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Shinni: A 'new-age' twist on Bangladeshi communal healing

RBR

My grandmother, whom I fondly called Bubu, used to bring us batashas – a sugar candy – from her visits to her homeland in Pirojpur, Barishal. She would tell us it was a tabarak or shinni, which is a sweet gift or grace from her visits to Holy places.

So, even now, the sugary memory of a white porous batasha is associated with the word shinni for me.

Shinni is the food prepared and served with love by any community for spiritual cleansing. The long lost word popped up again recently when vegan restaurateur Faiza Ahmed of Shanchayita decided to hold an event called "Vi-rohana Shinni", or healing food, in Dhaka, on November 16, at Jatra Biroti.

She stumbled upon this forgotten belief that if a community is in distress, then preparing and sharing a shinni wards off social, natural, and other disasters plaguing the people of that society. "I am strictly not adding any religious connotation to Vi-rohana Shinni. It is my wellness initiative to allow Dhaka people to heal their chi and let good energy flow around them," she says.

The essence of her shinni event is community healing, and she hopes Dhaka will pick this tradition from rural Bangladesh. Cooking a community shinni reflects the true spirit of Bangladesh – diverse, yet united.

In one of her sojourns, she saw two elderly friends from two different faiths, preparing a big pot of rice pudding or

kheer, as shinni, in a makeshift open kitchen under the village's favourite banyan tree, which is the regular place for all to convene and chat. This typical pastoral Bangla scene inspired her.

"What surprised me most was the purpose of this feast – to bring communal harmony in the face of a major crisis. They pool their resources, cook together, and share a meal, hoping to bring positive change. I discovered that contrary to popular belief, shinni holds no religious connotations. It's a communal gathering, a symbol of unity, resilience, and the power of collective hope," explains Faiza Ahmed.

Faiza's feast will bring to Dhaka the cherished treat of Sylhet, Tusha shinni. It is a vegan dessert made from flour

from any kind of grain, molasses or cinnamon-infused sugar syrup, and oil, then decorated with almonds and raisins. Puffed-up luchi, a flour-based deep-fried flatbread, and sweet paan supari will be the sides.

This is community healing at its best. Just like it is done in the villages where everyone chips in with whatever they can contribute; this event is also taking place for the support from well-wishers with their time, talents, and resources, and Jatra kitchen and staffs to help cook the shinni.

Be there to soak in the positive energy from the moon beams. Candlelit ambience, with soft notes of flutes playing will set the perfect therapeutic mood for Dhaka.

Three more advisers Bangladesh's climate debt keeps climbing

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division last night, Youth and Sports Adviser Asif Mahmud Sojib Bhuiyan was given the charge of the Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) ministry and was relieved of the charge of labour and employment ministry.

Adviser Ali Imam Majumder, who was attached to the Chief Adviser's Office, is now in charge of the food ministry, which Prof Yunus used to oversee.

Prof Yunus will now be in charge of four ministries and divisions instead of six.

He will be in charge of the Cabinet Division, the Ministry of Defence, Armed Forces Division, and the Ministry of Public Administration.

Alongside the land ministry, Hassan Arif will now be in charge of the civil aviation ministry, which was under Prof Yunus.

Arif was in charge of the LGRD ministry which will

They were entrusted with executive powers to assist advisers for the ministries of home, health, and education respectively.

The interim government was formed on August 8, following the fall of the Awami League government in the face of the student-led mass uprising, with Chief Adviser Yunus and 13 other advisers swearing in.

Two more advisers took oath on August 11. Another adviser took oath on August 13 and four more on August 16.

On August 8, for the first time in Bangladesh, two university students – Nahid Islam and Asif Mahmud – were included in the advisory council.

Nahid and Asif were two key organisers of the student movement.

At just 26, Nahid and Asif are the youngest people ever to have the status of a minister.

Meanwhile, a group of

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Bangladesh's significantly higher per capita climate debt burden leaves the country at high risk of falling into a debt burden, according to the report titled 'Climate Debt Trap Risks for Bangladesh and Other LDC' states.

