



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on September 10, 2009

Save the Planet: Take Off Your Coat and Tie

Sheikh Hasina, the prime minister of Bangladesh, has ordered male government employees to stop wearing suits, jackets, and ties to save electricity. By abandoning the traditional business attire, Hasina reckons that men in government office jobs will be cooler and therefore air conditioners can be turned up a bit.



Besides a new dress code, the prime minister has also issued an order that air conditioners not be set below 75 degrees Fahrenheit and that the country adopt a form of daylight saving time, both seen as steps to reducing the energy consumption, especially during the hottest months of March to November. Of course, were the power plants not under the management of a government agency accused of rampant corruption, then perhaps Bangladesh would not be suffering under such deprivation — a deprivation, it should be noted, that results in daily blackouts throughout the country.

Specifically, the new sartorial directive instructs men in government positions to no longer wear suits, ties, and jackets. Furthermore, shirts need not be tucked into one's trousers. Such articles of clothing, it is argued, are mere vestigial links to Bangladesh's colonial past, when in an attempt to be accepted, natives conformed to the fashion trends of their English colonizers. In view of this history, one writer for the Bangladeshi English language daily *The New Nation* has opined:

Wearing suits and stuffing our necks with a tie, in spite of ourselves, is a sartorial fashion we have borrowed from the British who were our colonial rulers. Our ancestors enjoyed punishing themselves by mimicking the British style and fashion, which was seen as synonymous with being chic and modern. They wanted in vain to be "brown sahibs"! So, as a legacy our office executives — the fashion victims — now find it prestigious to chill their car and office chamber to [64 degrees F.] so that they and their guests can wear pinstripe suits and silk ties wrapped over the designer shirts when the weather outside is extremely hot and humid and when the general people are sweating and panting due to power outage.

Few men in Bangladesh, Britain, or America for that matter, will dispute the fact that on some mornings putting on a suit and tie is at best a necessary evil. The essential elements of traditional business attire have been with us since the time of Louis XIII of France, who probably had no idea when he hired Croatian mercenaries that well-to-do Parisians with their inimitable quirky fashion sense would adopt these foreign soldiers' habit of wearing a knotted length of silk around their necks. This novel accoutrement was called a "cravat," which was probably a mispronunciation of the word "Croat."



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As for the suit and tie combo that is the de facto uniform of businessmen worldwide, the thanks (or the blame) goes to Beau Brummel, an influential sartorial trendsetter and close friend to George IV of England. Brummel was a notoriously natty dresser, so much so that he bragged about spending at least two hours every morning getting properly attired for the day, including choosing the right tie and the right coat. So, if the king of England did not have a friend who was so into clothes, we might all be wearing t-shirts and flip flops to work today. And for all those who are tired of rigid dress codes at work, there are planes leaving everyday for the liberal shores of laid back Bangladesh.



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