



PHOTO: SHADAB SHAHROKH HAI

# MAMA HOTEL a favourite of DU students

ASHIF AHMED RUDRO

It all started at the hands of one Kasim Uddin, who used to sell "khichuri" on a van at the gate of Shahid Sergeant Zahurul Huq Hall in the '90s.

The students called him "mama" out of fondness. So, once the restaurant started, it naturally took the name "Mama Hotel". The version of Mama Hotel that everyone knows today actually came together in 2002.

Mama is no longer with us, but the hotel remains. Now, it is run by his wife and three sons, who are dedicated to this business and its legacy.

"It started with the magic of my father's hands. Now we are thriving under our mother's leadership," said Hridoy Hossain Rana, the youngest of the three sons.

## THE MENU

It's a proper "bhaater hotel", meaning they are focused on rice and traditional dishes. This is why they open as late as noon and run until midnight.

The menu is pretty straightforward.



Just plain rice with a lot of dishes that include, but are not limited to, chicken jhal fry, beef and mutton brain, a variety of fish curries, daal, different types of vegetables and bhaji, bharta, and of course, Mama Hotel's signature onion salad, which is complimentary and has been a speciality of the eatery since its inception.

## THE REGULAR CUSTOMERS

Students of Dhaka University are the most frequent customers here, along with students from Dhaka College or

other nearby educational institutes. Mama Hotel is very popular amongst the people who stay or spend time around the Nilkhet area.

Anytime you step into Mama Hotel, you can probably find at least one Dhaka University student eating there.

The other customers include people from local businesses or former students who return out of nostalgia.

"Sometimes corporate employees come back here. They come in groups. To get that old feeling," confirms Hridoy.

## WHY IS IT SO POPULAR?

Md Shamim is a former student of Dhaka University, who works at a private bank now. He remembers his university days quite clearly.

"The price wasn't too high compared to the hall canteen. That was an important factor. On top of that, the menu had a variety of options which was an escape from the monotonous

canteen menu," he recalled, stating that mutton brain was his favourite at Mama Hotel.

"Other restaurants are always cheapskates about the salad. At Mama Hotel, you can ask for as much salad as you want and they don't mind," he added.

Saikat Barua, who works at BUET, had similar feelings to share.

"I quite like the prawn items and daal bharta. And the onion salad that they offer for free," he said, pointing out that the low price and the friendly behaviour of the staff was one of the main reasons he loved dining there.

"If I go there now, it's more out of emotion rather than food," Saikat admitted.

During lunch and dinner hours, it's difficult to find a seat at Mama Hotel. But that doesn't annoy the regular customers. They are well aware of the popularity of this place and they don't mind waiting a few minutes. The bond this place has with its customers is truly interesting, wholesome and perhaps worth checking out.

## Diesel price hiked by Tk 1 per litre, petrol and octane by Tk 2.50

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has hiked the price of diesel by Tk 1 per litre, and the prices of petrol and octane by Tk 2.50 per litre.

The new prices will come into effect on May 1 (12:00am), said a gazette of the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources.

According to the gazette, after the price hike, a litre of diesel will cost Tk 107, petrol Tk 124.50 and octane Tk 128.50.

The government has taken a policy to adjust local fuel prices with the international market from March this year.

In April, diesel and kerosene prices were reduced by Tk 2.25 per litre with an automatic pricing formula while petrol and octane prices remained unchanged.

In the first adjustment of March, per litre prices of diesel and kerosene had dropped by Tk 0.75, Octane by Tk 4, and petrol by Tk 3.

## 3 arrested over rape, blackmail of woman

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jashore

Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) arrested three young men over the rape and blackmail of a woman in Jashore's Sharsha upazila Monday night.

The arrestees are Shariful Islam, 19, Morshed Alam Shanto, 20, and Rifad Hossain, 19.

The victim filed a rape case against five men, including the three arrested, with Sharsha Police Station on April 20, said a PBI press release yesterday.

PBI District Superintendent of Police Reshma Sharmin said the trio would be produced to the court later in the day.

During an initial interrogation, the trio admitted their involvement in the crimes stated in the complaint and disclosed the names of their accomplices.

"We are trying to arrest the other accused," she added.

According to the police complaint, the victim's husband is a truck driver and mostly stays out of home. Taking advantage of his absence on March 10, their relative Imran Hossain, the key suspect, and four of his associates raped the woman at her house and filmed the incident.

They also demanded Tk 5 lakh and threatened to release the video on social media if they did not get the money, it added.

## Stressed loans

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"We expect the revised guidelines to increase levels of NPLs and provisions, which will strain banks' profitability in the near term," Moody's said in a report yesterday.

The removal of forbearance measures will push banks to recognise loans to weak borrowers as non-performing in the long term and set aside adequate provisions, a long term credit positive because it will improve their resilience in times of stress, it said.

The global credit ratings agency, however, expects NPLs to increase by 50 basis points until September 2024.

"We expect stressed loans, including performing loans with modified payment terms, as well as NPLs, to remain elevated."

This is because banks are likely to step up collection efforts on overdue loans to contain higher levels of slippage to non-performing, and may also take advantage of relatively lenient guidelines to restructure overdue loans to contain the impact on profitability.

The revised guidelines are an outcome of the central bank's initiatives related to Bangladesh's programme with the International Monetary Fund to strengthen loan classification and provisioning rules, eliminate forbearance measures and align with global best practices.

## Eleven die

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Besides, the DGHS surveillance does not cover private healthcare facilities that outnumber government ones.

Yesterday, mercury reached a record-breaking 43.8 degrees Celsius in Jashore, said Meteorologist Abul Kalam Mallick, adding that Chuadanga saw 43.7C.

As per DGHS data, 10 of the heatstroke victims were men and one was a woman. Of the four people reported dead yesterday, two were in Madaripur and two in Chattogram.

Earlier, one each was reported dead in Chuadanga, Khulna, Habiganj, Rajbari, Jhenaidah, Lalmonirhat and Bandarban.

As of yesterday, five people were admitted to hospitals after suffering heatstrokes.

Doctors at government hospitals are receiving online training based on a draft "Guideline on Management of Heat Related Illness", said Prof Abul Bashar Mohammed Khurshid Alam, director general of the DGHS, adding that the draft will be finalised soon.

Symptoms of heatstroke include a body temperature of 40C or more, increased heart rate, vomiting, fast breathing, excessive sweating, confusion, slurred speech, and loss of consciousness.

## WEATHER FORECAST

A Met office statement says rain or thunder showers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely to occur today at a few places over Sylhet division and at one or two places over Chattogram division with hail at isolated places.

## No decision on closure of secondary edn institutions

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Officials said they heard about the HC order through the media, but did not receive a copy of the order.

"We are respectful to the court. It is hard to make any comment on the court order. I don't want to comment on this," he told reporters at his ministry.

Asked about keeping schools shut for Thursday, Mohibul said, "There is still some time. We hope we will be able to see the court order. We will follow the order."

Education ministry officials said they are in favour of announcing closure of schools in those districts which are experiencing severe heatwave. They, however, said this stance may change once they receive the certified copy of the HC order.

Officials said they will have to close all educational institutions for tomorrow if they cannot lodge the appeal with the apex court.

Schools and colleges were scheduled

to reopen on April 21 after the Eid and Pahela Baishakh holidays. But the education ministry initially extended the closure until April 27 and reopened all schools and colleges on Sunday ignoring concerns of parents.

On Monday, the ministry again announced closure of all schools and colleges in 27 districts for Tuesday.

Mohibul yesterday said closing schools and carrying out other activities like implementing the curriculum are operational jobs of the executive branch of the state, which makes decisions following discussion with different stakeholders.

He said Met offices reported high temperatures in some districts and the ministry was taking decisions on keeping the schools in those districts shut. "The ministry is making decisions on a daily basis."

The minister said academic activities are being disrupted in different haor and char areas in the dry season. The situations in Dhaka and the country's

remote areas are different, he added.

"Keeping English medium schools, where children of affluent parents study, open and the general schools, where children of workers and the masses study, closed is apparently discriminatory," he said.

Referring to the discussion on the social media over closure of schools and a cartoon run by The Daily Star yesterday, Mohibul said, "They should also think about the marginalised people. You cannot only consider the influential, affluent and capital-centric parents."

"It is not appropriate for us to run the government by listening to what is being said in the social media space."

Speaking at an event in the capital in the afternoon, the minister said they are planning to frame a policy so that the district education offices can make decisions on closing schools considering the local weather conditions and disasters.

## More exchange rate flexibility needed

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improvement in macroeconomic performance. The growth has been projected at 5.7 percent for this fiscal year and 6.6 percent for next fiscal year.

"There have been improvements in monetary policy framework and improvements in fiscal performance."

"I think where Bangladesh was struggling was with the current account, which was just balanced, partly because there was restraint on imports."

Srinivasan, however, said the financial account was not performing very well. "So, in some sense, you could see the reserve was depleting and taka was coming under pressure."

The current account records a nation's transactions with the rest of the world, while the financial account is a component of a country's balance of payments that covers liabilities to foreigners.

Srinivasan further said Bangladesh should allow greater flexibility in its exchange rate to address issues in its external account, particularly the deficit in the financial account.

"Once you implement this, you will see a greater sense of stability returning to the external account."

This suggestion from the Washington-based lender comes as Bangladesh Bank has yet to allow market forces to fully determine the exchange rate, with two banking bodies periodically announcing the rates.

During the July-March period of the current fiscal year, the current

account balance, a major component of the Balance of Payment (BoP), was in surplus by \$4.7 billion.

In contrast, the financial account, another key part of the BoP that includes foreign direct investments and short, medium, and long-term loans, suffered from an \$8.3 billion deficit. This is nearly four times the deficit from the same period a year ago as shown by Bangladesh Bank.

Srinivasan said that with reforms in the exchange rate and improvements in fiscal policy, Bangladesh should see a more sustained recovery from the crisis that every country in the region has faced due to multiple shocks.

Bangladesh entered the IMF's \$4.7 billion loan programme in January last year. The IMF has set two types of conditions - six performance conditions and several structural conditions. Maintaining the net international reserves (NIR) was one of the main conditions.

