

MY DHAKA

Why Old Dhaka's Siddiqui Bhai nihari is a must-try

RBR

Recently, I drove to Subal Das Lane in Lalbagh to try the latest breakfast craze that has captivated Dhaka in the metaverse: Siddiqui bhai's Nihari.

Nihari is haute cuisine prepared with premium ingredients by specialised chefs, and it isn't an everyday meal. But weekend breakfasts call for something special, both in the old and new parts of Dhaka. Thanks to food vloggers and bloggers, Siddiqui bhai is on everyone's radar, making our weekends extra palatable.

Served in his hole-in-the-wall restaurant, Maa Shahi Halim, this delectable shank broth is available for a short window of time, mainly till his big stock pot or "degchi" is emptied of its contents.

I started my journey at half past six in the morning, and by the time I reached 40 minutes later, I was among the last few to get myself a bowl.

"It is Friday, and weekends mean a rich and fancy breakfast. Nothing is fancier than a big bowl of nihari made by Siddiqui bhai. His portions are big and filling, the shanks -- soft kuruli meat, pulled beef, and the gelatinous chunks of bone marrow -- are to die for. I have come from Uttara to join my friends from Gandaria for this delicious broth, and we do this quite often, at least two weekends in a month or more," says Parvez Malik, a young executive working in a bank.

Parvez's group was wiping off the last bits of nihari with a butter naan and praising the chef for his perfect dish.

Nihari is a melt-in-your-mouth, slow-cooked nalli (bone marrow) stew made with meaty bones that have a lot of tissue, cartilage, and marrow, like oxtail, shanks, and knuckles. The slow-simmer breaks the collagen to make a gelatinous bone broth with a jiggly consistency.

"There is no secret to my recipe; the flavour and taste depend on slow cooking for a long time. The spices I



add besides the regular ones are long pepper, star anise, galangal, allspice, and organic dried rose petals," says the amiable chef, who starts cooking his nihari right after maghrib prayers and continues till the crack of dawn.

"One big metal degchi or stock pot full of shanks, hock joints, and premium bone-in beef Kuruli, which is rich in flavour, tender, and excellent for slow-cooked dishes like stews, soups, and broths, goes through a 17-hour slow-cooking process. I do it myself, as it requires expert attention," Siddiqui says while serving a bowl to his customers.

He prefers doing this himself because the taste lies in the final mix. "I insist on serving because my clients want various sorts of meat cuts in their bone marrow broth. Some prefer soft meat chunks, some pulled

meat, some add mogoj or offal, but the caramelised onions and a spoonful of my special spice mix make my nihari bowl so enjoyable. It should be served hot and eaten with roti or naan fresh from the tandoor," he adds.

His countertop has separate pots of simmered mutton, beef, and chicken. And according to his client's choice of meat, he adds his soup stock that is prepared separately in a big degchi, and then, as a final touch, he adds his garnishes.

Siddiqui's scouts roam the local cattle markets of old Dhaka every morning to buy almost 50 kg of paya or shanks, which is the cut from the lower leg of the cow, containing sinewy muscles and often, bone with marrow. And on Fridays, they make extra to cater to the weekend rush.

In the evenings, when the all of the nihari craze dies down, Siddiqui bhai then serves Haleem. I will write about his Haleem later; for now, I shall savour the nihari.



PHOTO: STAR

Legal bars, admin delays stall polls in many universities

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done within days before sending the draft to the education ministry. "After the president issues an ordinance, we'll announce the election roadmap," he told reporters.

Under the new framework, all regular students can vote and contest, with no age limit. The central students' union executive body will have 21 members. There will be hall unions too.

Begum Rokeya University, Islamic University, Comilla University, and Maulana Bhashani Science and Technology University lack provisions for unions. Students there are demanding amendments to their universities' acts.

At Rangpur's Begum Rokeya University, students launched a hunger strike on August 17. Nine fell sick within three days, with several hospitalised.

VC Prof Showkat Ali said the university will hold elections once the act is updated. "We forwarded letters to the authorities concerned on May 14 urging inclusion of student union polls in our act... If [the University Grants Commission] approved by September, we'll hold elections between October 26 and 31."

At Maulana Bhashani University, a

hunger strike began on August 12 and soon drew wider support. Protesters say repeated memorandums and meetings were ignored.

