

DHANMONDI SHAHI EIDGAH

A Mughal relic that has withstood time

MD ABBAS

The Dhanmondi Shahi Eidgah, also known as the Mughal Eidgah, is the oldest Eidgah in Dhaka. Located right on the turn from the capital's Saat Masjid Road onto Dhanmondi Road 6/A, it is a rare historical landmark that remarkably is still in use today.

People have been offering Eid prayers at the Eidgah for almost 400 years.

The Eidgah was built for the purpose of Eid prayers in 1640 AD by Mir Abul Qashim, who was the Dewan of Subedar Shah Shuja, son of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan, according to an inscription on the central mihrab (the niche in the wall from where the imam leads the prayers) of the Eidgah.

Since then, the Eidgah has been under continuous usage, and hundreds of Muslims offer their Eid prayers here twice every year.

The Dhanmondi Shahi Eidgah is a listed

People have been offering Eid prayers at the Eidgah for almost 400 years.

archaeological heritage site recognised by the Department of Archaeology, which has been preserving the structure since 1981.

Originally, this ancient Eidgah was situated on the banks of the Buriganga river. But over



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

the centuries, the river's course has shifted, according to the book "Glimpses of Old Dhaka" by Syed Muhammed Taifoor.

There is an alternate opinion that a branch of the river Pandu used to flow beside this Eidgah. The branch would meet the Buriganga near the Sat Gombuj Masjid (Seven-domed Mosque) along the northwestern reaches of Dhaka.

According to Encyclopedia of Dhaka edited by Sharif Uddin Ahmed, the Eidgah was built

on four bighas of land on a platform that was about four feet high from the ground. The platform itself was 245 feet by 137 feet, and originally, the area covered by the Eidgah was 250 feet 6 inches by 147 feet.

The book adds that the Eidgah is surrounded by walls. The height of the walls to the north, south, and east is six feet, and the height of the western wall is 15 feet.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

FIRE AT SHISHU HOSPITAL

No casualties, but facility suffers heavy damage

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MD ABBAS

The intensive care unit (ICU) and high dependency unit (HDU) of the cardiology department at Bangladesh Shishu Hospital and Institute were burned in a fire yesterday.

However, all the children undergoing treatment in the ICUs and HDUs were safely evacuated, and arrangements were made to continue their treatment elsewhere.

No casualties were reported in the fire.

Five fire engines managed to extinguish the blaze around 2:40pm, which had broken out in the cardiac ICU around 1:45pm, according to Lima Khanam, duty officer of Fire Service and Civil Defence control room.

Upon receiving the alert, five teams from Fire Service and Civil Defence rushed to the scene and managed to extinguish the fire after an hour-long effort.

As the fire erupted, the attendants of the patients panicked and evacuated the patients immediately with the help of hospital staffers.

Critical patients were later transferred to ICUs in other wards.

Maymuna Begum, mother of two-month-old Solaiman, who was undergoing treatment in the HDU, noticed smoke entering the HDU.

She promptly alerted the on-duty nurse, who helped them evacuate downstairs.

Solaiman was then transferred to the

neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) in another building and is currently receiving treatment there.

Doctors at the NICU reported that all five patients who were transferred from the fire-affected building are in stable condition.

Yeasin, a seven-month-old son of Narzu Begum from Ashulia, was undergoing treatment in the recovery department, situated on the four-floor of the hospital.

Narzu Begum described the frightening experience of evacuating her son amidst heavy smoke but expressed relief that he is now receiving treatment in another part of the hospital.

"I was frightened, so I took my son in my arms and started going downstairs. With heavy smoke filling the room, I struggled to make my way downstairs," she recalled while talking to The Daily Star.

Due to the fire, the electricity connection of the building was suspended, forcing several patients from different floors to gather at the hospital grounds until 4:00pm due to the intense heat.

Sriti Khatun, a staff nurse on the third floor, said patients and their attendants evacuated downstairs when the fire broke out.

"They are now returning to the wards, and we are re-admitting them after checking their health condition," she said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

Bhasantek fire death toll rises to four

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lamia, a seven-year-old who suffered severe burns in a fire that broke out at their house in Dhaka's Bhasantek area on April 12, died yesterday morning.

