



Understanding the 'Dhaka Dhakka' phenomenon

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Moving to a new city can be intimidating, and when it's Dhaka, there are bound to be some stories.

Cultural shock is a real thing and it can happen even within your own country. Moving to Dhaka comes with such experiences and instead of cultural shock, I like to call these -- "Dhaka Dhakka."

Here are a few things that are common in Dhaka, but usually surprising to the newcomers:

NOT KNOWING YOUR NEIGHBOUR

If you come from a rural area, chances are that you know almost everyone in your village.

Some people are even so well informed that they can tell you what their neighbour is cooking for dinner on any given day.

But this is hardly the case in Dhaka. Unless you have been living close by for a long time, people in Dhaka barely know their neighbours. And in most cases, they do not have the time or the patience for it either.

IT'S ALIVE 24/7

Village markets get dizzy by 10:00pm. By 11:00pm, everyone is closing up.

In remote areas, late nights are quiet, desolate, and frighteningly dark. Dhaka is not bound by any such schedule.

Even at midnight, there are people



PHOTO: SAZZAD IBNE SAYED

on the roads, and many places are found buzzing at midnight, such as Nazirabazar.

Places like Karwanbazar and other wholesale markets in Dhaka are equally noisy in the middle of the night as they are at any other time of the day. Dhaka is alive every hour of the day and every day of the week.

NOBODY CARES ABOUT OTHERS

There are so many people in Dhaka and everyone is so busy with themselves that nobody has the time to sit back and care about what another person is doing.

In smaller cities and villages, you find that people will stop and stare. Some would even come up and inquire sometimes.

This happens more often in villages where individualism hasn't quite caught up yet and the concept of privacy is still alien. So, everyone is interested in someone else's business.

But in Dhaka, nobody has the time or interest to care about what others are doing.

LOVE FOR SLEEP

Sure, Dhaka is alive 24/7 and buzzing even at midnight, but the city loves to

sleep more than anything else.

One can really feel that on weekends and other national holidays. While you might be used to people starting their day as early as possible back in your hometown, Dhaka reminds you that there is no need to rush into the day when it's your day off.

On workdays, Dhaka will surprise you with its millions of commuters and their dedication but on holidays, you can expect to start the day as late as possible. Even the shops will open late so you're better off sleeping.

'THERE'S A MARKET FOR THAT'

Remember that time when people used to say "There's an app for that?" Well, Dhaka is sort of like that.

If you are looking for something, there probably is a market for that somewhere in Dhaka.

From common items such as books and clothes to unique items such as antiques and paintings -- whatever you need -- there is a marketplace for that in Dhaka. All you have to do is ask around.

Digesting the "Dhaka Dhakka" can take some time. For those who are willing to embrace the city, it can happen fast.

But if you are scared by Dhaka, then it's not going to get any easier because Dhaka is many things, but forgiving is not one of them.

Erdoğan calls Yunus, promises aid for flood victims

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan congratulated Bangladesh Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus on assuming leadership of the interim government over a phone call yesterday.

During the call, President Erdoğan condoned the loss of valuable lives in the flood-affected areas of Bangladesh and said Turkey would provide humanitarian aid to the flood-stricken people.

Chief Adviser Yunus thanked the Turkish president, who is a long-time friend of the 2006 Nobel laureate.

He called for increased trade with Turkey and said Bangladesh would need Turkish investment in key sectors, including manufacturing, in which Turkey is a formidable global power.

President Erdoğan said he would soon send a high-powered delegation to Bangladesh in their efforts to help rebuild the country.

He invited the chief adviser to visit Turkey. Prof Yunus accepted the offer, saying he would visit the country at a convenient time.

The chief adviser also invited President Erdoğan to visit Bangladesh. He also accepted the offer.

Student returns from Assam after backlash on social media

STAR REPORT

A Bangladeshi student studying in India's Assam returned home on Monday as many people reacted angrily to her heart emoji reaction on an "anti-India" post on social media, PTI reported yesterday, quoting local police.

The student of the National Institute of Technology in Silchar requested the institution's authorities to allow her to return to Bangladesh, Cachar Superintendent of Police Numal Mahatta said.

The SP said the fourth-semester student of the electronic and communication department of NIT was sent back through the Integrated Check Post (ICP) at Sutarbandi in Karimganj district.

