Empathy for Eid

Sabrina F Ahmad

So much has been said about Eid and the 'spirit of giving' that it's almost become a cliche, and like most cliches, it tends to lose meaning. 'Charity' has become like a dirty word, because people tend to associate it with profiteering these days.

Help Our People Empathize (HOPE), a community-service group based in the Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), aimed to change that attitude with the first of its Fall projects; one that involved making the festival season a little brighter for young children who don't normally have access to fun.

On hearing about the cause, many charitable people donated money to HOPE to fulfill the project. On September 27, HOPE hosted an iftar at Rolls Express in Banani to raise money for the cause. At Tk 500 per head, attendees got to enjoy a scrumptious set menu, knowing that 60% of the booking price was being used for a good cause. Despite the fact that the event had only been advertised briefly via Facebook, the turnout was pretty decent, and by the end of the evening, the group had managed to scrounge up Tk 25,000, which included donations made by people who were intrigued by the cause, but unable to attend.

A delegation from HOPE, headed by Munsia N. Ahmed, Founder and Chairperson of HOPE and organized by Jessica Tartila, set off for the Dhaka Shishu Hospital on September 29. They were formally received by Prof Dr AR Khan, Director of Dhaka Shishu Hospital, who briefed them on the history and functions of the hospital, which is the largest hospital for children in Bangladesh, and supported, but not owned by the government. After the briefing, Dr. Reaz Mobarak, Assistant Professor of the hospital helped the volunteers to go to several wards of the hospital.

Moving from bed to bed, talking to the patients and their caregivers, the HOPE volunteers distributed clothes and toys to over 100 children in the non-paying wards. There were several priceless moments when the children opened their presents and their faces lit up, while the babies repaid the volunteers' efforts by looking cute. There were also serious cases, like the cancer patients, the fatalities, and others, after encountering which, there were no dry eyes left amongst the volunteers.

All in all, it was a trip that brought many lessons and new experiences for the volunteers as well as a little Eid spirit into the lives of those on the receiving end.



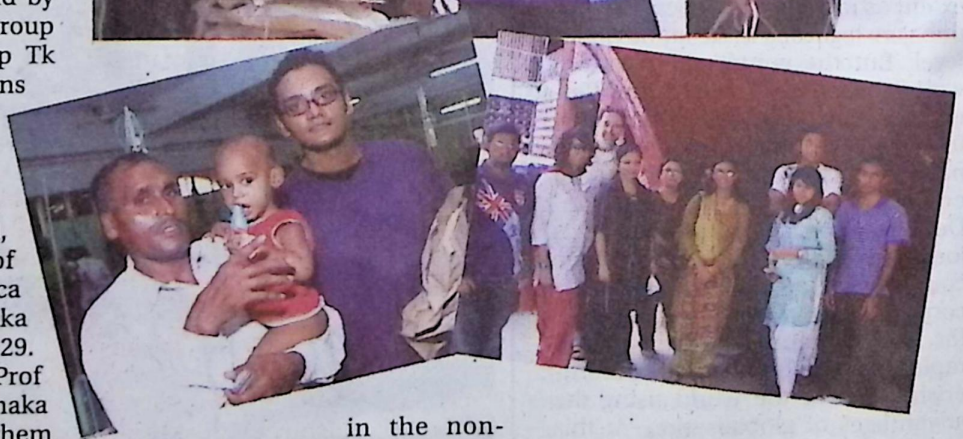


Photo: Salman Saeed