



MISSING DHAKA?

One bite of fuchka brings you home

RBR

Fuchka is an unhealthy but delightful bite of sin that we Dhakaites cannot do without. No matter which corner of the globe we live in, our periodic craving for this tangy street food makes us homesick, or perhaps fuchka sick.

Paper thin, hollowed bite-size balls made from flour or semolina dough are filled with a stew of potato and chickpeas. They are topped with garnishes like onions, green chilli, coriander leaves, and boiled egg shavings, but before you pop one into your mouth, you add a spoonful of tangy tamarind water, and that makes all the difference.

A fuchka-purist like myself does not agree with the recent gimmicky experimentation the vendors are coming up with. For example, adding cucumber as a garnish or making the tamarind water sweet is downright sacrilegious. The array of terracotta pots of sweet, spicy and tangy liquid put on the front row in the fuchka carts are also an eyesore.

I first saw these hideous pots in Uttara fuchka carts. Before I elaborate any further, you should know that Uttara is a sham when it comes to fuchkas. Moreover, calling it "pani puri" is not done in my fuchka book. Pani puri and gol gappa are Indian twists on our fuchka, which cannot be a substitute for it as they have a totally different sour flavour.

However, I do enjoy the Indian chaat

variation, called Dahi fuchka, where adding a dollop of chilled zesty yoghurt mix takes it up a notch. This Indian chaat spin made its debut in Dhaka quite a while ago. The addictive chilled yoghurt mixed over crispy fuchka, must be devoured within minutes of serving, or it will go soggy. It is a fun addition to our existing assortment of snacks.

Dhaka fuchkas have an almost perfect recipe; one that does not need improvising. The humble roadside snack has now made a grand entry in fine dining as cocktail snacks, served over a shot glass filled with the tamarind concoction. I love the new posh plating of this quintessential Dhaka's hallmark street food.

Our humble fuchka enjoyed the spotlight when Australian MasterChef's Bangalore contestant Kishwar Chowdhury put up a plate for the judges.

For any food cart to become a hit, the fuchkas must be crisp and not smell of day old fried oil. The potato mix must be fresh and made on the day to avoid going bad. The onions must also be freshly cut right before serving to ensure that it is not grown any bacterial growth from poor storing facilities.

There are quite a few good places that



PHOTO: STAR

serve fresh, crispy fuchkas. The second floor of Pink City is famous among shoppers. Various food stands in New Market and Dhaka University are also good places to find a great fuchka.

But my absolute favourite is Fusion Café, next to the Kumudini store on Gulshan Avenue. One plate of 8 or so stuffed crunchy balls in a tangy spice blend can be easily gobbled up in minutes, and then you always consider another round. The late evening hours

see a rush of customers -- from groups of friends, colleagues, or families -- who crowd the place, while some senior aficionados even sit in the car at late hours and order away.

However, I found a new contender to topple this cart. My friend, who is not a fan of street fuchka for health reasons, took me to Happiness Café, tucked inside the ground floor of Cityscape Tower on Gulshan Avenue.

Aesthetically decorated using vintage cane and wooden furniture, the place offers a cosy and comfortable ambiance. It has an impressive collection of books, and you can read while sipping the gourmet coffee or tea. They have a low table for kids to draw pictures and keep busy while parents chill playing ludo or chess or enjoy their meal.

They serve breakfast, brunch, and delightful seasonal fruit mocktails, but of course, their most popular item is the evening bites of fuchka. The menu offers Dahi fuchka, regular fuchka, and Naga fuchka. These handmade fresh crispy fuchkas are filled with mashed chickpeas, mixed with chopped onions, lime, coriander, and green chillies or naga chili, and comes with a sour dip of yoghurt or tamarind pulp.

This joint has given me the option to treat fuchka to my expat friends without having to feel guilty about the potential health hazards of unhygienic street food. Upscaling fuchka is one of the best things that happened to Dhaka.

'Frustrated, Yunus hints at quitting'

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he would be able to continue working under the current circumstances.

Recalling how the former student leaders had requested him to take charge and carry out reform initiatives after the August 5 political changeover, Yunus expressed discontent about relentless protests over myriad demands.

He said he felt "held hostage" by such demonstrations, Nahid told the British broadcaster.

"I cannot work like this if you, all the political parties, cannot reach a common ground," the NCP chief quoted Yunus as saying.

At that, Nahid urged Yunus not to make such a decision in haste. "He should remain strong. He should ensure unity among all parties. I hope everyone will cooperate with him," Nahid told BBC Bangla.

Ariful Islam, senior joint convener of the NCP and head of the political liaison

committee, told The Daily Star that Nahid met the chief adviser to discuss the current political situation.

However, the chief adviser expressed his willingness to reconsider his role in the present circumstances. At the meeting, Nahid urged him to reflect on the aspirations surrounding the July uprising, national security, sovereignty, and unity before making a final decision.

Lately, political tensions have been rising, fuelled by protests from various parties and increasingly toxic rhetoric on social media and at political gatherings.

The BNP has long been pressing for the election by December. Also, it yesterday demanded a smaller advisory council, with immediate removal of Mahfuj, Asif and National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman.

Leaders of the NCP demonstrated on Wednesday, saying they would not take part in any polls under the current Election Commission. Accusing the EC of

bias and terming it a "party office" of the BNP, they demanded its reconstitution. They also demanded the resignation of Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed, Law Adviser Asif Nazrul, and Planning Adviser Wahiduddin Mahmud.

They, along with Jamaat-e-Islami, want the election only after reforms are carried out and trial of the banned Awami League leaders.

Meanwhile, on Wednesday, Chief of Army Staff General Waker-Uz Zaman said the national election should be held by December this year.

"Bangladesh needs political stability. This is only possible through an elected government, not by unelected decision-makers," one source quoted the army chief as saying in an Officers' Address.

Yesterday morning, after holding the regular advisory council meeting at his office in Tejgaon, Yunus asked all but the advisers to leave the meeting. Then he held an almost four-hour-long

meeting with the advisers, according to a government source.

During the discussion, he noted that many people were making differing comments and demands, with some suggesting that conducting the upcoming general election is the sole responsibility of the interim government.

Yunus emphasised his commitment to ensuring the best ever election in Bangladesh's history. He questioned the necessity of his role if he was unable to achieve that goal.

While advisers acknowledged his sentiment, some urged him to take a day or two before making a final call.

However, on return to his official residence, Yunus remained firm in his position, with speculations doing the rounds amid a barrage of social media posts by leaders of NCP and other political parties.

ICT investigation

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Section 8(2) reads, "Any person appointed as a Prosecutor is competent to act as an Investigation Officer and the provisions relating to investigation shall apply to such Prosecutor."

Additionally, if deemed necessary, investigation officers may obtain arrest warrants through the prosecution at any stage of an investigation or trial. Such warrants will be executed by the investigating officer, a law enforcement agency, or the prosecutor, as per section 8(2) of the act.

The gazette on International Crimes Tribunal 1 Rules of Procedure, 2010 (amendment, 2025) came weeks after the government included a provision in the ICT Act to hold the trial of political parties or any entity subordinate to, or affiliated to, or associated with such a party, or any group of individuals which, in the opinion of the tribunal, propagates, supports, endorses, facilitates, or engages in the activities of such a party or entity.

On May 10, the interim government amended the act amid protests by several political parties, including the National Citizen Party, to ban the activities of the Awami League and its trial in the tribunal on charges of atrocities committed in July last year.

The gazette further defines an "accused" as any person or organisation identified under section 2(bbb) of the act, against whom an investigation has commenced.

Section 2(bbb) defines organisations as "any political party, or any entity subordinate to, or affiliated to, or associated with such a party, or any group of individuals which, in the opinion of the Tribunal, propagates, supports, endorses, facilitates, or engages in the activities of such a party or entity."

In his reaction, co-coordinator of the ICT investigation agency, Muhammed Shahidullah Chowdhury said the agency's work would be easier now because they would no longer have to depend on law enforcement agencies to arrest a suspect or accused.

ISPR releases list of 626 the army sheltered

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It said many of the 626 individuals who received temporary protection left within one or two days as conditions improved.

Those sheltered included 24 political leaders, five judges, 19 officials of the civil administration, 515 police officers and personnel, 51 women and children (family members), and 12 individuals from various public universities and other backgrounds, day.



read the release.

A few of them were later handed over to law enforcement agencies through proper legal procedures based on ongoing cases or allegations, it added.

The ISPR clarified that this matter had been addressed in an official statement issued on August 18, 2024, and a list of 193 individuals, excluding over 400 police personnel and one NSI official, was sent to the home ministry the same

Despite the issue being resolved, some vested quarters have continued to circulate misleading and politically motivated narratives in an attempt to tarnish the image of Bangladesh Army and erode public trust, it said.

In light of renewed attempts to misrepresent these events, the army has released the full list of all 626 individuals who sought refuge, including police and intelligence personnel.

The army has urged all citizens to remain alert to such disinformation campaigns and not to fall prey to rumours designed to create division and mistrust, read the ISPR release.

Ishraque suspends demos

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protesters vacated the area by 5:00pm.

His supporters began a sit-in at 10:00am, blocking the road from the Nagar Bhaban to Kakrail via High Court area and Matsya Bhaban. This led to massive gridlocks in the surrounding areas.

The protests also disrupted access to State Guest House Jamuna -- the chief adviser's official residence -- with law enforcement deployed in the area to prevent BNP supporters from approaching the premises.

Meanwhile, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, in a virtual message from Bangkok, described the HC order as the "people's victory," calling it a win for both democracy and justice.

"Undoubtedly, this is another victory for democracy. We know that during the mayoral election, the fascist Awami League government forcibly snatched the results ... The public has declared Ishraque as the 'people's mayor'."

He urged the local government ministry to take immediate steps to facilitate Ishraque's oath-taking.

The HC bench of Justice Md Akram Hossain Chowdhury and Justice

Debasish Roy Chowdhury passed the order in the morning after concluding the hearing on the petition that sought a stay on the EC's decision to declare Ishraque mayor.

Barrister AM Mahbub Uddin Khokon, who argued on Ishraque's behalf in court, told reporters that there is no legal bar preventing the authorities concerned from administering the oath to Ishraque as the DSCC mayor following the HC order.

"If they [the government] don't administer him the oath, a contempt-of-court proceeding will be initiated against them," he said.

Meanwhile, the writ petitioner's lawyer, Mohammad Hossain Lipu, told The Daily Star, "Our client has instructed us to move a petition before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, seeking a stay on the High Court order. We will move the petition this afternoon or on Sunday."

On March 27 this year, Dhaka's First Joint District Judge and Election Tribunal Judge Md Nurul Islam overturned the 2020 DSCC election result, declared Ishraque the winner, and ordered the Election Commission to issue a gazette within 10 days.

On April 27, the EC issued the notification declaring Ishraque the DSCC mayor.

On May 14, DSCC resident Mamunur Rashid filed the writ petition with the HC, challenging the tribunal's verdict and the EC's gazette.

Just after the HC passed the order rejecting the petition yesterday, Ishraque, in a Facebook post, urged protesters not to leave the streets and to intensify their movement.

"To my fellow protesters, I say -- you can tame donkeys with radish, but not us. The fight continues until we hear the news of the resignation of the two student representative advisers. Don't leave the streets -- rather, intensify the movement further," he wrote.

After joining the protests in Kakrail and announcing the suspension of the demonstrations, he reiterated that they would continue to press for the resignation of the two advisers.

Meanwhile, all public services in the DSCC remained suspended yesterday as well, DSCC Administrator Md Shahjahan Miah confirmed to The Daily Star. He said if they can resume work on Saturday, they would focus on Eid-related activities.

City chokes as protests wreak havoc

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"I'm in unbearable pain, please do something," Nurjahan was overheard telling her son, as drops of sweat rolled down her forehead.

Like Nurjahan, her son, and city dwellers have been bearing the brunt of gridlock caused by repeated blockades, particularly at Shahbagh and Kakrail -- two major thoroughfares of the capital -- over the last couple of days.

Yesterday, supporters of BNP leader Ishraque Hossain staged a sit-in from Matsya Bhaban to Kakrail, demanding that he be sworn in as Dhaka South City Corporation mayor.

Simultaneously, activists of the Jatiyatabdhi Chhatra Dal occupied



Holding his 96-year-old mother, Mizanur desperately looking for an auto-rickshaw near Golap Shah Mazar in Gulistan yesterday.

the Shahbagh intersection and the road in front of the InterContinental Hotel, demanding justice for the killing of JCD leader Shahriar Alam Shammo, a Dhaka University student.

With key streets blocked on the last weekday and a huge crowd in Old Dhaka for Eid wholesale shopping, city dwellers suffered immensely throughout most of the day yesterday.

Thousands had no choice but to walk long distances. Many were seen stuck in vehicles for hours, as drivers had no way to move forward or turn back.

Some patients even left their vehicles in the Banglamotor area, where police diverted traffic towards Moghbazar, and started walking to Bangladesh Medical University and Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

From morning till afternoon, different parts of the city, including Shahbagh, Kakrail, Matsya Bhaban,

As she spoke, a bus packed with passengers appeared. Desperate, Shahana competed with several males and managed to grab the door handle.

The increasing frequency of such blockades has left citizens exasperated, especially as temperatures continue to rise. For the elderly and women, particularly those travelling alone or with children, their sufferings have been even more severe.

"This city feels like a trap during these protests," said Shafiqul Islam, a commuter spotted at Banglamotor while walking from Motijheel to Farmgate.

"You either walk for hours or stand in one place, hoping that traffic will move."

The traffic situation began to improve after 5:00pm, when supporters of Ishraque and JCD leaders and activists left the streets.