

# Dhaka: Home away from home



**Julia Sable, Programme Associate of Asia Foundation, who has been living in Dhaka for the last eight months, shared her**

When I first landed in Dhaka it was 11:30 pm. The flight was delayed for 20 hours. I got out of the airport and saw people hanging around outside it. I was surprised and asked my boss why they were standing there late at night. He laughed and said: "In Dhaka there are people everywhere so do not ask."

I was overwhelmed by the vivacity of the city. People are very curious and I like it

because it means they are not hostile towards me or not with any bad intentions. And it is a part of the vivacity.

I had been told that Dhaka was very crowded and polluted. Whenever I visit any place I intend roaming on my own but in Dhaka it's not so easy. If you are in Bangkok you can roam on your own even if you are a tourist. In Dhaka it takes a few weeks before you even know the routes.

One day we went to Old Dhaka. People were asking us constantly *Hi. How are you? What's your name? Where are you from?* The questions were so frequent that we planned to put a sign board around our neck with the answers *Hi. This is Julia. I am fine thank you. I am from Canada. Now you can ask other questions.* It was really sweet. I find it good natured.

I love human interaction, and talk to people -- be it a salesman or an office staff member. I try to understand their wits and jokes and one reason why I learn Bangla.

My Bangla teacher gave me a nickname 'Brishti', meaning rain. I like being called 'Brishti'. Though I am not fluent I can carry on small conversations like 'apni kemon achen?' (How are you?) or 'amibhalo achi' (I am fine) and 'apnar meye khub khalo kaj kore' (your daughter is doing a good job). It helps communicate with people and they are very happy when I speak their language.

In Dhaka people are rather impatient and cars honk frequently. Everyone wants to go first. I prefer rickshaws because they do not honk. When I went home once after a few months in Dhaka, I was stuck at a busy

intersection where everything was unusually quiet. I found it quite odd. I was wondering why no one was honking! They should honk!

I love walking but in Dhaka it is dangerous and unpleasant because of the garbage, lack of sidewalks and errant rickshaws and CNGs.

It is hard to work in Dhaka because everything is politicised. People do not trust each other. If you try to do something good they think you have an ulterior motive behind it.

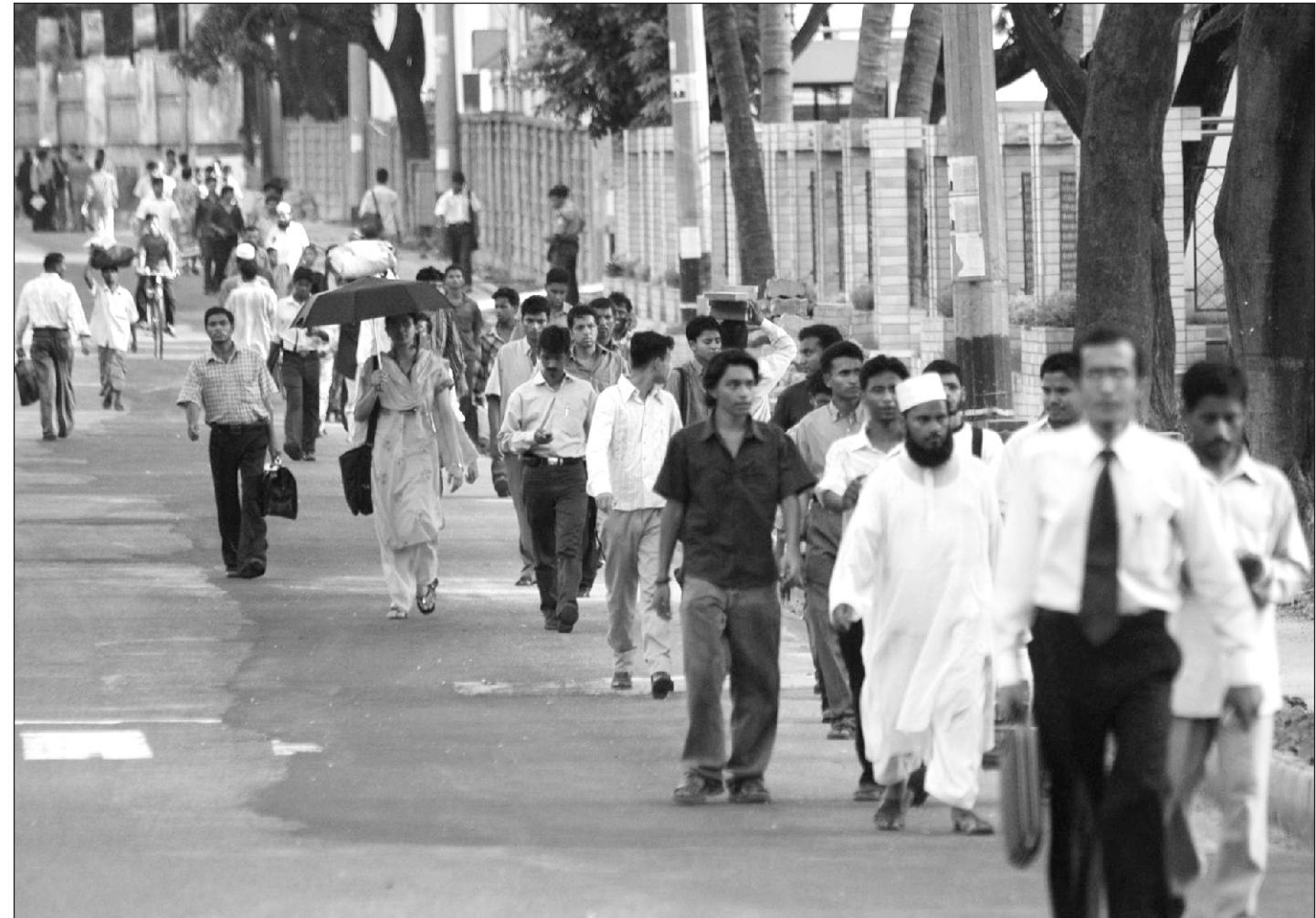
I bought lots of sarees from New Market, Chandi Chawk and Mirpur Benarosh Polli. I decorate my home with them.

My expatriate friends and I had a saree-lungi party in my apartment during the Bangla New Year. All the girls wore sarees and all the men wore lungis. We copied the year from newspaper and painted 'Shubho Noboborsho' in Bangla. We performed Bangla folk dances.

In my own words Dhaka is a big, crowded, polluted, vibrant, noisy and never-boring city. It is colourful both literally and metaphorically, literally because people wear very colourful dresses and metaphorically because it is a place of constant activity. People have a good social life here. There are many things to do -- like shopping, partying and eating out. It is very hard to get bored in Dhaka.

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As told to Durdana Ghias



STAR PHOTO

Despite facing all kinds of odds, the resilience and vivacity of Dhaka overwhelm Julia.



The scene of carnage at a filling station at Mirpur after a cylinder inside a cab exploded on September 1.

## CNG cylinders

**FROM PAGE 21**  
vehicle mechanism only. It does not have any facility or programme to check fitness of the CNG equipment installed in some of those vehicles.

Number of explosions from low-grade cylinders of the CNG run vehicles will rise if the government does not take any step immediately, a top BRTA official told Star City.

Compressed Natural Gas has become very popular as the cheapest alternative fuel among car owners following repeated increase in petroleum prices.

According to RPCGL data, there are 56 filling stations and conversion workshops in Dhaka. Approximately 43,000 CNG converted vehicles are plying the city streets and the number is growing fast.

## To a better, safer future...

**FROM PAGE 21**  
11:30 pm immediately after she was born, by a middle-aged couple who introduced them as the baby's maternal uncle and grandmother. The infant was wrapped in a piece of cloth.

They were looking for an incubator and finding none in Dhaka Shishu Hospital they came to Pancare Hospital. While the hospital staffs were busy arranging an incubator, they ran away leaving the baby behind.

Later, the Families For Children (FFC), a non-government organisation (NGO), along with many kind-hearted people, took the responsibility of the baby and its treatment.

