

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



The Kella on a weekend afternoon in winter.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Kella Photographs

Labagh Kella in Old Dhaka is an unfinished but picturesque Moghul fort with surrounding gardens. It was started in 1678 by Prince Azam, son of Emperor Aurangzeb. After the prince was recalled to Delhi, construction continued under governor Shaista Khan. But Khan's daughter Pori Bibi died suddenly, leaving him heartbroken. The half-done project, now deemed inauspicious, was abandoned.

Today, however, the Kella is a well-maintained and popular public attraction. The grounds include Pori Bibi's tomb, a mosque, a residence complex intended for the governor, and barracks for soldiers. These structures share eighteen acres of land with manicured lawns, flowerbeds, flowering shrubs, walkways, fountains and a large pond.

Starting in 2008, I photographed people visiting the Kella for several years. I hoped photographing these happy interactions would reveal something about what it means to be Bangladeshi. Having lived most of my life abroad I was keen to rediscover my roots.

Visitors come here to enjoy the open, outdoor setting in an otherwise crowded city. The Kella is most popular on Friday and Saturday afternoons when there is a long queue at the ticket counter, mostly families and friends groups in a picnic mood.

But you don't go to the Kella just to see. You also come here to be seen. Women wear colourful saris and salwar kameez, hands adorned by henna, flowers on their hair and any number of ornaments on their necks, hair, ears and wrists. Colourful burqa ensembles are worn by some women. Men wear tight jeans, the latest shoes

and smart shirts open at the chest. And the children? In one glance you know their outfits were chosen by proud parents.

The first thing visitors do is to make memories in these beautiful surroundings. Some pose for photographs with props – sunglasses, a bandanna, masks in pre-Covid days, perhaps a guitar. Others find a favourite plant and put an arm on a branch or even embracing it. Standing with back to the fort's ancient wall with arms outstretched is another popular pose. Friends line up for group photos on the rooftop of the barracks. Brave ones climb the fort's tall walls and risky ledges for unusual backdrops.

The children have the grandest time of all. Finding open space they run themselves breathless. A girl, having a piece of a lawn all to herself, spins at dizzying speeds, her kameez streaming around her. Another chases dragonflies landing on the flowers. Others scream in delight running down slopes of the mound – perhaps fifteen feet high – east of the barracks. In the flat terrain that is Dhaka and most of the nation fifteen feet can be exciting.

After several years I look through the photographs and ponder what I learned. The innate, almost goofy friendliness of my compatriots, for one thing, but what also strikes me is the closeness of friends of all ages and the utter devotion of parents to children. Perhaps it is the disregard for formalities that leads to a boundless exuberance for all that can be squeezed out of life.

facebook.com/ikabirphotographs or follow 'ihtishamkabir' on Instagram.

Education must not be for sale

Say academics on occasion of historic Education Day

DU CORRESPONDENT

It's time to stop the commercialisation of our education system, said academics yesterday.

Education should be a right, accessible to all, and not a product to be sold to the highest bidders, they added during two separate programmes, marking historic Education Day.

The two programmes were organised by left-leaning organisations, Samajtantrik Chhatra Front and Bangladesh Students Union, in Dhaka University to commemorate the education movement of 1962, when students took to the streets to oppose the Pakistani government's unequal and exclusionary national education policy.

"The country's education sector has been left at the mercy of businesses. Education has become a product, to be bought for money -- those who have the means can access it, while those who don't are left behind," said Prof Anu Muhammad of Jahangirnagar University's economics department.

"To save education from corporatisations, the state has to regain control of it, as per the aspirations of the Liberation War," he added.

At the programme organised by Samajtantrik Chhatra Front,



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PROF ANU MUHAMMAD, JAHANGIRNAGAR UNIVERSITY



During the pandemic, disparity in education has increased immensely. Many students have dropped out of school, which has led to increases in child marriage among female students. The state needs to find ways to bring back the students who have dropped out.

