

SECOND LEAST LIVEABLE BUT...

CHARLOTTE JACQUEMART, Zurich

One can list a multitude of reasons to not visit Bangladesh -- never ending traffic jam, incessant power cuts, air heavy with dust and pollution and thousands upon thousands of people thronging the streets every single day!

Dhaka was ranked the second least liveable city among the world's 140 cities in this year's Global Liveability Index released by the Economist Intelligence Unit.

Now let's be clear, it cannot be denied that there are more charming spots on earth than Dhaka -- what with the chaotic traffic system where cars, buses, rickshaws, bikes, people, donkeys and chickens share public space. The public infrastructure and health system are not very inviting either -- as people die in hospital elevators due to long power cuts.

Many other reasons are there why European visitors should stay away from Dhaka, but there are at least 10 reasons why one should visit the second least liveable city in the world.

1. FEMALE POWER

Women are all over the city. Females are much more visible than they were 10 years ago. The young generation, in particular, is seen flocking to universities and going abroad to earn international degrees from reputed universities. Women lead businesses, earn money, are interested in politics and want to be independent. Females will be an even greater force in the years to come. If you want to see and feel women's motivation, Dhaka is the place to go.

2. NEVER ALONE, NEVER BORING

Are you lonely once in a while? Is your boss not talking to you? Do your friends never have time for you? If you feel like you want a bit more attention, Dhaka is your city.

Hundreds of rickshaw-pullers are eager to take you on board. If you decide to grab tea in a local tea-stall, you can be sure to get involved in discussions. So if you feel neglected, just take a walk through Dhaka. The city offers you thousands of faces; Bangladesh as a whole has about 1,000 people per square kilometre. That is four to five times more than what we experience in Switzerland, for example. So if you want to live the real "density-stress", here you go! Dhaka is never boring, I promise.

3. YOUNG PEOPLE

Are you sick of the senile western cities, where more money is spent on elderly institutions than on anything else? Where demographics dominate every discussion? If yes, then Dhaka will be a refreshing change. Here, the young outnumber the old by miles. If you walk down the road and look at all the young faces -- which smile at you and are not looking into some digital device like back home -- you are reminded of your



own youth, memories come flooding back. In the midst of young people, you feel young again. And unlike young people in Europe, young Bangladeshis are always up for a chat.

4. YES, WE CAN!

The city is currently being rebuilt. Around every corner crumbling old buildings are taken down and replaced by surprisingly good architecture and modern designs. Even the sidewalks are being improved. Life in the city gets dangerous sometimes. The footpaths, which resemble Swiss cheese rather than sidewalks, can be a nightmare at times. Given that change is brewing, you can be there to see it.

5. OLD DHAKA

The old part of the city is the craziest mix between modern life and medieval age you have ever seen. Chickens are slaughtered on the footpath next to a man repairing an iPhone 5. The roads in Old Dhaka are so narrow and intertwined and the centre so densely populated, you are sure to lose your way. So do take a native with you if you go there or you will have to stay there forever. But Old Dhaka is the ultimate place to go if you want to experience the chaotic yet oh so beautiful Dhaka.

6. DAY IS NIGHT AND NIGHT IS DAY

Aren't you often frustrated if you can't find a warm dish after 10:00pm in European cities? In my home country, Switzerland, it is difficult to even find a cold dish after midnight. But in Dhaka, you will find warm food round-the-clock. Bangladeshis make no big difference between night and day. Little lights and fire sparkling along the streets are with you all night long and indicate where you are most likely to find a bite to eat -- at any time. And whereas in our world the roads after 10:00pm are often as dead as a cemetery, life in Dhaka goes on all night long.

7. FORKS AND KNIVES

Compared to 10 years ago, many things in the city have changed already. Not only many more people wear western clothes (less lungis), couples walk hand-in-hand through parks (not quite what you would expect in a Muslim country), and rickshaw-pullers communicate with their customers through mobile phones. One does not only find a cosy atmosphere and excellent food, the plate also comes automatically with forks and knives for visitors.

8. REAL VEGETABLES AND FRUITS

Let's stay with food for a second longer. We

in the West suffer from tasteless bananas, unripe mangos, and watery tomatoes. They are harvested too early in order to be shipped to us. That is why you will fall in love with Dhaka immediately if you like vegetables and fruits. At every corner of the city you'll find people displaying fruits and vegetables of the best quality. Just to look at the colourful display is a pleasure. Tasting them every morning for breakfast is like heaven.

9. BETTER THAN A BURNOUT CLINIC

Are you stressed and feel like you would like to run on a lower gear for a while? People in the West are flocking to so called burnout clinics to get relief from their workload and stress. A stay in Dhaka would provide the same cure and would be much more fun than a clinic, and most probably even cheaper. Because whatever you plan to do in Dhaka, pressure of time does not exist as traffic in the city dictates your programme. You will probably hang around most of the time waiting for traffic jams to dissolve. So running on a high gear most of the time is impossible, giving you all the free time for reading, socialising and doing nothing as you always wished. Your blood pressure will most



certainly decrease and there is no need for the expensive tranquilliser your doctor back home prescribed you to. You will be amazed at how much patience you can develop.