"This is not a case of deportation... She reacted with a lovesymbol in anti-India post on Facebook by her senior and NIT Silchar alumnus who left India around six months back after completing his course. He now lives in Bangladesh," Mahatta said.

UCB freed

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including approval of loans, according to the insiders.

The central bank constituted a five-member board for the bank, including two shareholder directors and three independent directors.

Sharif Zahir, chairman of National Finance, was made a shareholder director. Zahir is also the managing director of Ananta Group and a former vice chairman of UCB.

Md Tanvir Khan, director of Eastland Insurance, is the other shareholder director.

Sajjad Hossain, former executive director of Bangladesh Bank, Yusuf Ali, former deputy managing director of Agrani Bank, and Obaidur Rahman, a chartered accountant, were named independent directors.

The new board was constituted to protect the interests of the depositors and ensure good governance as per section 45 of the Bank Company Act, 1991, read a letter from the central bank to the UCB managing director.

Saifuzzaman has acquired at least 260 properties in the United Kingdom, paying at least 134.76 million British pounds or Tk 1,888 crore, according to The Daily Star's calculation based on company filings that are publicly available on UK government websites.

The three-time Awami League lawmaker also has at least 537 mortgages against properties in the UK, a majority of which are in London.

Allegations are also rife about the former land minister using UCB for personal gain.

The Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit found that Saifuzzaman and Rukhmila have also amassed huge fortunes in the United States and Dubai.

Saifuzzaman is a relative of S Alam Group Chairman Mohammed Saiful Alam.

TWO BANKS FREED OF S ALAM
The S Alam Group's dominance over two banks, namely Global Islami Bank and Union Bank, was upended yesterday as the Bangladesh Bank dissolved their boards, which were heavily controlled by individuals linked to the conglomerate.

In recent days, National Bank, Islami Bank Bangladesh and Social Islami Bank have also been freed from the S Alam Group's clutches.

The central bank dissolved the 21-member board of Global Islami Bank and 11-member board of Union Bank, and appointed five independent directors for each.

Mohammad Nurul Amin, former managing director of Meghna Bank, has been appointed as chairman of Global Islami Bank's board following his selection as an independent director.

Similarly, the banking watchdog appointed Md Farid Uddin Ahmed as the chairman of Union Bank after selecting him as an independent director.

Ahmed is a former managing director of Islami Bank Bangladesh.

Founded in 1985 by Mohammed Saiful Alam, a relative of former Awami League politician Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury Babu, S Alam Group has grown into one of the largest conglomerates in Bangladesh.

The banks have been facing huge deficits in their current account balances with the central bank for more than a year due to widespread loan irregularities and scams.

Govt sets up inquiry commission

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Action Battalion, Border Guard Bangladesh, the Criminal Investigation Department, the Special Branch, the Ansar Battalion, National Security Intelligence, military forces, and the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI).

The commission will provide descriptions of the incidents of enforced disappearance to the authorities concerned and make recommendations, according to a gazette notification of the Cabinet Division.

Relatives will be informed if the commission discovers someone forcibly disappeared, said the notification signed by Cabinet Secretary Md Mahub Hossain.

It will also gather information from the investigation already carried out by any agency or organisation on the incidents of enforced disappearances.

The other four members of the commission are Justice Md Farid Ahmed Shibli, another former judge of the High Court, rights activists Nur Khan and Sazzad Hossain, and Nabila Idris, a teacher at BRAC University.

They will submit the report to the government after completing their investigation within 45 working days in line with the Commissions of Inquiry Act, 1956, under which the

commission has been formed.

Sanjida Islam Tulee, coordinator of Mayer Daak, a platform for the families of victims of enforced disappearance, said, "The investigation process must be transparent and the report must not seek to hide any of its findings. A system must be set up for victims to submit evidence."

The AL's narrative regarding reports of enforced disappearances unravelled after the horrifying stories of people, who were confined to secret detention centres, became public following the dramatic fall of Hasina's government.

The victims of enforced disappearance began to speak out after their release from the secret facilities known as "Aynaghar". These victims come from different age groups and political and social backgrounds, but their narratives of the thick-walled, iron-door prison cells are strikingly similar. These facilities are notorious for their complete isolation, with detainees unable to see any light from the outside world.

