



The winter story in Dhaka is a short one; it lasts just a few days in January. However, the northern part of the country, mainly Tetulia upazila in the northern district of Panchagarh, shivers and clatters when the temperature drops to as low as 5 degrees Celsius, to even 2.6 degrees, during cold waves!



DHAKA'S WINTER

Hot teas and spicy soups to beat the chill

RBR

I would not go near Tetulia simply because I love the tropical weather in Dhaka. For the two months that winter lasts here in Bangladesh, this old city is cloaked in a mild chill. That is enough for Dhaka locals to bring out their monkey caps, mufflers, coats, and whatnot.

I am sure you guessed that I am a summer person. However, I do cherish the winter hot bowls found across the city's food streets. My favourite beverage is a steaming cup of Horlicks cha from the latest Dhaka craze, the Rangpur Cha stall near Gulshan 2 circle, beside the Lavender superstore. This alley is the new trending food street of Dhaka.

The name Rangpur, unanimous with winter chills, seems perfect for this hot beverage stall, that sells almost 25 or more (as some say) varieties of tea. Regular milk tea has a few options, like malai and masala, then they have Afghani tea, and saffron tea, but the black tea with a hint of Malta, which is sweet orange in English, is the hot seller.

I loved their masala black tea without sugar and their Horlicks tea with heaps of sugar. It is a dessert, almost like your childhood bedtime glass of Horlicks and milk. Their hot beverage choice is more diverse than the coffee options in fancy cafes.



PHOTO: STAR

The other winter street favourite is a bowl of wholesome chicken corn soup, made with seasonal vegetables, eggs, and chicken from the sidewalks of Mohammadpur. But nothing can beat a bowl of hearty, rich, and meaty haleem from there. Mona Mamar Haleem and Soup is said to be at the top of everyone's list right now, because of their perfectly balanced haleem, which is upped a notch with the added tanginess from their house-special achar. The bowl is garnished with a quail egg and if you are game, then maybe add a dollop or two of their extra hot

Bombai chilli vinegar.

However, if you are not willing to try street snacks in winter, then perhaps treat yourself to a hot pot to keep warm. In Gausul Azam Avenue, Sector 14, Uttara you will find the city's best hot pot joint, Yama Hotpot and Grill.

You will find a list of 53 mouth-watering items of plates of seafood, vegetables, lamb, chicken, rice, and noodles.

The authentic Chinese hot pot restaurant has three broths — Sichuan traditional spicy, slightly salted clear broth, and tomato broth, which are meticulously cooked from scratch with beef and mutton stock. They also have a number of condiments and dipping sauces to go with the pot.

The big pot is served on a table with a built-in burner. They have an array of fresh green vegetables like cauliflower, broccoli, Chinese chives, caraway leaves, quail eggs, fresh shrimps, crabs, and succulent meats; you pick your choice from their hot pot buffet menu and you can even go for second helpings as well.

So, in this short-lived Dhaka winter, try these hot delights — the bubbling, mouthwatering hotpot, Horlicks tea, and haleem with extra Bombai chilli vinegar; they are a culinary adventure waiting to be explored.

Police seek to restrict use of lethal arms

FROM PAGE 1

Citing security concerns, officers refused to divulge how many firearms should be replaced or phased out.

While police have pistols, submachine guns, rifles, light machine guns, shotguns and teargas launchers, Rab, SWAT, and the counterterrorism unit of police have sniper rifles and machine guns, officers said.

Police had SMG and LMG for many years to protect police stations in war-like situations or other emergencies.

However, the use of

weapons for crowd control began on a limited scale in 2012 and increased gradually, several officers said.

The decision to procure 7.62mm rifles and other lethal firearms was made in October 2014 at a meeting attended by representatives from the home ministry and Police Headquarters.

An officer who was at the meeting told this correspondent that the rationale presented for the decision were "difficult-to-control" demonstrations

by Hefajat-e-Islam at Shapla Chattar on May 5, 2013 and by Jamaat-Shibir men at different times against the trial of war criminals.

The first shipment of weapons arrived in 2015 from Italy.

Procurement data on Bangladesh Police's website shows police have long been using 7.62 sniper rifles and 7.62mm bullets.

In March 2024, the Police Headquarters invited bidders to procure 50 (7.62mm) sniper rifles. In March 2023, it

purchased 30 such sniper rifles.