10. AN ORGANISED CHAOS

Last but not least the organised chaos in the least liveable city of the world has a charming side to it. The honking horns, bells of rickshaws, the chatter and laughter of people, the cook-a-doodle-doo around the corner, and the colours in the bazaar all add to its charm. It is a world of mysteries and secrets to us who come from a frantically over-organised life where every minute of our day is scheduled and every train, which is a minute late, causes grim remarks. And surprisingly enough: most things you plan to do in Dhaka work out -- usually just a little later than you had planned.

Yes -- Dhaka in many ways is a horrible place to live. But nevertheless there are enough reasons to visit this unique metropolis. So hurry up and book a flight to Dhaka as long as the city is still the second least liveable city on earth. Because be assured: times change. Don't be late!



Chinese firm keen on Jamuna tunnel

BSS, Dhaka

Jigiang Construction Investment Group Company Limited, a Chinese state-run group of companies, showed its interest in constructing a tunnel under the river Jamuna in Bangladesh, when a delegation of the firm called on Minister for Road Transport and Bridges Obaidul Quader in Hong Kong Friday.

The minister suggested the company representatives to send their proposal formally to Bangladesh government.

BNP claims foreign donors

FROM PAGE 3

terminated at the end of July 2015," said a UN media note issued recently. The EU, the United Kingdom, and the US had been funding it since April 2012.

Ripon, also BNP's international affairs secretary, said the donors got disappointed witnessing irregularities and manipulation in the three city corporation polls held on April 28.

"The UNDP and the EU had requested the EC to look into the incidents, but neither the government nor the commission carried out any investigation."

He came down hard on the EC saying it has turned into a shameless puppet organisation of the government.

Mentioning that the EC has lost all credibility to hold any free and fair election, the BNP leaders said, "We have long been calling for reconstituting the commission. We now urge the chief election commissioner and other commissioners to quit voluntarily paving the path for forming a fair, credible and accountable commission."

He also demanded that the government reconstitute the EC in consultation with all the registered parties and civil society members.

Ripon strongly condemned Health Minister Mohammad Nasim's remark that BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's politics was now limited to Ladies Club.

"It is a regrettable matter that our constitutional rights have gradually been squeezed. Our democratic space has been shrunk to such a place that an influential minister is now saying that Khaleda Zia's politics is limited to Ladies Club. You have kept BNP indoors barring the door leading to the field. Is it your credit or fascist and autocratic attitude?"

He also protested the attack on an Iftar party of BNP leader Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan in Narsingdi allegedly by ruling party cadres and demanded that the government bring the perpetrators to book.

Shopping picks up in port city

FROM PAGE 3

Iftakher, Sanmar Ocean City Businessmen Association President.

Popular Indian clothes are selling between Tk 5,000 and Tk 30,000. Both Indian and local saris are also in great demand, said Abdul Mannan, Terribazar Businessmen Association general secretary.

Different brands of local saris like Silk, Katan, Tangail and Indian Kanjilal are in great demand in local markets.

Bangalore Silk Katan, Anarkoli and Lehenga, Pakhi dresses, and Kiron Mala dresses are being sold at higher prices ranging from Tk 5,000

to Tk 50,000.

Shamsun Nahar, a buyer at Sanmar Ocean City in GEC area, said the price is very high this season. "I bought a dress for Tk 8,300 which should not be this much," she added.

Buyers, mostly middle-income people, were found to be window shopping. Roadside shops and small shops were found more crowded than big shopping malls.

Meanwhile, a large number of makeshift shops have been set up on city pavements marking Eid. Prices of different materials, particularly cotton, tissue, silk, and synthetic, have registered a sharp

rise although the shops are almost full of various garment products.

Supply of goods, including foreign brands, in the market is abundant. Varieties of Indian clothes are also flooded at shopping centres, especially in Mimi Super Market, Terribazar and Reazuddin Bazar, Amin Center, Ocean City, Moti Tower and Chittagong Shopping Complex.

Traffic police were seen struggling to tackle the situation at those points. It has become difficult for buyers and locals to reach their destinations on time due to heavy traffic congestion, alleged people.

Ctg-Najirhat DEMU starts operating

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Railways Minister Mujibul Hoque yesterday inaugurated a Diesel Electric Multiple Unit (DEMU) train service on the Chittagong-Najirhat route at Chittagong Railway Station.

The train, having three coaches with seating capacity for 300 passengers, will leave the station at 10:30am and return at 1:00pm, railway sources said.

Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways ABM Fazle Karim Chowdhury, ISD leader Moinuddin Khan Badal, Additional Secretary to Railways Ministry Kamal Krishna Bhattacharya and Railways Director General Amzad Hossain were present among others.



Dumping of garbage continues unabated on the banks of the Rampura-Banasree canal in the capital, slowly pushing it to the brink of extinction. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

Police insignia up

FROM PAGE 3

star missing but all other features will remain same to that of the new IGP collar patch.

The eight ranks where changes were proposed are naik, havildar major, assistant sub-inspector, sub-inspector, inspector, assistant superintendent of police (ASP), additional IGP of grade-1, and the IGP.

Among others, the ranks of superintendent of police (SP) and deputy IGP will see no change.

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