PROF KABERI GAYEN, DHAKA UNIVERSITY



Investments in education are being made for reaping profits, as a result of which discrimination continues to rise in the sector. If we can free the parliament from the grip of business-people, education too will be freed from the grip of commercialisation.

PROF MM AKASH, DHAKA UNIVERSITY

he also argued, "The government has to ensure everyone receives quality education equally. To this end, budget must be allocated to the education sector accordingly, and before finalising the national educational policy, elaborate discussions and analysis on all matters of education has to be conducted."

Meanwhile, at the programme organised by Bangladesh Students Union at the university's Teacher-Student Centre, Prof Kaberi Gayen of DU's mass communication and

journalism department said, "We have seen that the last National Education Policy's priority was to show how education can be bought for money."

"During the pandemic, disparity in education has increased immensely. Many students have dropped out of school, which has led to increases in child marriage among female students," she said.

"The state needs to find ways to bring back the students who have dropped out," she added.

Speaking at the same

programme, Prof MM Akash, chair of DU's economics department, said, "It's no wonder education is seen as just another product when 50 percent of parliamentarians are businesspersons today."

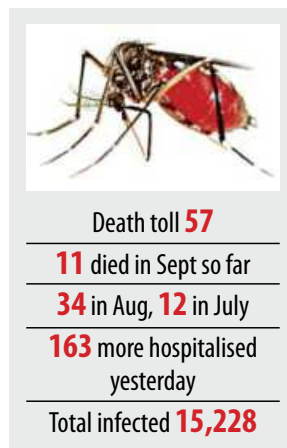
"Investments in education are being made for reaping profits, as a result of which discrimination continues to rise in the sector. If we can free the parliament from the grip of business-people, education too will be freed from the grip of commercialisation," he added.



While Bangladesh Students Union organised a discussion at Dhaka University's TSC area, Samajtantrik Chhatra Front marked the day with a student-gathering in front of the Raju Memorial Sculpture.

PHOTO: STAR

163 more hospitalised with dengue



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 163 patients were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till 8am yesterday, according to Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Out of the 163 infected, 23 are from outside Dhaka. With the new cases, 4,872 have been diagnosed with dengue during the current month, out of a total of 15,228 infected this year. Of the total infected, 1,676 are from outside Dhaka.

Among the 163, 26.2 percent were aged between 31 and 40, 24.6 percent were under 10 years of age, and 13.8 percent were between ages 11 and 30.

At least 7,698 people were diagnosed in August, 2,286 were hospitalised in July, 272 in June, while 43 were infected in May, according to DGHS.

As per DGHS data, 57 people died of dengue in the country this year. Twelve died in July, 34 in August, and 11 in September so far.

A total of 53 have died in Dhaka division, two in Chattogram division, and one each in Rajshahi and Khulna divisions.

'Mothers play crucial role in tackling extremism'

Say speakers at ceremony

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mothers play a significant role in protecting children from social vices, terrorism and extremism, said speakers at a ceremony yesterday.

Community Participation and Development (CPD) in association with Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) organised a four-month long training workshop titled "Parenting for Peace" for mothers. A total of 125 mothers received certificates after completing the programme.

"There is no scope to disregard the role of mothers in preventing radicalism and violence. Projects like this will play a significant role in this regard," said Advocate Sultana Kamal, former adviser to the caretaker government.

Lawmaker Aroma Dutta reiterated that

the training programme has created a new dimension in maintaining social harmony by involving mothers as a key stakeholder in the fight against extremism.

CPD Executive Director Moslema Bari said mothers who have received the training will become more conscious about such issues and play a leading role in their families and communities to counter hate and intolerance.

Those who participated in the programme said they will remain alert to protect their children from radicalism.

They said that they have learned how to monitor and analyse children's behaviour and deal with them.

Among others, executive director of Austria-based Women without Borders Dr Edit Schlaffer and executive director of MJF Shaheen Anam also spoke at the event.

Two killed, four hurt in Bogura road accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

Two people were killed and four injured after a bus hit a battery-run auto-rickshaw on Dhaka-Rangpur highway at Bogura's Jhoggari area yesterday.

