



On top of the world.



Water sports from a garden leak.



Friends exploring the sunken area around the pond.

KELLA'S KIDS

THE Moghul fort at old Dhaka's Lalbagh, known locally as the *Kella*, has a checkered history. It was started in 1678 by prince Azam, son of Emperor Aurangzeb. But before Azam could complete it he was transferred to Delhi. The responsibility of construction fell on the governor Shaista Khan who expanded it. However, tragedy struck when Shaista Khan's favorite daughter Pori Bibi died. Heartbroken, he now felt the fort was unlucky and abandoned it, but not before erecting a beautiful tomb - built from the finest imported ingredients - in her memory.

The three main structures making up the *Kella* are the tomb, the mosque and the Hammam / Audience Hall. The *Kella* compound also has three different gates, a watch tower, barracks, several fountains, a pond, and the remains of a Moghul garden on the roof of the barracks. The setting is an open space of several acres with lawns and well-tended gardens.

Three centuries after Shaista Khan's heartbreak, the *Kella* he helped build is today a place of joy for the children of Old Dhaka who are starved of open spaces and greenery amid the city's congestion. Not only is there space to run, but there are also walls to scale, holes to spring into, shrubs to play hide-and-seek in, and graceful surroundings to enjoy the company of friends and family.

Photo: IHTISHAM KABIR



Jumping into an empty fountain.



Playing *Kanamachhi* near the eastern gate.



Scaling the walls of the fort.



Balancing act in the Moghul garden.



BIOGRAPHY

Ihtisham Kabir is an amateur photographer who has photographed Bangladesh since 1984. He writes the weblog Back to Bangladesh (backtobangladesh.blogspot.com) and authors a daily photo-blog on Bangladesh (www.bangladeshimages.com). His Web Exhibition, "Discovering the Children of Bangladesh," was recognised as one of the Web's 10 best photo sites in 1996. In professional life, he worked over two decades as a software engineer in Silicon Valley, authoring several patents and the book High Performance Computer Imaging. Recently he has taken up the role of rubber planter. Readers can contact him at Ihtishamkabir@yahoo.com.