



MOJA KORI

cultural revelation of Korail

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When speaking about Gulshan and Banani, the two most elegant areas of Dhaka, a polychromatic image of towering skyscrapers, corporate prestige, and the opulence of daily life comes to mind. At the middle of these two urban epicenters, hides another reality that often dismays the people of its neighborhood, named Korail.

Korail is one of the most overcrowded and unplanned regions of the city, which often puts itself in the headlines for unfavorable reasons. But lately, a wind of transformation has been blowing through the narrow pavements of Korail, raising the hopes, dreams, and a sense of identity among



the people living here.

Once overlooked, fortunately, the boundless potential of the inhabitants was explored and revealed by Paraa, a research-based design and architecture studio, spending the last three years working closely with this community and has fueled this change. Their



PHOTO: COURTESY

efforts and initiatives culminated into one of the most exciting exhibitory events of the year, Moja Kori.

Sharara Khan, one of the organisers and architects from Paraa, described the vision behind their work, saying, "We are trying to build this space, Machan, as a collective hub for the habitants of Korail, so that they can showcase their ideas and use it for capacity building. Even if one artist emerges from this initiative, or if someone starts their own creative journey, that will be our success. The possibilities here are endless."

One of the most distinctive features of Moja Kori was the way it focused on the participation of Korail's own people. Residents were not just spectators, but active collaborators in every aspect,

starting from contributing as artists, to volunteering, to organising and managing.

A daily exhibition was held as part of the four day program where, along with art manifestations and exhibition, there were workshops that focused on a variety of topics, ranging from the chaotic cosmopolitan experiences to playful rhymes, creative handicrafts to the photo walk — it had it all. An interesting film screening was arranged at a rickshaw garage in a very unique manner. There were interactive talks sessions and performances throughout the whole program.

Nujhat Jahan Khan, a writer, has worked with children and youth from Korail on a project called Writers from Korail, producing fictional stories that

were later exhibited at the event with hand-designed covers. Regarding the project, she said, "We held a few workshops over the last three months, then we called for submissions and the response was overwhelming. Seeing their stories take shape and displayed like this has been an amazing experience."

The impact of this initiative goes beyond exhibition or event activities, it has had a profound influence on the lives of Korail's residents. Women who once lacked a safe space to spend their spare time, now have a common space where they can connect and grow. The community's perspective has shifted as well, with neighbours becoming more supportive and encouraging.

"The girls here feel safer now than they did a few years ago and most importantly, we have a space of our own. Even the viewpoint of our neighbours, who once discouraged us, has changed. So, we can dream of doing things we never thought possible," said Maliha Akter, a resident and volunteer of the event.

The event Moja Kori was not an ordinary one, it was a statement that the people of Korail are more than their struggles. Be it through embroidery, photography, painting, or performance art, the festival exhibited their creativity, mastery, and determination. It was a reminder to the whole city that even in the densest corners of a city, where survival often takes precedence over everything else, art and culture can thrive and transform lives.

Cold spell likely from January 9

It may last for 3 to 4 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It may drizzle in different places for a couple of days before another cold spell begins on Thursday, Met officials said.

The cold spell is likely to be felt first in the Northern, northeastern, southeastern regions and then in the southeastern part and Dhaka and its adjacent districts, Meteorologist Abul Kalam Mallik told The Daily Star.

"The coldwave will be felt for three or four days," he said, adding that the difference between day and night temperatures will reduce amid the cold spell, he said.

The northern and southwestern regions, in particular, may see a severe cold wave in the middle of this month.

According to the meteorological department, sunshine in the next couple of days may cause temperatures to rise slightly. However, dense fog will prevail from midnight to morning, especially near rivers, he said.

Ferry services on the Paturia-Daulatdia and Aricha-Kazirhat routes resumed as fog lifted yesterday morning after over 10 hours.

Syrian ministers urge lifting of US sanctions in first visit to Doha

AFP, Doha

Ministers from Syria's transitional government urged the United States to lift its sanctions on Damascus during their first visit to Qatar since overthrowing president Bashar al-Assad.

In a statement, Qatar's foreign ministry said the Gulf country's premier met with Syria's interim foreign minister, Asaad al-Shaibani, defence minister Murhaf Abu Qasra and the new head of intelligence, Anas Khattab.

Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani "reiterated the State of Qatar's position in support of Syria's unity, sovereignty and independence," the statement said.

Unemployment

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Experts have attributed the rise to widespread layoffs and safety concerns in urban areas, particularly affecting women.

"The political unrest in July and August likely exacerbated the unemployment situation," said Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling, a research organisation. "For women, the security challenges in urban areas could also be a significant factor."

Towfiqul Islam Khan, a senior research fellow at private think-tank the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), said the overall demand fell during the July-September quarter as industries faced a challenging time.

"It was a volatile time. Both labour supply and demand decreased significantly," he said.

The figures were compiled using the global standards outlined by the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS), hosted by the International Labour Organization.

This marks the first time Bangladesh's statistical agency has adopted the updated methodology in its quarterly labour report, alongside the data under the 13th ICLS, aiming to provide more precise and timely employment data. Most countries have transitioned to using the 19th ICLS standards to improve the accuracy of their labour force surveys.

As per the 13th ICLS, the unemployed population was 25.50 lakh, or 3.64 percent of the total in the July-September period, up from 24.3 lakh or 3.31 percent a year ago.

CPD's Towfiqul welcomed the publication of labour data in line with the 19th ICLS to portray a better picture. "However, BBS did not publish its sectoral data. So, it would not actually help the policymakers," he said.

However, Prof Raihan questioned the definition of the unemployed, saying the BBS data does not reflect the actual picture of the labour market.

According to the definition followed by the BBS, a person is to be considered unemployed if he or she did not work at all during the previous week (not even for an hour) or was temporarily absent from work.

"Our national labour market condition is not quite good. While the unemployment rate is reported to be below 5 percent — often referred to as the natural rate of unemployment. It is confusing and fails to provide an accurate picture of the labour market," said Prof Raihan.

The real situation would have been evident if individuals who fall under the condition known as "disguised unemployment" were counted, he said.

"In any case, if we take into consideration the disguised unemployed, the unemployment rate would likely be 10 percent," he said.

"Our economic growth is not effectively helping us for sufficient job creation because it is heavily reliant on a few specific sectors, such as ready-made garment and remittance," Prof Raihan explained.

The World Bank in its development update report in October 2024 said Bangladesh's economic progress over the last decade did not translate into a sufficient number of urban jobs in industry. "As a result, Bangladesh is at risk of missing out on a historical opportunity to take advantage of demographic dividends," the report said.

Children take a hit from winter diseases

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Officials said most patients come from Mohammadpur, Gulshan, Kamrangirchar, Ashulia, Mirpur and 20 other areas of Dhaka. Among the patients who are not from Dhaka, most are from Gazipur, Narayanganj, Narsingdi, and Keraniganj.

Two-year-old Mobasser Hossain from Rupganj of Narayanganj was admitted to the icddr,b on Wednesday.

His father, Ashraf-ul-Islam, said, "My son has never been this sick

before. We don't know when he will recover."

In 2024, 675 children were admitted every day at the icddr,b. In the last 18 days, the average was 914.

Doctors say many of the recent patients are infected by rotavirus, a very contagious virus that causes diarrhoea.

Scientists at icddr,b had tested every 50th diarrhoea patient and found that 60 percent of them had rotavirus.

Lubaba Shahrin, an icddr,b

scientist, said the main cause of the spike in cases was rotavirus.

Children should be taken to a hospital if they suffer excessive vomiting, cannot retain food, show behavioural changes, have high fever, or pass blood in stool.

"If an oral rehydration solution is given and the patient throws up immediately, it's a sign that institutional care is needed," she said.

Clean water, warm food, and proper hygiene can protect children from diarrhoea, she said.