VC Prof Anwarul Azim Akhand said, "As there is no provision, we cannot arrange anything now. But we held a meeting with deans, chairmen, the proctor, and student welfare bodies, and decided to place the issue in the regent board meeting [on August 27]."

After two rounds of discussions, students at Islamic University in Kushtia formed a platform named "Movement for IUCSU" and demanded inclusive representation, justice for the killing of a student, transparent teacher recruitment, protection for protesters, and minority participation.

Leaders from Chhatra Dal, Chhatra Shibir, Chhatra Union, and Students Against Discrimination joined. "This is a demand rooted in student rights. If the administration stalls, students will launch a tougher movement," said Shahed Ahmed of Chhatra Dal.

IU Pro-VC Prof M Yeaqub Ali said he supports the demand but added, "Since there is no provision, we must follow due process. If general students apply in writing, we will initiate discussions and approach the ministry, UGC, and the chancellor."

At Barishal University, a July 22 referendum saw 86 percent of 1,145 participants support union polls. VC Prof Mohammad Taufiq Alam said the administration is "positive" but added, "Not all students are demanding it. If general students jointly demand it, we will proceed."

Chittagong University is among those that has legal provision for a central students' union. Though an election commission was formed, no schedule was announced.

While authorities cited an incomplete voter list, with 11 of 54 departments yet to submit names, members of the Chhatra Odhikar Parishad locked the university's main gate on August 12, demanding a polls schedule.

CU Pro-VC Prof Kamal Uddin said, "Preparations are almost complete. We are ready to announce the poll schedule by Thursday." CU has held only six central elections, the last in 1990, since it was founded in 1966.

Shahjalal University of Science and Technology last held polls in 1997. To revive them, authorities formed a seven-member committee on July 15 to re-draft the ordinance.

VC Prof AM Sarwaruddin Chowdhury said, "We are hopeful of holding the central union election.

But as the last was 27 years ago, it would take time. Besides, under the current circumstances, hall polls may not be possible."

Asked for a tentative date, he said, "We're working to hold the election within December."

Bangladesh Agricultural University last held polls in 1998. On August 26 this year, students submitted a memorandum with nine demands, including a full election schedule.

VC Prof AK Fazlul Haque Bhuiyan said, "The union election is a necessary component for students' rights. So far, only a handful submitted a memorandum. If we get the demand from a majority of student bodies, we will work on it."

Bangladesh University of Engineering Technology's central union was established in 1962 and had 21 committees. The last election was in 2001. Prof AKM Masud, director of Buet's Directorate of Students' Welfare, said, "So far, there have been no demands for polls from the students' side. Hence, the authorities have nothing in process."

Meanwhile, DU will hold Ducusu polls on September 9 (last held in 2019), JU's Jucusu polls on September 11 after 34 years, and RU's Rucusu polls on September 25 after 36 years.

Police charge truncheons on students marching to Jamuna

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Fouzul Kabir Khan to examine the demands of both engineering graduates and diploma engineers, who have also been demonstrating.

The BSc engineering students' original demands included recruitment for 9th grade engineers only through competitive exams with a BSc minimum and scrapping the 100 percent quota for diploma holders in 10th grade posts, while allowing diploma, BSc and MSc holders to apply. They also demanded banning quota-based promotions or creation of equivalent posts under different titles; and taking legal action against misuse of the title "engineer".

Fouzul and Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan also sat with the students at the Railway Bhaban in the evening.

Fouzul said consultation with all stakeholders was required. "A decision will be made tomorrow [today] after discussions," he told reporters after the meeting.

"Students will continue raising demands while discussions will also go on. But repeated blockades at Shahbagh or attempts to march to Jamuna cannot be acceptable. Our doors remain open to the students," he added.

According to a Cabinet Division notification, the government committee will assess the justification of the demands raised by both BSc and diploma engineers and submit recommendations within a month.

Alongside the energy adviser and environment adviser, it includes

Public Works Adviser Adilur Rahman Khan, Education Adviser Chowdhury Rafiqul Abrar, Institution of Engineers President Mohammad Rezaul Islam, Institution of Diploma Engineers President Kabir Hossain, and Board of Accreditation for Engineering and Technical Education Chairman Tanvir Manzur. Cabinet Division Additional Secretary Kazi Muhammad Mozammel Haque will serve as member secretary. The committee may co-opt other members if required.

