



## MY DHAKA

# KALACHANDPUR

## Dhaka's hidden hub of culture and community

RBR

The backstreets of Baridhara Diplomatic Zone and Baridhara DOHS, known as Kalachandpur, are an energetic and vibrant neighbourhood that unfortunately suffers from an identity crisis.

The residential addresses describe their location as Badda, North Badda, Gulshan, Baridhara, even though Kalachandpur is a quarter in Ward-18, DCC (Kotwali), Dhaka Division. Kalachandpur is situated near the quarter of Nadda, according to city maps.

So many locations to explain where exactly this lively chipagoli-style or narrow lane suburb is situated have led to confusion about its postal address. The highbrow outsiders, those who live in the nearby posh tri-state area, refuse to acknowledge the residents of Kalachandpur as neighbours. Their enmity is almost like the fable of the City Mouse and Country Mouse.

It does not matter if the street layouts and the demarcations between Kalachandpur and Baridhara or Gulshan is just an adjacent street sharing a common border or lay directly next to each other.

Kalachandpur is irrelevantly considered a place for the less affluent. Dhaka is more than its upscale residential areas and shopping districts; beyond these lie the true heart of Dhaka.

The narrow lanes of Kalachandpur

embrace one such rustic and kitsch charming essence of the city. This spot is also a second home for the working Garo community in Dhaka.

Garos are an indigenous ethnic group primarily residing in the northeastern region of Bangladesh. They began to migrate to Dhaka to find employment or to pursue higher education. Kalachandpur, jokingly described as the Garo Embassy, brings about a sense of safety and security for this hard-working community. The old settlers shelter the newcomers, providing a village-like kinship, echoing a sense of ownership.

Their presence is the reason why the narrow lanes of Kalachandpur has a happy atmosphere. Relaxed in their traditional dress, dokmunda, the neighbourhood provides the freedom to express their ethnic identity.

They do their daily grocery, regular shopping, and socialising after office hours, lending a bustling mix of vibrant nightlife, diverse food, and unique shopping experiences. The dazzling shop lights and streetlights almost give the lanes a Bangkok-like vibe.

Starting from goldsmiths to budget-friendly stores, and food carts with

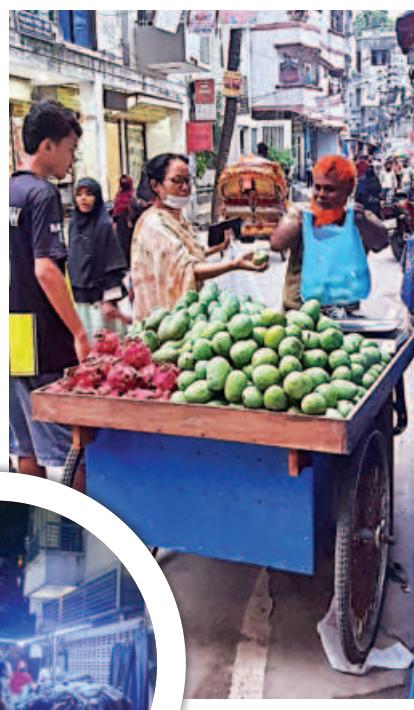


PHOTO: STAR

exceptionally exotic flavours, the place is buzzing with activities. One single jhalmuri vendor, who mixes the best spicy chickpea and puffed rice with bombay morich or hot chilli, has a cult following. On a regular day, he sells more than Tk 7,000 worth of the street food. During festivals, his sales soar even higher.

The nearby bazaars also carry food items catering to this thriving community. Their favourite items, such as the Asian swamp eel or kuichcha baim, snails, snail eggs, napi or shrimp paste, bamboo shoots kochur phul or arum flower, and ginger flower, are all available here.

St Paul's Church in Kalachandpur has sorted the community's religious callings as well. It is an affordable residential option surrounded by the expat community, who are their employers. The proximity to their workplaces, which are within walking distance, means the community is prosperous and is boosting the economy around Kalachandpur.

Many young men and women find employment in beauty parlours and salons as masseurs and hairdressers, and another fraction work as domestic helps, garment workers, or as drivers, security guards, construction workers, and even as nurses.

An increasing number of Garos have also found employment opportunities in call centres and non-governmental organisations or companies.

The educated well-off Garo people in white-collar jobs have reservations about Kalachandpur being a desirable destination for the community at large, but for the blue collar community, it is perfect.

This "culture within a culture" aspect makes Kalachandpur an interesting locality right in the heart of Dhaka.

## Negotiations start amid raging war

FROM PAGE 1

British, French, German and EU top diplomats held talks in Geneva with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, giving diplomacy a chance one week after Israel started its bombardment.

