

# DHAKA NOT FOR BEGINNERS!

## Capital now 6th least liveable city on Liveability Index

HELEMUL ALAM

Dhaka is not for beginners. This is a popular saying among Dhakaites, particularly the younger ones, who often make memes and write satires on this topic.

The megacity has a multitude of challenges that can overwhelm the unprepared.

Here, the air is so polluted that it can be life-threatening.

Even an hour-long rain can bring the capital to a standstill, with city roads remaining waterlogged for hours.

Besides, traffic congestion is a regular phenomenon in this

city, adding to the chaotic public transport system.

Not to mention, the overburdened and expensive healthcare system and dengue woes leave many vulnerable.

On top of that, infrastructure, often built hastily and skirting regulations, raises safety concerns with missing fire exits and questionable construction practices.

However, the metro rail service has been a breath of fresh air lately.

A recent study has confirmed what Dhaka residents have known all along – the capital of Bangladesh is one of the worst cities to live in.

Dhaka has slipped two notches to 168th in the Economist Group's Global

Liveability Index 2024 report. This decline from last year's 166th rank has placed Dhaka just above Karachi, while Kyiv, the war-torn capital of Ukraine, ranks three places higher.

The annual global survey, published yesterday, assessed the liveability of 173 cities based on stability, healthcare, culture and environment, education, and infrastructure.

Vienna, Copenhagen, Zurich, Melbourne, and Calgary top the list, while Damascus, Tripoli, Algiers, Lagos and Karachi occupy the bottom ranks.

**EXPERTS BLAME GOVT**

Adil Mohammed Khan, president

of Bangladesh Institute of Planners, attributes Dhaka's poor ranking to a lack of significant improvements across key sectors.

"This index is prepared on different issues like education, infrastructure, communications, and health. But we do not have any such sectors where we have improved a lot," he said.

Adil acknowledged some progress in mass transit, particularly with the metro rail, but deemed it insufficient for a megacity like Dhaka.

"We have failed to prepare a good public transport system, we have failed to curb pollution, and there is a lack of playgrounds for our kids," he said.

"There is no significant sign of improvement in planning and management of Dhaka city. Many new buildings are being developed, destroying green spaces," he added.

He suggested setting five or ten-year goals to ensure systematic development.

Adil also highlighted the necessity of gradually shifting industries out of Dhaka to reduce pressure on the city.

Iqbal Habib, vice president of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, also criticised the government for neglecting to improve the living conditions in Dhaka in a planned way.



### Modernised curriculum will help students flourish: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the curriculum has been modernised to enable the hidden talents of students to flourish.

"Just reading books is not enough. We'll have to bring out the talents of small children. It needs to create scopes for them so that their hidden talents can be flourished. With that view, we've included modern technology-based knowledge in the curriculum," she said.

The premier said this while inaugurating the National Primary Education Week-2024 and conferring the Primary Education Medal 2023 in the city's Osmani Memorial Auditorium.

The prime minister said the government wants to develop a balanced, public welfare-oriented, universal and standard education system.

"We initially started

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



### No accidents occurred due to signal error

#### Rail minister tells JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Railways Minister Zillul Hakim yesterday in parliament claimed that no accident has occurred so far due to an error in the signal system by Bangladesh Railways.

The minister said this while replying to a tabled question of Awami League MP M Abdul Latif.

He said projects are underway to establish railway connections in all districts and continuously modernise the signalling system of the entire railway, alongside procuring high quality engines and coaches.

Meanwhile, Textile and Jute Minister Jahangir Kabir Nanak informed the House that the government has earned about Tk 10,454 crore by exporting jute from 2012-13 to 2022-23.

He came up with the disclosure while responding to a question from AL MP Morshed Alam.

# Need more women in community policing

## Speakers tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women's participation in Community Policing Forums across Bangladesh has increased over the years, but it still remains below expectations, speakers said at a discussion yesterday.