At COP29, the least-developed countries must prioritise securing 100 percent grant-based adaptation finance by 2025 and operationalising debt relief mechanisms, the report said.

As wealthy nations that polluted the most and caused global warming did not keep their promises and disbursed grants, not just Bangladesh but all LDCs have fallen into a debt trap.

In 2009, Bangladesh formed the Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF), a pioneering initiative by the government to address climate change adaptation and mitigation without relying solely on international aid.

With an initial allocation of an annual Tk 700 crore from the national budget, BCCTF supported over 700 projects, spanning from constructing climate-resilient homes to developing early warning systems, with a focus on empowering local communities to adapt effectively.

However, despite the proactive measures, Bangladesh faces the "climate debt trap" as wealthier nations fail to fulfil their financial commitments under international climate agreements.

Though Bangladesh has contributed only

0.56 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, Bangladesh ranked seventh in the long-term climate risk index.

Bangladesh, as one of the most climate-vulnerable countries globally, faces climate impacts such as floods, cyclones, sea-level rise and salinity intrusion that frequently affect its agriculture, water resources and coastal areas.

In 2022, Bangladesh finalised the National Action Plan (NAP) on climate change (2023-2050) to reverse the effects of climate change.

The NAP identified 113 major interventions in 11 climate-stressed regions across the country, for which \$230 billion would be needed.

Currently, the government of Bangladesh spends approximately 6-7 percent of its annual budget on climate adaptation, about 75 percent of which comes from domestic sources.

However, scaling up adaptation measures as outlined in the NAP will require seven times the current spending, according to experts.

During the COP (conference of parties) 15 held in Copenhagen, wealthy nations committed to mobilise \$100 billion a year by 2020.

The promise remains unfulfilled putting LDCs like Bangladesh at risk of falling further into debt to fund necessary climate resilience efforts.

Additionally, the pledges are not clear on how the money will be distributed, raising fears among LDCs

that money will not reach the countries that need it most.

Along with other LDCs Bangladesh will push for new and additional climate finance available that does not exacerbate climate debt, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, adviser to the ministry of environment, forest and climate change, told The Daily Star.

"Bangladesh advocates for public funds from developed countries as the primary source of the financing," she said, adding that the country will urge swift implementation of the 2019 commitment to double adaptation funding by 2025.

Bangladesh will also demand the wealthy nations to fulfil their funding commitments to developing countries, she said.

The country will be vocal in making the loss and damage fund operational with simplified access and regular replenishment cycles.

Although a decision was reached at COP 28 in Dubai to operationalise the fund with an initial pledge of \$792 million, the fund is yet to become fully functional.

Apart from this, Bangladesh will emphasise the urgent need for all countries to uphold the commitment to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels by 2100.

This target is crucial to minimising severe climate impacts and is a priority Bangladesh intends to advocate at COP-29, Rizwana added.

Rizwana will reach Baku on November 17.

This year's COP has been

labelled as a "Finance COP".

The global climate conference starts today, with world leaders convening at Baku on November 12 and 13. Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus will lead the Bangladesh delegation to COP and he is scheduled to deliver his speech on November 13.

The world leaders are expected to establish a new financial goal post-2025, building on the \$100 billion pledge by developed nations.

According to the UNFCCC, developing countries will require \$5.8 to \$5.9 trillion for mitigation by 2030, and between \$215 to \$387 billion for adaptation.

Bangladesh will push for the fund's immediate activation at COP-29 to facilitate project funding and enable prompt implementation of adaptation and resilience-building initiatives.

The ministry of environment, forest and climate change will send a 28-member delegation comprising ministry officials, departmental representatives and climate experts.

In addition to negotiation efforts, Bangladesh has planned a 100-square-metre pavilion at COP-29. This space will host 13 side events and serve as a venue for bilateral discussions.

The pavilion is expected to function as a knowledge-sharing platform for both domestic and international stakeholders – including government officials, non-governmental organisations and youth groups – to foster engagement and dialogue on climate issues.