Besides, police procured 15,000 7.62mm semi-automatic rifles in September 2019 and August 2018, according to the website of Bangladesh Public Procurement Authority.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee recommends that each 30-member platoon will be primarily armed with non-lethal weapons, and only two of the officers in the platoon will carry 9mm pistols for use in

extreme cases.

The police will first try to de-escalate situations through communication. If crowds block roads or engage in other unlawful activities, police will give warning. If they throw brick chips, cause injuries, or detonate bombs, police will use water cannons, tear gas, and stun grenades.

Firearms will be used only in life-threatening situations, and officers will be instructed to target lower-body areas to reduce the risk of fatalities.

Striking forces with

lethal weapons will be kept ready if a large crowd turns unruly and the first responders fail to control the situation.

Future policies will determine the number and type of arms a unit will have.

The committee also plans to focus on developing new training guidelines for officers.

"Our ultimate goal is to avoid another tragedy like the one we witnessed during the July-August protests," said the committee member.

Pvt sector investment remains sluggish

FROM PAGE 1

Hussain said there are discussions about the interim government's reform initiatives. Meanwhile, students, along with different political parties, have emerged as a force in the country's politics.

However, there is uncertainty regarding the nature of the future government and how it will maintain checks and balances, he said.

Businesspersons are unlikely to make new investment decisions until these issues are resolved, he added.

Hussain also said many argue that high interest rates are a factor affecting private investment.

"However, even when interest rates were low, private investment didn't pick up significantly. So, it's difficult to point this

out as a reason behind sluggish investment," he said.

Hussain further said liquidity shortage in the banks and the distressed banking system could be blamed for the lack of private investment.

Prof Selim Raihan, executive director of South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (Sanem), also said slow private investment can be attributed to political uncertainty.

He said private investment has been low for the past few years, but the political changeover and uncertainty came as additional challenges. "This situation is not favourable for fresh investment," he said.

Prof Raihan said many businesspersons, who maintained close relations with the previous government, have either

ceased operations or are going through a difficult situation after the fall of the Awami League regime.

This has also impacted fresh investment that they would have made for business expansion, he said.

The cost of business increased because of continued high inflation and interest rates, Prof Raihan said. Investors, especially small and medium-sized entrepreneurs, are finding it difficult to take loans from banks and invest, he said.

"So, they are not making any investments at this moment and might have adopted a wait and see policy," he added.

He also said it is crucial for the government to prioritise controlling inflation and removing the barriers to "doing business" in the private

sector as much as possible.

Prof Raihan was a member of the white paper panel, formed by the interim government, to produce a report on the state of the country's economy.

He said that during their work on the white paper, many local and foreign businessmen informed them that the National Board of Revenue and Bangladesh Bank, through their rules and regulations, created obstacles to investment.

WILL RESERVES REMAIN STABLE?

The country's forex reserves have crossed \$21 billion for the first time since the interim government took charge in August. The reserves stood at \$21.36 billion on December 31.

It was possible mainly because of high remittance inflow, as Bangladeshis abroad broke previous

records by sending \$26.9 billion last year — a 23 percent year-on-year rise.

Monthly remittance inflow rose to a record \$2.63 billion in December, up 33 percent from a year earlier.

Bangladesh's exports also hit \$50 billion in 2024, an 8.3 percent year-on-year increase.

In December alone, exporters earned \$4.62 billion, an 18 percent increase compared to the same month in the previous year.

Development partners, including the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, provided more than \$1 billion in budget support in December, contributing to the boost in forex reserves.

Zahid Hussain said uncertainty over reserve management is going away because of the central bank's current foreign

currency policy.

As a result, a kind of stability might return to the country's macroeconomy, especially the external sector, he said.

Hussain said the overseas laundering of money, especially funds earned through corruption, stopped after the interim government took charge.

Besides, because of stable exchange rates, both forex reserves and remittance inflow have increased, and such growth could be a new normal, he said.

Prof Raihan said remittance and export earnings are promising signs for the country's economy.

However, such growth will not continue if the country's private investment does not improve and the government fails to control inflation.

'Nothing to add at this point of time'

FROM PAGE 1

"We expect a fair trial of the individual you mentioned."

To a question about reports that Bangladesh plans to buy battle tanks from a Turkish firm and if India sees a message in this, the MEA spokesman said, "We closely follow all security issues and take appropriate action accordingly."

Regarding ties with Dhaka, he referred to the press release issued by India after Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri's visit to Dhaka on December 9 in which India's general approach to fostering ties with Bangladesh was outlined.