"I read the news on Shuchi in The Daily Star and it immedi-

ately struck me. As her family deserted her, I thought the responsibilities lay on our shoulders and I extended my hand to help her," said one of the donors preferring anonymity.

"A similar news published in another English daily on Shuchi drew my attention. At that moment I thought she needed my help within my limitation" said Mrs Sabera Rahman, one of the donors who contributed to raise a fund for Shuchi's well-being.

The story published in The Daily Star on June 19 about Shuchi drew the attention of many patrons to assisting the authorities to take care of the infant. According to FFC the total amount of donation

totalled to Tk 92,000. But the cost of Shuchi's treatment amounts to Tk 1.5 lakh.

Shikha Biswas of FFC and Dr Munira Rahman, managing director of Pancare Hospital expressed gratitude to the donors for their contribution for Shuchi.

Shikha Biswas, FFC's assistant project manager said: "The discounts we get from doctor's fees, pathology and medicines helped us a lot to keep the expenditure low."

Professor MAK Azad Chowdhury expressed his gratitude to the nurses and doctors of the hospitals. He said: "The care of the doctors and the nurses of the hospital have helped Shuchi survive."

## A journey through

**FROM PAGE 21**  
University at Curzon Hall 'Urdu will be the only state language of Pakistan'. His declaration was challenged forthwith at the congregation and that was the inception of Language Movement.

"When we were students it was the symbol of DU. Exams, book fairs and other programmes were held there," said Prof Muntasir Mamun, also a historian.

"Though I was a teacher of arts, Curzon Hall always bore a significant part of DU's glory to me," he said.

"I attended my first university exam at Curzon Hall. I remember it as a cavernous hall which stirred up awe in my mind," said Ahsan Habib, editor of satire magazine Unmad.

Dhaka Physics Group arranged a special programme at Curzon "Hundredth anniversary of Einstein's special theory and

centenary of the Curzon Hall" yesterday to commemorate its centenary. The programme started at 10:30am and also celebrated International Physics Year and 100 years of the theory of relativity of Albert Einstein.

Professors from different departments of Curzon Hall spoke and reminisced memories of old days.

Dhaka Physics Group is a group of those passed from Curzon Hall at various times.

The group has also published a book named 'Our Alma Mater' on these occasion. The book has been dedicated to those who laid their lives in the language movement in 1952 and in liberation war in 1971. The chief guest of the programme was Justice Md Habibur Rahman, the former chief adviser to Caretaker Government.

## Unlicensed blood bank

**FROM PAGE 21**  
Under the SBTP, each of the 53 government hospitals in district headquarters and 11 medical college hospitals has the screening facility, said Programme Manager of SBTP Dr Saleh Md Rafique.

Screening of the five deadly dyes had not been ensured even at the government-run centres before the SBTP was undertaken, he said.

"Scenario at the hundreds of

blood transfusion centres across the country is just dreadful," said a top official of Health Directorate.

Approximately, total demand for blood every year in the capital is 1,20,000 bags, according to Dr Saleh.

He claimed that the government-run 18 centres meet 60 percent of demand in the capital while 20 percent is met by voluntary organisations. Illegal

centres supply the rest 20 percent.

According to official sources, there are at least 100 illegal blood transfusion centres at similar number of big private hospitals and clinics in the city apart from the small ones.

Under the World Bank funded extended programme of SBTP, 19 out of 98 centres were targeted for further stand-

ardisation with modern equipment, training of the personnel and quality assurance for blood component preparation of plasma, red cell, white cell and platelet.

Of the 19 centres, 11 are in Dhaka -- one each at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP), National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation (NITOR), National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICD), National Institute of Chest Diseases Hospital (NICDH) and Matuail Women and Children Hospital.

The total annual demand for blood for medical purposes in the country is 3.5 lakh units (bags), Dr Rafique said, adding that the daily demand for blood at Dhaka Medical College Hospital is 42 to 45 units.

