

TRAVELOGUE

“Is there any name for that feeling when hours of research tell you that you are going to witness something beautiful and you feel excited about it, but when you have it in front of you, you sense a weird ache in your stomach?” I asked my cousin as I stepped inside the Lower Antelope canyon.

“Excruciatingly beautiful!- that describes something so beautiful that it hurts. I don't know what that feeling is called though,” she replied after a short pause.

There we were. After days of planning and speculation, finally we were here, inside the Antelope Canyon.

We were sitting on a rock inside the canyon, smitten by a voiceless bewilderment, talking and not talking.

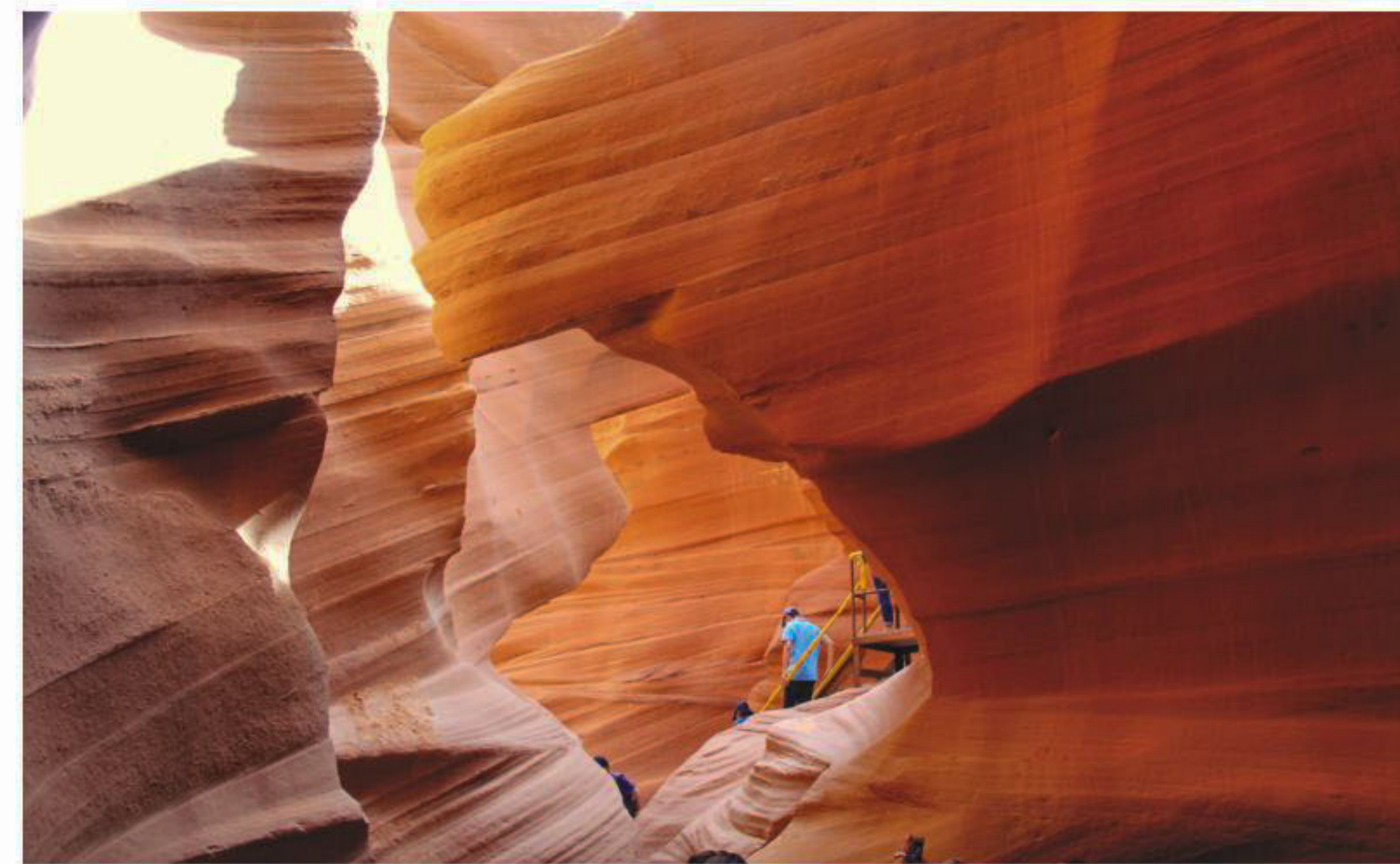
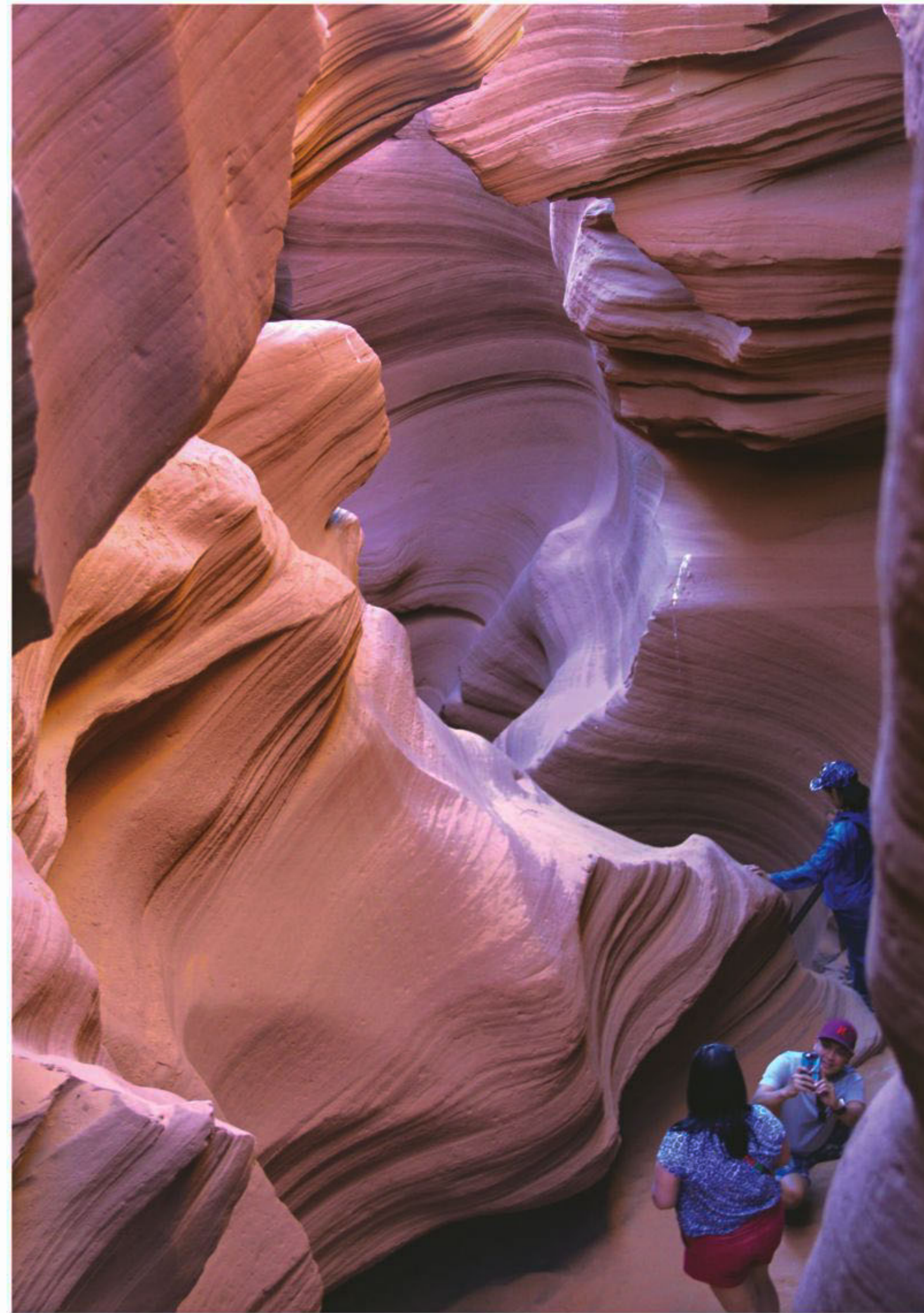
There are actually two slot canyons, lower and upper, that make up Antelope Canyon. We were in the lower antelope canyon which was formed mostly by erosion of Navajo Sandstone due to flash flooding and water rushing through the rocks.

wallpaper-like shot. I would rather sit on a rock and enjoy the moment.

