



A TEA SOIREE: In celebration of the deshi cha

#EVENT

On the evening of Friday, 22 November, many people flocked to the rooftop of a building in the capital's Baridhara Diplomatic Zone. Chitchats, mingling, speeches, and laughter flowed, as a melodious flute provided the background score. In the centre of it all was tea!

"Cha er Adda" was a celebration of Bangladeshi tea -- an event organised by Durjoy Bangladesh Foundation, in collaboration with Halda Valley Tea Garden, and based on the ideation of lifestyle journalist, Raffat Binte Rashid.

The "centrepiece" of the rooftop was an elaborate tea stall, stylised as a *tong er doka* -- with wooden benches, packets of chips and a bunch of bananas hanging over the counter, and many such elements creatively put together to bring out the typical roadside tea shop vibe.

So much so, there were wall posters



-- to exemplify, to let adverts and the awkward but ever-so-common message of "*baki chahiya lojja diben na*" featured boldly, reinforcing the feel of *tong er doka* and its surroundings! Meanwhile, hurricane lamps and a radio added to the mix gave a nostalgic twist to it all.

"Tea culture is something that is embedded in our everyday life. But somehow, it does not get that much highlighted," opined Durjoy Rahman, founder of Durjoy Bangladesh Foundation. "But we have to admit the impact tea has in our daily lives as well as in our economy. That's why we organised this event, to



celebrate the popularity and influence of tea in Bangladesh."

Guests sipped and tasted various kinds, served by Halda Valley -- *malai*, *masala*, *elachi*, green tea, and much more -- relishing in the charm and excellence of this popular beverage.

Of course, a cup of tea is more than just a drink. "For us, we need our tea at regular intervals," Raffat Binte Rashid said. "Our decibel amps up if we have a cup of tea in our hand and God forbid if politics is the topic of the conversation! Tea and politics are the right catalyst for that storm in a teacup here in Bangladesh."

Indeed, be it the hangouts with friends, those heated discussions on politics, or some alone time with a warm cup on a winter morning, the charm of tea is unparalleled!

The event also featured several guest speakers, such as Maisha Rahman, hailed as the country's first female tea auctioneer, who gave a talk on the trade.

Meanwhile, *cha* is usually incomplete without *taa* (snacks), as the adage goes. So, the rooftop fiesta offered a variety of it, from mouth-watering *jhalmuri*, *pithas*, *shingara*, and *samosa*.

Have we taken these *deshi* snacks and the accompanying drink for granted, often forgetting to appreciate the simple joys of life? That should not be the case, as they represent our culinary traditions and bind us together. With sips of different teas and delightful munchies, the soiree that was Cha er Adda has been a pleasant reminder of these simple joys of life!

By M H Haider
Photo: Abid Hasan Aomi