

MY DHAKA

A lifeline for low-income working mothers

BRAC IED, BRAC University equipping communities with trained home-based caregivers

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Before the sun rises over Dhaka's Korail slum, many mothers set out early for a long day of work, carrying the unspoken worry of who will care for their children while they are away.

For many, the answer is uncertain. Some skip work, others leave their little ones with toddler siblings or neighbours, and in heartbreaking cases, children are tied or locked up alone at home.

To help change this harsh reality, women like Nasrin Sultana Nishi and Salma Akter have transformed their modest homes into safe havens for children whose mothers work long hours in domestic jobs, caregiving, or factories.

For 22-year-old Monira, a domestic worker and mother of four-year-old Sanha, Nishi's initiative has been life-changing.

"I often drop Sanha off by 8:00am. Sometimes work runs out, and I have to find new jobs. But I'm not afraid to leave her at 'Nishi Apa's Daycare' because she's one of us -- we trust her."

Monira smiled as she recalled how Sanha now teaches her about manners -- lessons learned at daycare. "She tells me how to talk to people, how to behave, what's right and what's not. It amazes me."

According to Bangladesh's Labour Force Survey 2022, women's participation in the workforce has continued to rise, yet affordable, safe, and development-focused childcare for low-income mothers remains scarce.

Since 2019, BRAC has supported informal neighbourhood childcare by training caregivers, introducing safety and hygiene standards, and creating a structured home-based daycare model. The network has grown from 19 to 455 caregivers across Dhaka, Tongi, Gazipur, and Savar. In Dhaka alone, 104 caregivers look after nearly 1,820 children aged four months to eight years.

Instead of fixed fees, caregivers



Children playing with a caregiver in a home-based daycare centre in Korail slum in the capital.

PHOTO: BRAC

charge what mothers can afford, primarily serving garment workers and domestic helpers.

BRAC Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University, has provided technical support to refine the model, which also empowers women economically.

Nishi, 28, a mother of one herself, began her daycare nearly four years ago. "Most of the mothers are domestic workers," she said, watching five toddlers play in her small courtyard. "Since 2023, I've completed 11 BRAC training sessions on hygiene, safety, and supporting children's mental and emotional growth."

Pointing to safety switches and buckets stored out of reach, she explained, "I learned boys and girls should be bathed separately, and water buckets must be kept away from babies. These small details keep children safe."

Though her income is modest, Nishi takes pride in her work. "These children become part of my life. If mothers cannot cook, I do. I want them to feel safe and loved here."

Across the slum, 42-year-old Salma Akter has offered similar care for over two decades. Currently caring for six

children, she earns around Tk 2,300 a month.

"Money has never been the main motivation. Mothers work knowing their children are safe, while I gain independence and contribute to my family."

After training with BRAC recently, she said, "I've learned how to comfort upset children and encourage their independence during feeding. These skills really matter."

Ferdousi Khanom, senior lecturer and early childhood development academic lead at BRAC IED, BRAC University, said the model was developed through research and caregiver feedback.

It trains care entrepreneurs in attachment, safety, safeguarding, stimulation, and inclusivity, and engages children in culturally relevant activities that promote physical, socio-emotional, cognitive, and language development.

"After initial training, caregivers receive regular on-site mentorship and monitoring.... A detailed checklist tracks adherence to safety, hygiene, and learning standards. Supervisors visit centres twice weekly to provide real-

time feedback," she said.

BRAC has also developed minimum quality standards tailored to home-based childcare, balancing feasibility with essential protection and development needs.

Since its inception, the model has boosted mothers' ability to work and improve livelihoods by offering reliable, culturally grounded childcare.

Morsheda Khatun, a garment worker in Gazipur, now confidently leaves her child at a local daycare. "My child greets, behaves well, and even recites rhymes when guests arrive -- things she learned at daycare."

Former preschool teacher Kobita opened her own daycare in Savar after learning about the model. Now caring for 10 children with two assistants, she plans to expand, crediting BRAC's training for her success.

