



PHOTO: SAZZAD IBNE SAYED

Telltale signs that you have entered Dhaka city

ASHIF AHMED RUDRO

The holidays are almost over! By tomorrow, the city will revert to its default setting, a busy Dhaka with busy people. Most of the dwellers are either headed towards the capital or will be starting for the metropolis soon. This brings an interesting question to mind: When do you feel like you are in Dhaka?

It can be subjective and the entry points are not the ultimate decider of this feeling. Sometimes you get the vibe long before you enter the place. For some people, it's the presence of factories and skyscrapers that indicates the emergence of Dhaka; for others, it's the people they travel with!

"Do you ever get those fellow travellers who get on the bus with a

bunch of ducks, four kids, and way too many bags for any single person to manage? Well, they always get off at the suburbs and as soon as this happens, I know Dhaka is near," said Shahed Hasan, an engineer who lives in Basabo. "That and the usual traffic jam are usually my indicators for where Dhaka starts," he adds with a smile.

The melodious call that goes "Oi Gulistan-Sadarghat-Gulistan" is an unmistakable one that might as well be an anthem. It's not that Gulistan and Sadarghat are what define Dhaka, rather it's the way these calls for passengers are made and the way the bus conductors basically push you into their dilapidated buses.

"I remember coming to Dhaka on a train ten years ago. As I got down to

the station, it was quite an experience full of fear and awe. As I walked along the station to the end of the platform, I found that there was nothing there. I had simply walked in the opposite direction! I know it's silly, but I was new and scared to ask anyone. Since then, Dhaka comes to my mind with a view of the dome umbrella of Kamalapur Station," shared one Meraz Ahmed from Mirpur who prefers bus rides these days.

There's no denying that many people associate the metropolis with the iconic image of Kamalapur Station. No wonder back in the day, movies would pan out the camera to show the railway station to indicate that our hero, who will most certainly become a rich man by selling chanachur, has arrived in the city.

If you are flying to Dhaka, you may get some of the "vibes" even before landing – when the commotion starts. However, you will not get the true taste until you are out of the airport and struggling to find a car to get to your destination in the capital.

For newcomers, the "Dhaka feeling" comes in phases. First, it's curiosity as they pass through the outer points of the city. The commotion and traffic will surely pique their interest. Then comes fear when it's time to get off their bus or train. Then comes awe for those visiting the capital for the first time, irrespective of who they are.

Dhaka may not welcome you with a song like "Welcome to New York", but it does shelter you and give you stories that you will never forget.

Parties welcome possibility of February polls

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frustrating," reads the statement.

If the election is held before a July Charter and clear roadmap to trial for the atrocities committed during the mass uprising, then the polls will reduce the uprising to a mere power transition and suppress people's desire for rebuilding the state.

"If the government announces an election date before fulfilling these demands, the people will not accept it," it adds.

The NCP urged the government to reach consensus on reform issues through discussions with political parties, and to formulate and implement the July Charter.

Jamaat Assistant Secretary General Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair told The Daily Star that the election should only be held after the adoption of the July Charter, the implementation of reforms, and the trial of those responsible for the killings during the July uprising.

"Moving towards the election will not be possible without fulfilling these conditions," he said.

The Jamaat believes that the necessary reforms must be done before the election, he added.

The party had earlier stated that it did not see any problem if the election were held two or three months earlier as long as the goals of reforms and trials had been achieved.

"Necessary reforms are more important than the date or month of the election. If the reforms are not carried out, we will be heading back towards fascism. And there must be justice," said the party.

Israel launches biggest ever attack on Iran

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Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the Israeli campaign was aimed at defeating an existential threat from Iran, invoking the failure to halt the Holocaust in World War Two.

Israel's operation "will continue for as many days as it takes to remove this threat," he said in a TV address. "Generations from now, history will record our generation stood its ground, acted in time and secured our common future."

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Israel had "unleashed its wicked and bloody" hand, and would suffer a "bitter fate".

In a phone interview with Reuters, Trump said it was not clear if Iran's nuclear programme had survived. He said nuclear talks between Tehran and the United States, scheduled for Sunday, were still on the agenda, though he was not sure if they would take place.

"I tried to save Iran from humiliation and death," Trump said.

