



With room rents ranging from Tk 50 to Tk 150 per day, it's no wonder that the customers of Sadarghat's boarding houses prefer them over other cheap housing facilities, like a residential mess. On top of this, the rocking sensation created by waves and the sound of raindrop on their tin rooftops give this place a feel like no other.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



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We all live in a FLOATING HOME!

Life in Buriganga's boarding boats

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Right under Babubazar bridge in the capital, beside the Mitford morgue, there is a hub of floating boarding houses that many in the city have no clue of.

Made out of steel, these two-storey boat-boardings are almost like trawlers, only without any engines. When this correspondent visited the area recently, five of them were anchored at the bank of the river.

Inside the boats, rooms are roughly six feet in height, four-and-a-half feet in length and breadth. Depending on size, the rooms range from Tk 50 to 150, with the latter capable of housing five people at a time.

They remain open from 6:00am-2:00am, shutting down for three hours in fear of thieves.

This correspondent spoke to Shariatpur Muslim Boarding's manager Shah Jamal. He said its owner Abdus Sattar started the business, the first of its kind here, in 1960. After he passed away, he passed it on to his son. The two-storey hotel has a total of 52 rooms.

The manager said usual customers are people from the lower-income category,

especially those without a secure source of income. Unlike most paid living facilities, some customers stay here for years, with one particular customer staying for over 40 years!

The owners accommodate the customers by determining rates by keeping their convenience in mind. The boarding provides free blankets, water, and electricity.

When this correspondent spoke to Hasan (25), he was talking to his five-year-old son on video call. A fruit seller at Old Dhaka's Badamtoli, he said he's been staying here at a Tk 80 room for 6 months. He used to spend Tk 1,500 per month at a residential mess before, but said this is more convenient as the boarding house charges per day, with free amenities.

Faridpur Muslim Boarding's manager Mostafa Kamal said they've been running it for 33 years. The two-storey facility now has 48 rooms.

At Sabuj Mia's Boarding, formerly known as Buriganga Boarding, there are around 30 rooms. One of its customers Md Rasel works as a day labourer at Sadarghat area. He said he's been staying here for 7 years, at one of Sabuj Mia's Tk 50 mass rooms.

As a long-timer, he has build rapport with staffers, who often lend him money and let him stay on credit when times get hard.

"I enjoy the mild rocking sensation on the boat due to waves. It's not too noisy as it's quite far from the terminal. It also has a nice view, especially during monsoon, while the sound of raindrops on its tin roofs is just the icing on the cake," he said.

The boardings provide no food, but it can be brought in from the outside. Most of the boats are quite old, repaired constantly to keep them afloat.

Although there's just five such boats now, there used to be more, with around 10-11 in operation during the Pakistani period. During Ershad's regime, a Hindu-owned boat was torched in the aftermath of India's Babri Masjid massacre. This was one of the turning points, after which the numbers started falling.

The over 200 people who live in these five boats in close proximity kind of make up their own mohalla. Other than the persistent threat of mosquitoes and the foul smell of a decaying Buriganga, those who stay here say it makes for a pretty decent community life.

Too good to be true!

Syndicate extorts crores using fake website advertisements, 3 held

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Watch 25 advertisements online and earn Tk 300, or 12 for Tk 140 daily.

Circulating such advertisements on social media, a syndicate has extorted around Tk 1.60 crore from around 1,600 people in Dhaka and nearby districts.

Cyber and Special Crime Division DB has disclosed the fraud, following the arrest of three members of the syndicate from Dhaka and nearby districts recently.

The arrestees are Rubel Hasan (28), Mahim Ahmed Munna (21) and Rojina Akter (23).

Police recovered three cell phones and six SIM cards from their possession.

To commit the fraud, Rubel designed a website "www.rewardrupee.com" and claimed that it is an Indian company recruiting agents for Bangladesh.

To avail the offers, one had to become a member of this online platform by taking either "Standard" or "Basic" schemes, costing around Tk 10 and five thousand respectively.

Rubel then appointed nine agents to sell the packages "Standard" and "Basic" and got around 1600 members onboard.

Initially, the arrestees gave some of the promised money to the members over a couple of weeks.



But when their acquired amount crossed Tk 1.6 crore, they shut off operation of the site and stopped communicating with others, Junaed Alam Sharker, additional deputy commissioner of DB's cyber and special crime, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Agents used to receive Tk 500 and seven percent commissions for each new member they added to the schemes, he said.

