



KALACHANDPUR

Dhaka's hidden hub of culture and community

RBR

The backstreets of Baridhara Diplomatic Zone and Baridhara DOHS, known as Kalachandpur, are an energetic and vibrant neighbourhood that unfortunately suffers from an identity crisis.

The residential addresses describe their location as Badda, North Badda, Gulshan, Baridhara, even though Kalachandpur is a quarter in Ward-18, DCC (Kotwali), Dhaka Division. Kalachandpur is situated near the quarter of Nadda, according to city maps.

So many locations to explain where exactly this lively chipagoli-style or narrow lane suburb is situated have led to confusion about its postal address. The highbrow outsiders, those who live in the nearby posh tri-state area, refuse to acknowledge the residents of Kalachandpur as neighbours. Their enmity is almost like the fable of the City Mouse and Country Mouse.

It does not matter if the street layouts and the demarcations between Kalachandpur and Baridhara or Gulshan is just an adjacent street sharing a common border or lay directly next to each other.

Kalachandpur is irrelevantly considered a place for the less affluent. Dhaka is more than its upscale residential areas and shopping districts; beyond these lie the true heart of Dhaka.

The narrow lanes of Kalachandpur

embrace one such rustic and kitsch charming essence of the city. This spot is also a second home for the working Garo community in Dhaka.

Garos are an indigenous ethnic group primarily residing in the northeastern region of Bangladesh. They began to migrate to Dhaka to find employment or to pursue higher education. Kalachandpur, jokingly described as the Garo Embassy, brings about a sense of safety and security for this hard-working community. The old settlers shelter the newcomers, providing a village-like kinship, echoing a sense of ownership.

Their presence is the reason why the narrow lanes of Kalachandpur has a happy atmosphere. Relaxed in their traditional dress, dokmanda, the neighbourhood provides the freedom to express their ethnic identity.

They do their daily grocery, regular shopping, and socialising after office hours, lending a bustling mix of vibrant nightlife, diverse food, and unique shopping experiences. The dazzling shop lights and streetlights almost give the lanes a Bangkok-like vibe.

Starting from goldsmiths to budget-friendly stores, and food carts with

exceptionally exotic flavours, the place is buzzing with activities. One single jhalmuri vendor, who mixes the best spicy chickpea and puffed rice with bombay morich or hot chilli, has a cult following. On a regular day, he sells more than Tk 7,000 worth of the street food. During festivals, his sales soar even higher.

The nearby bazars also carry food items catering to this thriving community. Their favourite items, such as the Asian swamp eel or kuichcha baim, snails, snail eggs, napi or shrimp paste, bamboo shoots kochur phul or arum flower, and ginger flower, are all available here.

St Paul's Church in Kalachandpur has sorted the community's religious callings as well. It is an affordable residential option surrounded by the expat community, who are their employers. The proximity to their workplaces, which are within walking distance, means the community is prosperous and is boosting the economy around Kalachandpur.

Many young men and women find employment in beauty parlours and salons as masseurs and hairdressers, and another fraction work as domestic helps, garment workers, or as drivers, security guards, construction workers, and even as nurses.

An increasing number of Garos have also found employment opportunities in call centres and non-governmental organisations or companies.

The educated well-off Garo people in white-collar jobs have reservations about Kalachandpur being a desirable destination for the community at large, but for the blue-collar community, it is perfect.

This "culture within a culture" aspect makes Kalachandpur an interesting locality right in the heart of Dhaka.



PHOTO: STAR



PUBLIC ADMIN REFORMS

Govt moves to implement 8 proposals fast

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has identified eight recommendations of the Public Administration Reform Commission as suitable for immediate implementation and has directed the relevant authorities to promptly act in this regard.

The decision was disclosed by the chief adviser's press wing yesterday, following a high-level meeting held on June 16 at the Chief Adviser's Office.

The meeting, which was chaired by Principal Secretary M Siraj Uddin Miah, discussed 18 recommendations made by the commission and decided to implement eight of them straight away.

The eight suggestions include the formation of managing committees at colleges and secondary schools; ensuring sanitary toilets at highway filling stations; making ministry websites dynamic; operating community health centres under private management; holding public hearings at regular intervals in government offices; reviewing and amending the Right to Information Act; restructuring the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS); completing digital transformation; and strengthening e-government and e-service systems.

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2 crushed by trains in Dinajpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Thakurgaon*

Two people, including a woman, were crushed under trains in separate incidents at Chirirbandar Railway Station in Dinajpur yesterday.

The victims were Anjuara Begum, 60, and Ziabur Rahman, 43.

Abdul Mannan, officer in charge of Dinajpur Railway Police Station, told The Daily Star that Anjuara died on the spot after slipping and falling under a moving train while attempting to board the Shantahar-bound Dolonchapa Express around 9:00am.

In another incident, Ziabur was crushed under the wheels of Rajshahi-bound Banglabandha Express while trying to get on the moving train at the same station around 12 noon.

Processes are underway to file unnatural death cases with the railway police station, the OC added.

Negotiations start amid raging war

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British, French, German and EU top diplomats held talks in Geneva with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, giving diplomacy a chance one week after Israel started its bombardment.

"The good result today is that we leave the room with the impression that the Iranian side is ready to further discuss all the important questions," said German Foreign Minister Johann Wadepuhl in a statement alongside his European counterparts.

"It is of great importance that the United States takes part in these negotiations and the solution," he added.

The statements read by all four top diplomats in their native languages after the talks expressed hope of further progress but did not make any mention of a breakthrough.

Araghchi, making his first trip outside Iran since the bombardment began, said Tehran was ready to "consider diplomacy" again only once Israel's "aggression is stopped".

"In this regard I made it crystal clear that Iran's defence capabilities are not negotiable," he said.

"We support the continuation of discussion... and express our readiness to meet again in the near future," he said.

Meanwhile, the French FM yesterday condemned the efforts to change the regime in Iran from outside, calling it "dangerous".

Earlier, addressing the UN Human Rights Council yesterday, Araghchi said Israel's attacks were a "betrayal" of diplomatic efforts to reach a nuclear deal between Tehran and Washington.

"We were attacked in the midst of an ongoing diplomatic process," he said.

In an interview with German publication Bild, Israel's top diplomat Gideon Saar said he did not "particularly" believe in diplomacy with Iran.

"All diplomatic efforts so far have failed," said Saar, whose country had supported Trump's 2018 decision to abandon a previous nuclear agreement between Iran and world powers.

The Iranians, according to Saar, have used negotiations "to gain time while making progress (in their nuclear programme), and I don't think they've changed their nature".

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin said he was not seeking to be a mediator between Iran and

Israel, and was only suggesting ideas for how the countries could resolve the escalating crisis.

The Kremlin has spent much of the week positioning Moscow as a potential peacemaker after Israel launched strikes on Iran, which retaliated with missiles and drones.

But Western leaders have pushed back on a role for Putin, and earlier this week Moscow said Israel had shown little interest in its overtures.

"We are by no means seeking to act as a mediator; we are simply suggesting ideas," Putin said at an economic forum in Saint Petersburg.

"If they turn out to be attractive to both sides, we will only be happy."

While Moscow has condemned Israel's strikes, Russia has not offered military help to its ally Iran and has downplayed its obligations under a sweeping strategic partnership agreement signed just months ago.

The Russian foreign ministry on Thursday warned the United States against "military intervention" in the conflict, as it weighs joining Israel's strikes against Iran.

The UN Security Council was also due to convene yesterday for a second session on the conflict, which was requested by Iran with support from Russia, China and Pakistan, a diplomat told AFP.

The escalating confrontation is quickly reaching "the point of no return", Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned yesterday, saying "this madness must end as soon as possible".

UN chief Antonio Guterres, meanwhile, pleaded with all sides to "give peace a chance".

He warned that expansion of the Israel-Iran conflict could ignite a fire no one can control and called on parties to the conflict and potential parties to the conflict to de-escalate.

The Trump administration yesterday said it had issued fresh Iran-related sanctions targeting eight entities, one vessel and one person for their alleged role in providing sensitive machinery for Tehran's defence industry.

Two of the entities include shipping companies based in Hong Kong: Unico Shipping Co Ltd and Athena Shipping Co Ltd, the statement said.

The Treasury Department on Friday also issued counterterrorism-related sanctions targeting Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthis over alleged illicit

oil trading and shipping, it said in a separate statement.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, meanwhile, said that while Iran is the only country without nuclear weapons to enrich uranium to 60 percent, there was no evidence it had all the components to make a functioning nuclear warhead.

"So, saying how long it would take for them, it would be pure speculation because we do not know whether there was somebody... secretly pursuing these activities," the agency's chief Rafael Grossi told CNN.

"We haven't seen that and we have to say it."

He also warned against attacks on nuclear facilities and called for maximum restraint amid Israel's strikes on Iran.

His comments came as White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said Iran could produce an atomic bomb in "a couple of weeks".

Any US involvement in Israel's campaign would be expected to involve the bombing of a crucial underground nuclear facility in Fordow, using powerful bunker-busting bombs that no other country possesses.

In Iran, people fleeing Israel's attacks described frightening scenes and difficult living conditions, including food shortages and limited internet access.

Government spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani said authorities had restricted internet access to avoid "problems" like cyberattacks.

Protests broke out in Tehran and other cities after Friday prayers, with demonstrators chanting slogans in support of their leaders, state television showed.

"I will sacrifice my life for my leader," read a protester's banner, a reference to supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Britain yesterday withdrew its missile strikes since June 13 was 25 people, according to authorities. Iran's attacks have resulted in the displacement of more than 8,000 Israelis, Yedioth Ahronoth reported, citing the Israeli Property Tax Compensation Fund.

Fear grows over dengue spiralling out of control

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Bashar urged swift action: hotspots must be aggressively managed using all available tools, while areas with no current cases must eliminate breeding sources. He also called on individuals to ensure their homes are mosquito-free.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), a total of 7,077 dengue patients have been hospitalised so far this year, with 5,472 cases reported from outside Dhaka. Barguna alone has reported 2,035 cases. The total cases include 30 deaths, 13 of them outside Dhaka.

In the capital, a recently published government survey found some 13 wards across the two city corporations as high-risk zones for dengue, with seven under Dhaka South City Corporation and six under Dhaka North.

Among the breeding sources identified, cement water tanks accounted for the highest proportion (22 percent), followed by flooded floors (20 percent).

The other sources included plastic drums (13 percent), water meter holes (11 percent), plastic buckets (10 percent), flower tubs and trays/plastic pipe pits (7 percent), discarded tyres (6 percent), internal water channels (5 percent) and cement plots (4 percent).

The highest concentration of Aedes mosquito larvae (58.88 percent) was found in multistorey buildings, according to the pre-monsoon survey.

GAPS

Entomologist GM Saifur Rahman blamed the growing crisis on three major failures: lack of mandatory reporting, absence of a national dengue management programme, and exclusion of mosquito control experts from planning and response.

"Dengue is not a mandatory

reportable disease, and reports often omit the infection source," he said. "There is also no system to identify active Aedes clusters, which makes effective control nearly impossible."

Although Dhaka is reporting fewer cases, he warned the numbers may be misleading. Many people, especially adults, now show no symptoms due to prior exposure. As a result, only children and the elderly, who develop symptoms, are being reported.

"These unreported, asymptomatic cases still serve as carriers, helping the virus spread silently," he added.

Saifur called for nationwide sero-surveillance, which provides estimates of antibody levels against infectious diseases, to identify high-risk areas and assess virus exposure.

"We must understand mosquito population density to respond effectively, but there's currently no active control or dengue management programme in place," he said. "It's also impossible to operate such programmes everywhere unless clusters are identified first."

He also stressed the need to make dengue a notifiable disease, report sources of infection, and include entomologists in planning and action.

"Many cases go unreported as patients are treated at home. Hospital data alone is not enough," he said.

OFFICIAL RESPONSE

Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Administrator Mohammad Azaz said preparations have been underway for over a month and a half. Dengue units have been established at all DNCC hospitals, and treatment protocols are in place.

"We've intensified mosquito control drives in schools, where many infections begin," he said, adding that hospitals are also being cleaned thoroughly.

Insecticide spraying has been

increased to three times a day from two, and special teams are conducting awareness campaigns.

Cluster data from the Medical Information System is being used to guide disinfection efforts. Free dengue tests are being offered at ward-level health centres.

Four mobile courts are in operation to fine or take action against violators of mosquito control rules.

Meanwhile, Dhaka South City Corporation held an emergency meeting on June 11 at Wasa Bhaban. Chaired by Administrator Md Shajahan Miah, the meeting decided to double adulticide spraying from June 14 and form zone-based monitoring teams.

Separately, on June 15, the health ministry urged the LGRD ministry to strengthen mosquito eradication and cleanliness drives in areas with sharp case surges.

A letter from the Health Services Division also recommended launching grassroots awareness and prevention campaigns.

LESSON FROM KOLKATA

In contrast to Dhaka, Kolkata has taken a proactive, data-driven approach. The 206.2 sq km city is divided into 144 wards and 16 boroughs overseen by five vector management experts, including three PhDs.

The city deploys 32 Rapid Action Teams and employs 1,700 field workers and 1,440 support staff to maintain ward-based databases, conduct awareness campaigns, and monitor lever cases.

Their efforts begin in January, targeting ponds, tanks, open spaces, and construction sites. Once a case is reported, patients give blood samples at local Urban Primary Health Centres. Results are shared via SMS, and teams visit homes within 24 hours, inspecting at least 50 nearby houses for breeding sites.

Govt to scale back foreign loan reliance

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He blamed a cartel of rice mill owners and several large businesses for "manipulating the market".

Chitta Majumder, adviser of Bangladesh Rice Mill Owners Association, said paddy prices rose across the country, affecting the rice prices.

He added that he had bought Jira nazir paddy at Tk 1,730 per maund yesterday. It was Tk 1,550 before Eid.

The yield of paddy has been good this year, he said. But a handful of mill owners had brought enormous amounts of paddy, gaining significant control over the market.

Meanwhile, Enamul Haque, a chicken trader at Karwan Bazar, said Shonali chicken prices rose probably because demands have increased after the Eid.

During Eid, people eat red meat

a lot and for a while, the demand for chicken falls, he said.

At the fish market, the prices of each kg of hilsa, shrimp and ayer have increased by Tk 100-Tk 200 per kg while of rohu and katla increased by Tk 20-Tk 50 per kg.

Several traders at Karwan Bazar said as the demand for vegetables had yet to reach the pre-Eid levels, the prices remained low for many items.

reduce the external borrowing gradually; it aims to bring it down to 16.7 percent of gross financing needs by fiscal 2026-27, down from 22.9 percent this fiscal year, as per the latest Medium-Term Debt Management Strategy.

External debt has shot up for the sheer number of mega projects during the ousted government's tenure, said Mustafa K Mujeri, executive director of the Institute for Inclusive Finance and Development.

"The next three to four years are very critical. If we don't want to be a defaulter, whose consequences would be bad, we need to manage more foreign currencies."

The government should be very careful in initiating any project by calculating the financial benefits and priorities.

"If we can complete the development projects timely and transparently without extending time, those projects will give us results," he said, adding that the government should have a strategy for this.

Besides, when Bangladesh graduates from the least-developed country bracket in 2026, the window to get low-interest rate loans will shut. "We need to be more careful about this," he said.

Upon graduation, Bangladesh will lose access to grants and concessional

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It would reach Tk 1,207,700 crore, or approximately \$100 billion at the current exchange rate, in fiscal 2027-28, it said.

The government will have to repay about \$2.6 billion of the principal amount of foreign loans this fiscal year, up 30 percent year-on-year. In fiscal 2027-28, the repayment would reach \$3.34 billion.

Repayment volume is on the rise due to loan maturity, currency depreciation and the end of grace periods for certain loans, it said, adding the depreciation of taka against the dollar significantly increases the cost of servicing external debt as more taka is needed to repay the same amount of foreign currency.

The taka weakened from around Tk 84 per dollar in early 2021 to over Tk 123 now.

The interest payment on external loans is now Tk 22,000 crore, which is equivalent to \$1.83 billion – up about 45 percent from a year earlier. It will hit Tk 27,100 crore in fiscal 2027-28, equivalent to \$2.25 billion.

The government plans to conduct another DSA this month using the latest data to examine the vulnerability and ensure the transparency of debt management.

The finance ministry also plans to

loans (low interest rates, long repayment periods) from multilateral and bilateral development partners.

The country would then have to rely more on commercial loans with higher interest rates and shorter repayment periods, increasing its debt servicing costs.

The medium-term outlook for Bangladesh's debt after LDC graduation hinges on the government's ability to implement effective strategies to counter the challenges, said the finance ministry report.

"Without robust reforms in revenue mobilisation, export diversification and debt management, the debt burden and associated risks could increase. However, successful implementation of these strategies could help Bangladesh navigate the transition and maintain a sustainable debt trajectory while leveraging its improved economic standing."

Effective management of external debt interest payments is not just a matter of sound financial management for Bangladesh; it is fundamental to ensuring macroeconomic stability, protecting its foreign exchange reserves, fostering sustainable economic growth, maintaining international creditworthiness, and securing its future development prospects, it added.