The approach, according to Jaiswal, is that India supports "a democratic, stable, peaceful, progressive and inclusive Bangladesh. [The foreign secretary] reiterated India's willingness to build a positive and constructive relationship with Bangladesh, based on mutual trust and respect and mutual sensitivity to each other's concerns and interests. The foreign secretary emphasised that people are the main stakeholders in India-Bangladesh relations, and noted that India's development cooperation and multifaceted engagements with

Bangladesh, including in the areas of connectivity, trade, power, energy and capacity building, are all geared towards the benefit of the people of Bangladesh."

Jaiswal gave the same answer when a journalist asked him about the decision to free Indian and Bangladeshi fishermen and on the issue of a move to replace the 1972 Constitution of Bangladesh.

To a question on India's crackdown on infiltration from Bangladesh in different states in the last few weeks, Jaiswal said, "Our security forces would obviously act if people take illegal routes to immigration."

Asked about reports of deportation of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants in the last few days, he said he did not have any figure on the number right now but would get back later.

To a question about Washington Post's report that India had wanted a regime change in the Maldives following the coming to power of President Mohd Muizzu, Jaiswal reacted sharply, saying the newspaper's report appeared "to nurse a compulsive hostility towards India...I leave it to you to judge its credibility. As far as we are concerned, there is none."

Dense fog, biting cold to stay for 3 to 4 days

FROM PAGE 1

According to the BMD, two-three cold waves may occur in January.

During the cold spells, moderate to dense fog is likely to occur across the country between midnight and morning, and may persist at some locations until noon.

Air navigation, inland river transport and road communication may be disrupted temporarily due to dense fog.

Also, cold weather may persist in some places during the daytime because of dense fog.

In Panchagarh, Jitendranath Ray, an assistant officer at the local weather observatory centre, said that the chilly wind from the Himalayan side is sweeping through the northern districts due to the almost clear skies, amplifying the biting cold.

The weather is expected to remain similar for the next few days in these areas, the official added.

According to the meteorological department, temperatures between 8 and 10 degrees Celsius is considered a mild cold wave, six to eight degrees Celsius a moderate cold wave, and less than six

degrees Celsius a severe cold wave.

Md Saifuddin, 50, a rickshaw van puller of Panchagarh municipality, said though the sun has appeared in the morning, it is tough to stay outside due to the cooler wind.

Dinesh Barman, 48, a farm worker of Bathina village in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila, said, "Working in the potato field in the middle of the bone-chilling cold is unforgiving. The cold has intensified as wind speeds have picked up."

Rakibul Alam, resident medical officer at Thakurgaon 250-bed Modern Hospital, said that around 200 children affected with cold-related diseases have been admitted in the last few days to the hospital.

He also said that on average, six hundred patients remain admitted during this season, while the number in the outpatient department is much higher.

Meanwhile, the district administrations of Thakurgaon and Panchagarh, along with nongovernmental initiatives, are distributing warm clothes to those in need.

Rice prices rise

FROM PAGE 1

Joglu blamed big companies and millers competing to purchase and stockpile paddy for an artificial shortage that is driving prices up.

Masuma Begum, who runs a mess in the East Tejuri Bazar area, said she requires 100kg of rice each week. Three weeks ago, Pajam rice was priced at Tk 2,700 per 50-kg sack, but it has gradually risen to Tk 3,000.

She added that she used to charge Tk 160 for two meals a day, but now she has increased the price to Tk 180, which has upset her mess members, most of whom have limited income.

Nirod Boron Saha, president of the Paddy and Rice Stockists and Wholesalers' Association in Naogaon, explained that there was a shortage in paddy stock due to last season's flooding and natural disasters.

"The paddy for fine rice that we used to buy for Tk 1,300-1,400 per maund eight months ago is now Tk

1,850-1,900."

Chitta Majumder, managing director of Majumder Group of Industries, told The Daily Star that he imported 20,000 tonnes of coarse rice after receiving permission for rice imports, but its demand has been low. As a result, he began importing fine rice from India last week.

"We opened an LC for 10,000 tonnes of fine rice and have already imported 400 tonnes. We imported this Miniket for Tk 73-74," he said.

In November, the National Board of Revenue (NBR) of Bangladesh withdrew the import duties and regulatory taxes on rice imports, while also lowering the advance income tax from five percent to two percent.

The interim government then allowed 277 private entities to import 14.81 lakh tonnes of rice as part of efforts to contain domestic prices of the staple grain by increasing stocks.