

MY DHAKA

The rhythm of musical instrument hub in Science Lab

REHNUMA SHAHREEN

Mirpur Road's Science Lab area is best defined to the average Dhaka-resident through its cacophony of honking cars, buzzing markets, and unrelenting traffic, where people are often caught in the gridlock. But just beyond the congestion of the streets exists a different kind of chaos, one that might help you.

We are talking about the largest hub of musical instrument stores in Dhaka, a place where every note carries the weight of someone's dreams, where aspiring musicians find hope in the strings of their first guitar, far removed from the stressful world just outside. So, if you are looking for your first instrument, or simply bold enough to abandon the struggle and slip out of the traffic's grip, you can stroll around these shops; you never know, you might just find one of your favourite musicians out there.

These stores have a story of their own that stretches back a long time, with the oldest shop in the area, Surasree, moving from the lanes of Shankhari Bazar to the Science Lab area shortly after Bangladesh's independence. Since then, this area gradually became Dhaka's musical



PHOTOS: SHADAB SHAHROKH HAI

heartbeat, with more and more stores popping up, serving generations of artists and aspirants with instruments.

The owner of Adi Surasree, Sumon Sarker, said, "Bacchu bhai bought his first electric guitar from us. Back then, everyone used to import from Singapore, until we started importing products from China. Other than China, most of the instruments here are imported from India, providing affordable options, whereas, higher-end pieces are sourced from countries like the US, Indonesia, and others upon pre-order.

Step into one of these shops, and

you're likely to find a college student strumming their very first ukulele, while a group of friends huddle around acoustic guitars, debating which one sounds "just right". The owners, too, are well aware of their customers' needs.

"The primary customers are students. We understand their sentiment, they walk in with their saved-up pocket money to buy their desired instrument, so we generally aim for limited profit," said Ali Rezowan, the brand ambassador of ZS Music Zone.

Throughout the years, as the music scene evolved, so did the youth's preference for beginner instruments, shifting from the reign of harmoniums

and tablas to guitars and ukuleles.

In this context, Rony Barmon, the manager of Surasree, said, "Back then, harmonium and tabla were the go-to instruments for beginners. Only a few, interested in modern music, would play the Hawaiian guitar. Then in the 90s, the Spanish guitar became very popular. And for a few years, ukuleles have gained popularity among young customers because of how budget friendly it is."

Whether you prefer the hand-carved dotara, with its roots in local folk traditions, or the sleek acoustic guitar or piano that catches your eye, Science Lab offers a rich variety of instruments to explore. From violins and cajons to mandolins and flutes, the options are endless.

Business, as they put it, hasn't been the same in recent times. According to the owners, for the past couple of years, it has been on the decline, and the recent political unrest has made matters worse.

Yet, even in times of uncertainty, the store owners are somewhat optimistic. For now, business may be slow, but the spirit of these shops is far from defeated.

The owners hope that this difficult time, much like every other crisis in Dhaka, will eventually pass. And much like Dhaka's music scene, these instrument shops, despite the disruptions, hold onto the hope of finding their rhythm once again.

Now coal power plants scaling back

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Two of the three units of Barapukuria power plant are in production and have been producing around 235MW, against the combined capacity of 444MW. The largest 275MW unit has been producing around 170MW due to mechanical problems, the PDB said.

Only Payra power plant has been producing at capacity.

The PDB has been producing around 11,000MW during day-time peak hours and around 13,000MW in the evening peak hours, which are about 1,000MW short of the demand.

Barishal has the blessing of Payra. It is the only division that is not experiencing power cuts.

Bangladesh's total power generation capacity is 27,086MW, including Adani's plant.

Since early June, gas shortage was

the major concern for the PDB after one of the two floating storage and regasification units faced technical problems.

Bangladesh has been able to regasify only 600 million cubic feet of imported liquefied natural gas a day (mmcf) till late September, instead of the usual 1,100 mmcf.

The regasification has improved to 900 mmcf. Still, only 5,500MW is being produced from gas-based power plants which have a total capacity to produce 12,064MW.

Khandaker Mokammel Hossain, member (generation) of PDB, said they have increased gas supply to power plants, but now they have shortage of coal.

"Procedures must be followed to import coal. If I want to import now, it is not possible. We need time to complete the procedures," he told

The Daily Star.

Rabiul Islam, an onion wholesaler at Hilli of Dinaipur, said he lost half of his imported onions due to frequent power outages over the last couple of days.

"Due to the loadshedding, it was not possible to run the fans inside my warehouse resulting in the onions going bad," he said.

He said there were almost an hour-long power cuts every three to four hours during the day.

Abdul Hannan, a rice miller in Shambhuganj area of Mymensingh, said his mill's output has dropped significantly because of the power cuts. He said his mill experienced four to five hours of power outages a day.