After a meeting with the advisers, Sakibul Haque Lipu, general secretary of the Prokoushali Odhikar Andolon, declared the "complete shutdown" of engineering universities. "All classes and examinations will remain suspended tomorrow [today]," he told reporters.

He added that the next course of action will be announced at a press conference at the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh, this afternoon.

Lipu said they would avoid programmes that cause public suffering, such as blockades at Shahbagh. "None of our three demands have been met. Policymakers do not even know what our movement is about," he said, adding that a student-nominated representative would be in the committee formed with four advisers and engineers.

POLICE ACTION

Students gathered at Shahbagh intersection around 11:30am as part of their "Long March to Dhaka" programme, halting traffic at the key intersection and causing gridlocks on adjacent streets.

They declared the march on Tuesday after blocking Shahbagh for five hours without receiving any response from the authorities. Around 1:30pm yesterday, the protesters tried to march towards Jamuna, the chief adviser's residence, but police intercepted them near the hotel.

As students broke through barricades, law enforcers fired teargas shells, used water cannons and sound grenades to disperse them. The incident led to chase and counter-chase, scuffles, and the throwing of brick chunks.

The home ministry in a statement said at least eight policemen, including Ramna Division Deputy Commissioner Masud Alam, were injured, two of them critically.

DC Masud said police had to act when the protesters reached near Jamuna and broke the barricade.

Additional DC Mir Asaduzzaman said force was used to bring the situation under control and restore traffic flow.

The protesters, however, claimed police attacked them despite their programme being peaceful. "Around 1:30pm, as students moved from Banglamotor towards Shahbagh, police began firing teargas shells and using water cannons," said Buet student Sifat Rana.

In Chattogram, students under the banner "Engineers' Rights Movement" blocked the busy Gate No. 2 intersection for nearly two hours in the afternoon in protest against the police action in Dhaka.

Around 5:00pm, students from

CUET, IUUC, Premier University, and Chittagong University marched from GEC intersection and gathered in front of Biplob Udyan at Gate No. 2.

In Rajshahi, students of Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology (Ruet) blocked the Dhaka-Rajshahi highway at Talaimari intersection in the afternoon.

In a separate incident, police charged truncheons to disperse protesters under the banner of Bangladesh Diploma Engineering Students-Teachers-Professionals Songram Parishad in Kakrail yesterday afternoon.

The demonstrators began a procession from the Institution of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh, to submit a seven-point demand to the chief adviser. An 11-member delegation was later allowed to hand over the memorandum to his office.

On their way back, participants staged a brief sit-in in Kakrail, causing traffic congestion. They later moved towards Kakrail intersection. When they reached Willes Little Flower School and College around 2:30pm, police suddenly chased the protesters and charged truncheons.

Their demands include defining the roles of BSc and diploma engineers at workplace, reserving the sub-assistant engineer post for diploma engineers, fixing a 1:5 BSc-diploma engineers ratio in staffing structures, and raising the quota for promotion from sub-assistant to assistant engineer from 33 percent to 50 percent.

Qader vows to end seat crisis

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neglected and oppressed. I feel a lot needs to be done regarding student rights, which is why I'm running in the Ducusu race."

Qader said he has always spoken out against injustice, even at the cost of being evicted from his hall and sent to jail. "But I didn't stop. Students have seen me protesting injustice publicly, and they will continue to see me doing so."

Saying Dhaka University could lead the change in the "New Bangladesh", Qader said, "There will be no discrimination here. The campus will be student-friendly. Together with the students, I will build their dream campus."

If elected, his topmost priority would be student welfare, including addressing the seat shortage and improving food quality in residential halls.

"We'll also take steps to ensure that the 'gono room' culture can never return. Also, the distance between students and teachers must be bridged, and teacher appointments must be free of political preference."

Saying that the number of female halls is inadequate, he pointed out

that while around half the students are women, they have only five halls. "We'll work to resolve their housing issues quickly. Women face harassment and moral policing both online and offline. We'll ensure their safety so that they don't feel insecure."

Qader also criticised the authorities for failing to hold Ducusu elections every year. "We'll ensure Ducusu polls are held every year, because without representatives, students have no one to speak for their rights."