Having suffered 55 percent burns, she succumbed to her injuries around 6:00am, said Torikul Islam, a resident surgeon at the Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery.

Earlier, her parents Liton Mia, 48, and Surya Banu, 40, and grandmother Meherunnessa, 70, also died while receiving treatment at the hospital after suffering burn injuries in the incident.

With Lamia's demise, the death toll in the incident rose to four.

Lamia's two siblings — Liza, 18, and Sujon, 9, — are currently being treated at the hospital. Their condition is also critical.

PRAYER TIMING
APRIL 20

	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN	4:25	12:45	4:45	6:27	8:00
JAMAAT	5:00	1:15	5:00	6:31	8:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Eidgah ground turned into a kitchen market

Most of the NHA's 40-katha land now houses around 200 illegal shops

MD ABBAS

Abdul Haque grew up in Avenue 5, Block D of Mirpur-6 area. He has been a resident of the area since 1975.

For him, Eid mornings used to be different. Back then, the open field across the road, a stone's throw from his house, would turn into a sea of white prayer caps. The Eidgah ground, situated beside the Central Jame Mosque Complex, was the heart of the community. Abdul and his friends used to play there every afternoon. However, Abdul's six-year-old son is not as fortunate.

"He keeps asking to play outside," Abdul said. "We used to play cricket here all afternoon after Eid prayers. But there's nowhere for my child to play," he added.

The open field Abdul reminisces about is no more. The Eidgah plus playground has been occupied by a vested quarter. They have transformed it into a permanent kitchen market, filled with tin shed shops. Abdul isn't the only one lamenting the loss. Nur Hossain, another resident, echoes his sentiments. "This ground was our playground growing up," he said, gesturing towards the market. "We fought tooth and nail to keep it designated as an Eidgah, but we failed."

Several other residents of the area echoed them.

The National Housing Authority owns the 40-katha land of the Eidgah field. During a recent visit to the area, this correspondent noticed that a significant portion of the Eidgah ground has been transformed into a kitchen market. The main gate appears dilapidated, with the inscription "Eidgah ground" nearly faded. Approximately



200 tin shed shops have been operating here for over ten years, selling fish, chicken, meat, and groceries. Additionally, there's a daily wholesale fish trade from 6:00am to 8:30am, accompanied by an ice mill to preserve the fish.

Only a small part of the field, where a podium was erected for the Imam to conduct Eid prayers, remains unoccupied.

Residents said the mosque's committee let the kitchen market run there to collect money for the upkeep of an orphanage under Darul Ulum Alia Madrasa, adjacent to the mosque.

According to the shop owners, Gias Uddin

Bepari, general secretary of the mosque's committee, took advance payments of Tk 50,000-1.5 lakh to allot space to the shops.

Also, each shop has to pay Tk 50-150 daily to the mosque committee, while each of the around 30 wholesale fish traders pays Tk 300-500 every day.

Locals said they have submitted letters to the police commissioner, city mayor, housing and public works ministry, traffic police department, and all other authorities concerned with signatures of residents of the area.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

BOAT CAPSIZE IN THE MED
Man sues human traffickers for his son's death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The father of a Faridpur man, who was killed with seven other Bangladeshis after a boat sank in the Mediterranean Sea on February 15, filed a case against seven named and 10-15 unnamed people on charge of human trafficking and murder of the victims.

Sunil Bairagi, father of Sajal Bairagi, 25, of Madaripur's Rajoir, filed the case with the Airport Police Station in the capital with the help of officials of Trafficking in Person (TIP) cell of Armed Police Battalion.

In the case statement, the complainant said the accused persons lured his son and other victims, promising them a better fortune by taking them to Italy legally.

Yet they illegally trafficked them and sent them to Italy in a boat boarded with excessive passengers, despite knowing their deaths were certain, and consequently caused their deaths, it reads.

Police did not disclose the accused's names for the sake of the investigation.

Sunil, in the case, said one of the accused, who was known to Sajal, took Tk 14 lakh to legally send his son to Italy. The human trafficker, who is from Gopalganj's Muktsudpur, promised that his father, who is living in Libya, would arrange Sajal's travel.

The human trafficker took Sajal to Dhaka, from where he flew to Dubai on December 31. Since then, they could not contact Sajal, Sunil said.

