocking the road. Their protest also included a protest against car owners honking to get onto the expressway and to run more Jaya Ahsan photoshoots.



PHOTO: LENNON CHENG

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Assistant manager who threatened to resign 7 times made assistant deputy manager

JEAN PAUL SATIRE

An assistant manager in a local corporation has broken records by threatening to quit his position seven times in one day if he wasn't given a promotion. Sources within the corporation say that after intense negotiations, the assistant manager was finally given the new title of “Assistant Deputy Manager”. Atto Shomman Talukder, an old-timer who has been at Patriotism Inc, the country's oldest business entity, since the 1980s, had been causing disturbance for some time ahead of the AGM (annual general meeting). While his time at the helm of the company came to an end in the beginning of the 1990s, he has been an

influential figure within the organisation ever since. The company leadership, led by Managing Director Batman Bin Superman, has ensured stability and prosperity for Patriotism Inc for the last two decades. Members of the Bin Superman clan have involved themselves at various levels of operation at the company, but as the family has grown over the years, there have been less and less roles to assign to the family members. In the last AGM, the leadership considered sidelining stalwarts like Atto Shomman Talukder to make space for the young and upcoming professionals of the Bin Superman family, but Atto Shomman Talukder threatened to quit the company

then and start his own business if he was sidelined. The leadership budged at this, and kept him on as Assistant Manager. At this year's AGM, however, the leadership was under even more pressure to make space for various members of the Bin Superman family. On the other hand, Atto Shomman Talukder had also began agitating as he claimed he was due for a promotion, and resurfaced his old threat to quit and start a competing company. According to

him, he had served for many years and it was time they gave him a more important role within the company. For at least a month leading up to the AGM, there was palpable tension in the offices of Patriotism Inc, and on the last day of negotiations, Atto Shomman Talukder drafted and submitted his resignation at least seven times. On each occasion, he was appeased with the promises of discussions, while

leadership maintained among themselves and the press that no promotions were available. However, at the last moment, when it seemed like no compromise was possible, Batman Bin Superman, the company MD, stepped in and offered Atto Shomman Talukder the position of assistant deputy manager. While it is unclear if this is a real position or if it involves any real perks and salary raises, Atto Shomman Talukder has accepted this promotion and stayed on in Patriotism Inc for another year. The Bin Superman family will hope that this compromise will be enough to ensure continued stability and prosperity of their family business.



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