## health, bus services, airlines & train timing

### HOSPITALS & CLINICS

|   |                                      |                                     |
|---|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Ahsania Mission Cancer & General Hospital | Holy Family Hospital                 | Rashmoni General Hospital           |
| 9008919, 8051618                          | 8311721-25                           | 8317606, 9557354, 8317819           |
| Apollo Hospitals Dhaka                    | Islami Bank Hospital                 | Ratan's Dental Clinic               |
| 9891680-4, 01713046684/85                 | 9333739                              | 9111090                             |
| Emergency no. 9896623, 0171409000         | Japan Bangladesh Friendship Hospital | Salimullah Medical College Hospital |
| Bangladesh Medical College & Hospital     | 8828855, 8827575                     | 7319002-6                           |
| 9118202, 8115843                          | Labaid Cardiac Hospital              | Samorita Hospital Ltd               |
| Central Hospital                          | 8610793-8                            | 9131901                             |
| 9660015-19,                               | Marie Stopes Clinic                  | Shahid Suhrawardy Hospital          |
| China Bangla Hospital (JV) Ltd            | 8821874                              | 9122560-78                          |
| 8913674                                   | Medinova Medical Services Ltd        | Shishu Hospital                     |
| Dhaka Medical College Hospital            | 8620353,                             | 8116061-2, 9119119                  |
| 8626812-16                                | Monowara Hospital                    | Neptune A/C Coach Service           |
| Gana Shasthyo Kendra                      | 8318135, 8319802                     | 7101945, 7101951, 9123092           |
| 8617208, 8617383, 8620178,                | Pangu Hospital                       | Shohag Paribahan (Pvt) Ltd          |
| Greenland Hospital                        | 9112150, 9113041                     | 9334152, 8316766, 8126293           |
| 8912663                                   | PG Hospital (BSMMU)                  | Shoukhan Paribahan                  |
| Gulshan Mother & Child Clinic             | 9614545-9, 961250-4                  | 8014397, 9001796                    |
| 8822738, 8812992                          |                                      | Silk Line                           |

### BLOOD BANK

|                                    |
|------------------------------------|
| Bangladesh Red Crescent Blood Bank |
| 9116563                            |
| Modern Clinic & Blood Center       |
| 9883948                            |
| Sandhani, Dhaka Medical College    |
| 9668690                            |

### BUS SERVICES

|                            |
|----------------------------|
| Drooti                     |
| 8014563                    |
| Eagle Paribahan            |
| 7101504                    |
| Green Line Paribahan       |
| 9339623, 9342580, 8353005  |
| Hanif Enterprise           |
| 9120116                    |
| Keya Paribahan             |
| 7101894, 7101250, 9121280  |
| Modern Enterprise          |
| 9123743                    |
| Neptune A/C Coach Service  |
| 7101945, 7101951, 9123092  |
| Shohag Paribahan (Pvt) Ltd |
| 9334152, 8316766, 8126293  |
| Shoukhan Paribahan         |
| 8014397, 9001796           |
| Silk Line                  |
| 7102461                    |
| Subarna Express            |
| Mahanagar Prabhati         |
| Mahanagar Godhuli          |
| Turna                      |
| Parabat Express            |
| Joyantika Express          |
| Upaban Express             |
| Tista Express              |
| Ekata Express              |
| Upakul Express             |
| Agnibena Express           |

### AIRLINES

|   |
|---|
| lines   |
| Aeroflot  |
| 9559930, 9559111, Fax: 9563787                            |
| Air India   |
| 8617783, 8611929, Fax: 9670591                            |
| Biman Bangladesh Airlines                                 |
| 8825845-9, Airport Office: 8960404, 8915699, Fax: 8826115 |
| British Airways   |
| 8815111, Fax: 8815346,                                    |
| Cathay Pacific  |
| 9557117, Fax: 9562667                                     |
| Drak Air  |
| 9862243, 9892862,   |
| Emirates  |
| 9892801, 9885574-75                                       |
| GMG Airlines  |
| 8826115, Airport Office: 8960404, 8915699, Fax: 8826115   |
| Gulf Air  |
| 9130123-5, Airport Office: 8914573                        |
| Indian Airlines Ltd                                       |
| 9555915, 9557813,   |
| Kuwait Airways  |
| 9115182, 9118829  |
| Malaysia Airlines</                                       |