



How people in Dhaka enjoy rain

REHNUMA SHAHREEN

There's something about rain in Dhaka. It doesn't come politely. It arrives in sheets, in sideways gusts, soaking your bag, your back, and your plans. But once you let go of the instinct to rush for shelter, there's a certain honesty to it -- the kind that peels off layers. You notice the city differently when it's wet and slow. You notice yourself.

Most of us don't look for perfect spots to enjoy the rain, we just find ourselves in them. And yet, when asked, people had places. Some very specific, others more like moods. A few were open and sprawling. Others were tucked away, behind staircases, on quiet rooftops, or through narrow alleys no one else cares to find.

Lakes and parks

Ramna, Suhrawardy Udyana, Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed Park -- these aren't secret spots, but they carry a certain silence when it rains. The kind of silence that even Dhaka respects. The trees get heavy. The benches stay wet long after the clouds leave.

"As an introvert, I like places with fewer people," Yasir, a student, shared. "In the storm, the rain in front of the glass tower at Suhrawardy Udyana, mixed with the light and wind, creates a dreamy surreal scene."

"One of my favourite spots is from the deck of Bardhara Lake," said Tasmia, an architect. "The spot is secluded by tall trees, almost invisible from the roads and apartment windows. And the view? Heavenly. Sitting on the wooden seat of the deck -- I plug in my earphones, watch the raindrops falling on the lake as the



PHOTO: STAR

city blurs into the background!"

Muddy playgrounds

Of course, not everyone wants silence. Some go looking for a mess. Starting from a dedicated playground to a random empty space in a park, you'll find boys chasing the rain as if it owes them something.

Kanon, a football enthusiast, said during his admission days, when nothing felt good, playing football in the rain at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Park was the only thing that made him feel alive. "I was a loser in exams, but a hero on the field. I can still score six-seven goals even in rain. You can't really know joy in this city until you've kicked a muddy football barefoot."

Campus rain hits different

Rain changes campuses too. It softens everything. Arguments pause. Crushes walk a little closer. Umbrellas become shared territories. Mishkat, a student at Dhaka University, put it simply: "As a woman, I feel most relaxed and free when I get wet in my own hall. I enjoy the rain in the open courtyard of Sufia Kamal Hall."

Chaiti, another student, recalled, "TSC in the rain, swimming pool in the rain, shingara from Chhayanaut's canteen during rainy evenings -- it was all fun. I loved watching the rain from the Chhayanaut balcony."

Rooftops and other escapes

Then there are the personal spots. The ones we don't post about. Rooftops,

stairwells, tea stalls under corrugated tin roofs and many more.

Niloy, an engineer, prefers the indoors, but not entirely. "I find rainy days oddly comforting that Dhaka usually doesn't offer. On days like these, I like going to music events and art exhibitions, or just enjoying some warm food and a cup of tea."

"For me it's about the mental state I'm in," said Rafid. "Sometimes, I like to just sit at a random tea stall during rain and watch the shift -- how everything suddenly looks different. There's movement, but also stillness. The city sort of repositions itself."

Some people don't want to share their spots. And that's fair. Rain can be deeply private. It reminds people of lovers they haven't spoken to in years, or friends they don't call anymore. It asks you to remember things, even when you don't want to.



306 Bangladeshis held by Malaysian immigration dept

STAR REPORT

The Malaysian Immigration Department yesterday detained 306 Bangladeshi nationals and one Nepalese citizen for alleged immigration violations, according to a report by Malaysian state news agency Bernama.

All detainees will face further investigation before being transferred to the Jawi Immigration Detention Depot, the report added, quoting Immigration Department Director-General Datuk Zakaria Shaaban.

He was speaking to reporters after leading a raid at a factory in Simpang Ampat, Penang.

There are around 800,000 Bangladeshis working in Malaysia.

However, allegations of labour exploitation persist, both during recruitment and later by employers and agents.

Malaysia suspended Bangladeshi worker

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EC seeks details of magistrates in last 3 polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission has requested detailed personal information on magistrates who were deployed during the national elections held in 2014, 2018, and 2024.