The discussion titled "Towards Gender Equality: Gender-Responsive Community Policing in Bangladesh" was organised jointly by UN Women and The Daily Star at The Daily Star Centre. Academicians, top female police officers, legal specialists, and gender activists participated in the event.

Amena Begum, deputy inspector general (Special Branch) of police, praised community policing for preventing crimes by engaging local people, including women.

"Females are still underrepresented in the police force, which was further impacted after the abolition of



Speakers at the discussion organised jointly by UN Women and The Daily Star at The Daily Star Centre yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

the female quota in government jobs. Recently, 100 officers joined the police force through BCS, and only four of them are female," she said.

Amena emphasised the need for more female representation in the police force.

"Only one-third of female police personnel can be engaged

in operational activities due to various issues, including leave and maternity leave," she added.

Tania Haque, a professor of Women and Gender Studies at Dhaka University, highlighted persistent negative perceptions toward female police members, though attitudes are gradually shifting.

Female police personnel can contribute significantly, especially at the grassroots, if provided with a proper environment and infrastructural facilities, she said.

Rekha Saha, legal aid secretary of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, pointed to societal attitudes and beliefs that foster gender-based discrimination and violence against women.

"Community policing has a big role here. If police can reach the community with confidence and trust, a significant change may occur," she said.

Alfrida Rubai, assistant inspector general (Community and Beat Policing) at Police Headquarters, said more than 49,000 CPF committees exist nationwide, with around 45,000 female members.

Alfrida acknowledged that while continuous training sessions are being conducted to

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

### Why are they fleeing abroad?

#### AL MP Qamrul Islam on Benazir, Matiur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League MP Qamrul Islam yesterday raised concerns in parliament about Benazir Ahmed, Matiur Rahman, and others evading the law by fleeing abroad.

"Why are those accused afraid of facing the law? Why do they flee abroad?" he asked.

He argued that these individuals' fear of the law implies their guilt.

"We who do politics are ashamed to see the pictures of all these corrupt people, bank robbers," he added.

Ruling party MP Aroma Dutta said some opportunistic individuals are tarnishing the country's image and they should be given exemplary punishment.

Independent MP Mohammad Huchamuddin Chowdhury from Sylhet echoed the call for justice against those involved in corruption.

Another Independent MP Akhtaruzzaman said inflation should be reduced.

"The finance minister has unveiled a plan for this. But it is the same model which failed in the United States five years ago," he claimed.

**Why are those accused afraid of facing the law? These individuals' fear of the law implies their guilt.**

# 'From protector to rights violator'

## Speakers on the role of state

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country's human rights situation, including freedom of expression and people's right to vote, is in crisis since the ruling class has "turned into violator from protector," said speakers at a discussion yesterday.

Many people are now apprehensive about speaking freely, said the speakers, who included university teachers, journalists, and rights activists.

Human Rights Support Society (HRSS) organised the discussion as part of its "10th Human Rights Conference-2024" at the capital's Bishwo Shahitto Kendro.

Amid such a situation, ensuring people's right to vote could be a way to express their silent opinions. However, their voting rights have been snatched away and public representatives were either elected by a small number of voters or won elections uncontested, said speakers.

Abu Sayeed Khan, advisory editor of Bangla daily Samakal, said human rights cannot be upheld without democracy since they are correlated.

However, Bangladesh as a nation had never experienced a full-fledged democracy; instead, what it has seen is "electocracy," as people could have their say during the regimes, he added.

"Yet, such rights have been snatched away



**Ensuring people's right to vote could be a way to express their silent opinions. However, their voting rights have been snatched away and public representatives were either elected by a small number of voters or won elections uncontested.**

and the state has become more reckless," he said, adding that a culture of fear persists in society and people cannot speak out against the powerful.

Pointing to the deteriorating rights situation

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



A boy starts running across the road to go to the other side while his mother and sister climb over a divider to follow him. Despite being illegal, buses continue to drop off passengers in the middle of this approach road to the Padma Bridge in the capital's Postagola area. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN