

Dhaka vs Dhaka: The food derby

MH HAIDER

We have split Dhaka into two. The old has its unique charm reflecting the rich history and traditions of our city. And there is the New Dhaka, the more "modern" extension of our city. From the old to the new, it is one city all right but in terms of culture and social norms and food, the two are often poles apart.

And this difference can easily be spotted during iftar and sehri. Granted, our love for chola, begooni, piyaju, haleem and the likes do not show much of a difference between the Old and the New, but dig deeper and certain interesting differences are revealed.

Perhaps it was showcased the best when two close friends, Mishael Aziz Ahmad and Abed Ali Khan, decided to treat each other with the old and the new. They met in university and have been friends since. Mishael, who now works for Care Bangladesh, resides in Bangla Motor, while Abed, the owner and Managing Director of Old Dhaka International School, hails from Kayettuly, in the heart of the old part of the city.

Last week, Abed had given a tour to his friend, highlighting the iftar scene at Old Dhaka. And then, Mishael did the same for him, presenting the culinary scene that is prevalent in New Dhaka.

THE BEAUTIFUL CHAOS

Mishael arrived at Nazira Bazar -- a culinary hub in Old Dhaka -- at about 5:30pm. By then, the sky was hinting that the day was nearing its end. But one need not look above to realise that: buying and selling of iftar was in full swing.

Abed guided Mishael through the narrow and confusing alleys. The entire locality was a whirlwind of chaos. Numerous rickshaws manoeuvred through pedestrians and other vehicles and street-side sellers were advertising their myriad iftar items by shouting at the top of their lungs. And the air was thick with the smell of a wide array of foods: kebabs, biryanis, and mangoes and pineapples.

Abed led Mishael to Bismillah Kebab Ghor, one of his favourite places. He showed around the assortment of kebabs that were being fried.

"It's not that you don't have kebabs in

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Traditional iftar items on sale at a makeshift shop on Kazi Alauddin Road in old Dhaka, which is famous for the sale of iftar delicacies throughout the month of Ramadan. The photos were taken on Tuesday.

PHOTO: ZAHED KHAN



Little progress in nutrition status

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An International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)-led team of experts prepares the report. The World Health Organisation (WHO) is a partner in the GNR publication.

Though the rate of stunting -- low height for age -- is still high at 36.1 percent in Bangladesh, it is now dropping faster than in the past. The rate was 41 percent in 2011 and 51 percent in 2004. Its current stunting rate, although higher than some of its South Asian neighbours, stands better than that of Nepal (37.4%), India (38.7%), Afghanistan (40.9%) and Pakistan (45%).

The rate is 14.7 percent in Sri Lanka, 20.3 percent in the Maldives and 33.6 percent in Bhutan.

Bangladesh is marked "on course" in this particular nutrition indicator as it has come a long way over the last one decade.

The GNR referred to a research carried out in Bangladesh by the IFPRI and the World Food Programme (WFP) showing how stunting could be reduced far more quickly had nutrition education been tagged with social safety net programmes (SSNPs).

This nutrition education is technically called behaviour change communication (BCC).

Reached over the phone yesterday, IFPRI Chief of Party in Bangladesh Dr Akhter Ahmed said their study in 500 villages during 2012-14 showed that malnutrition and childhood stunting can be brought down three times faster by incorporating nutrition BCC in different SSNPs.

An IFPRI study has found that mere transfer of food or cash under the SSNPs would not make much difference in terms of improving people's nutrition level unless these programmes were tagged with nutrition BCC.

This means people should be advised as to what food items should be on their menu and how the food should be consumed.

While visiting Dhaka a few months ago, GNR lead author Lawrence Haddad told The Daily Star that stunting rate was coming down fast in Bangladesh but the pace could be even faster provided the country invested more for nutrition.

"If Ghana can reduce stunting to 19 percent, Bangladesh can do it as well. President Lula [da Silva] left a legacy in the fight against stunting in Brazil. Bangladesh can fight malnutrition too," noted Haddad, also a Senior Research Fellow at the IFPRI.

In Bangladesh, wasting remains high at 14.3 percent, far above the global target of five percent.

According to this year's report, Bangladesh remains at the bottom end (117th) of a 130-country ranking. Except for India (15.1%) and Sri Lanka (21.4%), five of its neighbours -- Bhutan (5.9%), Afghanistan (9.5%), the Maldives (10.2%), Pakistan (10.5%) and Nepal (11.3%) -- are faring well.

The report reveals 43.5 percent Bangladeshi women in their reproductive age are anemic. In terms of anemia, Bangladesh ranked 158th among 185 countries and 5th among the eight South Asian countries. Women in Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Nepal and the Maldives are less anemic than their Bangladeshi counterparts. Scenarios in India, Bhutan and Pakistan are worse.