Earlier, Trump posted on Truth Social: "Iran must make a deal, before there is nothing left."

Israel's National Security Adviser Tzachi Hanegbi said military action by itself would not destroy Iran's nuclear programme, but could "create the conditions for a long term deal, led by the United States" to get rid of it.

Two regional sources said at least

20 Iranian military commanders were killed, a stunning decapitation reminiscent of Israeli attacks that swiftly wiped out the leadership of Lebanon's once-feared Hezbollah militia last year. Iran also said six of its top nuclear scientists had been killed.

Among the generals killed were the armed forces chief of staff, Major General Mohammad Bagheri, and the Revolutionary Guards chief, Hossein Salami.

Major General Mohammad Pakpour, swiftly promoted to replace Salami as Guards commander, vowed retaliation in a letter to the Supreme Leader read out on state television: "The gates of hell will open to the child-killing regime."

Iranian media showed images of destroyed apartment blocks, and said nearly 80 civilians were killed in attacks that targeted nuclear scientists in their beds and wounded more than 300 people.

Iran's ability to retaliate with weapons fired by its regional proxies has been degraded over the past year, with the downfall of its ally Bashar al-Assad in Syria and the decimation of Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza.

Air raid sirens sounded in Jerusalem yesterday evening, and Israel said it had detected the launch of a missile from Yemen, whose Houthi militia are one of the last remaining Iranian-aligned

groups still capable of firing at Israel.

Israel said that Iran had launched around 100 drones towards Israeli territory yesterday, but Iran denied this and there were no reports of drones reaching Israeli targets.

The United Nations Security Council was due to meet yesterday at Tehran's request. Iran said in a letter to the Council that it would respond decisively and proportionately to Israel's "unlawful" and "cowardly" acts.

Two die from Covid

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Earlier, the DGHS issued a health advisory, urging people to avoid public gatherings and mandating mask use in crowded areas to curb the spread of the virus.

The infection rate saw a sharp increase in May, according to Covid-19 surveillance data analysed by the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR). Of 1,409 samples tested that month, 9.51 percent were positive – the highest since January 2023.

Additionally, two new SARS-CoV-2 Omicron subvariants – XFG and XFC – were detected in Bangladesh for the first time at CMCH in April, according to a hospital-based influenza surveillance study jointly conducted by icddr,b and the IEDCR.

A 'missed opportunity'

Yunus tells BBC about not being able to arrange a meeting with UK PM

STAR REPORT

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus said the meeting with UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, which did not take place, was a "missed opportunity."



In an interview with the BBC, he said he had not received any explanation for why the meeting failed to materialise.

"I don't know whether I should be disappointed or he should be disappointed. It's a missed opportunity," he said.

When asked if Downing Street had given a reason for not scheduling a meeting with Starmer, he said: "I don't think we have received an explanation from that kind of thing. Probably he is busy with other important things."

As reported by the Financial Times, Yunus is visiting London to garner support for efforts to recover billions allegedly laundered abroad by the deposed Sheikh Hasina regime.

Starmer is a close friend and constituency neighbour of Labour MP Tulip Siddiq, niece of Hasina, who was ousted last year in a mass uprising. A Downing Street spokesperson did not comment.

However, Yunus said the UK government was "extremely supportive" of this effort.

"I have a lot of admiration for the promptness with which they're treating the whole subject," Yunus told the BBC.

Yunus also said he could not meet Tulip as the allegations against her were a "court matter".

He also said he has confidence in Bangladesh's Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), which is investigating Tulip on corruption allegations.

Earlier this week, Tulip sent a letter to Yunus for a meeting during his 4 day visit to London to discuss allegations against her.

The ACC has accused Tulip of illegally receiving land from the regime of Hasina.

Tulip, a former UK treasury minister, has denied the allegations and accused the Bangladeshi authorities of a "politically motivated smear campaign".

Search on for missing people, clues

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Smoke was still rising from one of the buildings.

Two police sources told Reuters that one of two black boxes from the 787 had been found. They did not say whether it was the flight data recorder or the cockpit voice recorder that had been recovered.

India's aviation regulator has directed Air India to carry out safety inspections on its Boeing 787-8/9 fleet after the crash in Ahmedabad, an order showed yesterday.

Air India and the Indian government are looking at several aspects of the crash, including issues with the jet's engine thrust, its flaps, and why its landing gear remained open, a source with direct knowledge told Reuters.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was briefed by officials on the progress of rescue operations when he

visited the crash site in his home state of Gujarat yesterday. Modi also met some of the injured being treated in hospital.

"The scene of devastation is saddening," he said in a post on X.

Residents living in the vicinity said that construction of the hostel for resident doctors was completed only a year ago and the buildings were not fully occupied.

"We were at home and heard a massive sound, it appeared like a big blast. We then saw very dark smoke which engulfed the entire area," said 63-year-old Nitin Joshi, who has been living in the area for more than 50 years.

Parts of the plane's fuselage were scattered around the smouldering building into which it crashed. The tail of the plane was wedged on top of the building.

The Wall Street Journal reported

yesterday, citing unnamed sources, that an investigation into the crash was focusing on "whether the aircraft had a loss or reduction in engine thrust".

It was the first crash for the Dreamliner since the wide-body jet began flying commercially in 2011, according to the Aviation Safety Network database.

The plane that crashed on Thursday flew for the first time in 2013 and was delivered to Air India in January 2014, FlightRadar24 said.

The lone survivor, a British national, told Indian media how he had heard a loud noise shortly after Flight AI171 took off.

India's Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said he is in touch with foreign ministers of Britain, Portugal and Canada after citizens from their countries were killed in the crash.

meeting.

Tarique left his London residence around 1:00pm Bangladesh time, accompanied by Amir Khosru and BNP International Affairs Adviser Humayun Kabir.

As they reached the hotel, the BNP leaders were greeted by party activists who gathered in front of The Dorchester, holding banners, placards, and posters.

Khalilur Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alami welcomed Tarique and others. Yunus and Tarique exchanged pleasantries before the meeting began, with the BNP leader inquiring about the chief adviser's health and passing along greetings from his mother and former prime minister Khaleda Zia, followed by a brief conversation about the weather.

Tarique gifted Yunus two books: "No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference" by climate activist Greta Thunberg, and "Nature Matters: Vital Poems from the Global Majority" by Mona Arshi and Karen McCarthy Woolf, and a pen.

After the meeting concluded, Tarique was seen leaving the venue with a smile on his face. He also waved to the party leaders and supporters outside the hotel.

He also called BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir to inform him about the discussion with Yunus, Fakhrul told reporters at the BNP Chairperson's Office in Gulshan.

Fakhrul hailed the meeting as a "turning point" in the country's politics, urging all sides to move past old disagreements and focus on fulfilling the people's expectations.

He said the nation had anxiously waited for the outcome of the meeting. He praised Tarique for demonstrating "true statesmanship" and thanked Yunus for taking the initiative to resolve political uncertainty.

"It's time to strengthen national unity and move swiftly toward a fair election in mid-February," Fakhrul said, calling for renewed momentum for a transition to democracy.

December this year and June next year, depending on the implementation of reforms promised by the government.

The process to reach a consensus among political parties about the reforms is currently underway.

Asked if there was any problem in fixing a specific election date, Khalilur said: "There is no issue at all. We don't see any problems. If anyone does, they are seeing it incorrectly. In today's joint statement regarding the election, both sides have made it clear. We hope the Election Commission will listen and announce a date."

When a journalist asked whether the election will be held with the consent of all parties, Khalilur said: "That is what we are hoping for."

While answering another question about trial of July atrocities and extradition of ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina before the polls, Khalilur said the answer was included in the joint statement. "There has been mention of sufficient progress in both reforms and judicial matters, and we are fairly confident that this progress will be achieved before the election," he added.

In reply to a question about the newly formed National Citizen Party's (NCP) announcement that it would not participate in the polls without reforming the Election Commission, Khalilur said, "You should ask them [NCP]. Every party has its own opinion, but we want to hold the election with everyone's participation."

BNP Standing Committee member Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, who flew to London ahead of the meeting, also attended the joint press conference.

He said many issues naturally came up during the discussions, which continued for one and a half hours.

"We all are united and are moving forward with the determination to build a new Bangladesh. We will work together to achieve this goal. Not only before the election, but even after, we will continue to advance with the shared resolve to