Getting down all the way there was quite an adventure. It was a hot day, and by hot I mean blistering – the temperature was over 100 degrees. It requires a fair amount of footwork, as you need to walk down the canyon on steep stairs and ladders, navigating through extremely cramped corridors. You need to safeguard your head as there is a chance of hitting the protruding fins of the walls (as I obviously did). For the sheer drops, you need to trust your instinct and climb them with agility. While climbing the many stairs - steep and spiral - you might constantly fear falling off (as I obviously did).

But I am ready to go through many more ordeals, if I am required to do so, to see the sculpted, orange, thin layered walls and to feel the dusty red sandstone inside my converse.

Wait, was it solid orange coloured? Or orange mixed with blue or peach? Or



(MY) MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR

TEXT AND PHOTOS: FAYEKA ZABEEN SIDDIQUA

Of all the slot canyons located in the Southwest, Antelope Canyon is mostly visited. We chose the lower part, more adventurous and less crowded. You won't find many tourists lounging there. “But you have the ideal condition for taking a tour- the right combination of depth, width, length, colour and light,” our tour guide says.

Lower Antelope Canyon is a photographer's paradise. In fact, there are tours specifically for those with tripods and fancy cameras, for people who love playing with angles and colours. We took the walking tour, where you have a tour guide who will not only help you with your trail but also assist you in figuring out the best angles and spots where you can take the best shots. I tried, took some pictures, looked at the display of my camera and discovered what a failure of a photographer I was. I decided not to get worked up over getting the perfect,



something between pastel pinks and red? Or a purplish red?

I can't decide and that is where the beauty of the Antelope lies - the way the light keeps dancing on the fiery walls. At some point, it seems like an artist's palette - all the colours are squeezed out and mixed. They appear different each time you see them. Each season. Each time of the day. Each hour.

The tour inside the canyon took a little over an hour. Not too crowded. Not too hurried.

We got back to our car and hit the road again as the sight of yellow lines started fading behind me in the rear view mirror.

Visiting Antelope Canyon was the agenda of the first day of our trip, and the next day we were about to visit the Grand Canyon.

The landscape in Arizona keeps changing at every turn. It is so quick that before you are able to inhale the beauty of the vast deserts as you drive by them, you come across some bizarrely sculpted rocks, which might turn into a range of

mountains the very next moment. You feel baffled, wondering which direction to look at. On our way back to Flagstaff from Page, we indulged in a lot of 'oohs' and 'aahs' over the vastness and changing colours of the sky.

Leave aside Antelope Canyon or the grandeur of the Grand Canyon, the lone cacti and the deserts, the Arizona sky was magical and versatile and in its full element.

At one point, it was clear with the perfect blue, and layers upon layers of white clouds. I could not believe my eyes when suddenly we saw batches of dark clouds heading our way; a storm was approaching. Then there were dazzling thunderbolts; we witnessed a lightning strike right before our eyes, at a considerably close location, and couldn't help but let out a collective gasp of surprise and fear. Then a few hours later, there was a rainbow. Correction: rainbows. We saw two of them.

Tell me, why shouldn't I still be marvelling at the amazing Arizona sky? The two-day road trip was my version of a magical mystery tour. Because those lyrics of The Beatles' song were rumbling in my head all the while:

“...the magical mystery tour is waiting to take you away
Waiting to take you away” ■

HERITAGE

There was a time when this particular place was more than just an educational institution. This haven once (trying its best even today) provided the best environment to the young minds to learn, think, mingle and to live. It is that academy, where numerous legends are made every day, since inception, to lead the country. With a glorious history of 175 years; Dhaka College is one of the oldest educational institutions in Indian Subcontinent.

