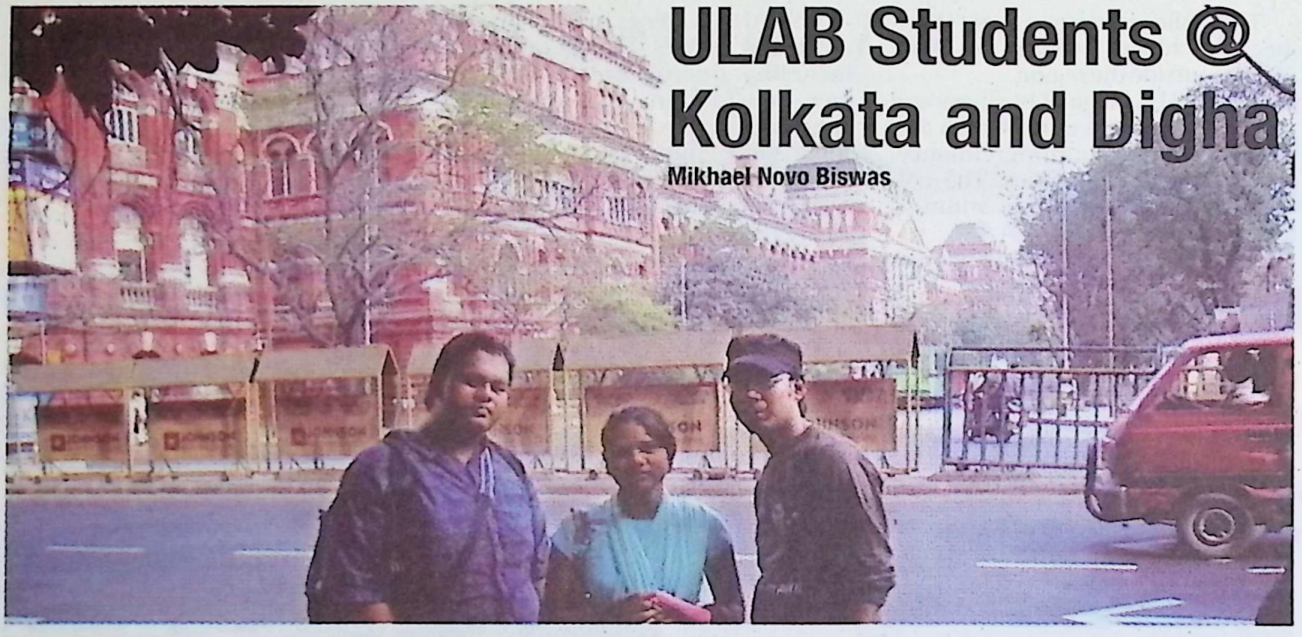


ULAB Students @ Kolkata and Digha

Mikhael Novo Biswas

CALCUTTA, now Kolkata, was once the capital of British India. Though it is quite near to Bangladesh, but is seemingly a very distant land. You need a passport, a hard acquired visa, foreign exchange endorsement and the ticket, depending on how you are traveling. Some of us had planned to visit Kolkata in our semester break and so one cool and pleasant morning seven of us boarded the bus bound for Kolkata.

When the bus reached Kolkata the sun was setting and we could feel the humidity of the city even in the month of February. The next few days that we spent in Kolkata just amazed us. On top of everything it was the warmth of people. Wherever we went we never felt that we had ever left Bangladesh. It is really a City of Joy as described by the renowned author Dominique Lapierre in his book by the same name, made into a movie later. Most of us had never seen such a large and vibrant city before. The city is full of places of historical importance.

Basically Kolkata has got its past glory during the British rule and stands out as one of the most exciting cities in this region. However some of the glory is lost due to decay and negligence. It also has a perfect blend of modernity and old heritage. The tourist attractions in Kolkata remind us of the golden years when the city was still young and growing. Our objective was to visit as many places as we could within two days in Kolkata! Therefore, we maintained a very well planned schedule. Some of the places we could visit in Kolkata were Calcutta Town Hall Museum, Indian Museum, Victoria Memorial, Eden Gardens, Akash-Bani Kolkata, Birla Planetarium, the famous Howrah Bridge (Rabindra Setu) and New Vidyasagar Setu, Howrah Railway Station, Governor's House, Writers' Building, High Court, St. John's Church, Millennium Park and Science City. Among these, we have enjoyed the musical show of Town Hall Museum of Kolkata from which we learned about the city and its glorious past. Around the Writers' Building where writers (clerks) of the East India Company who used to reside, we had experienced the look of the city of London city. It was also wonderful to relax in the Millennium Park during the evening enjoying the beauty of Old Howrah Bridge. Lastly Science City was the place where we learned about the intricacies of science through fun.

It was a pleasant experience of crossing our national border for experiencing a different Bengali culture in a new country. Kolkata is the best place for the students to start their life's first tour outside the country, as everything is very cheap if you know the art of bargaining. The food is incredibly delicious, especially in the roadside restaurants. Of course, we didn't forget to have the Maharaja Mac and French fries at McDonalds!

After spending two days in Kolkata, we set out for the sandy beaches of Digha. It is a three-hour journey by train from Kolkata but the fair is only 75 rupees! Digha is one of the most popular tourist spots in West Bengal. It is very different from our sea beaches. One of the beaches in old Digha is totally protected by stone blocs. The sea at Digha is calm and shallow for about a mile from the shore, making it quite safe for swimming. One can view both sunrise and sunset at Digha sea beach.

The trip to Kolkata and Digha was not only a journey but also an experience of spiritual and cultural exchange that gave us an experience of a lifetime.

(The writer is a student of University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh)