



From the capital to the countryside, marathons are happening everywhere in Bangladesh

Running marathons: Transforming lifestyles, inspiring communities

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“There’s something magical about these moments. It’s not just about fitness anymore — it’s about connection, celebration, and pushing boundaries. Events like these make me feel like I’m witnessing Dhaka at its absolute best!” he adds.

NUMBERS THAT INSPIRE

The Dhaka Half by Dhaka Run Lords has played a significant role in shaping the growth of distance running in Bangladesh. At the time, running events in Bangladesh lacked international standards. Accurately measuring race distances, timing events, providing quality medals and jerseys, and organising marathons in Dhaka and beyond — all of these were major challenges.

A group of passionate volunteers then joined together to organise the Dhaka Half Marathon 2018. This event marked a milestone as the first race initiated by a running community in Bangladesh.

In the years that followed, numerous organisations were born and events held, inspiring new runners and keeping the standards of races nationwide. While many successful sporting events have since gained

recognition, the Dhaka Half remains a pioneering effort that laid the foundation for the country’s growing running culture.

In a word, the journey of Bangladesh’s running culture took a significant turn in 2018, and the numbers kept growing ever since.

“Only 100 to 150 participants showed up in the first event organised by UCR, 4-5 years ago,” shares Muhammad Masum, the founder of

Ultra Camp Runners, UCR. “The growth has been phenomenal. By 2024, the number of runners increased to 1,800, and our most recent event saw a staggering 2,300 participants!”

Masum believes the rise in the number is also linked to growing health awareness.

“Doctors now recommend at least 30 minutes of running or walking daily for a healthier lifestyle. This advice has particularly motivated

people, aged 40 and above, who are joining in large numbers to improve their health and redefine their way of living,” Masum explains.

Many runners are also inspired by friends and colleagues who have already participated in the events. For some, collecting medals as souvenirs adds to their motivation. Unlike many sports, running marathons involve no designated playgrounds or equipment. You can run anywhere, anytime!

RUNNING BEYOND THE ROADS

Marathons are no longer limited to the capital; they are rapidly gaining popularity in other districts as well. Communities across the country are embracing running as a way to promote health, fitness, and unity. Events outside Dhaka are seeing remarkable growth.

Recently, the Brahmanbaria Half Marathon 2025 brought together 400 plus runners from 45 districts, with an increased number of participations from past years. Founding admin of Brahmanbaria Runner’s Community, Ali Ahad Ratan shares, “The goal is to organise a full marathon next year.”

Among the inspiring stories, an amazing teacher-student duo caught the attention at the event. Mahdi

Hasan, a 12-year-old madrasa student, who crossed the finish line side-by-side with his teacher, M M Tazul Islam.

“I always encourage my students to stay fit,” shared Islam. “Mahdi has always been passionate about sports and I hope more of my students will join in the future.”

Similarly, events like the Shamshernagar Ultra Trail Marathon at Shamshernagar Tea Garden, and the Rajkandi Hill 25K at Rajkandi Forest, Sylhet Division are making waves.

The main person behind the events, Abdul Basit, shares — “Whether it’s a hilly trail or a challenging road, runners are embracing these tests of endurance, which has boosted marathon participation in any district outside Dhaka.”

As participation numbers rise and new milestones are set, running marathons continues to inspire individuals to lead healthier lives and fosters a sense of unity across generations and communities. With each step taken, Bangladesh is not only embracing fitness but also paving the way for a future filled with shared achievements and vibrant energy.

By Jawwad Sami Neogi
Photo: Courtesy

