

Indonesian parents outraged by 5:30am school start trial



THE GUARDIAN – Early every morning in a city in Indonesia's far east, sleepy teenagers can be seen trudging through the streets on their way to school.

The students are taking part in a controversial experiment to get the day off to a much earlier start.

The pilot project in Kupang, the capital of East Nusa Tenggara province, has twelfth-graders at 10 high schools starting classes at 5:30am.

Authorities say the scheme, announced last month by Governor Viktor Laiskodat, is intended to strengthen children's discipline. According to parents, though, children are exhausted by the time they get home. Schools in Indonesia generally start between 7 and 8am.

BBC apologizes to mother of missing woman



THE GUARDIAN – The BBC has said it is "very sorry" for the distress caused to the mother of missing university cook Claudia Lawrence after letters about license fee payments were sent to her daughter's property. The broadcaster plans to apologize directly to Joan Lawrence after she told the Sun the letters, which she said had threatened up to £1,000 in fines, were causing her "untold heartache".

It comes before the 14th anniversary of Claudia Lawrence's disappearance on 18 March 2009. Lawrence's mother contacted the BBC in September 2022 but only a temporary pause was put in place and automated letters restarted in February this year.

Lawrence's disappearance, and a subsequent appeal from her mother, has previously featured on BBC's Crimewatch.

'Spring is the time of plans and projects' Girl with an ambitious plan of being kind



Ali Amiri

Staff writer

EXCLUSIVE

Walking down Tehran's famous Chahar-Rah Vali-e Asr, the city's beating heart a few days before Norouz – hereafter called Eid as it is colloquially known among Iranians – I came across a street vendor selling perfume dupes who was playing Farhad Mehrad's nostalgic song 'Childlike' through a Bluetooth

perfumes and testers. Ceaselessly, he uttered prices that flew by and got lost in the sound of the memorable song.

Close to the speaker, I noticed a thirty-something woman, entirely disengaged from her surroundings, singing under her breath the iconic line of the song: "These are the things I spend the winter with."

I approached her. She introduced herself as Neda, 37, a young professor of art history in one of the nearby colleges. I asked if she had any special feelings for the song she was

this song epitomized our longing for Eid and Eidi, which consisted mainly of new banknotes that family adults gifted to children.

"It reminds me of my childhood years, counting the minutes until the schools were out and Eid officially began," said Neda, her eyeballs moving about the corner of her eyes.

She took a step back from the stall when the song was over, and said, "These days, not so much," and started to walk north towards the subway station. When she disappeared into the crowd, I turned to the perfume vendor and asked him his name and the state of his business.

"My name is Kazem," he said, immediately adding, "I'm 24, and I'm from Sirjan."

"All in all," mumbled Kazem as he handed a young man a bottle of Laliq dupe, "it's not bad. Dupes are selling fine, but the price of unboxed bottles and testers are a tad too high for my regular customers."

The young man was Shahrokh, 26, and was buying the bottle of perfume for his father as Eidi.

"He loves the smell, and to be honest he can't tell the difference between the real thing and the knock-off. So it makes him happy, and that's what matters. I can't afford the real thing either," he said with a frown.

I was curious to know how excited he is about the

forthcoming Eid. "Not at all man, not at all. I'm terrified at the prospect of next year's inflation; it is already stinging us bad, man."

I nodded and moved on from Kazem's stall to see if I can find someone who is as hopeful and excited as myself.

A few steps ahead, I found a couple of young girls sitting on the outer edge of City Theater, leisurely sipping their coffee, chatting and laughing.

They were both sophomore students of architecture, and best friends since they were fourth graders. Kimia and Sahar were both excited about Eid.

"We are going to spend every day of the holidays exploring parts of Tehran, discussing the architecture and taking photos of interesting buildings," said Sahar gleefully.

"I really can't wait for it to arrive," she said.

Although sharing Sahar's excitement and optimism, Kimia looked for a second a bit concerned.

"I wish we could go about our plans in peace and without any unnecessary drama."

Then she cheered up, picked up her takeaway coffee mug and just before drinking it all up, said, "You know, Leo Tolstoy once said spring is the time of plans and projects."

"I pray to God that our collective project is to be kinder to each other. I certainly plan to do so."



speaker device. Quite a few passersby were crowding his stall, asking him all manner of questions about the products he sold. Some asked the tall, young vendor with a handlebar mustache about the price of unboxed

singing along with the lyrics to.

"Oh, I love this song so very much. Of course, I love all of Farhad's songs, but this one has a special place, you know."

I thought I knew. Through all those years growing up,



PIC OF THE DAY

Cinema in retrospect



Reza Jalalvand

Guest contributor

Things change; that's one of the few facts of life, perhaps only second to our own mortality. The change, however, is usually unnoticeable because it is in most cases a gradual process, incrementally going forward until a whole new thing emerges that seems to be almost entirely different from its original version. That's why we only come to appreciate the true scale of change when we are presented with the evidence from the past, such as looking at a photo of ourselves taken years ago.

Or, in this case, the actual projectors used to offer amusement to cinemagoers more than half a century ago. These huge, analog devices, showcased in Chahrbagh Cinema Complex in Isfahan, were more attractive to me than whatever film was on the screen in that cold, wintry night. Perhaps used to the curiosity of the passersby, workers at the theatre graciously let me in to inspect three historical pieces with my childish bemusement.

Upon departure, I told them how I admire a business that respects its links to the past, its continuity over time, its tradition.