The deceased -- Anowara Begum (50) and Hamidun Begum (55) -- were from Namabala in Bogura Sadar upazila, said police.

The injured -- identified as Jui (16), Rakhimoni (13), Azhar Ali (60) and Abdur Razzak (50) -- were undergoing treatment at TMSS Medical College and Hospital, they said.

Anwara and Hamidun were declared dead at Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital.

BRTC bus service for port city students to resume today

ARUN BIKASH DEY, City

Ever since schools started this week, Jayeta Talukdar, a tenth-grader at Chattogram city's Dr Khastagir Government Girls' High School, has found it difficult to get to school in jam-packed public vehicles during rush hour.

"It was easier last year [before the pandemic] after BRTC launched a bus service for students in January," she said. "We could travel anywhere for Tk 5 and finding a seat wasn't difficult as the service was dedicated to students."

Unfortunately, for her and more like her, the service had to be stopped once the lockdowns hit.

However, with educational institutions open once more, the Chattogram District Administration and Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) have announced they are going to resume the service from today.

A total of 10 double-decker buses will be used for the service, said sources inside BRTC.

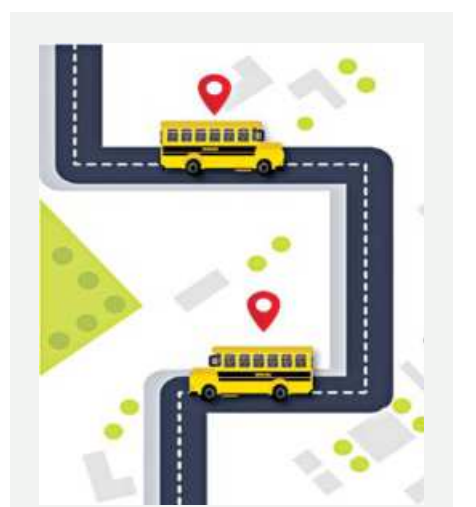
Only school and madrasa students will be able to ride the buses -- after showing their institutional ID cards to staffers -- when traveling to and from their campuses, the sources said. Initially, the buses will operate on two routes in the city in the morning and afternoon.

A student will have to pay Tk 5 for each trip. There will be two boxes on each side of the buses, called honesty boxes. Students will put their fare into these boxes on their own and get down to their respective destinations, said BRTC officials.

Contacted, Mahmud Ullah Maruf, additional deputy commissioner (Education and ICT) of Chattogram, said, "BRTC will operate the service while the district administration will oversee it."

"Nobody except the students will be allowed to use the service and we will take strict action against the driver and helper if any such allegation is found to be true."

BRTC officials said all buses have been fully prepared for the operation. BRTC's Chattogram Bus Depot Manager Abdul



ROUTE 1: From Bahaddarhat to New Market via Baduratata, Chawkbazar, Gani Bakery, Jamalkhan, Cheragi Pahar, Nandankanan and Amtal; from New Market to Bahaddarhat via Amtal, Nandankanan, Cheragi Pahar, Jamalkhan, Chawkbazar and Baduratata

ROUTE 2: Oxygen to Agrabad via Muradpur, Sholashahar Gate No. 2, GEC Intersection, WASA Intersection, Tiger Pass, Dewan Hat and Chowmuhani; from Agrabad to Oxygen via Tiger Pass, WASA Intersection, GEC Intersection, Sholashahar Gate No. 2, Muradpur and Aturar Depot



For the last two months, Nobab, an employee of a private organisation, has been waging a battle against dengue on his own volition. To raise awareness about the deadly disease, he picks a spot in the capital and stands with all his placards, which inform fellow residents about how to protect themselves from Aedes mosquitoes. Yesterday, he stationed himself in front of Jatiya Press Club.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Latif told The Daily Star that during the students' movement demanding safe roads in 2019, the prime minister pledged to launch a bus service for the benefit of the students.

In light of that commitment, the service started in port city in January last year, he said.

Hailing the resumption of the service, guardians expressed their gratitude to the authorities for coming up with such a timely initiative.