Many of these were run by the DGFI. The agency's heads are reportable directly to the prime minister and the prime minister's security adviser.

At a meeting with the DGFI on August 6, a six-member team,

including rights activists and a UN representative, demanded access to the detention facility. The team was allowed to visit the DGFI headquarters in Dhaka on August 7.

After coming out of the facility, rights activist Shirren Huq told families of some victims that the DGFI said there were no detainees in their Dhaka facility. The agency also said that they would form a joint commission to arrange visits for rights activists to 23 other facilities across the country to see if the victims of enforced disappearance were there.

Now demands are being made from the families of the victims, rights activists and different other quarters to put an end to such torture in confinement to Aynaghar-style facilities.

According to rights organisation Odhikar, at least 708 people were victims of enforced disappearance between 2009 and June 2024.

The US in December 2021 imposed sanctions on Rab and seven of its top officers over serious rights abuses. It said the Rab and other Bangladeshi law enforcement agencies were responsible for more than 600 enforced disappearances since 2009 and nearly 600 extrajudicial killings since 2018.

Major reshuffle in police force

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Over the last one week, 13 top police officers have been sent into forced retirement in "public interest".

Many of these officials have been alleged to have used excessive force to suppress the student movement that toppled the AL government on August 5.

Much-talked-about names like Monirul Islam, additional IGP at Special Branch; Habibur Rahman, DMP commissioner; Atiqul Islam, additional IGP of police headquarters; Mohammad Ali Miah, CID chief; and Krishna Pada Roy, additional IGP of the Police Headquarters, were among those forced to retire.

Some of them have murder cases filed against them.

Police and home ministry sources said the changes were made as a part of measures to revamp the force that has been "politically used" for a long time.

"We have transferred the officials out of Dhaka as a part of measures to revamp the force," Md Mainul Hasan, commissioner of the DMP, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said, "Capable, professional, and deprived officers are being selected for filling the vacant posts."

Muhammad Nurul Huda, a former inspector general of police, termed the moves "administrative measures or actions warranted by the present situation."

He told The Daily Star, "The officials, who have been given charge in new posts, should strictly follow the law so that the image [of the force] is restored."

REINSTATEMENTS, RETIREMENTS
With three circulars, the government

yesterday sent three top police officials, including an additional inspector general of police (IGP), into forced retirement from today.

The officials are Krishna Pada Roy, additional IGP of police headquarters; Mozammel Haque, Khulna Metropolitan Police commissioner; and Sarder Rakibul Islam, additional commissioner.

The circular invoked section 45 of the Public Service Act, 2018.

The five reinstated police officials, who were forced to retire between 2020 and 2023, are Deputy Inspector General of Police Abdullah Al Mamun, and SPs Nazmul Karim Khan, Ali Hossain Khan, Delwar Hossain Mia, and Zillur Rahman.

Five circulars were issued in this regard yesterday.

They would be considered on duty from the day of their forced retirement, and they would be entitled to arrears, promotions, and other benefits as per rules, read the circulars.

The home ministry during the AL rule had cited "public interest" as reason for them being forced to retire.

THE NEW TO BE WATCHED
Sources said many of the newly posted DMP officials do not have experience in working in the capital.

Talking to this newspaper, a source, requesting anonymity, said, "It would be hard for the newly appointed officers to perform their duties if they have no experience in dealing with crime in the capital..."

DMP Commissioner Mainul said, "We will keep the newly transferred officials under the scanner and follow their work. If they fail to perform and

maintain the professional standard, then they would be sent back.

"We want to ensure the best service to people..."

Earlier, the authorities transferred all additional commissioners and deputy commissioners of eight crime divisions and eight detective branches of the DMP.

The officials, who were posted outside Dhaka, are now being given the charges of these divisions and DB branches.

NEW SPs, DIGs
The home ministry in another circular transferred the SPs of 24 districts.

New officials were also appointed to these districts.

The districts that got new SPs are Rangpur, Gazipur, Cumilla, Dhaka, Sirajganj, Chattogram, Manikganj, Mymensingh, Gaibandha, Habiganj, Rajshahi, Munshiganj, Sylhet, Narayanganj, Natore, Pabna, Patuakhali, Bagerhat, Kishoreganj, Jhenaidah, Magura, Tangail, Jashore, and Narsingdi.

