



3 unexpected monsoon weekend plans you must try

RBR

What to do this monsoon, when Dhaka is in a shroud of either oppressive heat or unbearable humidity? Lest we forget the sudden showers, heavy rains, or a light, breezy drizzle? However, the unpredictability of the Dhaka monsoon should not be a killjoy. Instead, fill your weekend calendar with pleasurable activities if you know where the fun is.

Monsoon needs to be celebrated beyond a bowl of khichuri for us bored city people. Try something out of the ordinary and add a little spice to your routine eating-out weekend plans.

We city folks do things only to make our social media identity look trendy and happening. Prove me wrong; every outing must be Instagrammable or nothing. But allow me to guide you to three random and slightly bizarre spur-of-the-moment fun activities.

Circus, that too inside a village fair, just on the periphery of the metropolis, sounds like an amazing change of tempo. Friday morning, a long drive to Roth Khola in Joydebpur, Gazipur, or to Dhamrai, will take you to the vibrant Roth Mela, or chariot festival fair, that commemorates the journey of the triad of Lord Jagannath (an avatar of Vishnu) and his siblings to their aunt's place.

A dancing crowd chanting Vedic hymns and blowing conch shells, and a vibrant fair with local circus groups and portable amusement park rides, the Roth mela is a different spin on entertainment. Between the two traditional fairs, the elaborate one is going on in Dhamrai, boasting a



400-year-old tradition of Roth jatra.

Grab a pack of crunchy hot onion fritters, or salted nimki and murali, and walk up and down the street lined with stalls, food carts, and games. If you are a traditionalist and love random stuff, then the terracotta paraphernalia, cane and bamboo wares, wooden home accessories like jalpuri (a four-legged seater), or cash boxes, and our exquisite green cane mat, the shital pati, are sure to take your breath away.

These melas are celebration centres of all things local, indigenous, and artisanal. A shital pati for only Tk 1,000 (prices vary with sizes), a dhama or changari, which is a large, round basket made of cane or bamboo, used for storage in the villages; you come across many such long-lost, ecologically sustainable, everyday use items that were once the way of living.

Environmentally friendly, ethnic, and celebrating the time-honoured and non-mechanised art of craftsmanship,

these village fairs on the outskirts of the metro are like a revelation on how artisanal our lives were once. The fairs will continue till the end of this month. So, plan a trip, fast!

Next, try to drench your soul with spirituality on 9 July, which is the full moon night of Ashari Purnima. The full moon's brightness is often seen as a symbol of enlightenment and clarity of mind. Ashari Purnima is of great consequence, not only for the Buddhists, but also for those who consider themselves to be 'moon children.'

The pearly sheen of the moonbeams will replenish you spiritually. Plan an Ashari Purnima celebration with friends, either in the city parks, your rooftop gardens, or simply gaze upon the moon, breathe, and meditate for 10 to 15 minutes. You don't have to be perfect or feel anything dramatic -- just try. Let it be a moment of quiet

contemplation as Ashari Purnima is seen as a powerful day for setting intentions, seeking blessings, and realigning with one's spiritual path. Make it a night to remember, and let the full moon shine on you.

What is monsoon without getting soaked to the skin in the pouring rain? When was the last time you were carefree enough to stand in the rain and feel the splash of raindrops on you? One of my favourite rainy-day rituals is cherishing the heavy monsoon rain with my favourite songs on full blast. Stop worrying about catching a cold and plan a rain shower party with your friends, family, or kids, loaded with water balloons, water guns, and a football. Don't forget to brew a kettle of masala milk tea and order in hot singaras.

Let's not curate everything in life; be footloose, and let spontaneity take over.

BB forms Tk 25cr fund for July injured and martyrs' families

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Bank has decided to form a special fund of Tk 25 crore to support the treatment of protesters injured during the July uprising and to provide financial assistance to the families of those killed.

Of the total amount, Tk 14 crore will come from the central bank's own resources, while the remaining Tk 11 crore will be contributed by 11 commercial banks. Each of these banks posted over Tk 400 crore in net profit in the last fiscal year and will contribute Tk 1 crore each, sources said.

The decision was taken at a bankers' meeting held yesterday at the BB headquarters, with Bangladesh Bank Governor Ahsan H Mansur presiding.

The entire fund will be handed over to the July Martyr's Memorial Foundation, an official who attended the meeting told The Daily Star on condition of anonymity.

Additionally, a managing director of a leading private commercial bank, also requesting anonymity, said the governor urged banks to scale up QR code-based transactions.

Nigerian gangs kill 40 in 'revenge' attack

AFP, Jos

An armed gang killed at least 40 members of village self-defence groups in a weekend ambush and related attack in Nigeria's central Plateau state, the Red Cross and residents told AFP yesterday.

One resident described the assaults as a "revenge" attack on local vigilante groups set up to defend communities from the gangs.

For years, the heavily armed gangs -- locally known as "bandits" -- have intensified assaults in rural areas in northwest and central Nigeria where there is little state presence, killing thousands and conducting kidnappings for ransom.

Plateau state Red Cross secretary Nuruddeen Hussain Magaji said "hundreds of vigilantes were ambushed" Sunday and 30 killed in the village of Kukawa.