The programme also addresses mental health, with para-counselors visiting centres twice weekly to support children showing signs of withdrawal and help mothers cope with stress. "These mothers carry a lot of stress, and their children often absorb that," said Rokeya Akhter, a para-counselor in Korail.

Challenges, however, remain: frequent migration and job instability among mothers affect children's enrollment, while social stigma around childcare work hinders recognition, Khanom noted.

BRAC is working with community leaders and local governments to promote home-based childcare as a respected service. "If the government were to formally acknowledge the role and impact of home-based childcare and integrate this model into the Childcare Act 2021, it could pave the way for a sustainable, long-term solution," she said.

For mothers like Monira, the benefits are undeniable. "With more training, our children would learn even more. Already, my daughter is ahead of where I was at her age. That means everything."

Yunus seeks Malaysia's clout for resolving Rohingya crisis

BERNAMA, Kuala Lumpur



Bangladesh hopes to leverage Malaysia's influence as Asean chair to bolster international efforts in resolving the long-standing Rohingya refugee crisis, Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus said in an exclusive interview with Malaysian state media Bernama.

"We are hoping that Malaysia will exercise its influence throughout the negotiation process to help us overcome this problem," he told Bernama before concluding his 3-day official visit to Malaysia on August 13.

Yunus warned that the crisis has worsened amid ongoing clashes in Myanmar's Rakhine State between the Arakan Army and government forces, triggering fresh waves of Rohingyas fleeing across the border into Bangladesh.

"In the last 18 months alone, 150,000 new Rohingyas have arrived, in addition to the 1.2 million already in Bangladesh. It [the crisis] is becoming more and more acute. And worst of all, the US has cut off all funds to maintain them. So that is a huge problem for us," he said.

He added that three international conferences on the Rohingya issue will be convened in the coming months to seek a sustainable solution.

The first is scheduled in Cox's Bazar at the end of this month, coinciding with the eighth anniversary of the Rohingya exodus in 2017. The second high-level meeting will take place on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in September, while the third is planned for year-end in Doha, Qatar.

Repatriation efforts have made little progress amid armed conflict in Myanmar since the 2021 coup.

ASSAULTED ON AUG 15 Rickshaw-puller sent to jail in July uprising case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sent to jail a rickshaw-puller, who was taken into police custody after being assaulted by a mob for trying to pay tribute to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on Friday, in connection with an attempted murder case linked to the July uprising.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Israt Jenifar Jerin passed the order after police produced him before the court, seeking his confinement in jail, a sub-inspector working in the court told The Daily Star.

Azizur, the rickshaw-puller, was beaten up by a mob when he went to Dhanmondi-32 on the 50th death anniversary of Mujib, carrying a bouquet to pay tribute.

Witnesses said that when Azizur was surrounded, he kept saying, "I am an ordinary person of this country, not linked to any political party. I came here to pay tribute because I love Bangabandhu."

One of the people snatched the bouquet -- which carried a sticker inscribed with "National Mourning Day, August 15" along with Azizur's details -- and tore it apart.

Some in the crowd punched him before police arrived and took him into custody.

Police said Azizur was sent to jail in a case filed with Dhanmondi Police Station on April 2.

According to the case statement, plaintiff Ariful Islam was shot in the back when he was going from New Market to Science Lab around 2:30pm on August 4, 2024, during the July uprising.

Dhaka set to soar

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in their already very high FARs -- the former to 5.5 from 5.7, and the latter to 5 from 5.1.

The draft amendment was approved in principle at a stakeholders' meeting chaired by Housing and Public Works Adviser Adilur Rahman Khan at his ministry on August 10.

The approval has drawn mixed reactions from city planners, architects, environmentalists, and real estate developers.

Urban planners have warned that it could undermine the sustainability of Dhaka city, already overburdened with more than two crore residents in its 1,528-square-kilometer area.

An increase in FAR means a developer will be able to build a structure much taller than the one permitted by the existing rules, said Adil Mohammed Khan, president of Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP).

Giving an example, he said a developer is now allowed to construct a five-storey building on a five-katha plot in Khilkhet residential area. Once the new rules take effect, the developer will be able to build a nine-storey structure on the same plot.

"Dhaka's population density is already high. It frequently sees severe traffic congestion and is prone to waterlogging in the rainy season. A higher FAR will worsen these problems," said Adil, also a member of the technical committee that finalised the draft.

He pointed out that allowing the construction of additional floors will put utility services under strain and also reduce light and airflow into buildings.

The city planners initially opposed the idea of increasing FAR but eventually accepted it to break the deadlock with other stakeholders including real estate developers, he added.

Mohammad Fazle Reza Sumon, former president of BIP, said DAP 2022 was designed to curb indiscriminate and unplanned development that Dhaka city witnessed under the 2008 Building Construction Rules with much higher FAR.

"The vision of DAP 2022 was to prevent Purbachal from becoming another Uttara and ensure that Dhaka's new wards -- 42, 43, 44, and 45 -- don't turn into areas like Badda, Senpara Parbata and Mirbagh," said Sumon.

He mentioned that the revised FAR is somewhat better than what Real Estate

& Housing Association of Bangladesh (REHAB), and Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB) had asked for.

The push to amend DAP began soon after a gazette on it was published on August 24, 2022, with developers and landowners opposing FAR restrictions.

At the end of last year, Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk) began drafting an amendment following intensified lobbying and pressure from real estate developers.

On December 15, 2024, the government formed a seven-member advisory committee to oversee the process of making amendments to DAP under Rajuk's jurisdiction.

In March this year, the proposal was reviewed by an evaluation committee that included seven advisers to the interim government.

This correspondent called Adviser Adilur on his mobile phone several times and also sent a text message yesterday but he didn't respond.

Asked, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, adviser to the environment, forest and climate change ministry, said it was difficult for some stakeholders to accept DAP 2022, which marked a sudden 180-degree policy shift from the previous one.

"REHAB had objected to the FAR in the current DAP. Following a Rajuk initiative, an agreement on revised FAR was reached between various professional bodies at the last meeting," said Rizwana, also a member of the advisory committee.

Welcoming the government move, REHAB has said an amendment to the DAP 2022 is long overdue.

"A strict restriction on FAR reduces available space for residential and commercial projects, making many of them financially unviable. This impedes our ability to meet growing housing demand," said REHAB Senior Vice-President Liakat Ali Bhuiyan.

"Though FAR has been increased, we are still not satisfied with some areas in the DAP," he said.

Md Ashrafur Islam, chief town planner of Rajuk, said the draft will now be sent to the DAP Advisory Council Committee for final approval.

The provision for updating DAP every five years is a notable feature of the revised plan, Islam mentioned.

"To facilitate this, a technical committee will be formed within a year to help Rajuk upgrade and refine DAP," he added.

Trump puts peace onus on Ukraine

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the industrial region that is one of Moscow's main targets.

Zelensky rejected the demand, the source said. Russia already controls a fifth of Ukraine, including about three-quarters of Donetsk province, which it first entered in 2014.

In a major shift, Trump also said he had agreed with Putin that negotiators should go straight to a peace settlement -- not via a ceasefire, as Ukraine and its European allies, until now with US support, have been demanding.

However, Trump and European leaders said they wanted a new summit that includes Zelensky.

Zelensky said he would travel to Washington on Monday to discuss next steps, while Kyiv's European allies welcomed Trump's efforts but vowed to back Ukraine and tighten sanctions on Russia, and again urged the US to offer security guarantees for Ukraine.

Sources said European leaders had also been invited to attend the talks.

Trump's meeting with Putin in Alaska on Friday, the first US-Russia summit since Moscow launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, lasted just three hours.