In the indicator of exclusive breast feed (EBB), the report says Bangladesh is slipping back from the progress it made. Its EEB rate is a little over 55 percent now which was 60 percent a few years back. A GNR author attributed it to the spread of urbanisation, the increase in women's participation in formal workforce, and lack of facilities at workplace for lactating mothers.

Asked, Prof Nazma Shaheen who teaches nutrition and food science at Dhaka University contested the EBB rate, however. She said it showed lesser percentage now because of some adjustments made in the indicator's definition and criteria in recent years.

The Daily Star could not verify this with the GNR authors.

The 2016 GNR report estimates that malnutrition causes significant economic losses -- 11 percent of the GDP per year in Africa and Asia.

Similarly, in the US, for every obese person in a household, that household's healthcare bill increases by an equivalent of 8 percent of the annual income.

However, one of the key messages of the report is that this dire situation masks significant opportunities. The economic returns on investments preventing malnutrition are extremely high -- \$16 for every \$1 invested. The report illustrates numerous examples of countries, such as Brazil, Ghana, Peru and Vietnam, which have seized these opportunities and made rapid progress in tackling malnutrition.

Globally, the world is off-track to meet most nutrition targets by 2030, but the rate of progress varies significantly by country and indicator. Most countries and regions are on course to achieve targets on child stunting (except for Africa), wasting, and overweight.

Conversely, most countries are off course on targets on obesity, diabetes, and anemia in women. Indeed, obesity and overweight rates, currently at 1.9 billion people, are rising in almost every country and are now approaching the same scale of other forms of malnutrition.

At least 12 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals are directly related to nutrition and nutrition-related indicators. This reflects nutrition's central role in achieving sustainable development, as well as its interrelationship with the majority of development sectors.

The report highlights that improvements in nutrition are necessary for achieving progress on global health, education, poverty, female empowerment and inequality.

Working out

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where riders can come in for a shower and a smoothie before work.

The idea for these Ride2Rebel fitness buses was developed by 1Rebel co-founders, James Balfour and Giles Dean. "It is an absolute no brainer for us that we can create more efficiency in people's routines by transforming their commute," Balfour said. "For those who want the components of a class, but perhaps don't have the time to commit during the day, this provides a great solution for them to maximise time they would otherwise be spending just travelling to work."

Ride2Rebel basically leave workaholics who claim to be too busy to work out with no more excuses, and 1Rebel, one of London's most popular fitness companies, confirms that interest in their novel idea is through the roof. "This morning interest peaked so much that the registration website crashed and had to be moved to a separate server," Balfour told CNBC, last month.

According to the Ride2Rebel website, there are currently 8121 people in line for tickets, and the service hasn't even launched yet. As for when the fitness buses will actually launch, it all depends on whether the plans get signed off by the government, but 1Rebel claims Ride2Rebel will hit the city streets later this year. Apparently, safety concerns are the biggest obstacle in the way of this project becoming a reality. The bikes mounted in the buses do not currently include seatbelts, and Balfour made no mention of helmets, CNBC reports. "We are working with bus companies and the government to establish all health and safety conditions," the co-founder said. "As this is such an innovative idea there are no established norms but due to the high levels of interest this is something that all our partners are focused on."

If, and when Ride2Rebel launches, passengers can expect to pay £12 to £15 for a 45-minute ride.

Transfer must within a year

Govt won't keep same officials, law enforcers in smuggling-prone areas for long

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

Law enforcement and government officials will not be allowed to be posted in the smuggling-prone border areas for more than a year.

However, officials with good reputation for anti-smuggling efforts would stay put, the National Anti-Smuggling Committee decided yesterday.

The decisions were made at a meeting of the committee, with Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan in the chair at his ministry, said meeting sources.

The committee reached the decisions following intelligence reports that many law enforcers got involved in smuggling due to their long stay in particular areas.

Some officials of Border Guard Bangladesh and police made a huge amount of money after their posting to border areas, according to the reports.

Presently, an official get a posting for three years.

Talking to The Daily Star after the meeting, the home minister said: "We've decided not to allow any government official to stay in an area for more than a year."

The home ministry will prepare a list of law enforcement and government officials, elected public representatives and the people involved in smuggling in border areas, he added.

"Although drawing up lists of smugglers and their patrons is a routine work, we'll now prepare the list of smugglers and their associates and

The eye-catching

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could not take photos as the light was insufficient and the trees were quite tall. Around two years ago, I saw a few bunches on the hundred-year-old rain trees. You will find them in the Psyche part of the Balha Garden in Wari and National Botanical Garden in Mirpur.

Nowadays people cultivate orchids as a hobby. Commercial farming has started in Gazipur and Bhaluka of Mymensingh. These orchids are getting rare with our natural forests receding, as they grow on old trees. The famous *Neel Vanda* of Khasi hills of the Sylhet region is now very rare. The orchids in our country are known as *Rashma* in general.