He finally came to know from media reports that his son died in the Mediterranean Sea.

Nine people, including the eight victims from Bangladesh, died when the boat carrying 52 migrants from various countries caught fire while en route to Europe from the Libyan coast. The incident occurred as the vessel approached the Tunisian coast. The Tunisian coastguards rescued 43 migrants from the vessel and 26 of them were found to be Bangladeshis.

Royal Tehari House:
a Nilkhet heritage

ASHIK ABDULLAH APU

In the last 50 years, Nilkhet has gone through many changes. Many old shops have closed down, new shops have popped up, but over this time, one constant has been the taste of tehari at Royal Tehari House.

Situated among the busy bookshops of Nilkhet, Royal Tehari House offers students a delectable treat without burning a hole in their pockets.

The tehari is a harmonious blend of aromatic rice, slow-cooked meats, and a symphony of spices — a dish that encapsulates the very essence of gastronomic nostalgia.

The spicy aroma from the large pots of tehari presents a mouthwatering proposition for pedestrians, and students who come to Nilkhet for their books and stationery needs can hardly ignore the desire to have tehari from one of the roadside shops.

"We have been providing our customers with quality tehari for almost fifty years. I started the shop in 1974 when a half plate of Tehari used to cost Tk 7. Though the prices of the ingredients have skyrocketed in the last few years, we tried

our best to keep the price of food items within the grasp of students," says Sheikh Mohor Ali, manager of the Royal Tehari House.

"While half a plate of tehari (which is enough for most customers) costs Tk 150, a three-quarter serving is Tk 200 and full plate of tehari would cost Tk 270," he said.

In addition to tehari, this nearly 50-year-old restaurant in Nilkhet also offers bhuna khichuri and morog polao on their menu.

Royal Tehari usually remains abuzz with hundreds of patrons from morning till late at night. People even queue up for seats since the crowded shop can only accommodate 15 to 20 customers at a time.

It is also a nostalgic place for former students of Dhaka University and Bangladesh University of Engineering Technology.

"I used to have this tehari at the beginning of every month when I would get the salary from my tuition. Now I have come here after almost five years to take a stroll down memory lane," Sheikh Abdullah, an alumnus of DU, told this correspondent.



Brothers in business

The bond behind the fried chicken stall in front of DU Charukala

SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

For over two decades, a business built on mutual trust and respect between two people from different faiths has thrived in front of Dhaka University's Faculty of Fine Arts.

This is a story about the partnership between Uttam Sarker and Sadikul Islam, the duo behind a popular fried chicken street shop in Shahbagh, and how they stood by each other during times of crisis.

They have a long history together. Sadikul, or Sadik, began working as an assistant at Uttam's shop nearly 25 years ago.

"I learned this work from Uttam da," said Sadik. "I took a job as Uttam da's assistant. I really needed it as I was helpless after losing my mother, which is when Uttam da gave me shelter."

Uttam Sarker's family, which includes his wife Dipa Rani and two children, has always relied on this single source of income. As such, the family fell into a crisis around 13 years ago when Uttam became seriously ill as a result of a heart attack, rendering him incapable of running the business.

Dipa Rani became very concerned at the time about how she would pay for her husband's treatment and meet the needs of the family. That was when Sadik stepped in.

"I worked as his assistant for 12 years



after he helped me in my time of need. After Uttam da's heart attack, I began assisting his family," Sadik said.

Following Uttam's illness, Sadik assumed full responsibility of the business.

Both Uttam and Sadik's families currently live off the shop's profits.

"I am now a member of Uttam da's family, and I feel like I am his brother," Sadik said.

Dipa Rani said, "I have complete trust in Sadik. He holds the business together, which is essential to my family's survival. I regard him as my brother. We care for him like he is a family member."

"We also live together in harmony. We practice our religion, while Sadik practices his. Sadik's wife often comes to visit from their village home and stays with us," she added.

Speaking to this newspaper, Uttam Sarker said, "I enjoy running my business. But I cannot do it because of my illness. Despite the difficulties, Sadik is keeping things together. I am grateful to him for this."

"Our bond is strong, like that of a family. When Sadik calls me dada, it truly feels like he is my own brother. Without him by my side, my business would have been over."