

Legacy of a Dhaka-born business that thrived beyond

|| MH HAIDER ||



DHAKA VIBE

The current state does not reflect the true grandeur of the mansion -- a property that is not only architecturally important but historically significant too.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Indifferent attitude towards Old Dhaka's heritage buildings is continually turning our fascinating past rather obscure. So much so, even if you walk past an old structure soaked in history, you may not even notice it at all, let alone appreciate it.

One such grand mansion would be that of "Sakti Oushadhalaya" on 44 Sarat Gupta Road, Narinda. Parts of this colonial era building can still be spotted from the main road, if you purposefully look for it. And when you enter the alley and stand in front of the compound, interesting architectural elements will

subtly induce a sense of awe for the bygone era -- and for the inspiring vision of the entrepreneur who founded Sakti Oushadhalaya, one of this region's most renowned Ayurvedic institutions (founded, according to Banglapedia, in 1901).

Before he started the business, Mathuramohan Chakraborty used to be a school teacher. Then, according to Dhaka Kosh (published by Asiatic Society of Bangladesh), he started making medicines, which he himself sold at Bangla Bazar.

The business took off and Mathuramohan expanded



the range of medicines. Sakti Oushadhalaya thrived; branches were opened at numerous places in Bengal and other parts of undivided India (Patna and Benares). A print advertisement (accessed from the electronic archive of Bangladesh on Record) -- published in Mohammadi (a now defunct journal) in 1940 -- is testament to those heydays.

The vintage ad included endorsements from highly distinguished people, such as politician and lawyer Deshbandhu CR Das and Governor of Bengal Lord Lytton.

To illustrate, Lord Lytton wrote: "... remarkable factory which owes its success to the

energy and enthusiasm of its proprietor Babu Mathura Mohan Chakravarty B.A. The preparation of indigenous drugs on so large a scale is a very great achievement."

Perhaps a fitting reflection of the success is the mansion being discussed. It was closely associated with Mathuramohan and his business.

The gatehouse -- and outhouse attached to it -- is an elegant structure in its own right, with ornamentations like elaborate lantern-like finials on the roof.

Walk through the gatehouse into the courtyard, and the majestic building comes in full

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'Focusing on patients, not medicine'

Dr Bimalangshu Dey suggests palliative care units should be under one umbrella; included in curricula

MOUDDUD AHMED SUJAN

At the 67th World Health Assembly in 2014, member states of World Health Organization (WHO) agreed to strengthen palliative care as a component of comprehensive care throughout the life course. However, this patient-focused approach is still under-addressed.

Each year, an estimated 40 million people are in need of such care globally, but only about 14 percent of them currently have access to it.

Recently, Dr Bimalangshu Dey, a world-renowned bone marrow transplant specialist, who is an associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, USA, talked to The Daily Star in this regard.

Born in Chatak upazila of Sunamganj in Bangladesh, Dr Bimalangshu was among the pioneers in setting up the only bone marrow transplant unit in Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

TDS: Palliative care is a comparatively new branch of healthcare. It is also not so much familiar in Bangladesh. Please, tell us about it.

Dr Dey: There are many diseases that are incurable. In fact, there are millions of people around the world who will



The function of palliative care is to make patients [and family members] understand that death and dying are universal... It is all about helping an ailing person die with dignity and peace.

ultimately become seriously ill. Palliative care is for terminally ill patients. This concept started with cancer treatment. However, it can be applicable to patients with advanced cardiac, lung and kidney failures; advanced stroke patients and patients with advanced stage sickle cell anemia and thalassemia -- all non-communicable diseases.

TDS: How useful is it for patients?

Dr Dey: Many patients, yes, [perhaps] they will die in three, six or twelve months. The purpose of palliative care is to relieve their pain or sufferings. This pain could be physical, mental, cultural, psychological or emotional. The function of palliative care is to make the patients

[and family members] understand that death and dying are universal; we have no choice but to accept them as a phase of life rather than the end. If we could accept it, we will be able to use our imagination, love and compassion. This would eventually ease the dying process.

It is all about helping an ailing person die with dignity and peace.

Death doesn't have to be defeated. Rather it should be given a human touch through adding soul to the dying person.