The orchid in question is more known as foxtail orchid (*Rhynchostylis retusa*). A dangling tuft of flowers imitating a foxtail is perhaps the reason behind its naming so. The round petal shaft is a bit puffy like a fox tail. This is our best looking orchid. It looks like *Vanda* but much bigger in size. The leaves are hollow and long. The hanging deep green leaves immensely add to the beauty of the flowers. More than a hundred fragrant white-violet flowers hang from the hollow of the leaves. This crowd of such bright flower is what catches our attention the most. These are basically orchids of dependent species. We have land orchids too. Foxtail orchids are found in large scale in Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and India. The largest population is in Odisha and Arunachal. A few of them have survived in the hills of Chittagong and Sylhet.

'Attacker' of Tutul held Pay fine until relocation

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On the same day, another publisher Faisal Arefin Dipan of Jagriti Prokashani was stabbed to death inside his office in Aziz Super market in Shahbagh.

Monirul said Shihab was brought to Dhaka from Chittagong two months before the attack and motivated and trained in a rented house in Mohakhali along with four others.

All the five attackers carried machetes while three of them had firearms too. Their senior leader, Shariful alias Sharif, who coordinated the attack, was outside the Shuddhoswar publishing house at that moment, Monirul added.

The five were apparently fresh recruits of the militant outfit. The attack was for some of them a first mission. Shihab returned to Chittagong after the mission, Monirul said.

He told police the names and addresses of some of his accomplices during interrogation, and police were trying to arrest them.

Replying to a query, Monirul said Shihab was unaware of the simultaneous attack on publisher Dipan, but following their failure to kill Tutul, Sharif rebuked them, citing another group's success in killing Dipan.

According to police, another five ABT men went to the office of Jagriti Prokashani at the same time and stabbed Dipan to death. The attack was

coordinated by Selim.

Both Sharif and Selim, the third tier leaders of ABT after operational commander and spiritual leaders, were on police's list of wanted six ABT men. They trained the 10 ABT men of the two groups.

Investigators believe that the synchronised attacks on them came as both were publishers of slain secularist writer-blogger Avijit Roy, who was hacked to death on February 26 last year on Dhaka University campus.

Responding to another query, Monirul said Jasimuddin Rahmani, now in jail, is the spiritual leader of ABT, but there are some other leaders of the banned outfit.

The media and IT wing of the ABT, which claimed the responsibility for many secret killings in the country, basically collect information on their possible targets and submit reports to their leaders.

The leaders then raise the issue before their "Sharia or Mufti Board" and discuss the next course of action. If the board agrees on any killing, the leaders order their subordinates to carry out the murder by their sleeper cell members, he added.

Shihab passed the HSC examination from a Chittagong college and joined a private organisation. He was recruited in ABT in early 2015, according to police.

A Dhaka court yesterday placed Shihab on a five-day remand.

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deadlines for shifting their factories to Savar. None of them have completed construction of factory buildings there though the last deadline set by the government for relocation expired on March 31 this year.

Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC), the government agency responsible for implementing the tannery estate project, approved the lay-out plan of 152 industrial units in Savar. Of those, 148 units are now under construction, according to BSCIC officials.

Shaheen told BBC Bangla service that they would need time till December this year to shift all the tanneries to Savar.

It is not possible to relocate the tanneries right away, as a lot of work is still to be done for this, added the tanners association leader.

The tanneries in Hazaribagh area release thousands of litres of untreated

and toxic waste to the Buriganga River every day, posing a serious risk to humans and the aquatic life.

Taking into account the health and environmental hazards caused by the tanneries, the government in 2003 took up a project to relocate those to Savar.

The project was first scheduled to be completed by December 2005. But the deadline was extended more than a dozen times at the request of the tanners.

Yesterday, the HC bench of Justice Syed Muhammad Dastagir Husain and Justice AKM Shahidul Huq directed the industries secretary to submit to it by July 17 a report on the implementation of the HC directives.

Talking to The Daily Star, Manzill Murshid, counsel for the HRPB, said he would move a petition before the HC, seeking its order for sending the tanners to jail if they don't pay the compensation every day.

'Criminal' killed in 'shootout' with Rab

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rescued and took him to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he was pronounced dead, Mohiuddin said.

The law enforcers recovered a pistol and three bullets from the scene, he said adding that two Rab men were

also hurt in the incident.

With Aidul, at least 19 people, including five alleged militants, have been killed in such "shootouts" or "gunfights" since a "crackdown" against criminals began following the murder of the wife of a top police official in Chittagong on

June 5, according to The Daily Star reports.

Meanwhile, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Chairman Mizanur Rahman yesterday said they are always against any incident like "crossfire" or other forms of extra-judicial killings.

Whenever there is any allegation of such incidents, the NHRC does not wait for anyone and sends letter to the home ministry, seeking inquiries into them, he told reporters while visiting the Dhaka Central Jail.

Sometimes the ministry replies, sometimes it does not, he added.

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