Khaleda will fly to London for treatment

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Bir Bikram visited Khaleda at her residence in the evening.

During the meeting, he inquired about her health, said Oli Ahmed's Press Secretary Salah Uddin Razzak.

The 79-year-old former prime minister, who has been suffering from multiple health complications, including arthritis, diabetes, liver cirrhosis, and kidney ailments, requires specialised care unavailable in Bangladesh, according to her doctors.

According to the party sources, Khaleda is expected to stay with her son, Tarique Rahman, in London before heading to the US for treatment of her ongoing liver complications.

This will be her first reunion with Tarique in seven years, and her first overseas visit since she was freed from jail.

Khaleda is set to leave Dhaka for London at 10:00pm Tuesday on an air

ambulance of Qatar Airways.

According to party insiders, a 15-member team will travel with her. The team includes her late son Arafat Rahman Koko's wife, Syeda Sharmila Rahman, several doctors, BNP leaders, personal staff, and two housemaids.

Office of the BNP chief has already informed the foreign ministry about her trip, including details of the team travelling with her.

In March 2020, amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the government temporarily released her on an executive order, suspending her sentence on the condition that she will remain at her Gulshan residence and not leave the country.

She was convicted in Zia Orphanage Trust and Zia Charitable Trust graft cases.

On August 6 last year, Khaleda was fully freed by an order from President Mohammed Shahabuddin after

the Awami League government was ousted by a mass uprising.

Talking to reporters, Fakhru said, "Madam [Khaleda] has instructed us to work together for the people and for democracy."

"We hope she will return home soon after her treatment."

BNP sources said Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani will provide a special aircraft for Khaleda. The air ambulance is fully equipped with advanced medical facilities.

Khaleda will undergo a liver transplant at the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Maryland, US. Her medical records and test reports have already been sent there.

During the AL government, Khaleda's family requested the authorities several times to permit her to go abroad for treatment, but she was denied.

Questioning settled issues not wise

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consciousness shaped by the spirit of the 1952 Language Movement, the 1971 Liberation War, the 1972 constitution, and the 2024 student-led mass uprising, he said.

The goal of the Liberation War was to establish equality, human dignity, and justice in Bangladesh. However, even after 53 years, the dream of building the desired Bangladesh remains unfulfilled, said Dr Kamal, adding that the spirit of the 2024 mass uprising now reflects the aspirations for a democratic, inclusive, and discrimination-free society.

In recent years, democratic institutions have become nearly dysfunctional due to blatant partisan interference. Reforming these institutions and creating an environment for free and fair elections is a moral responsibility of all political parties and the public, he said.

The interim government formed to carry out these reforms must be given reasonable time and full support so

that they can successfully implement the necessary reforms, he added.

"We cannot deviate from the spirit of building a democratic and humane, inequality-free Bangladesh as envisioned in the Liberation War. Similarly, we must not let the dream of establishing a new, inequality-free Bangladesh through the 2024 mass uprising be thwarted. These historic aspects are interconnected and complementary."

The 87-year-old emeritus president of Gono Forum gave a brief speech before his statement was read out.

In the speech, Dr Kamal said, "We have achieved significant milestones through our movement. We must sustain these efforts to strengthen the unity of the people. It is only by consolidating this unity that we can achieve our goals. Unity has always been our priority, as divisions only weaken us. Let us come together to intensify our street movements and uphold the vision we have accomplished so far."

"We will continue our movement by uniting the people against corruption

and terrorism. By creating a society free from corruption and terror, we can build a just and equitable nation where our fundamental objectives can be realised. With the power of unity, we can achieve the main objectives of the country together."

Gono Forum President Mustafa Mohsin Montu questioned the understanding of the people who talk about "burying the constitution of 1972"

"No one has the right to play a game with this issue. The crisis is not with the constitution itself, but those who have misused it. Discussions about the constitution are welcome, but those who are trying to create controversy regarding the Liberation War, the state, or the constitution through such remarks should refrain from doing so."

