

Trot back in time

BISHAJIT DAS
Kings are not in Dhaka anymore, nor their rule. But their transport remains; some people did not let it slip into oblivion.

Riding a horse may sound absurd, but not riding a hackney carriage. It will cost you only Tk 5 to go on a ride from Gulistan to Sadarghat. "I ride horse-drawn carts whenever I come to Sadarghat," says an ex-army officer. "It's fun to travel in a hackney carriage. Clangs of hooves on the streets take me back to the historic Dhaka," said Sefa, a university student. But Badsha is not happy with driving his carriage. "I started 12 years ago with much enthusiasm, but now it sucks." "But I cannot leave this profession as I didn't learn anything else," said Badsha. Twelve-year-old Masum, an apprentice, says, "I enjoy working with horses." Masum is paid Tk 40 daily. Although his employer Badsha earns Tk 400-600, he needs to spend on a pair of horses Tk 180 a day. Medicine needed for the treatment of horses is not always available. The veterinary hospi-

tal cannot provide all, said Hussain, "Sometimes, we buy from outside." A hackney carriage costs a driver about Tk 50,000 -- up to Tk 12,000 for a horse and the rest for the carriage, depending on size and quality, explained Hussain. Mostly, newcomers and locals of Old Dhaka ride the hackney carriages. "Even the prime minister rode a horse cart in Chittagong," Badsha boasted. "It's our heritage. We should respect this profession," says Sefali, a traveller. You are sure to find several horse carts caught in traffic jam on the Gulistan-Sadarghat Road. Fourteen horse-carriages ply the road. If you want to ride back in time, go on a horse carriage ride. And ride to the trapping sound of hooves on the Dhaka roads. Even if you get caught in traffic jam on the road between Gulistan and Sadarghat, don't give up. You will get enough space in the carriage to laze and daydream. Horse-drawn carts are a relaxing mode of transport. To savour the experience of the bygone days is an added advantage for travellers.



A pleasant surprise

Dhaka in the eyes of a non-resident Bangladeshi

CITY CORRESPONDENT

When Apollo arrived in Bangladesh last month to visit his parents and family after a 13-year absence, he braced himself for a bad experience. Murder, theft, demonstrations--he was ready for them all, because his view of the country was gleaned from newspaper stories, mostly negative, on the Internet. And he was still haunted by encounters with unscrupulous customs officials and taxi-drivers during his previous visit. But he was in for a pleasant surprise. "I did not run into anyone that could mean trouble outside the airport and the customs officials inside were cordial. And, it did not take long to reach home. The traffic has improved a lot," Apollo giggled. The ban on noisy, pollutant-spewing two-stroke three-wheelers and many roads' being off-limits to rickshaws are definitely among the upsides. And, it's good to see people line up to get on bus. The air is much cleaner and fresher than it was back then. Still, Dhaka is way behind when it comes to traffic system and air quality in Kiev, he reflects sadly. Of course, downsides are there. "It's not that you can easily find a

taxicab. Walking down the sidewalks is difficult too as hawkers have taken over those. Dust-haze at times makes life difficult," he grumbles. Apollo has an idea to contain the spread of dust to a minimum. In Kiev, water lorries frequently spray water on the streets during summer. "It is an option our Dhaka mayor can think over," he said. He does not try to hide his disgust at the waste management by the Dhaka City Corporation. "Streets littered with rotting household rubbish and the pungent smell hanging in the air are all too common here. The citizens have bore with the problem for long, maybe too long. This sort of compromising attitude earned my country a bad name." He informs that in Kiev, landlords refuse to rent out houses to a tenant who does not have a sound concept of hygiene. "To be frank, living abroad for a long time has made me indifferent towards the problems of Dhaka. I shouldn't really care about your problems. Then again, it is my motherland and I hope you people would take initiatives to make Dhaka a better place to live," he said rather nonchalantly.

SIDEWALK DELICACIES

Spicy feel on the tongue

CITY CORRESPONDENT
If you have a discerning taste for cheap new foods in the street, you'd better try this one -- a local burger, many would say. 'Ghugni-puri' is now in almost every crowded street. "It is a combination of first-rate Dhakaiya Puri and Ghugni. And it's meant for Dhakaites," says Mohammed Mizanur, a seller in old Dhaka. The recipe is very simple -- Puri, Ghugni and salad. You can prepare "I like it a lot. I have introduced it to my other friends. Even who are snobbish at having street food are also gorging on Ghugni-puri a lot."



them as you like. That is if you'd care to overlook the fascinating preparation that the sellers make. "First, we boil the 'daabli', the pulses sort of stuff, and crash it well. Then we mix it with different spices, like fine chilli, 'zira', salt, onion, lemon, 'panch foron' and turmeric juice." "You can prepare the salad of your preference, but we make it with tomato and cucumber," Mizanur says. "Once you have prepared the Ghugni, put it inside the Puri slicing it like a burger. If you make this at home, you can add any sausage you like. You can

have it at your evening tea, for your child's tiffin, or to serve the guest. "I buy 100 pieces of Puri for Tk 75, and Tk 50 more for Daabli and salad," says Rafiq. "Usually I have an income of Tk 400-450. Cool! That's not a bad idea of earning a living. It's now a popular food in the city. People especially at Motijheel often have it in between their working hours. Now, it is sweeping the universities. "Like a lot. I have introduced it

EKING OUT AN EXISTENCE

The house hunter

He started selling seasonal fruits on sidewalks. But the earnings were not enough to run his family. His uncle talked him into this business. After that, he did not look back.