AL activists barred from joining event at Zero Point

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chanted slogans in support of AL near the stadium, said Amit Biswas, a sub-inspector at Paltan Police Station.

They would be taken to the police station after treatment, he said.

The Sheikh Hasina-led party, which was ousted through the student-led mass uprising on August 5, called the event – a protest march "to restore democracy" and a gathering to observe Shaheed Noor Hossain Day – through its verified Facebook page.

Noor Hossain, then a 26-year-old leader of AL's youth front Jubo League, was killed in police firing at Zero Point on November 10, 1987, while protesting against the autocratic rule of HM Ershad. A memorial was built there and the place was renamed Noor Hossain Square.

Yesterday, Noor Hossain's family and various political parties other than the AL and its allies paid respects to him by placing wreaths at the memorial.

Although AL men could not reach Zero Point, the party posted on Facebook photos and videos of its activists bringing out brisk processions in the Motijheel and Press Club areas.

As many as 42 people, including nine women, were detained during AL demonstrations in Motijheel and Paltan areas, said Hossain Mohammad Farabi, assistant commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police's (DMP's) Motijheel Zone.

Another person was held in the Dilkusha area while several others were handed over to police by student and pro-uprising political activists, he said, adding that more details would be given later.

Tensions ran high in the city after the AL urged

its leaders and activists to gather at Zero Point at 3:00pm yesterday through a post on Facebook on Saturday.

In response, the interim government said it would not allow "fascist" AL to hold the programme. Students and political activists demonstrated at Zero Point late on Saturday night, vowing to prevent any attempt by AL activists to gather there.

Police also conducted raids in different areas of the capital on Saturday night and arrested over 50 AL activists on charges of attempting to create anarchy in the name of protests, Talebur Rahman, deputy commissioner of DMP, told The Daily Star.

To counter the AL event, supporters of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement and activists of BNP, Jamaat and other parties occupied Zero Point and nearby areas again since yesterday morning. Many of them were carrying sticks.

They also gathered outside the AL headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue near Zero Point.

Witnesses and police said the activists handed over several individuals to police after beating them up for chanting the "Joy Bangla" slogan.

Around 12:45pm, an elderly man was beaten up severely as agitators suspected him to be an AL activist. The victim could not be identified immediately.

Witnesses said the man was suspiciously wandering in the area when a group of demonstrators asked him about his motive. They soon started punching him in the face.

Many others joined the crowd and beat the man indiscriminately. He was later rescued by police.

Climate finance in focus as summit begins

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business and civil society to advance concrete solutions to the defining issue of our time," according to the UN.

"A key focus of COP29 will be on finance, as trillions of dollars are required for countries to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect lives and livelihoods from the worsening impacts of climate change."

On Thursday, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres warned that the world is nowhere near ready for the "calamity" being caused by climate change and must urgently prepare for even worse in the future.

Global efforts to adapt to climate change – from building defensive sea walls to planting drought-resistant crops – have not kept pace as global warming accelerates the frequency and intensity of disasters.

Floods, fires and other climate shocks have affected nearly every continent in a year the EU climate monitor says is almost certain to be the hottest ever recorded.

The amount of money going to poorer countries for adaptation measures was barely one-tenth of what they needed to disaster-proof their vulnerable economies, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) said in a new assessment looking at 2022, the latest year for which data is available.

"Climate calamity is the new reality. And we're not keeping up," said Guterres at the launch of UNEP's annual Adaptation Gap Report.

Rich nations are under pressure at this month's UN COP29 summit to increase

the \$100 billion they pledged for climate action in developing countries, including for adaptation.

But some donor governments are under fiscal and political pressure, and major new commitments of public money are not expected at the conference in Azerbaijan.

A UN biodiversity meeting this month failed to reach a funding agreement and the election of Donald Trump – who opposes global climate cooperation – hangs over COP29.

Most of the public money committed to climate change goes to reducing planet-warming emissions, not adapting to its long-term consequences.

Some \$28 billion in public finance was paid to developing countries for climate adaptation in 2022.