Though he described the current election atmosphere as better than in 2019, he claimed that violations of the electoral code have gone unpunished. "The administration must act neutrally and provide equal opportunities for all candidates."

He said that online harassment, particularly of women, remains an issue unaddressed by the administration.

Speaking on army deployment during polls, Qader said, "It's like firing a cannon to kill a mosquito. The current situation does not warrant such measures. It seems intended to instil fear among students. There appears to be a malicious intent behind this sudden decision."

Hamim for Ducusu charter

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a student representative as the president. The honourable vice-chancellor will remain as the chief adviser on the Ducusu advisory council," he said.

Hamim further said, "To ensure gender equality, Ducusu may have two VPs -- one female and one male. Also, to ensure Ducusu elections are held regularly, we will include this in the university's annual academic calendar."

He expressed confidence that students will choose him for his student-friendly work.

"Even before the July movement, I was on the streets for students and against fascism. Through volunteer organisations, I arranged medical camps for female students in the women's halls. To keep students' minds and bodies healthy, I organised various sports competitions. I also organised cultural programmes -- just as we arranged Quran recitation competitions, we similarly held talent hunt contests in dance, music, and acting."

However, Hamim conceded that the Ducusu charter has limitations and the student body cannot bring about sweeping changes at Dhaka University, even if it wants to.

"What we can do is to fulfil some basic needs of students," he said, referring to accommodation and quality food crises.

Hamim pledged to end the practice of master's students occupying hall seats after exams by introducing an automated system that cancels seats once results are published, freeing space for first-year students.

"If implemented, this might, by and large, solve the accommodation problem of first-year students."

He also promised to ensure computer literacy for students from marginalised areas, form advisory teams of meritorious students to help others achieve good results, and set up small medical centres in women's halls through public-private initiatives.

To address female students' safety, he plans to launch a helpline for immediate response to harassment complaints.

While the election atmosphere is festive, he accused Islami Chhatra Shibir and some independents of electoral code violations.

He also criticised army deployment on polling day, calling it unnecessary and fear-inducing.

"There is no war-like situation prevailing on the campus to deploy military."

Hamim said the JCD panel is inclusive, with representation from women, minorities, hill students, and July martyrs' families.

"I believe our students will vote for the JCD-nominated panel as they like inclusivity."

Rucusu polls day revised to Sept 25

RU CORRESPONDENT

In the face of student backlash, the election commission of the Rajshahi University Central Students' Union (Rucusu) last night backtracked from the polling date announced earlier in the day.

The Rucusu polls will now be held on September 25, three days earlier than the previously set date of September 28.

Voting will take place at the academic buildings, with results to be declared the same day.

Confirming the matter, Prof F Nazrul Islam, chief election commissioner, told The Daily Star that other dates in the revised schedule will also be adjusted accordingly.

"Since the 28th is the holy Maha Shashti [the beginning of Durga Puja], we are pushing the election date forward out of respect. The complete schedule will be announced later tonight [Wednesday]."

He further said, "After hearing that the election was scheduled for the 28th, students started protesting. Considering the matter, we have decided to change the date."

Earlier in the day, students protested, saying the timing would disenfranchise thousands of students.

RU student Sourav Karmakar said, "We strongly protest this decision. Not just Hindu students, most of the campus will remain empty that day. Who will cast their votes then? We demand that the administration ensures no one is deprived of their voting rights."

Fuad Ratul, convener of the Socialist Students' Front, added, "Because of Durga Puja festivities and university holidays, many students will be unable to vote. This exclusion will give fundamentalist groups an undue advantage."

Rajshahi University Chhatra Dal president Sultan Ahmed Rahi posted on social media, "Fixing the Rucusu polls on the eve of Durga Puja is no coincidence -- it is a deliberate conspiracy."

Mujahid Faisal, general secretary of the Shibir unit, said, "We believe the commission made this unilateral decision under pressure from a particular group as part of a plan to sabotage the election. Other organisations and candidates are dissatisfied. We hope the commission will withdraw this announcement and hold the election at the originally scheduled time."

Kaiser Ahmed, treasurer of the Chhatra Union, added, "The extension of the election timeline and the new polling date are the result of influence from two partisan organisations. This move will exclude a large portion of students and make a fair, participatory election impossible."