

PHOTOS: DARSHAN CHAKMA

Holi at Shakhari Bazar

ARMAN R. KHAN

I've seen my friends from university attend Holi and they always seemed to have the time of their lives. Adding to that the way Holi is portrayed by Bollywood, I couldn't resist the urge to go and see what it's about. So on March 6, I headed over to Shakhari Bazar with a group of friends. There are many parts of Dhaka where this festival is observed, but none as vibrant as the Old Town, I've been told.

Applying oil on the visible body parts and hair was something I was hesitant about, but my friend explained that it would help while cleaning up afterwards. When we reached Shakhari Bazar, I saw that a lot of people were going in, a majority of whom consisted of people not from Old Dhaka. Interestingly, many of them had DSLRs, wrapped by layers of protective covering. I spotted quite a

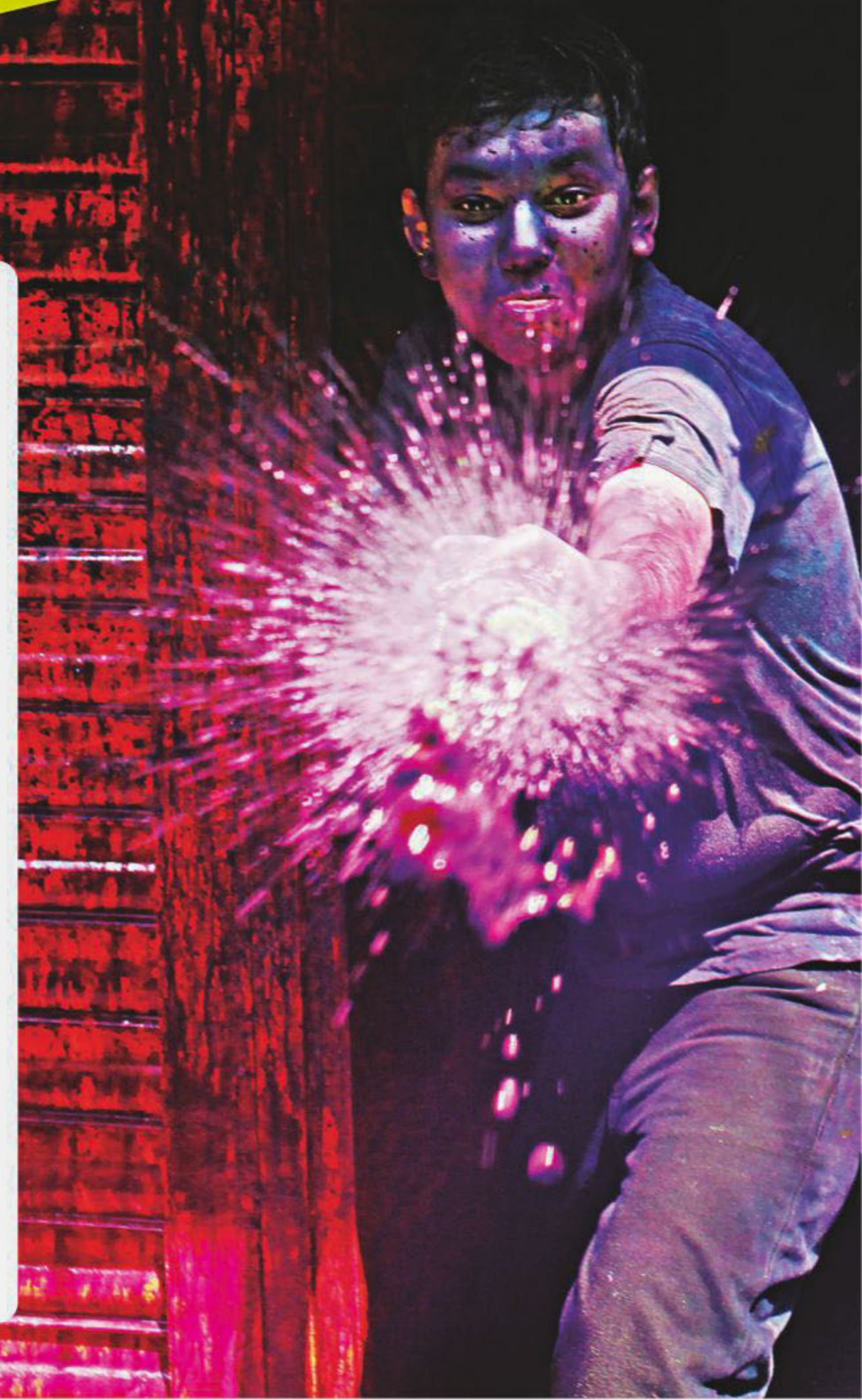
few foreigners amongst us as well.

As we entered Shakhari Bazar, someone – a complete stranger – smeared powdered colour on us, and someone else sprayed us with colourful liquid using water guns. Every other minute, a stranger would put colours on us, screaming "Happy Holi" and we followed suit. The entire street was packed, and it was getting difficult to move through the crowd, but we did. More *rang khela* followed as everyone was having fun with colours. We soon got drenched, with people throwing water and colour from roofs and balconies, alongside the incessant water gun and water balloon wars.

It was indeed a spectacle. Though I had concerns about the pollution caused by this, I put those aside for a while and indulged in the festivities. Large speakers were installed and groovy Bollywood songs blared out of those, working

as a catalyst to further the hype of the crowd. People of various ages were there, dancing and playing with the endless supply of colours. We too danced to our hearts' content! When we became tired, we found a narrow, quiet alley and rested there for a while before re-joining the festivities for an hour or so.

Even though Holi is a Hindu festival, it is celebrated by people of all religions at Shakhari Bazar. It seemed to be more of an Old Dhaka tradition to me, reemphasising that communities can happily coexist and be a part of each other's celebrations. Holi is just one such celebration. It didn't matter whether you know the person next to you or not, you would still greet them and smear some colour on them, because that's the spirit of Holi. It's difficult for me to express how amazing it was, and I loved every bit of it. Now if you'll excuse me, I have to get some dye out of my hair.



UP TO 12 HOURS
LASTING FRESH BREATH



THIS IS NOT JUST A
TOOTH PASTE
THIS IS
closeup

Unilever