This was an increase on the year prior, but still a drop in the ocean: UNEP estimates between \$215 billion and \$387 billion is needed annually for adaptation in developing countries.

Rich countries had pledged to double the amount by 2025 to roughly \$40 billion a year but even this would leave an "extremely large" adaptation funding gap, UNEP said.

Climate disasters hit poorest communities hardest but the cost of inaction was no longer borne by them alone, said Patrick Verkooijen, CEO of the Global Center on Adaptation.

"From rising seas and extreme heat waves to relentless droughts and floods, the impacts of climate change now reach every corner of the globe. No nation, no community is immune," he said in a statement.



Sayedur Rahman M Aminul Islam Khuda Baksh

now be looked after by Asif Mahmud.

Asif Mahmud had been overseeing the labour and employment ministry but now Brig Gen (ret'd) Sakawat Hussain will be in charge of it along with the shipping ministry.

Finance Ministry Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed will not be overseeing commerce ministry as Bashir was assigned the ministry along with textile ministry which Brig Gen (ret'd) Sakawat used to run.

Asif Nazrul who used to run three ministries will now look after law and expatriate welfare ministries. Farook will oversee cultural affairs ministry instead of Nazrul.

Prof Yunus yesterday appointed former inspector general of police Khuda Baksh Chowdhury, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Vice Chancellor Sayedur Rahman, and former Rajshahi University Prof M Aminul Islam as special assistants using the Rules of Business 1996, according to a cabinet division gazette issued last night.

people marched with lit torches and demonstrated near Bangabhaban in protest of the inclusion of Sk Bashir Uddin as an adviser. They said Bashir is the brother of former Awami League MP Sk Afil Uddin.

Sarjis Alam, a coordinator of the student movement, yesterday strongly criticised the selection of new advisers.

On his verified Facebook page, he said, "Thirteen advisers from just one division! But there is not a single adviser from the North Bengal, Rangpur and Rajshahi division's 16 districts! On top of that, the killer Hasina's lackeys are also becoming advisers!"

Ashrefa Khatun, another coordinator of the movement, wrote on her Facebook page that many of the coordinators were in the dark about the appointments of new advisers and only came to know about the development through Facebook.

The government does not give importance to the coordinators but people hold them responsible for the government's failure.

6-yr-old killed, hidden in pond mud

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On November 3, Muntaha went out to play with other children in the afternoon. She was last seen around 3:00pm that day.

The girl's family lodged a missing person report on November 5.

Muntaha's father, Shamim Ahmed, even offered a reward for information leading to her being found.

On Saturday night, police detained Muntaha's former tutor Shamima Begum Marjia for questioning. Later, police also questioned Marjia's grandmother Kutubjan

Begum. Based on their information, police requested locals to look for the body near their home.

Around 4:00am yesterday, Aliajan Bibi, Marjia's mother, was seen trying to move Muntaha's body to another pond, leading to the recovery of her body.

Police have so far arrested Marjia, Aliajan, and locals Islam Uddin, and Nazma Begum.

Alok said their preliminary findings indicate that Muntaha was killed over family feud.

Hundreds of people surrounded the house of

the detained women and vandalised, looted, and set fire to the house, Alok told The Daily Star.

Muntaha's father Shamim said, "She [Marjia] was Muntaha's private tutor ... She was vindictive because we asked her not to teach Muntaha anymore because of her bad behaviour."

Muntaha was laid to rest at a local graveyard after an autopsy and namaz-e-janaza which hundreds of grief-stricken people participated.

Selim Ahmed, member of Kanaighat Sadar Union Parishad, who attended the namaz-e-janaza, said,

"For almost a week, people of this neighbourhood had been looking for the sweet little girl. They had been anxious. The thing they feared the most has happened. The grieving community gathered here today [yesterday] to say goodbye to the little girl."

All four detainees are sent to jail after they were produced before a Sylhet court yesterday.

Mahbubur Rahman, superintendent of Sylhet police, said, "We tried hard to find out what happened to the child ... No one connected to the murder will be spared."