That attack came as the vigilantes regrouped after clashes earlier in the day in the nearby community of Bunyun Nyalum left 10 vigilantes dead, said Musa Ibrahim, a resident.

US tariff threatens export economy A pause before the storm

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Washington, President Donald Trump on Monday extended his deadline to seal country-by-country trade agreements, this time until August 1. The announcement came as a threat in letters sent to 14 world leaders, including Bangladesh's. Trump declared that their exports would be subject to levies ranging from 25 percent to 40 percent.

Addressing Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus, Trump wrote: "If for any reason you decide to raise your Tariffs, then, whatever the number you choose to raise them by, will be added onto the 35% that we charge."

About the new deadline, Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform yesterday, "TARIFFS WILL START BEING PAID ON AUGUST 1, 2025. There has been no change to this date, and there will be no change."

"In other words, all money will be due and payable starting AUGUST 1, 2025 - No extensions will be granted."

A PERFECT STORM

This tariff shock will compound a series of pre-existing vulnerabilities that have already placed the garment industry under immense pressure. According to a recent Bloomberg Economics forecast, Bangladesh's apparel exports are set for a hit this year from three directions simultaneously: a separate and ongoing trade tussle with neighbouring India, domestic energy shortages that have hampered production, and now, the crushing new US tariffs.

The cumulative effect of these headwinds could be staggering. Bloomberg Economics estimates the damage to garment exports could reach \$2 billion in 2025 alone. This is a significant blow for an industry that constitutes the backbone of the national economy, accounting for 81 percent of total exports.

In response to the new tariff, Dhaka is mounting a diplomatic push. Commerce Secretary Mahabur Rahman, who departed for Washington, DC, to join the negotiating team for meetings on July 10-11, expressed hope that the tariff could be significantly reduced. Rahman will join Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin and National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman in Washington, DC.

The core of Bangladesh's argument rests on the possibility of a preferential rate for least developed countries (LDCs). "I'm hopeful that Bangladesh's tariff will be a 10 percent baseline as the Trump administration has been working to fix a separate tariff line for the LDCs," the commerce secretary said.

If that broad LDC benefit doesn't materialise, he believes, Bangladesh's rate should still be "much lower" than the 20 percent imposed on the more developed Vietnam.

To sweeten the deal, Bangladesh has put several concessions on the table. Bangladesh offered to boost duty-free imports of American goods, including wheat, cotton, LNG, and soybeans, to help narrow the more than \$6 billion trade gap between the two nations. And Washington asked Dhaka to buy US-made equipment, mainly used by law enforcement agencies, according to Rahman.

In Dhaka, Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed said the tariff may be reduced if direct, one-to-one negotiations with the US are successful.

UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Despite the government's efforts, experts caution that the outcome is shrouded in uncertainty. The impact of the 35 percent tariff is not a simple calculation but depends on a complex web of trade actions by the US against other global players.

"It is difficult to exactly say what will be the impact," said Mohammad Abdur Razaque, chairman of the Dhaka-based think tank RAPID. President Trump has not yet announced the final tariff rates for China and India, two titans of the global garment supply chain. "If the Chinese market shrinks due to the tariff measures, Bangladesh may benefit," he added, suggesting that a crackdown on China could divert orders toward Bangladesh.

Mostafa Abid Khan, a former member of the Bangladesh Trade and Tariff Commission, agreed that the country faces a "challenging time" but stressed that the outcome depends on the corresponding tariffs levied on China, India and Pakistan.

This view was echoed by Fazlee Shamim Ehsan, executive president of the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association. "If the high tariff is imposed on China and India, the export of garments from Bangladesh to the US will increase significantly," he predicted.

Mahmud Hasan Khan, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, warned of a "negative impact" on the 20 percent of the country's apparel trade destined for the US.

He described a two-tiered crisis. At the national level, overall exports will decline. But at the micro-level, the damage will be acute. "The factories which export nearly 90 percent to the US will be hit hard," he said, adding that many small

and medium enterprises will face immense trouble.

Furthermore, Khan warned of dangerous ripple effects. If exporters are forced to divert their focus away from the US and toward other markets, such as the European Union, it will create a glut of suppliers. "There will be many players in the same markets and there will be an unfair price competition," he said. "The buyers will take the chance of a price cut."

Some top exporters argue the 35 percent figure is a negotiating tactic rather than a final decree. AK Azad, chairman of Ha Meem Group, a major exporter to the US, believes the rate is simply too high to be sustainable. "The 35 percent tariff rate will not be finally executed," he said, viewing the proposal as a "chip of negotiation" and expressing hope that the Trump administration will review the rate.

Uncertainty has left many in limbo. Ramzul Seraj, managing director of Elite Garments Ltd, which ships nearly 65 percent of its products to the US, said his buyers have yet to respond to the news. He acknowledged that exports will "face challenges" if the new rate is finalised, but also pointed to potential silver linings.

"If the tariff is fixed at 55 percent on China, Bangladesh may benefit," he said, adding that Vietnam, despite its lower tariff, cannot absorb a large volume of new orders.

"Bangladesh has a lot of production capacity, which is a plus point for this country," he said.

EU parliament approves start of automated border system

AFP, Strasbourg

The European Parliament yesterday gave final approval to a phased rollout of a new border check system for non-EU nationals which will do away with passport stamps.

The so-called Entry/Exit System (EES), was supposed to kick in last November but was delayed at the last minute as several states were not ready.

First agreed on in 2017, the automated system will record visitors' date of entry and exit and keep track of overstays and refused entries.

Visitors to the bloc's Schengen free movement area will also have biometric data -- facial images and fingerprints -- collected at ports of entry.

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any rewards given to them. If the government wishes to expand their benefits, we welcome it. But we oppose quotas that extend to their grandchildren and beyond," he said.

Earlier in the day, two students from Dhaka University filed a writ petition at the High Court, challenging the reinstatement of the quota system. The petition was later forwarded to the chamber court for a hearing scheduled for July 10.

In response to that development, Sarjees Alam, another coordinator of the quota reform movement, emphasised that regardless of the court's decision, their demand for legal reform through the parliament remained unchanged. "Even if the court gives a favourable verdict, our demand will not be fulfilled. We want a comprehensive reform of the quota system across all job grades through the formation of a commission. Only then will we leave the streets and return to our studies," he said.

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader, responding to the ongoing movement, acknowledged that the protesters were demanding reform, not abolition, of the quota system. He welcomed the students' decision to appoint legal representation and to participate in court proceedings. "We hope the country's highest court will give a realistic decision after hearing all sides. Until then, I urge everyone to exercise patience," he said.

However, Quader also warned that the BNP's support for both the quota reform movement and the simultaneous protests by university teachers and staff against the

Universal Pension Scheme was an ill-intentioned move. He directed party leaders and activists to remain vigilant to prevent any political forces from using these apolitical movements to create nationwide unrest.

While Dhaka remained relatively quiet, the quota reform protests continued on campuses across the



Buet students demonstrate in front of the university's main entrance in Dhaka on July 9, 2024, demanding reform of the quota system in government jobs.

PHOTO: FILE/PRABIR DAS

country. At Rajshahi University, students held a sit-in on Paris Road for an hour from 3:00pm. At Rajshahi College, students blocked the road in front of the college from 11:00am for three hours. In Chattogram, students from Chittagong University formed a human chain and held a mass campaign at the Shaheed Minar premises from 10:30am. Kaniz Fatima, a student of the university and daughter of a freedom fighter,

of Brojomohun College (BM College) blocked the Dhaka-Barishal highway in Nathullabad for two hours starting at 11:30am.

While July 9 offered a temporary break in the blockade programme, the determination of the students to carry the movement forward remained unwavering. With a renewed call for the next day's full-day blockade, the stage was set for further escalation in the days ahead.

Repeal stripped people of their voting rights

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The bench in the full text of the verdict released yesterday said, "Now, the entire focus or demand of the nation is for establishing a system that will effectively ensure free, fair, and impartial elections for protecting democracy, rule of law, and independence of judiciary, which can be held only under a non-party caretaker government system, which will pave the way for a new democracy, a new hope, new freedom, and a new Bangladesh."

On December 17, the HC bench delivered the verdict following two separate writ petitions. In the judgement, the bench scrapped a part of the 15th amendment to the constitution that abolished the non-partisan caretaker government system and restored the provision for holding referendum for bringing any amendment to the constitution.

On that day, the HC bench also said the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court will make the final decision about the restoration of

the caretaker government system as review petitions on a verdict on the amendment are pending with the apex court.

Mohammad Shishir Manir, a lawyer for Jamaat-e-Islami who filed one of the review petitions, told The Daily Star yesterday that the release of the full text of the HC would help lawyers place arguments before the Appellate Division for quick disposal of the review petitions.

"We will try to move the review petitions before the Appellate Division for the hearing on Thursday [tomorrow]."

If the Appellate Division overturns its verdict, delivered on May 10, 2011, scrapping the 13th amendment, the caretaker system will be automatically restored, the lawyer added.

In the full text of verdict, the HC said, "With the repeal of referendum, as it was part of article 142 of the constitution vide (via) the Twelfth Amendment Act, 1991, has negated the will of the people to express their opinions on the amendability of the preamble and articles 8, 48, and 56 of

the constitution. Therefore, repealing the provision of referendum under article 142 vide section 42 of the Act No 14 of 2011 is declared void, as it repugnant to and inconsistent with the basic structure of the constitution. Consequently, article 142 as it then was vide Twelfth Amendment Act, 1991, is hereby restored."

"Incorporating articles 7A and 7B after article 7 of the constitution is squarely contradictory to article 7, guaranteeing the will of the people and the supremacy of the constitution, including the right of freedom of thought and conscious and of speech and expression. It also has taken away the power of amendability of the successor parliament. Hence, it is declared void and a nullity in the eye of the supreme law of the land, i.e. the constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Consequently, section 7 of the act, 2011, incorporating articles 7A and 7B after article 7 of the constitution is hereby declared void being ultra vires the constitution," the HC said in the full text of the judgment.