



Our friends, as usual were quick to respond with sensationalised warnings about accidents on the highways, narrow and curvy roads, and so much more.

# FAR FROM THE MADDENING CROWD



Once we set out on the trip, we realised it's not as terrifying as people make it to be. Instead it's quite refreshing, with almost no crowding and of course, much less traffic. After gorging ourselves on some *bhaat, daal* and *maach-bhaji* at a quaint highway restaurant, we went running through the open field's right next to it, just like little kids.

Both our hearts and eyes were hungry for the beautiful mustard yellow and dewy green landscape that lay ahead. My mind, still stuck to pathetic city lifestyle and technology, forced me to get my phone out in an effort to capture the image of the luxuriant countryside. Eventually, I learned that the splendour I was looking at was impossible to capture with anything, except for the mind!

That's when another realisation set in. Why can't we all go back to nature instead of being stuck in the confines of concrete, rubble, and dust? The idea hit me real hard and so my quest began on finding people who materialised on the thought.

Amirul Rajiv, an art curator and photographer by profession, almost ran away from the capital for a little bit of creative freedom, inspiration and encouragement. "I grew up in the city, my friends and family are mostly living in the city where I grew up. But I still felt the need to escape. My personal belief is that city tends to restrict your mind and put it inside a box. In my line of work, I needed to be inspired and motivated. So greens were the only muse I could think of," he said.

Living a solitary life with no responsibility towards immediate family and most importantly children, this was perhaps easier for Rajiv, was my first thought, but he soon told me otherwise.

"Now I get to regularly talk with my sisters, and that too in a calm state of mind, sometimes even giving them advice on personal relationships and other serious matters. They are surprised at how easily I can give solutions. I believe it's only because I live far away from the maddening crowd and this gives me ample amount of time to think and



act attentively."

"As for children, I might not have one myself, but there are plenty of others who have moved out of the city with their families and doing quite fine. The barrier is absolutely psychological. There are excellent government schools in the peripheries of the country. Did our parents and our forefathers not study in these schools once upon a time? They grew up to be doctors, engineers, artists, and so much more. Why do our children need to only study at a particular school in the capital? Is it not mostly because we want to stay 'one and the same' in the rat race?" said the artistic individual and a passionate traveller.

Rajiv also bares few worthy facts like the improvement in transport quality and the roads and highways of Bangladesh, making it easier for people to travel as much as they want.

"In my line of work I have to occasionally go out of the country and it's absolutely not a hassle. I can go to the nearest airport and take direct international flights. I do not have

to go to the capital for a flight. Plus, some people think they have to be hermits to live far away from the city, it is actually quite the opposite. My friends are always visiting me — either to escape from their own fatigue of the city or just to enjoy some quality time amongst sociable silence," explained Rajiv.

Certainly, the expert photographer and nature enthusiast has inspired me to be more open minded about owning a place outside Dhaka. But I needed to have more evidence to support my interest and that's where Ishrat Jahan and Kanak Aditya's little love story about city escape piqued my interest.

"I grew up in old Dhaka. The only nature I enjoyed was a veranda at my father's house and the big blue sky. I was mesmerised with this little bit of scenery and dreamt repeatedly of a house of my own with a little tree next to it," revealed Ishrat.

She continued to open up her life story to help us a bit more on this route. "After meeting Kanak, having children and beginning Deshal, everything was going on at its usual

pace. But then suddenly, one day, both of us being great supporters of green, we decided to move out of the city; maybe not far but still away from the usual chaos."

"Today, our little abode has a tiny pond in it where my children bathe themselves, they run around in the massive playgrounds and even go to school in the city. Interestingly the ride is quick, thanks to the highways. I love it that my children are getting the best of both worlds. We have even shifted Deshal and its factory close to our home, recruiting people from the vicinity. This increased the employees' chance to work closer to home and removed their need to go to the city, which would block the roads further and creating an additional pressure," said the artsy designer.

These were few of the great minds who decided to shift in time. They certainly encouraged me to make a similar move. And maybe, just maybe, the lovely greenery is not so far away as we think it to be. I can already imagine a pastoral setting with a verdant garden in the courtyard where I am planting the seeds for the next batch of tomatoes while planning a menu with roasted cabbages, spicy butter and chicken korma spread out elegantly over a fine-looking trestle table.

Friends can pop in on Thursday nights as we celebrate over a pint of homemade mocktails. Saturdays and Sundays might call for long visits to the farmer's market selecting fresh produce and breathing in unsullied air.

On the other days, I am imagining enjoying companionable silence- reading or painting. I hope to materialise this someday, our very own solace, a get-away place where we can simply switch off for a few days.

"Switch off" are the words!

**By Mehrin Mubdi Chowdhury**

**Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed, Amirul Rajiv**

*Special Thanks to Ishrat Jahan, Kanak Aditya and Amirul Rajiv for sharing pictures of their beautiful abode.*