[Mokammel Shuvo, of Cox's Bazar, and Kongkon Karmakar, of Dinaipur, contributed to the report]

Admin was hostage to politicians

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At least 32 senior secretaries and secretaries and 53 other high-level officials attended the meeting.

Debapriya said the top bureaucrats emphasised capacity building and creating a congenial environment for the government officials.

"They hope there will be no injustice in their profession," he added.

Some of the officials told the panel that they could stop irregularities to some extent by speaking up.

Some others said their career took blows for showing courage against irregularities. But the associations of officials did nothing to protect them because those were also politicised, he

said.

The officials discussed the administration's role in embezzlement in the name of projects.

Many development projects were taken, designed, implemented and even evaluated by bureaucrats who benefited from the government, business people, and politicians.

Many projects taken on political consideration were revised multiple times, causing delays and rise in costs. Flawed projects were taken and feasibility studies were not properly done.

The banking sector, the government role in appointing bank directors, Karnaphuli tunnel, a high-tech park,

and issues facing the energy sector, and social safety were discussed.

The whistleblower panel has identified irregularities that took place while awarding contracts and purchasing equipment. Many completed projects have yielded little to no economic return.

Debapriya said more professionalism and capable, independent, and efficient officials are essential for the country's development.

Requesting anonymity, a member of the panel said the whistleblower may be submitted to the chief adviser by this month.

of BPDB told UNB that Adani Power requested Bangladesh to pay dues through a letter a few days back.

"Adani has not demanded full payment of \$800-\$850 million in seven days. We are cooperating fully and collaborating with BPDB to resolve any issue," the Indian company told The Daily Star through its PR firm in Dhaka.

The Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), however, said the government of India has no role in this contract.

"This issue is between two parties. There is a contractual obligation between them: one is a private organisation and the other is the government of Bangladesh. The government of India has no role in this contract," MEA Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal told reporters while responding to a question during a weekly briefing on Saturday.

Harris, Trump run toe to toe

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rallies with supporters in Georgia, North Carolina and Pennsylvania.

Most polls show Trump, 78, and Harris, 60, within the margin of error from each other across the swing states.

However, there was a surprise boost for Harris when one of the most respected pollsters in the country dropped a new survey in the Des Moines Register that shows the Democrat three points ahead of Trump in Iowa – a state he won easily both in his victorious 2016 presidential campaign and again in his narrow 2020 defeat.

Reflecting Harris's drive to hit every possible target before tomorrow, her plane unexpectedly took a detour to New York for an appearance on the legendary Saturday Night Live television comedy show.

For Harris, a key electorate is women

voters angered over the ruling by justices appointed by then-president Trump to the Supreme Court to overturn Roe v Wade, ending a decades-long constitutional right to abortion.

"Donald Trump's not done. He will ban abortion nationwide," Harris said in Atlanta, Georgia. She painted Trump as "increasingly unstable, obsessed with revenge" and "out for unchecked power."

"We have an opportunity in this election to finally turn the page on a decade of Donald Trump who spends full time trying to keep us divided and afraid of each other," she said.

Trump, stirring up his right-wing base, continued to deliver increasingly dark rhetoric.

In Salem, Virginia, he began his speech by saying "I've come today with a message of hope for all."

But he was soon back to conjuring the apocalyptic vision he'd laid out hours earlier in North Carolina.

Calling his opponent "low IQ" and "stupid," he said Harris would usher in an economic "depression," asking the crowd: "Do you want to lose your job and maybe your house and pension?"

In later remarks, he dipped into far-right rhetoric with a promise to "keep American for American citizens."

"We're going to have American people in our communities now," he said.

Trump has worked hard to appeal to men, appearing on podcasts with martial artists, spending time in barbershops and meeting with crypto entrepreneurs. With Harris getting a surge in support from women, some predict a dramatic gender gap in the results.

Don't think about 'minus 2 formula'

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"No one should even think about following that path. We want to make it clear that you should not try to do anything to exclude the BNP as part of any plot because the people of Bangladesh will never accept it," Fakhrlul said.

He said the Awami League had tried to split the BNP in various ways but failed, and no one will be able to do so in the future.

Without naming anyone, he said an adviser to the interim government made an "unexpected and unwarranted" comment suggesting that politicians are restless to go to power. "This is very unfortunate. We do not expect an individual of his stature to make such remarks."

The Dhaka South City unit of the BNP organised the programme at the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh, to mark the fifth death anniversary of Sadeque Hossain Khoka, the former mayor of the undivided Dhaka City Corporation and BNP vice-chairman.

Earlier on Saturday, Road, Transport and Bridges and Energy Adviser Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan said, "There's no money in the banks. Politicians seem desperate to go to power, and we, too, wish to return to our work."

Fakhrlul said politicians not only aspire to return to power, but they have also sacrificed their lives, endured repression and suppression, and worked tirelessly to free Bangladesh from Sheikh Hasina's grip.

He said they are advocating for the prompt restoration of democracy by holding national elections, as the longer the government delays the polls, the greater the chance Hasina and her cohorts will have to revive.