CITY CORRESPONDENT
A couple of months back, eminent cultural personality Abdullah Abu Sayeed in an interview with a Bangla satellite channel said, "Landlords of Dhaka don't belong to their mahallahs (neighbourhoods) anymore. Rather, tenants dominate it." Classified advertisements on rented houses in the leading newspapers echo the same. Banking on this development, Mahmud Alam, popularly known as Mahmud Bhai, has been working at Mohammadpur for 25 years. Many dwellers of the area rush to him, requesting him to arrange their houses. Where does one find him? No signboard structure, no sleek commercial hangs entices people, but his business has flourished over the years. Even the place where he works does not belong to him. He just sits on an old rag outside a shop. Mahmud Bhai does not entertain all. He is choosy. He arranges houses for the people he is acquainted with and finds gentle. Sometimes, he goes beyond. He inquires about many

elements like lodging, character, occupation and others. "I depend on my insight to make deals. People don't have much time to look for suitable houses. The landlords of my area also come to me before letting apartments," says Mahmud. "I follow some principles. Nothing went wrong in my career so far," he said. Mahmud Alam was a tobacco trader in 1972. He used to buy tobacco leaves from Bikrampur and sold them to bidi factories. One day he came down with typhoid and one of his legs was paralysed. He started selling seasonal fruits on sidewalks. But the earnings were not enough to run his family. His uncle talked him into this business. After that, he did not look back. Mahmud Alam charges 25 per cent of the first month's rent of a house from his clients. In the initial years of his careers, he used to get only Tk 200 for each rented house. As the figure of the population of the city grew, so did his fee. Once in a while, landlords also pay tips only if they get a

handsome amount of money in advances. Like other businesses, his occupation is not free from hassles and obnoxious episodes. "All of my admirers do not live up to my expectation. I am frequently deprived of my commission. Sometimes some unscrupulous persons take advantage of my service." "For instance, if I give them the detail of a house for a prospective tenant, they would ignore me and contacts the landlord to seal a deal. Thus I get nothing. But not many people do that. Good people are always there who help me earn my living," said Mahmud Bhai. In the last six months, the business was not that good. He does not have any idea behind this slide. But he hopes that the orders from the customers will pick up sooner or later. Anyone in trouble to find a suitable house at Mohammadpur can catch him at U/64, Tajmahal Road, Mohammadpur.



Sitting on an old rag outside a shop at Tajmahal Road at Mohammedpur, Mahmud Alam (right) is in negotiation with a client.

crisis telephone numbers

HEALTH

Hospitals
Heart
National Institute of Cardio Vascular Diseases (NICVD), - 9130800, 9122560-59
Burn
Dhaka Medical College Hospital Burn Unit-8626812-6
Cancer
National Cancer Institute- 80149148826561-65
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University-8612550-4, 861455-9
Diabetes
Diabetic Research Hospital (BIRDEM)- 9661551-5, 8616641-50
Mother & Child Care
Shishu Hospital- 9119119, 8116061-62
Azimur Mother & Child Health Training Institute- 8624827, 8624980

Eye
Islamia Eye Hospital-9110794, 9119315
National Eye Hospital- 8117202, 8114807
Dental
Dental College 9002035
Orthopaedics
National Orthopaedics (Pangu) Hospital- 9114075, 9112150
General
Dhaka Medical College Hospital- 8626812-6
Holy Family Hospital- 83111731-25
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital- 8612550 -4, 8614545-9
Bangladesh Medical College & Hospital- 8115443, 9118202, Shamaria Hospital- 9131901
Suhrawardy Hospital -- 9130800, 9122560-69
Salimullah Medical Collage

Hospital -- 7310061-4, 7319002-6
Cholera Research Hospital (ICDRB)- 8811751-60
Infection Disease (I.D) Hospital 602429, 601835, Cantonment 605168, Tongi 9801070, Palassey 509670, Demra 7400111, Postagola 7410771, Narayanganj 9715644, Sadarghat 7119759, Mirpur 10 Circle 9002269, 9001055, Mirpur TVG Complex 9001189, Narayanganj Port 9715365, Hajiganj (N Ganj) 9715531, Mondalpara (N. Ganj River) 9712015, N. Ganj Bander 9712095, Dhaka EPZ (Savar) 7701444, Markajul Al Islami 7727867, Anjuman e-Mafidul Islam 324067, 239808, 248166, Holy Family Hospital 8311721-5.
Blood Bank
Red Crescent Centre- 9116563
Sandhani (DMCH)- 8624040
Sandhani (SMCH)- 7310061, 7310061, 7319022
Dhaka Medical College Hospital- 8626812-9
Eye Bank
Sandhani International Eye Bank- 8614040
Ambulance Service- Fire Service & Civil Defence Ambulance 9555555, 9556666-7, 9567734, Fire Services Siddique

**Bazar (HQ) 9556667, Mohammadpur 9112078, Tejgaon 605272, Khilgaon 7218329, Lalbagh 505778, Mirpur 9001055, Cantonment 605168, Tongi 9801070, Palassey 509670, Demra 7400111, Postagola 7410771, Narayanganj 9715644, Sadarghat 7119759, Mirpur 10 Circle 9002269, 9001055, Mirpur TVG Complex 9001189, Narayanganj Port 9715365, Hajiganj (N Ganj) 9715531, Mondalpara (N. Ganj River) 9712015, N. Ganj Bander 9712095, Dhaka EPZ (Savar) 7701444, Markajul Al Islami 7727867, Anjuman e-Mafidul Islam 324067, 239808, 248166, Holy Family Hospital 8311721-5.
Ambulances For Dead Body
Anjuman Mafidul Islam (Kakrail) 9336611, Gandaria 7319808, 7318166, Al-Markajul Islam 9127867, 324069.**

UTILITY

Electricity
Electricity Complex- PDB- 9566061-5, 9566170-9
Electricity Complex (DESA)- 8616737-43, 8617626
DESCO- 8123138-40
Complaints (Rural Electrification Board, Dhaka)- 8916424-8
Gas
Titas Gas Exchange (Emergency)- 9563667-8
Kawrnabazar-8112135-42
Mirpur- 8014132-3
Mohammadpur- 9117215, 9113903
Mohakhali- 9884741, 9885922, 8824993
Motijheel-9667612
WASA
WASA (PABX)- 8117829-31
Mirpur- 9000519
Mohammadpur- 8120192
Fakirapool- 9115343
Asad Gate- 8917492
Uttara- 9559142,
Segunbagicha- 7316348
Pagla- 8113900-39

Fire Services
Siddique Bazar (HQ)- 9556667
Mohammadpur- 9112078
Khilgaon- 7218329
Mirpur- 9001055
Tongi- 9801070
Demra-7400111
Postagola- 7410771
Sadarghat- 7119759
Mirpur 10 Circle- 9002269, 9001055
Mirpur TVG Complex- 9001189
DO YOU KNOW
Fire services provide cheap, fast and efficient ambulance service too?

TAXI CAB

Yellow Cab
Comfort 881710-4
Navana 9558065
Salida 9344477,
0171620881
Cosmo 9112959 and
8127191
Cab One 7113282-3
Nihon 8624741-2
Orion 9347277
Anudip 8125285 and

8127611
Capital 9352847
Union 8130485
Kool 0171826731
Black Cab
Cab Ex 9358401
Cabline 8321162
JBS Cab 019364575
Sajan 018126036
Anudip -- 8125285 and 8127611

Cab One 7113282-3
Palaki 0171052500
Cab I 7113282
Jatri 0171540074
Nipun 9572277
R-Cab 8914782
Star Cab 9571919
Shihab 018202477 & 018228675
KGN 8620011

TRAIN TIMING

Subarna Express	Leaves Dhaka at 4:00 pm	Reaches Chittagong at 10:15 pm
Mahanagar Prabhathi	Leaves Dhaka at 7:30 am	Reaches Chittagong at 2:55 pm
Mahanagar Godhuli	Leaves Dhaka at 3:05 pm	Reaches Chittagong at 9:11 pm
Turna	Leaves Dhaka at 11:00 pm	Reaches Chittagong at 7:05 am
Parabat Express	Leaves Dhaka at 6:30 am	Reaches Sylhet at 2:30 pm
Joyantika Express	Leaves Dhaka at 12:30 pm	Reaches Sylhet at 9:20 pm
Upaban Express	Leaves Dhaka at 9:30 pm	Reaches Sylhet at 6:40 am
Tista Express	Leaves Dhaka at 7:00 am	Reaches Bahadurabad at 1:05 pm
Ekata Express	Leaves Dhaka at 5:00 pm	Reaches Bahadurabad at 11:55
Upakul Express	Leaves Dhaka at 6:00 am	Reaches Noakhali at 1:35 pm
Padma Express	Leaves Dhaka at 9:20 pm	Reaches Jagannath at 2:30 pm