Gono Forum General Secretary Mizanur Rahman said, "We cannot question past achievements like the Liberation War and the constitution by comparing them to Sheikh Hasina's misrule or using her misrule as a pretext to undermine them."

Govt to sit with parties

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About whether the proclamation would be announced by January 15, as per the deadline set by the Anti-discrimination Students' Movement and the Jatiya Nagorik Committee, he said they will announce it "soon".

The two platforms on December 30 said they would announce the July mass uprising proclamation the next day.

Initially, the CA Press Wing had said the government had no involvement in the student leaders' proclamation event.

However, that very night it said it would take initiative to prepare the proclamation based on national consensus.

Following that, the student leaders after a late-night meeting announced a "March for Unity" programme in support of the interim government's initiative.

WORKING TO BRING HASINA BACK Shafiqul also said the interim government is working relentlessly to extradite fallen autocrat Shiekh Hasina from India.

"It's the government's top priority. She had been involved in enforced disappearance, killings, kleptocracy, and siphoned off billions of public money. She must face trial," he said, adding that nobody in the world "wants to give space to a killer".

"Many in the Indian media didn't know the horrors of Hasina. Many have started writing [about it] recently. When the whole world will know, the pressure will mount. We'll do our best to bring her back. If not, those who will come to power will do so later as it is a generational issue.... It's the nation's desire. We're very hopeful."

Shafiqul further said they have not yet heard anything from the Indian side regarding Hasina's extradition request through the note verbale by Bangladesh. "But the government's efforts are still underway to bring her back."

He also said the government is investigating reports of Awami League leaders fleeing after August 5, and assured that the probe will be conducted by honest officials.

"Investigations led by officials from the previous Awami League government may not yield good

results."

Regarding criticism of the recently-approved draft of the Cyber Protection Ordinance 2024 by Transparency International Bangladesh, the press secretary said, "We welcome any kind of the criticism and take them positively. Asif Nazrul will talk speak on this issue soon."

Shafiqul noted that the commission investigating enforced disappearances is doing good work.

He mentioned plans to arrange visits for journalists to a few of the "Aynaghors (detention centers)" to showcase the horrific methods used for disappearances.

Highlighting incidents like irregularities in three previous elections, the Shapla Chattar crackdown, and money laundering cases during Hasina's rule, Shafiqul said that each issue is being addressed.

He added that the Police Bureau of Investigation is working hard to expedite the investigation of the murder of journalist couple Sagar Sarwar and Meherun Runi.

Responding a query, Shafiqul said state media exists in every country, and it plays an important role.

"BTV [Bangladesh Television] and BSS [Bangladesh Sangbad Shangstha] have been granted independence and are free to exercise press freedom according to their roles. Over the past five months, media in the country has enjoyed unprecedented freedom."

Asked whether BSS will report on the corruption during the AL regime, he said, "We don't interfere in their management. We hope they'll design their programmes reflecting the spirit of the July uprising."

Speaking at the press conference, Deputy Press Secretary Azad Majumder said many European countries have initiated relocating their visa centres from Delhi to Dhaka, or another neighbouring country, upon the request of Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus.

"Bulgaria has already announced transferring its visa centre for Bangladeshis to Indonesia and Vietnam. Romania has announced the issuance of visas from the embassies in Vietnam and Thailand. Kazakhstan also said it will issue visas to Bangladeshi students from Bangkok."

SC upholds scrapping of 4 cases

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lawyer Kayser Kamal told reporters that his client is still accused in 18 to 19 cases although most of the cases lodged against him have already been dismissed.

Many false and fabricated cases were filed from political motives to harass Tarique and tarnish the image of BNP during the regimes of military-backed caretaker government and Sheikh Hasina led government, he added.

On October 23 last year, the HC scrapped the four extortion cases after hearing the rules that questioned the legality of the trials of the cases.

The rules were issued by the court following petitions filed by Tarique in 2008, when he was in Bangladesh.