"I would like to repeat it: create an atmosphere for holding the elections quickly by removing garbage from the state institutions. You have been given that responsibility, and we are cooperating with you. Now, you should cooperate with us. Don't try to mislead people by claiming that we are anxious

to return to power," the BNP leader said.

As a political party, he said, the BNP aims to return to power, with its leaders and workers actively engaging in politics to run the country and ensure the welfare of the people.

Describing how BNP leaders and workers faced repression and sacrificed their lives during Awami League rule, Fakhrlul said the immense sacrifices of the BNP cannot go in vain.

He urged the BNP leaders and workers not to engage in any actions that could tarnish the party's image or lead to criticism of the party. "Don't let anyone do that. Keep it in mind."

The BNP leader observed that Bangladesh still seems to be trapped even after the fall of Hasina since "the government of the people has not yet been established."

"We have been freed from the grasp of an awful monster, but there is no relief," he said.

Fakhrlul said they have extended their support to an interim government headed by a respected figure like Professor Muhammad Yunus, which will oversee the government until the election is held.

He said the BNP and its Chairperson Khaleda Zia, like the entire world, have always respected Chief Adviser Yunus.

"You (Yunus) have been entrusted with the task of restoring democracy in Bangladesh, which means you must hand over power to an elected parliament and government by conducting a fair and acceptable election," Fakhrlul said.

He said the Awami League has devastated the country and its economy over the past 15 years by plundering and siphoning off public funds abroad.

"The greatest damage has been done to the morale of the people of Bangladesh, and now thieves are everywhere, from banks to other offices."

He recalled Khoka's contributions to the country's Liberation War, nation-building, and the strengthening of the BNP.

REMARK ON UPRISING

Key student coordinator given show cause notice

DU CORRESPONDENT



Hasib Al-Islam

Hasib Al-Islam, a key coordinator of the Anti-Discrimination Students Movement, has been served a show-cause notice for his remarks that the July revolution could not have been easily achieved without the arson attacks on metro rail stations or the killings of police officials.

The notice, signed by Abdul Hannan Masud, chief organiser of the platform, read, "It has been observed that Hasib Al-Islam made an objectionable comment regarding setting fires to metro rail [stations] and [killing] police in a talk show of a private television channel recently. This has stirred a lot of criticism on social media."

In the notice, Hasib was asked to provide a logical explanation of his remarks within three working days.

The video of the talk show, titled "Projotone Bangladesh," in which Hasib made the remarks, was released on television channel DBC's YouTube page on Saturday.

The discussion was on "How much of a challenge is national unity?" and featured BNP leader Nilufar Chowdhury Moni alongside Hasibul.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Hasib said, "I am aware of the notice and will provide an explanation ..."

55 ex-cops sued for firing on BNP activists in Habiganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A total of 55 former policemen have been sued in a case filed over the alleged indiscriminate firing on BNP leaders and activists in Habiganj in 2021.

The accused include SSMurad Ali, former district superintendent of police, and Masuk Ali, former officer-in-charge of Sadar Model Police Station.

Shamsul Islam, a member of the district unit BNP and also a lawyer, filed the case with the Habiganj Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court Judge Delwar Hossain yesterday afternoon.

Confirmed the matter, Nazmul Hossain, court inspector, said the judge had accepted the case and scheduled a hearing for November 5.

According to the case statement, the incident occurred on December 22, 2021, when the BNP organised a public rally in Shayestanagar, Habiganj, to demand the immediate release of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

Adani dues to be cleared fast

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no matter how powerful they are," he added.

UNB reported that Adani Power has cut back on power supply due to outstanding dues and has set a deadline for the Bangladesh government to clarify the situation regarding the dues, which total nearly \$850 million.

Earlier, Adani Power had set an October 31 deadline for the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) to settle the outstanding amount and provide a letter of credit (LC) of \$170 million to ensure secure payment.

Although the BPDB attempted to issue an LC for the overdue amount through Bangladesh Krishi Bank, the effort did not align with the terms of the power purchase agreement, as reported by Times of India. A shortage of dollars was mentioned as one of the reasons.

From October 31, the Adani power plant in Godda, Jharkhand reduced its supply from October 31, worsening the existing power shortages in Bangladesh.

As per the latest update on the Power Grid Bangladesh (PGB) website, on November 1, the Adani plant supplied 724 megawatts against an installed capacity of 1,496 MW.

The Adani plant is the largest supplier of electricity, followed by the Payra (1,244 MW), Rampal (1,234 MW), and SS Power I (1,224 MW) plants.

Adani has not publicly commented on the situation, but senior executives have expressed hope for a resolution, according to the media report.

The decision to snap supply will also impact the Godda plant's viability as Bangladesh is the sole power purchaser and Adani Power Jharkhand has had to leave one of the two 800 MW units idle.

Preferring anonymity, a top official