On Monday, letters, signed by Deputy Secretary Mohammad Monir Hossain, were sent to the divisional commissioners of Dhaka and Chattogram, as well as all deputy commissioners across the country, seeking information under eight categories.

The EC has made the move at the request of the Police Bureau of Investigation.

The data requested includes each magistrate's full name, parents' names, permanent and present addresses, national ID number, passport number, and mobile phone number.

The three polls in question had drawn

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Govt to shuffle the top cops by lottery to curb polls bias

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including the army and police, and Ansar, will be deployed during the upcoming general election.

According to insiders, the meeting discussed the possibility of pulling the armed forces back to the barracks for a few months and then redeploying them before the polls schedule is announced.

The home adviser told the meeting that the government believes the law and order situation is gradually improving, and if the trend continues, it will consider withdrawing the armed forces, added the meeting sources.

A meeting source told The Daily Star, "Although the issue was discussed, any decision in this regard will have to come from the chief adviser."

The meeting, convened to finalise action plans for law enforcement to ensure smooth conduct of the upcoming polls, was participated by the Special assistant to the chief adviser (for the home ministry), the principal secretary to the chief adviser, the senior secretary of the public administration ministry, the senior secretary of the home ministry, the finance secretary, the information

secretary, and the senior secretary of the Election Commission, along with secretaries from at least 11 ministries and divisions.

The meeting was also attended by the inspector general of police (IGP), the director generals of Border Guard Bangladesh, Ansar, and Coast Guard, and a representative from the Armed Forces Division. According to sources, Rapid Action Battalion was not invited at the meeting.

The CA office yesterday wrote to the Election Commission, asking it to complete all necessary preparations for holding the polls in February, as announced by Chief Adviser Prof Yunus in his address to the nation on Tuesday.

Following CA's announcement, Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin said the election schedule may be unveiled in early December, and in that case, reshuffle of the SPs and OCs may take place in November.

At yesterday's meeting, Home Adviser Jahangir Alam observed that some field administration officials tend to act in favour of certain candidates.

Agreeing with the observation, Mokhles Ur Rahman, senior secretary of the public administration ministry,

said officials will be repeatedly cautioned about this during the election training sessions.

The Election Commission monitors polling centers through CCTV cameras during elections. However, in the upcoming election, the chief adviser himself is expected to be present at his office to monitor the situation via CCTVs, according to discussions at the meeting.

Meeting sources said the chief adviser has instructed the home ministry to speed up the ongoing recruitment process under its jurisdiction, aiming to deploy the newly appointed personnel to the field after short-term training.

This directive comes in the view of the Election Commission's plan to announce the polls schedule in December.

At the meeting, instructions were also given to complete the training of all government officials from election-related offices and agencies without delay. The home adviser said no separate training allowance should be necessary for government officials participating in the training.

The meeting also discussed withdrawing 21 DCs who were

recently promoted to the rank of joint secretary from field duties by next week. Typically, officers with the rank of deputy secretary serve as DCs.

According to sources, the meeting discussed receiving the list of polling agents several days before the election day, rather than on the day before, as is currently practised.

The meeting also stressed the need to ensure that polling agents do not leave the centres during voting hours. Additionally, they will not be allowed to approach the booths too closely while on duty, to prevent them from identifying which symbol a voter is choosing. The idea of setting up separate booths for voters under the age of 30 was also discussed.

The home boss asked the information secretary about the ministry's actions regarding the spread of fake news from various platforms. He requested the ministry to launch campaigns to increase voter interest ahead of the elections.

He also instructed relevant officials to devise necessary strategies to maintain heightened vigilance regarding the possibility of a major political party boycotting the upcoming parliamentary elections.

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Responding to queries on their objections about two "student-advisers", the BNP leader said, "The work of Prof Yunus shows that he won't do anything in the future that would make the election questionable."

In a statement, Gono Odhikar Parishad said they would boycott the July Declaration if the background of the July uprising is not included.

Party General Secretary Md Rashed Khan said, "The movement against discrimination of 2024 began in demand for reinstating the 2018 circular abolishing the quota system."