"We have got details of some five to six people involved with the scam, who are now on the run. A drive is currently underway to arrest them," said the DB official.

When asked about where the money went, ADC Junaed said arrestee Rubel has bought some lands and built houses as well.

"We are currently working to collect details of the expenses," he added.

CEC, 4 others face contempt of court rule

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday issued a contempt of court rule against Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda and four other government officials on charge of violating its directive for not publishing the polls result of a ward under Pomra Union Parishad in Rangunia of Chattogram.

In the rule, the HC asked them to explain in four weeks why they should not be punished for committing contempt of court by violating its order.

The four others are Election Commission Secretary Md Humayun Kabir Khandaker, Deputy Commissioner of Chattogram Mominur Rahman, Rangunia's Upazila Nirbahi Officer Bayezid Alam and presiding officer concerned Ratan Kumar Kanti.

The HC bench of Justice Mamnoon Rahman and Justice Khandaker Diliruzzaman came up with the rule following a contempt of court petition filed by Ahmed Kabir, candidate for the post of member of Pomra Union.

Lawyer ABM Altaf Hossain and Abul Kasem appeared for the petitioner.

Following a petition filed by Ahmed Kabir, the HC on December 12 last year directed the CEC to dispose of in 15 days an application submitted by him (Kabir), who brought allegation of anomalies in the number of votes cast in Ward No-2 of the union for the general and reserved seats.

In the application, he requested the CEC and other respondents to recount the votes cast.

The HC also directed not to publish the gazette notification of the election result of the ward concerned until the application is disposed of.

In violation of the HC order, the EC published the gazette notification on the election result on December 23, declaring another candidate passed in the election, lawyer Abul Kashem told The Daily Star.



Success depends on president's steps

Says law minister on EC talks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday said to understand whether the president's dialogue with political parties over formation of the Election Commission (EC) is a failure or a success, everyone needs to wait for when the head of the state takes steps after its conclusion.

He said this in response to a comment made by Dr Akbar Ali Khan, noted economist and former adviser to the caretaker government, on this issue.

On Saturday, Akbar Ali Khan told a programme in Dhaka that the formation of a search committee will yield no good results as the EC will eventually be constituted with the persons picked by the government.

The minister's comments came in light of this, when he was speaking to reporters while exchanging new-year greetings with law ministry officials at his secretariat office.

"There is freedom of speech in Bangladesh. Therefore, any citizen can express his or her opinion. I think he (Dr Akbar) has expressed his opinion as he has the right to do so," he said.

Anisul Huq said it will be good for BNP and all others if the party joins the president's dialogue.

"If BNP does not participate in the dialogue, it is their decision. If BNP feels the situation has become 'toxic', they (BNP leaders) will have to take some steps to come out of it. I think it will be positive for all if BNP joins the dialogue," he said.

The law minister said a law will be formulated over the formation of the EC, but there is no scope for the formation of a law within this period by the time the tenure of the present EC expires.

"The law should be made in such a manner that it is acceptable to all. If the law is acceptable to a single political party, it will not be universal," he said.

The formation of the (election) commission will depend on the dialogue, he added.



Demanding nationalisation of the village police force, Bangladesh Village Police Staffers Union staged a demo in front of the press club yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

No polls-time govt

Says agriculture minister

STAR REPORT

Though BNP has been demanding a polls-time government, Agriculture Minister Dr Muhammad Abdur Razzaque yesterday said there will be no such government during the next parliamentary election.

He said elections will be held as per the constitution, which does not have provision for forming polls-time government.

Also a presidium member of Awami League, Razzaque said, "BNP has been giving threats of waging movement. But by giving threats the BNP will not refrain us from following the constitution."

"Election will be held with or without participation of the BNP," he said, adding that BNP is afraid of the election that is why they do

not want to participate.

The minister was speaking at a discussion, cheque distribution and cultural function at Shaheed Srity Pouro Udyan in Tangail town.

He said the government will form an Election Commission upon which everyone will have confidence. This commission will create a level playing field for all and make arrangements for free, fair and impartial elections in the country.

During the election, the EC will control everything, including the army, law enforcement agencies, and administration. Therefore, if any party does not participate in the election, it is their responsibility, he added.

The programme was organised by the district administration, district social service office and voluntary organisations to mark National Social Service Day.

PRAYER
TIMING
JAN 3



	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
Azan	5:30	12:45	4:00	5:30	7:00
Jamaat	6:05	1:15	4:15	5:35	7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION