



Dhaka's love hate relationship WITH RAIN

ASHIF AHMED RUDRO

There are thousands of people in Dhaka, each living a different life. But a few things are constant for all. Apart from the unavoidable traffic and the signal at Bijoy Sarani, their love-hate relationship with rain unites most of them.

There are those who say they love rain and identify themselves as pluviophiles, a term I had to look up and now have many questions about. Do they have a club? Do they gather on weekends and soak in the rain and mud together? What do they do in winter? I am curious.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

wishing for rain. "May it rain as hard as it can," I say to no one in particular, staring out the window. Yet this same me was hoping for a dry afternoon this past Friday because I wanted to meet some friends.

Call me whatever you want – a hypocrite, a narcissist, or any other name you can think of – but I know exactly what I am: just a regular Dhaka resident.

While most people enjoy the white noise of continuous rainfall, the cool weather it brings at night, and the tempting feeling of peaceful slumber while tucked under a sheet as it rains

cats and dogs, they also loathe getting wet in office attire. It's bad enough having to get all suited and booted for work; it's unbearable getting drenched in that state. Even worse if you are carrying important documents.

I enjoy the sentiment of khichuri bilash like the next person during these rainy days. In fact, I look forward to mota chaler khichuri with aubergine fry, but I cannot bear the feeling of wet shoes as I struggle to get home. Sometimes I wonder if the opportunity cost of khichuri versus getting soaked in the streets is even fair.

Like any other Dhaka resident, I love waking up to see the drizzling rain and

the fresh air it brings. Fresh air is a rare commodity in this city, after all. But the next moment, I start nursing a temper because it will be a herculean task to get to work. The rickshaw-pullers will become dictators, the CNGs will be as rare as a meteor shower, and buses will become inhospitable.

The idea of stepping into waterlogged roads that might contain hidden holes – and water as dark as the eyeliner of a goth teen – is disgusting. But it's a deed we cannot escape in this city.

Like most people, I love watching the rain from a higher floor because it offers a peaceful landscape that is refreshing and has a natural charm. But my annoyance returns quickly, because the number of umbrellas I have lost in the last three months is unhealthy. It feels like I am in a toxic relationship with my umbrella, and it leaves at the first chance it gets.

What's even more annoying is the mud. It does wash away if it rains heavily, but if it only drizzles, the capital becomes a muddy mess. And it does not help that I am a fast walker. I am no Jackson Pollock, but the back of my trousers often looks like an abstract canvas after a walk on Dhaka streets.

So, if you ask me, or the average Dhaka resident, whether we love or hate rain, the answer will be far from simple.

Let's just say it's complicated and leave it at that.

Yunus sends birthday bouquet to Khaleda

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus yesterday sent a bouquet of flowers to BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia, extending warm wishes on her birthday.

"The chief adviser has sent a bouquet for Madam (Khaleda) this afternoon (Friday). His officials delivered it to her residence in Gulshan," said party Standing Committee member Professor AZM Zahid Hossain.

Zahid, who is also Khaleda's personal physician, said the BNP chief herself was not celebrating her birthday.

"She does not host any celebrations herself, but our party is holding milad and doa mahfils across the country," he said.

The bouquet was handed over to Khaleda's private secretary ABM Abdus Sattar at 4:00pm by the chief adviser's private secretary Shazzeb M Khairul Islam and Director of the Chief Adviser's Office Mohammad Nazmul Islam.

BNP Executive Committee member Belayet Hossain, Media Cell member Sayrul Kabir Khan and officers from the chairperson's personal wing, including Masud Rahman, were also present.

Outing turns tragic as child drowns in Tanguar Haor

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A family outing ended in tragedy yesterday when a five-year-old boy drowned after falling from a tourist houseboat in Tanguar Haor of Sunamganj's Tahripur upazila.

The victim, Masum Mia, was the only child of Kabir Hossain, who is a resident of Sylhet city.

OC Delwar Hossain of Tahripur Police Station, said a group of 15-16 people travelled from Sylhet earlier in the day and boarded a tourist houseboat.

"While the boat was heading towards the watchtower area in Tanguar Haor, Masum suddenly fell into the water. His father immediately jumped in to rescue him but failed," the OC said. The incident happened around 2:00pm.

A rescue operation was launched soon after the incident. The body was recovered around 5:00pm.

Damaged Teesta

FROM PAGE 1

worsen the erosion," he said.

Nazarul Islam, a schoolteacher from Mohipur, stressed the need for a long-term protection plan. "If the embankment collapses completely, the damage will be irreparable," he warned.

FLOOD FORECAST AND SITUATION
The Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) reported that water levels in the Teesta, Dharla, and Dudhkumar rivers may drop over the next 48 hours but could rise again on the third day to warning levels and threaten low-lying areas in Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, Rangpur, and Kurigram.

The Padma River is expected to rise over the next two days, possibly reaching warning levels and flooding riverside areas in Rajbari, Faridpur, Pabna, Manikganj, Shariatpur, Madaripur, Munshiganj, and Dhaka. The Brahmaputra-Jamuna river system may also swell over the next three days, while the Atrai River in Naogaon could cross the danger level within 24 hours.

By 9:00am yesterday, the Teesta water level at the Teesta Barrage point in Lalmonirhat's Hatibandha had dropped to 20cm below the danger mark, while the Dudhkumar's level at Pateshwari in Kurigram's Nageshwari fell to 4cm below danger.

"With no rainfall today, water is receding quickly," said Shunil Kumar, executive engineer of Lalmonirhat's WDB. "Since the Brahmaputra is below danger level, the Teesta water is draining into it rapidly, improving the flood situation."

Despite falling river levels, many areas remain inundated. Sekendar Ali from Bagdora village in Lalmonirhat Sadar said roads are still under water. Shamsul Alam from Char Bamondanga in Nageshwari said his family remains displaced on roadsides until water fully recedes.

PADMA SWELLS IN FARIDPUR

Meanwhile, river levels in Faridpur have risen due to upstream inflows and continuous rain, worsening conditions for residents along the Padma, Madhumati, and Arial Khan rivers.

According to Faridpur WDB, the Padma rose by 0.9 metres in the past 24 hours till 7am Friday and is now flowing 8cm above the danger level. The Arial Khan is 109cm above danger, while the Madhumati has also risen, reports UNB.

Flooding has affected 13 unions across four upazilas, disrupting transport and daily life and triggering severe erosion. In Sadar upazila's Dikrichar and North Channel unions, residents are relying on boats for movement.

Md Mostakuzzaman, former chairman of North Channel Union Parishad, said prolonged flooding could cause fodder shortages on the chars.

District WDB executive engineer Md. Rakib Hossain said erosion in several areas has forced authorities to place sand-filled geo-bags at critical points to prevent further damage.

Terminal-3 operations face further delay

FROM PAGE 1

According to CAAB officials, the consortium, comprised of Japan Airport Terminal Company, Sumitomo Corporation, Sojitz, and Narita International Airport Corporation, will carry out operational activities, while CAAB will oversee security.

Around 6,000 personnel, including 4,000 for security, need to be deployed in four shifts to operate the terminal round-the-clock.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines will manage passenger and cargo handling services for two years under the consortium's supervision. Data security will be under CAAB's jurisdiction, they said.

All equipment – from baggage handling systems to explosives detection devices – must be checked before the terminal is put into operation, said Air Vice Marshal Md Monjur Kabir Bhuiyan, the immediate

past CAAB chairman.

The Japanese consortium will carry out trial runs and CAAB will monitor them, he added.

Business leaders have been calling for the terminal's swift launch – a demand that gained urgency after India abruptly suspended third-country transshipment on April 8, posing significant challenges for Bangladeshi garment exporters.

Air transshipment through India became popular due to faster services and lower costs compared to Dhaka airport. Moreover, inefficiencies and mismanagement in ground handling have long plagued the airport.

CAAB officials believe that exporters' concerns will be largely addressed once the third terminal goes into operation.

On October 7, 2023, the previous government went for a soft launch of the Tk 21,300 crore project, promising

to make it fully operational by the end of 2024.

However, frequent changes in project leadership, delays in receiving some materials from abroad, and last year's political changeover pushed back the deadline.

Of the total project cost, Tk 5,000 crore was provided by the government, and the rest was covered by loans from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

The terminal's construction began on December 28, 2019, with a floor space of 230,000 square meters. It houses 115 check-in counters, 66 departure immigration desks, 59 arrival immigration and 3 VIP immigration desks.

Once it becomes fully operational, Dhaka airport's cargo handling capacity will double to 1 million tonnes annually, and its passenger handling capacity will triple to 24 million a year.

Govt prepares for transition amid calls for delay

FROM PAGE 1

together account for nearly 90 percent of exports. Currently, Bangladesh enjoys LDC trade privileges in 38 countries, covering 73 percent of its exports.

Economist Debapriya Bhattacharya, a distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and member of the UN Committee for Development Policy, said any deferment request must come from the head of government and demonstrate economic damage warranting the delay.

Bhattacharya, however, sounded optimistic about the graduation. "All the numbers are very much in favour of graduation," he said, stressing that the focus should be on ensuring a smooth transition.

He noted that major markets, including the EU, UK, Canada and Australia, have agreed to extend LDC trade benefits by three years after graduation, until 2029, for preparations. The economist urged negotiations with India and China for similar terms.

Zahid Hussain, former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office, also questioned whether deferment is feasible given that Bangladesh already received a three-year extension due to the pandemic.

"You have to build a case with strong arguments," he said, noting Nepal's deferment was granted after a massive earthquake. He also said Bangladesh should not risk its reputation with faulty economic data for building the case in favour of a deferment.

"I think the train has left us. Better let's prepare for a smooth graduation," he said.

Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network for Economic Modelling (SANEM), believes Bangladesh should take the opportunity if there is a possibility of deferment. In the UN, there is no clear stance whether Bangladesh can defer the graduation or not.

He said Bangladesh's case for deferment would weaken if fellow November 2026 graduates Nepal and Lao PDR do not also seek delays.

Raihan, a professor of economics at Dhaka University, urged coordination with those countries but cautioned that any unsuccessful bid would waste valuable time that could be spent on economic reforms for a smooth transition as per the schedule.

Mohammad Abdur Razzaque, chairman of the Research and Policy Integration for Development (RAPID), also thinks Bangladesh should apply for a deferment and work with the UN to find out what needs to be done.

But success will depend on multiple factors, including smart diplomatic engagement in a tense global trade environment, he said.

"A careful implementation plan must show how extra time would strengthen preparation," he said, adding that graduation is under UN purview and cannot be influenced by the WTO.

Despite business concerns, Bangladesh qualified for graduation by meeting all three UN criteria: per capita income, human assets, and the economic vulnerability index.



Family members break down in tears after receiving the bodies of their relatives from police in Rajshahi yesterday.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

Police struggle to regain

FROM PAGE 1

deliver justice over the killings of at least 44 police personnel during and immediately after the uprising.

Many officers shared that their family members strongly discourage them from engaging in situations that involve high risks.

They said their low morale stems primarily from the absence of superior officials who have been either sacked or are absent from duty.

The current officials – many without experience in leadership roles – are struggling to effectively guide their subordinates, they mentioned.

Seeking anonymity, an officer in charge of a police station in the capital said, "When I ask constables to visit the scenes of incidents, many of them hesitate. This is because police members are occasionally assaulted or verbally abused by locals."

An assistant sub-inspector (ASI) stationed in Dhaka said, "During the tenures of political governments, police always got support from the administration. But that support is no longer available. That's why officers now think twice before making any decision."

Echoing him, another ASI said, "Many officers believe that it is now pragmatic to avoid a conflict situation because if they get into trouble, no one is there to protect them."

EXAMPLES OF POLICE INACTION

Over the last couple of months, several video clips of criminals committing crimes in the presence of law enforcers have gone viral on social media. Police personnel were seen playing the role of mere spectators while the offenders simply walked away after committing crimes.

On August 6, a journalist was assaulted by extortionists in broad daylight in front of a policeman while investigating alleged extortion of auto-rickshaw drivers in Gazipur. The policeman was seen taking no action.

Video footage of the attack went viral a day later, sparking widespread outrage.

Earlier, a video of a machete-wielding man went viral on social media on July 18. He was seen casually walking past an on-duty traffic police after mugging a person near Dhanmondi road 32 the previous night.

Another mugging incident occurred at Malibagh rail gate on June 7, with a police patrol vehicle parked just 30 to 40 yards away.

Yet, no officer responded to the victim's screams. CCTV footage confirms both the attack and the presence of the vehicle that belonged to Shahjahanpur Police Station.

The figure represents a fraction of the police force with a total of 2.13 lakh members.

FIRM ACTION NEEDED

Stressing the need for firm directives to improve law and order, former IGP Nurul Huda said that those taking the law into their own hands should be brought to justice immediately.

He noted that there had been fears of escalation in revenge attacks and counter-violence following the uprising, but that didn't happen.

"Eventually, revenge killings stopped... people didn't resort to counter-violence. That's why I would say the situation is comparatively better," Huda added.