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Govt better at persecuting opposition than controlling price hike: Manna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nagorik Oikya Convener Mahmudur Rahman Manna yesterday firmly criticised the government for its failure to check prices of essential commodities and ensure security of women migrants working in the Middle East.

He claimed the soaring prices of essentials as well as living expenditure in Bangladesh in recent times are "much higher" compared to other countries around the world -- breaking "previous records".

The seasoned politician made the remarks while speaking at a human chain, formed in front of Jatiya Press Club in the capital. Nagorik Nari Oikya, the women's wing of Nagorik Oikya, organised the event protesting price hike and violence against women.

"How are people supposed to live [a decent life] if prices keep going up like this, with income remaining unchanged? Only a few people in this country have become millionaires, while millions are enduring miserable lives," said Manna.

"Where are the onions which have arrived by plane and ship? Why haven't the prices gone down yet?" he asked.

The government has completely failed to control the prices of onion, rice, vegetables and other essential commodities; it has failed to give remedy to public sufferings,

he added.

"They [government] are better at persecuting the opposition party leaders and activists, and sending the people who protest government actions to jail," alleged Manna.

Terming the government "illegal", he said, "You haven't been voted by people as you snatched the votes. You have no legal right to remain in power."

"You cannot ensure public safety and respect for women; you cannot even control the price hike," he added.

Manna also said the government is planning to increase the price of electricity although there is no valid reason to do so. He urged the authority to step back from such a move and bring prices of essentials within public reach.

He also demanded that the government step down immediately and announce an early national election.

About the torture of female domestic workers in the Middle East, Manna said bodies of several women -- who died because of torture by their employers -- have arrived recently, while many others returned alive but with gruesome wounds.

"The government couldn't do anything to stop these. It couldn't even protest such brutalities," he alleged.

Several other leaders of both Nagorik Oikya and Nagorik Nari Oikya also spoke at the human chain.

'It's unforgivable'

Says Quader about pro-BNP lawyers' behaviour at SC

UNB, Dhaka

Terming the behaviour of pro-BNP lawyers at a courtroom of the Appellate Division an unpardonable offence, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said they turned the courtroom into a battlefield.

"Pro-BNP lawyers' behaviour at the courtroom was audacious and an unforgivable offence," he said while speaking at a press conference at Awami League president's Dhanmondi political office.

Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, said, "The government has nothing to do with the release of Khaleda Zia as she was not imprisoned in any political case. She was sentenced to jail in a corruption case."

"BNP has been claiming that Khaleda is in jail in a political case, which is a lie," he added.

Quader also said any anarchy in the name of movement by BNP activists will be resisted and their "non-political" activities will be dealt with an iron hand.

On Thursday morning, a six-member bench, headed by the chief justice, left the courtroom after a group of pro-BNP lawyers created unprecedented chaos at the Supreme Court during the hearing of party chief Khaleda Zia's bail appeal in a corruption case.

High time for a proper city plan: state minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka -- the most densely populated city in the world -- is still growing in an unplanned way, said State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Dr Md Enamur Rahman at an event in Dhaka yesterday.

"It is high time we introduce a proper plan to make the city healthy, inclusive and liveable for our future generations," said the state minister.

"All stakeholders, including architects, should come forward to resolve the city's crisis," he added.

He was speaking at the inauguration session of the three-day Urban Thinkers Campus 2019 held at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet).

Buet's Department of Architecture is hosting the event as an associate partner of World Urban Campaign of UN Habitat.

Citing the huge number of migration into the city, Dr Enam said Dhaka is highly vulnerable to disasters such as earthquakes due to its high density.

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PHOTO OF THE DAY

PALASH KHAN



WHEN TWO ARE NOT ENOUGH! This little boy wants more of the sugary delicacy -- cotton candy -- from a vendor. Known fondly as "Hawai Mithai", this once popular melt-in-your mouth confection, a must-have at fairs among children and adults alike, has become a rare sight in the capital. This photo was taken in front of a school in Kalabagan on Thursday.

DHAKA TODAY

WORKSHOP

Learning Video Production and Editing
Venue: Midas Centre, Dhanmondi
Time: 11am

Organiser: Bangladesh Online Activist Forum
Venue: Jatiya Press Club
Time: 10:30am

FILM SCREENING

The Shawshank Redemption
Venue: EMK Center
Time: 3pm

DISCUSSION
Historic 7th March Speech: Known and Unknown Facts