"It was determined by all that the best way to end the horrific war between Russia and Ukraine is to go directly to a Peace Agreement, which would end the war, and not a mere Ceasefire Agreement, which often times do not hold up," Trump posted on Truth Social.

"If all works out, we will then schedule a meeting with President Putin. Potentially, millions of people's lives will be saved."

That statement will be welcomed in Moscow, which says it wants a full settlement -- not a pause -- but that this will be complex because positions are "diametrically opposed".

After the summit, Trump spoke first with Zelensky, the White House said. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, Nato Secretary General Mark Rutte and European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen later joined the call, officials said.

The European leaders, who had been wary of being left out of the Alaska meeting, held their own talks

- ▶ Trump and Putin cite progress but offer no details
- ▶ Putin reportedly demanded more Ukrainian land
- ▶ Zelensky to visit Washington on Monday

yesterday and said they supported the proposed three-way summit.

"As long as the killing in Ukraine continues, we stand ready to uphold the pressure on Russia. We will continue to strengthen sanctions

about that now".

Monday's talks will be held in the White House Oval Office. Zelensky said after a lengthy conversation with Trump following the Alaska summit that he supported the idea of a three-way meeting.

But Putin made no mention of meeting Zelensky when speaking to reporters. His aide Yuri Ushakov told the Russian state news agency TASS that a three-way summit had not been discussed.

In an interview with Fox News' Sean Hannity, Trump signalled that he and Putin had discussed land transfers and security guarantees for Ukraine, and had "largely agreed".

"I think we're pretty close to a deal," he said, adding, "Ukraine has to agree to it. Maybe they'll say 'no'."

Asked what he would advise



US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin shake hands after their arrival for a US-Russia summit on Ukraine at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Anchorage, Alaska, on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

and wider economic measures to put pressure on Russia's war economy until there is a just and lasting peace," they said.

Before the summit, Trump had warned of "severe consequences" if Russia did not accept a ceasefire.

But when asked about those consequences during a Fox News interview after the talks, Trump said that "because of what happened today, I think I don't have to think

Zelensky to do, Trump said: "Gotta make a deal."

"Look, Russia is a very big power, and they're not," he added. "They're great soldiers."

Zelensky has underlined the need for security guarantees for Kyiv to deter Russia from invading again in the future. He said he and Trump had discussed "positive signals from the American side" on taking part.

Putin did not signal any movement

in Russia's long-held positions on the war, but said he agreed with Trump that Ukraine's security must be "ensured".

"We expect that Kyiv and the European capitals will perceive all of this in a constructive manner and will not create any obstacles. That they will not attempt to disrupt the emerging progress through provocation or behind-the-scenes intrigue," said the Russian leader.

According to a source, the US proposed security guarantees for Ukraine similar to -- but separate from -- those enjoyed by Nato member countries.

"As one of the security guarantees for Ukraine, the American side proposed a non-Nato Article 5 type guarantee, supposedly agreed with (Russian leader Vladimir) Putin," the diplomatic source said on condition they not be identified in any way.

Nato's collective security is based on its Article 5 principle: if one member is attacked, the entire alliance comes to its defence.

There was no immediate comment on the matter from Moscow.

For Putin, the very fact of sitting down with the US president represented a victory. The Kremlin leader had been ostracised by Western leaders since the start of the war, and just a week earlier had faced a threat of new sanctions from Trump.

Cold War historian Sergey Radchenko wrote: "Putin is a determined opponent, and, yes, he basically won this round because he got something for nothing. Still, Trump did not sell out Ukraine."

Oleksandr Merezhko, head of the Ukrainian parliament's foreign affairs committee, said that, by dropping any focus on a truce, "Trump is taking Russian President Vladimir Putin's position".

Trump ended the joint press conference by telling Putin, "I'd like to thank you very much, and we'll speak to you very soon and probably see you again very soon."

"Next time in Moscow," a smiling Putin responded in English. Trump said he might "get a little heat on that one" but that he ld "possibly see it happening."