In another circular, the home ministry yesterday transferred two additional inspectors general of police and six DIGs.

Additional IGP (supernumerary) AKM Hafiz Akter and KH Mahid Uddin were transferred to the Industrial Police and Tourist Police.

DIG Munibur Rahman of DMP was sent to the Armed Police Battalion headquarters while DIG Faruk Ahmed to the DMP.

DIGs (supernumerary) Israil Howlader, Khondoker Nazmul Hasan, Masud Karim, and Hasan Md Shawkat Ali were posted to the DMP.

It presented a clear vision of Bangladesh

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and money laundering has raised expectations and would motivate the relevant institutions to take action to set concrete examples that abuse of power, especially at high levels, can no longer be enjoyed with impunity, Ittekkharuzzaman said.

Yunus has rightly conveyed the message that it is upon the people to determine when the much-needed elections will be held.

"There is no denying that one of the deliverables of the interim government is the restoration of people's right to vote as the means of transition of power. But the election cannot be regarded as an end in itself without meeting the key aspirations of the movement," he added.

In his address to the nation on Sunday, Yunus requested the people to discuss and prescribe what is the least the interim government needs to do, said Serajul Islam Choudhury, professor emeritus at the University of Dhaka.

"Our expectation is that an election should be held and for that, a proper atmosphere should be created."

At the very least, the expectation is that due honour will be given to the aspiration of liberty.

There are several other expectations such as proper treatment for those injured during the mass upsurge and financial compensation for the families of those killed.

"Perpetrators of these murders must be brought to book. There is a need to rein in the immense powers given to the police and the RAB. Efforts should be made to stop wealth laundering, plundering and corruption."

Ramping up employment generation, bringing prices under control, ensuring freedom of expression and dismantling all types of syndicates are crucial.

Furthermore, adopting a policy of development towards social ownership and moving away from the trend of capitalist development is also essential.

"If you can ensure this, an atmosphere of polls will be created. This should not take that much time. There are proposals of different reforms and commissions but those are time-consuming exercises," Choudhury added.

In his statement, Yunus highlighted that a key priority for the interim government is to seek justice for the hundreds killed and thousands injured during the July protests, said Sara Hossain, a Supreme Court advocate and a rights activist.

"He also said it out loud and clear that no one should face injustice when seeking justice. I hope the government will act on this and take swift measures to bring to account some of those responsible for the gross human rights violations we have just witnessed, and also stand

by the victims, remembering the long history we have in our country of impunity across the years."

It was good to hear Yunus emphasise the importance of respecting each other irrespective of ethnicity, religion or gender, marking a clear step away from the politics of division and hatred and towards a vision of common goals and a shared future.

Yunus asked all those raising grievances for patience.

"People have genuine grievances, and with the restrictions on democratic space, they have had little opportunity to voice them for years."

They need to be heard and issues resolved based on priority.

"But more importantly we need to move ahead with a practical reform agenda, including for public institutions, which have been hollowed out. Once this is done, the government can move forward with other tasks."

Hossain agreed with Yunus that there should be reforms before holding elections.

"We have not witnessed proper elections for many years. Elections are not just a matter of institutional practices or legal rules; political parties should play a role and they should be ready for it. For that, voters need genuine choices, and all political groups must have a fair chance to be involved," she added.

Through his address, Yunus aimed to reassure the countrymen about the actions being taken and addressed the challenges of democratic transformation and the necessary reforms for it, said Selim Raihan, professor at the University of Dhaka's economics department.

Yunus mentioned that the interim government assumed power based on the mandate of the students and the people and asserted that the government would remain in place as long as they have that support.

However, one thing that needs clarification on how much control this interim government has over the administration.

"Every institution is in mess, with many being severely damaged -- it is a monumental task to rebuild them. I believe the government should create a comprehensive package outlining the necessary reforms and then hold a referendum on that."

If the government go to an election without making significant progress on the reforms, it will be like returning to square one, said Raihan, also the executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modelling.

He suggested that a white paper on the state of the economy should be issued and that similar initiatives should be taken across different sectors such as the constitution, administration, elections and others to ensure their accountability.