

# Dhaka: Home away from home



PHOTO AMIRUL RAJIV  
Greg Morgan, Executive Chef, Dhaka Sheraton, who has been living in Dhaka for the last nine months, has shared his

I am an Australian and have been living in Dhaka from the end of last November. Before that I worked as an executive chef in a five star hotel in China. There I met a fellow Australian who was working at Dhaka Sheraton at that time. That was the first time I heard about Dhaka.

When I arrived, I was surprised. The city was quite big, noisy and always moving -- wonderfully busy and yet chaotic; people were racing everywhere. Everyone is in a hurry and nobody had any patience. But they are very friendly and helpful.

To me Dhaka is not a modern city. The amount of rickshaws was overwhelming. I do not like rickshaws because they slow down the traffic. And that is terrible. This was also my first time in a Muslim country so I noticed different local customs. For an instance here ladies are clad in colourful sarees.

I attended two wedding receptions in

Pabna and Comilla. These were wonderful experiences. I observed the village rituals and methods of these events. The house of the bride was decorated with colourful flowers and papers, friends of the bride were singing wedding songs. The countryside was also very different from the city.

Other things I dislike about the city are the traffic, pollution and corruption. The political situation is very strange. Everything is centralised in Dhaka. Once I went to Chittagong I found it comparatively manageable than Dhaka. There were more greenery, less traffic and it was comparatively less busy.

People have a difficult and hard life here. There is a high rate of unemployment. I feel really bad when I see small children begging on the streets. The local private companies are doing good business and trying to employ people. They are driving the country but I have not seen any remarkable strategy from the government side to deal with the situation.

Being a chef I have a different kind of thinking about food than a normal person. I had been to many countries as a chef and tasted many foods, so for me the impact of tasting new dishes is not surprising and it is very difficult to say which food is exotic.

I enjoy spicy foods like curry and biriyani and the dates and sweetmeats of Shab-e-Barat. I do not like Hilsha because it has too many bones. I like pangash, rui, Black Jew and prawns. Seafood is good and vegetables are fresh in Bangladesh. This is the first time I am going to observe Ramadan in a Muslim country so I am looking forward to it and the Eid festival.

As told to Durdana Ghias

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## We shall overcome some day

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Nupur returned from Geneva in September, having represented Bangladesh at a general session of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

"There is no way left for us unless we make the society aware and conscious of the Rights of a Child," she said. "We are working hard towards this goal and believe that we will overcome the barriers soon," she added.

Finding solace on the street a few years ago, after experiencing horrible abuse,

that she usually trains children on the hidden dangers at Osmani Uddayan and every day she sees new faces. "I realise that violation of child rights still continues," she said. She has trained around 75 children and now these children are working like her.

Toma Roy, a class 10 commerce student of Naznin High School at East Razabazar wants to be an accountant.

She too is a working street child and believes that some day child rights will be established in the country.

A rights campaigner, Toma said: "Of course I believe in our

He said that his family wants him back after eight long years and he was very confused. He said that he had established himself as a painter during these years.

His father is an influential transport leader at Chadpur, and was forced to get on to the streets because of the repression by his stepmother.

He said, "I begged, worked as operator room boy at cinema halls and sales boy in the grocery shops after running away. I tried to continue my study although not regularly as arranging a meal twice a day was a tough job."



Toma (left) and Khorshed, both are street children, actively campaigning for child

### Gulshan south

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slaughterhouse and other waste. "We have built boundary wall, walkway and some benches temporarily just to ensure possession of the land," said the CEO of DCC. Asked about the slaughterhouse inside the park, he said, "We cannot remove it unless we find an alternative site."

About the shrine inside the park, he said, "You know how powerful the Pir and their followers are in our country."

The CEO of DCC had earlier told Star City that the parkland is a valuable asset because of its location and that it would be utilised accordingly in consultation with the PMO.

The principal secretary to the prime minister wrote a letter on October 26 last year to the DCC saying that the PM has clearly directed to set up a green park at the site immediately.

In another letter on November 20, Housing and Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas informed Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) of the ministry's clear stand to turn the space into a park.

Rajuk, the original owner of the park, has time and again asked the DCC at the PM office meetings to give the park back to it saying it would develop the park with its own resource.

But the DCC authorities have all along been obstinately refusing to return the parkland.

Nupur, talking to the Star City said that she thought her life was over she was destroyed and was a burden to herself.

"But the sense of my rights created an inner urge and desperation to stand to establish these rights and this sense made me strong," she said.

At 14, she is aware of the vulnerability of children in the harsh grip of society and learnt by paying a high price that males can lure the young with soft words.

Nupur now works to establish child rights and talks to children on the hidden dangers of society. Besides this she also continues with her education.

At the moment she is preparing to celebrate the Child Rights Week on September 29. She said that awareness of violation against child rights has increased but the incidents are not.

The reason, she said, was

victory as we labouring heavily to establish our rights."

When asked why she is into these activities instead of trying to secure her own future, she said: "I don't want any child facing the same problems I faced and watch society's brutality."

She said she campaigns against child abuse, child trafficking, early marriage, unsafe sex and drugs.

About the problems child face in society, she replied: "It is a long list, but I will say that, no one in the government, police and family want to pay heed to children and listen to their opinions. We have to win over the situation as we have no alternative to establishing our rights."

When Star City met Khorshed, another working street child, he was busy in counselling two others children who live together, where one had abused other.

About the confusion of going home, he said, "I enjoy campaigning for child rights as it is this sense that made me an independent individual now and I know that repressors are powerful than the repressed."

He said, he believes, that some day the situation will change and somebody has to work hard for that change.

"I should not leave these vulnerable children, should I? If I leave them now, how will they establish their rights?" he asked.

A top official of the women and child affairs ministry said that a gulf of problems exist in establishing child rights in the country.

"But we have projects for the children, which provide for aid different types of children and we are trying hard to work on more projects to establish child rights," he said.



SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN  
A woman was begging on the Mohakhali-Gulshan 1 Link Road while her two children were sleeping on the pavement. The picture was taken yesterday.

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**Drik Gallery**  
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Gulshan 1, 2 markets-Friday  
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Bishal Center-Friday  
Baitual Mukarram Market-Friday  
Polwell Market-Friday  
BCS Computer City-Friday  
Isha Khan Shopping Complex-Friday  
Rajlaxmi Complex-Friday  
Stadium Market-Friday  
Bangabazar Market-Friday  
National Museum-Thursday  
Ahsan Manzil-Thursdays  
New Market-Tuesday  
Gausia Market-Tuesday  
Mouchak Market-Sunday  
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday  
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday  
Eastern Super-Sunday  
Farmview Super Market-Sunday  
Muktijuddha Jadughar-Sunday  
Dhaka Zoo-Sunday  
Shishu Jadughar-Sunday