



Volunteers of Bhalo Kajer Hotel distributing food packets among underprivileged people.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF BHALO KAJER HOTEL

Cultivating kindness as a currency

LABIBA KABIR

Md Arifur Rahman, along with his friends, has been involved in charitable work since 2009, which laid the groundwork for Bhalo Kajer Binimoye Ahar, last year.

"In one of Humayun Ahmed's television shows, the lead character, played by Zahid Hasan, made the decision to perform one good deed every day, which deeply resonated with me," says Arifur, Founder and Chief Volunteer of Bhalo Kajer Binimoye Ahar. During his university days, along with his friends, Arifur started to save BDT 10 every day, which would add up to BDT 300 from each of them at the end of a month. They divided the money and eventually put it towards medical treatment, food and academic lessons for underprivileged children. Since 2012, Arifur and his friends have spent every Eid with these kids.

They founded the Facebook group Youth for Bangladesh in 2012. Since then, they have been providing food and education to underprivileged groups. "The children around the Kamalapur Railway Station are very prone to addiction and crimes since they have no one to guide them. As a result, we decided to launch a project through which these kids could get food in exchange for their good deeds," Arifur adds.

They started the project Bhalo Kajer Binimoye Ahar in December 2019, with the goal of serving 250 to 300 people every day. Now, it has evolved into Bhalo Kajer Hotel, a mobile restaurant located beside a footpath near the Kamalapur Railway Station. It provides at least one meal to underprivileged people daily – but the catch is that they get the food in exchange for their acts of kindness. Some of these people, especially kids, like to help elders around the streets, while others try to feed



Bhalo Kajer Hotel provides food to underprivileged people in exchange for their good deeds.

stray animals or take care of the dying plants on roadsides. Then, they line up at the footpath for the meals, provided by the volunteers.

The volunteers distribute the food packages systematically, after listing down the names, deeds and ages of these people. Each week, those who are behind the best three good deeds receive gifts from the Bhalo Kajer Hotel team.

Things have not been as steady for the team during the pandemic. In these difficult times, they met people who were surviving on just water for three consecutive days and people who had money but nowhere to buy food from as the shops were closed.

4,000 volunteers work for Bhalo Kajer Hotel, following a rotation system. Around April, some of them camped out at a footpath in Badda for two and a half months to provide food to underprivileged groups, despite the health risks.

Moving forward, they plan to establish a full-fledged restaurant, where underprivileged people can come and get food, in exchange for their good deeds.



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DEADLINE: November 10, 2020 | Scholarships



The Founder, Mansur Rahman, with the students of Khukumoni School in 2017.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF KHUKUMONI FOUNDATION

Building secure futures for underprivileged children

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Khukumoni Foundation, established by Mansur Rahman in 2016, intends to ensure better and secure childhoods for underprivileged kids. Mansur, a graduate from Jagannath University, was inspired to start the organisation after he met a child outside his campus. "I threw away a watermelon peel and saw this kid trying to eat it so I bought him a fresh piece," he said. Following this incident, he began spending time with these children. Subsequently, he started conducting regular classes for them at Suhrawardy Udyan. The organisation has five 'Khukumoni' schools, where over 500 children receive free primary education. They have also established three schools in Rajshahi, Rangpur and Barishal, intending to establish basic educational facilities across several villages.

Through their project, 'Food For All', the team is distributing cooked food among underprivileged people. Their volunteers also



Mansur Rahman distributing food packets among underprivileged people during 'Food for All' in 2018.

conduct free health campaigns to provide free treatment to slum dwellers. "These people are in real need of health counselling due to the unhygienic conditions they live in. This is a monthly project, and we have reached out to around 30,000 people so far," added Mansur.

The organisation's regular projects also include the distribution of relief materials

among flood victims in the northern parts of the country. "We've been doing this for the past three years but couldn't continue it this year due to the pandemic," said Shahadat Hossain, an active volunteer of the organisation and a student from Carmichael College, Rangpur.

During the ongoing pandemic, Khukumoni Foundation has been delivering food to around 5,000 people every day. Their volunteers are regularly collecting donations from various localities after mic announcements. Focusing their distribution drives in various slums, they are also distributing free masks and medicines. "A few of our volunteers have been recently infected with the virus, while many have recovered. Even with these risks involved, we are working to make this crisis easier for everyone," added Habibur. The organisation further intends to establish 'Khukumoni' schools across all districts and also plans to introduce skill development projects based on fisheries, agriculture and poultry farming.