"The good result today is that we leave the room with the impression that the Iranian side is ready to further discuss all the important questions," said German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul in a statement alongside his European counterparts.

"It is of great importance that the United States takes part in these negotiations and the solution," he added.

The statements read by all four top diplomats in their native languages after the talks expressed hope of further progress but did not make any mention of a breakthrough.

Araghchi, making his first trip outside Iran since the bombardment began, said Tehran was ready to "consider diplomacy" again only once Israel's "aggression is stopped".

"In this regard I made it crystal clear that Iran's defence capabilities are not negotiable," he said.

"We support the continuation of discussions, and express our readiness to meet again in the near future," he said.

Meanwhile, the French FM yesterday condemned the efforts to change the regime in Iran from outside, calling it "dangerous".

Earlier, addressing the UN Human Rights Council yesterday, Araghchi said Israel's attacks were a "betrayal" of diplomatic efforts to reach a nuclear deal between Tehran and Washington.

"We were attacked in the midst of an ongoing diplomatic process," he said.

In an interview with German publication Bild, Israel's top diplomat Gideon Saar said he did not "particularly" believe in diplomacy with Iran.

"All diplomatic efforts so far have failed," said Saar, whose country had supported Trump's 2018 decision to abandon a previous nuclear agreement between Iran and world powers.

The Iranians, according to Saar, have used negotiations "to gain time while making progress (in their nuclear programme), and I don't think they've changed their nature".

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin said he was not seeking to be a mediator between Iran and

Israel, and was only suggesting ideas for how the countries could resolve the escalating crisis.

The Kremlin has spent much of the week positioning Moscow as a potential peacemaker after Israel launched strikes on Iran, which retaliated with missiles and drones.

But Western leaders have pushed back on a role for Putin, and earlier this week, Moscow said Israel had shown little interest in its overtures.

"We are by no means seeking to act as a mediator; we are simply suggesting ideas," Putin said at an economic forum in Saint Petersburg.

"If they turn out to be attractive to both sides, we will only be happy."

While Moscow has condemned Israel's strikes, Russia has not offered military help to its ally Iran and has downplayed its obligations under a sweeping strategic partnership agreement signed just months ago.

The Russian foreign ministry on Thursday warned the United States against "military intervention" in the conflict, as it weighs joining Israel's strikes against Iran.

His comments came as White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said Iran could produce an atomic bomb in a couple of weeks".

Any US involvement in Israel's campaign would be expected to involve the bombing of a crucial underground nuclear facility in Fordow, using internal bunker-busting bombs that no other country possesses.

In Iran, people fleeing Israel's attacks described frightening scenes and difficult living conditions, including food shortages and limited internet access.

Government spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani said authorities had restricted internet access to avoid "problems" like cyberattacks.

Protests broke out in Tehran and other cities after Friday prayers, with demonstrators chanting slogans in support of their leaders, state television showed.

He warned that expansion of the Israeli-Iran conflict could ignite a fire no one can control and called on parties to the conflict and potential parties to the conflict to de-escalate.

The Trump administration yesterday said it had issued fresh Iran-related sanctions targeting eight entities, one vessel and one person for their alleged role in providing sensitive machinery for Tehran's defence industry.

Two of the entities include shipping companies based in Hong Kong: Unico Shipping Co Ltd and Athena Shipping Co Ltd, the statement said.

The death toll in Israel from Iranian missile strikes since June 13 was 25 people, according to authorities. Iran's attacks have resulted in the displacement of more than 8,000 Israelis, Yedioth Achronot reported, citing the Israeli Property Tax Compensation Fund.

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He added that he had bought Jira nazir paddy at Tk 1,730 per maund yesterday. It was Tk 1,550 before Eid.

During Eid, people eat red meat

The yield of paddy has been good this year, he said. But a handful of mill owners had brought enormous amounts of paddy, gaining significant control over the market.

Meanwhile, Enamul Haque, a chicken trader at Karwan Bazar, said Shonali chicken prices rose probably because demands have increased after the Eid.

He added that he had bought Jira nazir paddy at Tk 1,730 per maund yesterday. It was Tk 1,550 before Eid.

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A lot and for a while, the demand for chicken falls, he said.

At the fish market, the prices of each kg of hilsa, shrimp and ayer have increased by Tk 100-Tk 200 per kg while of rohu and katla increased by Tk 20-Tk 50 per kg.

Several traders at Karwan Bazar said as the demand for vegetables had yet to reach the pre-Eid levels, the prices remained low for many items.

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The government plans to conduct another DSA this month using the latest data to examine the vulnerability and ensure the transparency of debt management.

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