History says that Dhaka College first started its journey on 15 July, 1835, as an English Seminary School, under the initiative of the General Committee of Public Instruction. The committee submitted a report to Lord William Bentinck, the then Governor-General of India, asking to be established as many as educational institute to teach English literature and science in the major populated cities of Bengal Presidency (the largest colonial subdivision of British India at that time). It is said that since then through the various processes, the school was established by Dr. James Taylor, the then Civil Surgeon and Mr. Grant; the



DHAKA COLLEGE A WITNESS TO HISTORY

NILIMA JAHAN

PHOTOS: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

District Magistrate of Dhaka. Later in 1841, the school developed its college (classes 11 and 12) section that was known as 'Dhaka Central College', then as 'Dhaka College' and the school section was named 'Dhaka Collegiate School'.

With the tagline 'Know Thyself', now located in Mirpur road, adjacent to the New Market, Dhaka College went through a lot of location changes from the beginning. “Dhaka College was respectively situated at the Curzon Hall, University of Dhaka, Old High Court Building, Islamic Intermediate College (presently, Kabi Nazrul Government College) and later in an old building of Khan Bahadur Abdul Hai in Siddique Bazar, Fulbaria”, says Professor Moazzem Hossain Molla, the current Principal of Dhaka College. Finally, in 1955, Dhaka College was re-established with its present permanent campus on 18 acres of land.

At present, along with the intermediate sections, the college has 19 distinct departments for undergraduate and post graduate programmes, under the National University. Approximately, more than 20,000 students are pursuing their education here. Also, there are eight dormitories for the students—South Hall, North Hall, International Hall, West Hall, Elias Hall, Shaheed Farhad Hossain Hall, Southern Hall and Sheikh Kamal Hall. The garden in front of the main academic building and the pond adjacent to the

large playground create a calming environment for the students.

Dhaka College has always been quite vocal when it comes to the annual results and other educational activities. There are many legends who were the alumni of this institution, for example, Zillur Rahman, the 19th President of Bangladesh, A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury, the 13th President of Bangladesh, Fazle Hasan Abed, Founder and Chairman of BRAC, Humayun Ahmed, writer and film maker, Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury Bir Bikram, the Energy Adviser to the Prime Minister, Abdul Matin Chowdhury, the 14th Vice-chancellor of University of Dhaka, AAMS Arefin Siddique, the current and the 27th Vice-chancellor of University of Dhaka and many more.

But, it is quite dissatisfactory that comparing to the previous glory, heritage aspects and reputation, it is believed that the prior image of Dhaka College has almost lost its dignity.

“The various problems we are suffering from have no end”, says 25-year-old Rakibul Hasan (not his real name), a final year student of the college, Department of Islamic History and Culture. “Destructive student politics, interference in admission process and conflicts, and students' absence in classroom are now the main reasons that are tarnishing our glory”, he states. Contrary to his statement, the principal said that now they follow the online admission system of the National University and there is no chance of any lobbying. “Also, on the issue of destructive student politics, I don't think we should blame the whole institution for certain people”, states Professor Molla.



Besides the irregularities, the campus needs a reformation system, as many buildings and dormitories are not in good condition. The 'Shaheed Minar' inside the campus needs to be renovated. Some of the students claimed that the temporary room used for the medical treatment of the students has been closed for a long time. But the principal denies this and according to him, the treatment facility is open twice a week (Saturday and Sunday). “At the dormitories, at least 10-12 students are packed into most of the rooms, where it is said by the campus authority that only six students are

allowed to live in one room”, says Asif Rahman (not his real name), a 3rd year student, Department of History of the college. “Apart from these, engineers have already recommended the Elias Hall to be abandoned immediately, but we are living there, as living outside the halls is quite expensive now-a-days”, he adds.

However, despite all the problems, the students and the authority are hoping to bring back the prior environment of Dhaka College and thinking that if necessary steps are taken to develop the entire system, it is not very tough to regain the lost reputation. ■