In the first review in November last year, the country failed to meet an NIR of \$24.46 billion as of June 30 last year. Later, the global lender revised it down in December last year, and March and June this year. But Bangladesh failed to meet the target set for both December and March. The country may also fail to meet the target set for June this year.

The reserve situation has not improved much since the commencement of the loan programme. The country's gross forex reserves have been hovering around \$20 billion in recent months, as per an

IMF calculation. It was \$19.97 billion on April 24.

The government had expected the reserves to improve after the January 7 election, but it did not.

According to the IMF assessment, the reason behind the deficit in the financial account is that the exchange rate is not market-based. As a result, export proceeds are not coming to the country while remittances are coming through unofficial channels.

A mission of the IMF has been reviewing the conditions of the loan programme before releasing the third tranche worth \$681 million, expected in June.

A finance ministry official said IMF could put more conditions to make the exchange rate market-oriented.

## 15pc workers'

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Initially, the penalty for such violations was Tk 5,000, but it could be raised to Tk 25,000, Anisul said.

He said they would listen to all stakeholders or international agencies until the labour amendment bill is passed.

The delegation, led by ILO country office director Tuomo Poutiainen, consisted of Tim De Meyer, senior adviser on Standards Policy of International Labour Standards Department, Chayanich Thamparipattra, Trade for Decent Work technical officer, and ILO country office senior programme officers Md Saidul Islam and Ruksana Yasmin Arzoo.

## The invisible ones

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limits; wage structure; workplace safety; compensation after one's death; workplace injury compensation, treatment, rehabilitation; retirement benefit; maternity leave; and pension.

"Unemployment situation is so bad that people are bound to work under any conditions," he said.

Ratan said informal workers are the main drivers of our economy. "But their lives and livelihoods are always at risk. The state must take some responsibility for their housing, health, rations and pension."

Rizwanul said that in many developed countries, even small enterprises and the self-employed are regulated. Minimum wage, hours of work, and contributions to pension have to be ensured in Bangladesh.

He said rights should be looked into in a broader framework to cover not only workers but the self-employed and micro employers.

In addition, it is important to give attention to issues relating to workplace conditions, improving safety, and raising productivity, said Rizwanul.

Sultan of BLS said Bangladesh does not have any national rules for wage.

"In its absence, wages are determined on a piecemeal basis. And this is one of the main reasons for the widening of the income gap," he said.

There is no system for a family to get compensation in case a worker dies at the workplace.

He said labour law should cover whoever is employed.

Sultan said it's impossible to ensure true development with a labour law that keeps 85 percent of the workforce out of its purview.

He demanded appointment letters and a minimum national wage for the informal sector workers.

He said the workers should also be covered by social safety net protection.

## PM blasts US crackdown

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but they do not see their own faces in the mirror, Hasina said.

She questioned what the Americans would have done if any cop was attacked by any political party in the US like the BNP did in Bangladesh recently.

The premier denounced the recent killings of some Bangladeshis in the US, including two brutally killed a few days ago.

"I am protesting those killings. They went there to earn their livelihoods. Why those should be killed like this?" she said.

Hasina further said how will those who always talk about upholding human rights respond to these murders.

"How will they answer to this? I am demanding an answer. I am demanding answers from the human rights organisations, the justice department and those who impose sanctions on us."

Calling upon world leaders to stop the genocide in Palestine, Hasina said, "Actually genocide is being committed in Palestine by the Israeli forces. We are protesting that continuously. Whenever I go abroad, I register my protest against the genocide by the Israeli forces and ask all world leaders to stop the war."

Talking about the heatwave in the country, the AL chief urged all to stay safe. She said heatwaves not only swept over Bangladesh, but also over the entire South and Southeast Asia. She requested all to plant trees in the coming rainy season.

Hasina said Himalayan ice is melting due to scorching heat and that is why the flow in the Teesta river has doubled this year compared to previous years.

All the rivers originating from the Himalayas are having more water this year, she continued.

"Because of the melting of ice, the rivers are swelling. That is a silver lining for us. This will ensure better irrigation for us."

Describing the achievements made by her successive governments in different sectors, the PM said Bangladesh has become a role model for development in the world and its advancement will be continued braving all odds.

She also blasted the so-called politicians and intellectuals for spreading propaganda against the country's progress and prosperity.

Although many expected that the ALCWC meeting would discuss the upcoming upazila polls, to be held in phases from May 8, as many close relatives of ministers and AL lawmakers are running defying the party's directive, no discussion was held on this issue.

When a working committee member raised the issue before the meeting, the AL chief said they will discuss the issue later, said meeting sources.

Hasina asked her party leaders to get united ignoring all differences among themselves.

The meeting also decided to celebrate the diamond jubilee of the AL, and Hasina's Homecoming Day.

AL was founded on June 23, 1949. Hasina had returned home on May 17, 1981, ending six years in exile.

Meanwhile, the prime minister will address a press conference at the Gono Bhaban at 10:00am tomorrow to inform the media about the outcome of her recent visit to Thailand.