These matters must be resolved clearly before the election."

Meanwhile, BNP called upon all other parties and people to come forward to ensure a successful election and to build an effective parliament.

BNP Secretary General Mirza

Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said the party

were all missing from the July

believe this historic announcement of holding the polls in February will help overcome the political deadlock in Bangladesh and make the path to democracy smoother."

The party also believes that the government and the EC will take all necessary steps to make this election fair, free, and acceptable to all, he told a media briefing at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office yesterday.

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CA office writes to EC

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institutional arrangements in this regard.

In the context of people not being able to vote in 15 years, the chief adviser emphasised making the upcoming election a memorable day of joyous voting.

The letter also informed the EC of the government's full commitment to providing all necessary support for organising a desired free, fair, peaceful, and festive election, alongside the importance of using appropriate technology.

Earlier yesterday, CEC Nasir said the Election Commission was preparing to announce the schedule in December so that the parliamentary polls can be held in February next year as declared by Yunus.

Speaking with reporters at the EC headquarters in the capital, he said, "Despite the challenges of holding an election in February, we are moving ahead with our preparations. There will be no shortcomings on our part."

CEC Nasir said, "The election schedule may be announced in early December. The road map will be revealed in phases," he said.

"Over the next month, we will hold discussions with political parties, civil society, media, and other stakeholders," the CEC said, adding they want the media to play a role in making the election more transparent.

The CEC also said they were considering revising the media guidelines based on journalists' feedback.

The EC aims to complete tasks like voter registration, training of officials, and procurement of election materials by September, according to him.

About delimitation of parliamentary constituencies, the CEC said, "A draft has been published. After receiving objections and holding hearings, we will make adjustments

where necessary. The work is being done impartially, scientifically, and free from influence."

Regarding the registration of new political parties, he said, "The process is ongoing. We will make decisions after document verification, scrutiny, and hearing objections. Our goal is to complete this process by September."

The CEC said their goal is to ensure a level playing field and have instructed deputy commissioners, SPs, the administration, police, DGFI, and NSI to work impartially and without political bias.

"Unlike before, there is no political pressure. In fact, now there will be pressure to work professionally and neutrally," he said.

"Restoring voter confidence and bringing them back to polling centres have become a major challenge as they've lost faith in the EC, the electoral process."

"The EC's goal is to hold a participatory election -- one where political parties and voters can freely participate. That's why we will launch a massive awareness campaign," Nasir said.

The CEC warned about the misuse of artificial intelligence (AI), saying, "Fake news, doctored videos, and false propaganda are now major concerns. I'm not worried about law and order as much as I am about the misuse and abuse of AI. Every day, it's being used for spreading disinformation."

When asked about the role of returning officers in past national elections, the CEC said, "We are giving this matter serious thought. Measures are being taken to ensure that those who were previously biased remain neutral this time."

Replying to another query, he said the Awami League as a whole cannot participate, since its political activities have been banned, but individuals may run as independent candidates and supporters can cast their votes.

Trump raises India tariffs

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prepares for his first visit to China in over seven years, suggesting a potential realignment in alliances as relations with Washington fray.

India's national security adviser was in Moscow yesterday, media in New Delhi reported, coinciding with US envoy Steve Witkoff's visit.

Last week, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent warned China that continued Russian oil purchases could trigger new tariffs, as Washington prepares for the expiry of a US-China tariff ceasefire on August 12.

Trade between the United States and India, the world's biggest and fifth largest economies, respectively, is worth over \$190 billion.

The increased duties place Indian exporters at a 30-35% disadvantage versus trade rivals in Vietnam, Bangladesh and Japan.

"We still have a window," said a senior Indian official, requesting anonymity. "The fact that the new tariffs take effect in 21 days signals the White House is open to talks."

Another official said there were no immediate plans for Modi or senior leaders to travel to Washington, nor were any retaliatory measures being considered.

A sharp drop in US-bound shipments could drag India's GDP growth below 6 percent this year, down from the central bank's 6.5 percent forecast, said Sakshi Gupta of HDFC Bank.