

SHARING HERITAGE OVER A MEAL

|| HELEMUL ALAM and HASAN MEER ||



PHOTO: HASAN MEER

**DHAKA
VIBE**

Good food is personal and far reaching at the same time. It creates a bond, sheds light on values that are important to us, and reveals the perspective and way of life.

And what better way to relish that than in Old Dhaka, where history is held together not only in labyrinthine alleys or century-old architectures, but also in food and hospitality.

Food is and always will be a pivotal part of a rich tradition ingrained in the spirit of old town.

Being true to that spirit, an over 200-year-old zamindar house on Noor Baksh Lane at Becharam Dewri has opened its doors to guests, offering a scrumptious "lunch at Heritage Home".

The two-storey house was built in the nineteenth century by Maulvi Abul Khairat Muhammad, a third generation zamindar of Dhaka and Sonargaon. AM Emran, the sixth-generation descendant of

his family, now carries on the tradition of hospitality.

These correspondents visited the house, situated on over six-bigha land on a weekday afternoon -- that too unannounced. But Emran was

A spacious garden, now divided by a boundary wall, welcomed us. This house named "Yousuf Castle" is divided in three parts -- one where Emran holds onto the past glory (around 1.5-bigha land),



least bothered. True to the tradition, he opened the door himself and greeted us.

another where his relatives live while the other is being turned into a multi-storey building.

Noor Baksh Lane and Abul Hasnat Road are named after his ancestors.

The house may be old, but it is looked after with care, which becomes apparent amid the intricate designs on pillars and side railings. In the course of the day stained glass windows are often animated by changing light, while their patterns wander across the floor, inviting one's thoughts to step back in time.

"Our home used to be famous for hospitality. Many eminent personalities either visited or stayed here," said Emran, who worked in the aviation sector for decades.

He started the heritage meal from September 18, 2018 with the help of Urban Study Group (USG), an organisation campaigning for the conservation of architectural and urban heritage of Old Dhaka.

Lunch at Emran's gradually became popular among people,

Lofty promises but no manifesto yet

Most councillor candidates making verbal pledges

HELEMUL ALAM and MATHEWS CHIRAN

With election to the Dhaka city corporations around a week away, ward councillor candidates are campaigning in full swing. However, most of them do not have any specific vision to develop their wards, if elected.

While some are making promises to woo voters, others have been saying that they do not have any manifesto as their scope to work independently is very limited.

Once elected, they will convince the new mayor to resolve ward-based problems, they assured.

Experts, however, said ward councillors' work is limited to issuing birth and death certificates.

"In the existing system, a councillor has no executive power," local government expert Tofail Ahmed told The Daily Star yesterday. "To make the city corporations functional and vibrant, councillors, not the mayors, should be put in the driving seat," he said.

A parliamentary system will have to be

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXPERT TOFAIL AHMED



**DHAKA CITY
POLLS 2020**

making pledges to voters." Selim has been a councillor for around 18 years.

BNP councillor candidate (ward-44) MA Sahed Montu pledged to set up a gymnasium, library and music school in his area. Montu also promised to construct a multi-storey cleaners' colony in Sutrapur.

On the other hand, AL's Mohammad Nizam Uddin (ward-44) said he will work for solving mosquito-related problems and strengthen mosquito control activities.

He also promised to create employment opportunities for youths and set up a training centre for women.

AL's Abul Kalam Azad Mintu (ward-40) aspired to create a social arbitration system against stalking to ensure a safe environment for women. He also promised WiFi facilities and fire hydrants at different points of the ward.

DNCC

The verbal promises made by candidates in DNCC are quite similar.

Awami League candidate Kadam Ali Matabbar (ward-2 under Pallabi area) is prioritising safe roads, drives against mosquito and scholarships for poor students. But he did have a written manifesto.

"My ward has 1.25 lakh voters. The area needs attention from the city corporation. If I can maintain a good connection with the mayor and inform him about our problems properly then it is possible to

"Councillors need to provide us with manifestos so that we can hold them accountable after they are elected."

UTTARA RESIDENT MOIN KADIR

develop the area," he said.

Meanwhile, 18 new wards were added to DNCC through a government gazette in 2017. These wards (37-54) got new councillors last year and they had little time to play their roles. Some of them are contesting with their previous manifestos.

Awami League's Nazrul Islam Dhali is the incumbent councillor of ward-40 in Bhatara. It is the second time he is contesting for the post. "I could not fulfil all the pledges I made in last term's manifesto due to a budget crisis. So, I am using that this year with a pledge to implement those."

His priorities are fixing sewerage line, constructing roads, creating playground and community centres. On the other hand, AL's Abdul Matin (ward-41) has no written manifesto.

"When Badda was first included in 2017, I submitted my plan to DNCC to develop this ward. Therefore, I did not prepare any written manifesto this time," he said, adding that his priorities are waste

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'Will fight for the working class'

CPB mayoral candidate for DNCC promises

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Rakibul Alam, while walking through Mirpur 10, stopped in his tracks to listen to what a bunch of people holding signs and banners were talking about. Right there, a street rally of Dhaka North City Corporation mayoral candidate Sajedul Haq Rubel was taking place.

Around 150 campaigners -- many carrying red flags and sickles, a symbol of the candidate -- were at the rally. "Their campaign seems to centre around the working class, but will they be able to win the polls?" Rakibul asked after taking a sip of his tea at a stall.

Another man at the stall replied, "At least they are talking about the poor, while many have just forgotten about them, as if they don't exist." The chitchat continued alongside Sajedul's speech, in which he said

if he is elected mayor, his focus will be to make the city safe, clean and liveable for all.

Sajedul, running under Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), said representatives of the ruling class who were Dhaka mayors have so far ensured benefits for the rich only, and if elected, he will ensure rights of general people who are continued to be deprived.

"We are positive of the election if it is free from all kinds of illegal influences and irregularities such as that of money and muscle power. State machineries like the Election Commission and even media can help create a level playing field," Sajedul told The Daily Star, when was asked about people's doubts regarding the election.

"We [CPB] are waging movements for causes of the toiling masses, such as fighting against gas and electricity

price hike, and resisting high house rent. I hope people of DNCC will not fail to realise that we are their friends in need," he said.

Sajedul, general secretary of CPB's Dhaka committee and a dentist by profession, said his party is on a continuous mission to make Dhaka a liveable city. "We are taking part in the election as part of that mission. We are also participating to restore democracy," he added.

"People still vividly remember the parliamentary election in December, 2018, where they were not allowed to vote," claimed Sajedul.

He said if the mayoral election is not free and fair, the city's people will not accept it, and they will start a movement against the government.

Sajedul said CPB is a pro-people party that always works for betterment of the working class. "Around

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DNCC mayoral candidate Sajedul Haq Rubel at his campaign in Mirpur 10 yesterday.

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