

Dear future mayors, here's what the youth want

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With the Dhaka North and South city corporation elections almost upon us, we reached out to our city's youth, and asked them what they expect from their future mayors. We talked to students, young professionals, and even a few younger ones who, despite not being of voting age, still happen to have a lot at stake with the city's future greatly intertwined with theirs.

Here's what they had to say.

PROMOTE CLEANLINESS

"Dhaka is one of the most polluted cities in the world. The city, where filled with garbage, not only leads to deterioration of the atmosphere but also unpleasant sights. Cleanliness needs to be promoted, and actions must be taken accordingly. The late Mayor Anisul Huq took some good initiatives in this regard. But stronger steps need to be taken now for a better and a more thoroughly clean Dhaka city."

— Roshni Shamim, 23, Brac University

STREETLIGHTS, PLEASE

"Everything in Uttara is within close proximity, but people still resort to public transport as roads seem shady or sketchy. I don't think people in Uttara have fallen victim to mugging and pickpocketing as much. However, what scares us is the fact that the roads are too dark. Hence, I expect the mayor to implement proper road plans with functional streetlights."

— Tashfia Zaman, 23, Program Assistant, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition

SEPARATE THE TRASH

"We don't really separate our trash. All of it is dumped together. Dhaka could implement a simple three-way trash separation: organic, recyclable, and others. A better waste management system should be institutionalised."

— Mashrur Mahmud, 22, Islamic University of Technology (IUT)

TAKE AIR POLLUTION SERIOUSLY

"Don't allow the cutting down of so many trees and instead, plant more. I believe that the construction project of the Metro Rail is one of the reasons behind the increasing air pollution. More initiatives should be taken in that regard. In short, the mayor should take steps to keep air pollution under control."

— Anika Nawar, 22, North South University

MITIGATE THE TRAFFIC PROBLEM

"A better approach to our traffic problem should be put in motion with immediate effect. The way traffic is controlled in the Cantonment areas can work as a model for solving this issue. Unfit vehicles should be removed from the streets as soon as possible. There should also be a separate lane for ambulances and other emergency vehicles, something you see in foreign countries."

— Tanvir Ahmed, 25, Senior Auditor, Deloitte Bangladesh

SECURE THE CITY FOR WOMEN

"What troubles me is the rising number of sexual harassment cases in the city. I would want the mayor to focus on minimising this as much as possible. I

think the elected body should assure that all roads and streets are diligently monitored by CCTV cameras because the crime rate in a monitored area is less than an unmonitored one."

— Maisha Nazifa Kamal, 19, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET)

IMPROVE PUBLIC SPACES

"One of the worst things about Dhaka is the lack of public spaces. It'd be really nice to see plans addressing this issue, perhaps by redesigning existing public areas like *kacha bazar* into public squares or improving the lakeside areas in residential blocks by adding benches to sit on."

— Adepto Intisar Ahmed, 25, Researcher

THINK ABOUT THE DISADVANTAGED

"I think the mayor should plan for homeless people. As an example, creating an organisation, which will provide them with work such as sweeping the streets, collecting waste, planting trees, etc. This organisation can also educate them on family planning and birth control. In this way, many people will be employed and the children will not have to suffer without shelter."

— Sabrina Iqbal, 17, Dhaka City College

PLAN AHEAD FOR NEW DEVELOPMENTS

"There is a lack of planning when it comes to working on any new initiative. The roads in my area have been undergoing improvement for a while now. But the biggest problem is that when they work on these roads, they obviously have to close them off for a few days, or even weeks. They ended up closing off every entry and exit point at the same time, leaving just one entry. This led to huge traffic related problems. I hope in the future, they will think about how they are immobilising an entire area before taking up such initiatives."

— Mayabee Arannya, 21, Student, North South University

ESTABLISH MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT AND DRUG REHABILITATION CENTRES

"I think the mayor needs to install mental health support and drug rehabilitation centres. Young people are often seen trying to distract themselves by getting involved in unethical activities like drug abuse. As a result, the young generation is being derailed. This is something that needs to be taken care of."

— Khandker Nadia Naushin Hasan, 17, A Level candidate



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