

Day 11: Chowk Bazaar Shopping Trip

I'm writing today's blog sitting on top of 2 huge sacks containing 150 school bags The Orphan Trust has bought that are tied on to the back of a bicycle cart. With me are Sister Bijoya and Suhel, We've just finished our dinner on board and are stuck in a seemingly endless sea of rickshaws.

We had ventured out in search of shoes and bags for the 150 girls of Bottomley House Orphanage. First stop we tried the renowned shoe brand Bata in Farmgate; a manic place with traffic heading in all directions in a cacophony of noise under a series of connecting pedestrian bridges. The prices here were extortionate so we headed south to Gulistan on the edge of Old Dhaka. We passed a very small political protest of a 100 chanting people before arriving at the shoe wholesale market, here prices were more than 3 times lower. We scoured the market's 3 floors searching for girl's school shoes of the best quality and price before agreeing a deal. We bought 1 of each size and tomorrow will see the great shoe fitting exercise at Bottomley House, with 150 pairs of feet to measure!

Next we took a cycle rickshaw and headed deep into Old Dhaka to Chowk Bazaar, on the way we past the city jail where a crowd and TV cameras were gathered and Suhel informed me that a political execution by hanging was about to take place. As the rickshaw weaved in and out of on coming traffic the roads became lanes and the lanes became narrower, I noticed an open manhole cover and then out popped a near-naked man! Farmgate is manic but Chowk Bazaar is an incredible mass of humanity crammed into a tiny, narrow road with goods of every kind being moved up and down on heads, shoulders and bicycle carts amongst other modes of transport. We quickly located the bag wholesale market and again searched out the best prices and quality. Once the deal was done the school bags were tied up in sacks ready for the journey home and are currently safely below me, very slowly winding their way back through the jammed streets to the orphanage.

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~~The journey back from Old Dhaka to Farmgate took just short of 2 hours, when we arrived back at~~
the orphanage the girls were all working hard sitting at their desks in a large hall studying. I headed back to Dhanmondi and stopped at Dhaka's famous Hotel Star Kebab which does a cracking lamb biriyani. It's back to Old Dhaka tomorrow to collect the 150 correct sized shoes!

By Christopher