



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



SATIRE

MAN VERSUS MIRPUR

FAISAL BIN IQBAL & SHOAIB AHMED SAYAM

For years, we have been getting reports from general people that a certain ominous area in our own capital has been harrowing the lives of its inhabitants, and no, it's not Uttara. So finally, we decided to risk our lives like the brave and sexy reporters that we are and go into the battlefield to bring you the truth. The following is an account of our harrowing journey.

THE JOURNEY TO GET TO MIRPUR

We woke up early in the morning to prepare ourselves, since we had an idea of how mentally taxing this would be. But having no idea of how the locals would perceive us to be, we tried to wear the most innocuous clothes we could find. There are numerous transport options to get to Mirpur, and almost every area has a bus service that leads there. It's as if the place constantly allures you to step inside it. Instead of practically dying by going alone, we all met in Farmgate and began our journey together.

The obstacles started right from the get go. We decided to take a CNG auto-rickshaw but multitudes of them either outright rejected to go or asked for an exorbitant amount. What were they scared of? Why were they reluctant? We had a bad feeling in our stomachs but we had to do this for the people. For you. Fortunately, one of the drivers agreed to take us into the lion's den.

It's well known that going to Mirpur is never a matter of minutes, but we definitely didn't think it would be this long. You have to forgo any semblance of time if you plan on venturing there. An hour will feel like a whole day and the road

will never seem to end until you just suddenly arrive. There has to be a wormhole or a warp-zone along the way. When we finally did arrive, we weren't prepared for it at all.

THE ARRIVAL

If you experienced the sandstorms in Moghbazar while the flyover was being constructed, you'll get flashbacks from those days, but worse. Right after we got off at our designated point, we were welcomed by a cloud of dust. Beyond that cloud was a desert-like path in the shape of a giant wiggling serpent. That path was not for us as the

striking signs told us to keep away. We surely didn't want to take any chances. Huge machineries towered over us. They were constructing the metro rail. Many were wearing helmets as if misfortune could befall at any moment. It seemed like people were trying their best to not make it into a dystopia, but humans can only do so much. With so many realisations, we began our operation.

THE EXPEDITION: PHASE 1

Phase 1 of our operation began at Mirpur 10. Mind you, despite being called "Mirpur 10", the

place is anything but the number it has to its name, with the highest being a mere 4.5. Immediately after our arrival, we got the feeling that we weren't welcome. People began gawking at us with wonder as they couldn't fathom the fact why non-locals like us would even dare to step foot into their near-post-apocalyptic locality. Ignoring the curious glares of the people, we made our way on top of a foot-over bridge to get a better view of the town.

Once on top, we were amazed to see thousands of people pacing through the busy streets trying to reach their destination, but at what cost? Many were too reluctant to use the foot-over bridge while crossing the roads. They would rather risk it all and save them a few seconds instead of taking the safe way across the road. Scouts from nearby schools were at the scene to provide assistance to the authorities in charge of traffic control. Despite their earnest requests, people were still being careless and oblivious to the dangers that awaited them on the heartless streets of Mirpur.

"Most of them are cooperative, except the 'busy' ones," said one of the Scouts deployed in the area. "We usually don't face any problem during our time on the streets, but occasionally, there will be that one person with the identity crisis who asks everyone around, 'Chino amake?' These people think that the only laws applicable to them are that of physics."

We then continued our operation by heading towards Mirpur 11. The metro rail construction continued for almost the entire length of our route. We were occasionally distracted by the cautionary sign-boards that accompanied the

construction site. The signs told us to wear helmets, avoid trespassing, and warned us about the dangers we could be in while we were near the construction site. Our instincts, however, got us believing that those warnings were not just for the construction area. Mirpur 11 was also somewhat similar to its previous sector. Same conditions, same types of people desperately trying to get themselves off Mirpur soil.

But we needed more info. So, we took a deep dusty breath and began phase 2 of our expedition. **THE EXPEDITION: PHASE 2** Mirpur Zoo was only a five-minute bus ride from Mirpur 1 but it took us almost half an hour to reach.

"Raised in captivity and kept there for the amusement of others. Animals competing against one another for the food that was being served and for the general purpose of their minds. It was as if they were never meant to be free from the cages of their thoughts nor from the shackles of reality." – This very thought was probably going on inside their minds as they glared at the humans going past their cages. What an irony! They were the ones who were inside cages yet we were the ones who felt imprisoned.

After getting out of the zoo of dejected animals, we roamed around in search of opinions from the locals. A man was vigorously swirling glasses of tea as if Mirpur would devour him if he stopped his hand motions. We approached him and started talking about how he felt living there.

"How long have you been living here?"
"For fifteen years I've been rotating my hand like a motor for these worthless tea addicts."

"Wow, so a lot must have changed since you first came here."

"Nothing. Absolutely nothing has changed. The people are the same, my life has remained static, and I'm still making bad tea."

Either the man had completely deluded himself into denial, or what he said was absolutely true, that this place is a booby trap, a puddle of quicksand. We had to act fast or else we might've gotten sucked into this limbo too.

IN SEARCH OF AN ANOMALY

With everything else under our belt, we had one last mission to conduct. Mirpur 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ or "Mirpur Shaarey Egaro" is an area shrouded in mysteries. Why is it called 11 $\frac{1}{2}$? What does the $\frac{1}{2}$ add? Did it magically appear one day between 11 and 12 and people had to name it? These questions along with a lot more needed to be answered. We opened up our specialised GPS-enabled devices to locate this elusive place.

Funnily enough, there was a café called "Café 11 $\frac{1}{2}$," at 11 $\frac{1}{2}$. This was the trace that should have led us to our goal. But it didn't. We scoured the vicinity in search of it, went into random shady buildings, and kept our eyes peeled for a sign that would read the name. It was nowhere and we were stranded. We kept lugging our demoralised bodies on the streets, seeing signs of supermarkets and other restaurants. Late capitalism is the only thing that doesn't fear Mirpur. And with that, we just gave up, went into a prominent store that sells chicken balls, and relaxed for the first time since our arrival.

Deciding on ending our journey, we paid the

bill and stood up. In jest, we asked the cashier if he knew of any Café 11 $\frac{1}{2}$.

"This is Café 11 $\frac{1}{2}$."

"No, it's not."

"It is."

"What?"

The place we were sitting in was the enigma we were searching for. Mirpur truly is devoid of any real boundaries, defying normal law and order. A café that sells chicken balls instead of coffee can only happen in this land. We quickly made a run for the bus; we had to escape this bizarre world.

As the sun was about to set on a tiring and gruesome day, we saw people returning to Mirpur on buses, cars, and all other available forms of transportation. They were in a rush to come back, just like they were at the time of leaving Mirpur. This event reminded us of the song "Hotel California" by the Eagles – "You can check-out any time you like, but you can never leave."

Even though we vowed to never come back, how many can really keep that vow? Mirpur will always be there, to entice you with a high-paying job or affordable rent, but should we give in?

The mystery remains unsolved, and so does Mirpur.

Faisal wants to be the very best, like no one ever was. To survive university is his real test, to graduate is his cause. Send him memes and motivation at abir.afc@gmail.com

Shoaib Ahmed Sayam tortures himself by watching fake sports and Vietnamese cartoons. Send help at: fb.com/oribabamama



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA