



# FEASTING ON FRIDAYS

## Dhaka's rich breakfast traditions

RBR

The Friday menu, whether for breakfast or lunch, has always been a lavish affair for the people of Dhaka.

The bowl of cereal or a hard toast is swapped with hot parathas fried in ghee, julienned potatoes fries, spicy omelettes with cheese, and sweet semolina halwa, or perhaps, puffed-up luchis with aloo dum and dim er halwa (potato curry, and an egg dessert).

The most elaborate morning spread, in my opinion, is beef bhuna and thick laal atta roti that is spiced up with onions and chilli (brown flour savoury soft tortilla), and finished off with a hot cup of gur er cha (tea with molasses). Bengali families are spoilt for choices, and a well-planned, sumptuous home-cooked weekend breakfast is undeniably the best.

Then again, it is a Friday morning, and the lady of the house is equally entitled to stay in bed a little longer, with her tea. Getting all flustered with cooking is not exactly an ideal option to relax on a Friday morning.

So, if there isn't a rich breakfast at home, then the second-best option is going out for breakfast.

Dhaka has numerous lovely breakfast options. The posh cafes in Dhaka, like White Canary Café, North End Coffee Roasters, and Bistro E offer an elaborate English breakfast menu: sausages, eggs (fried, poached, or scrambled),



grilled tomatoes, mushrooms, baked beans, marmalades, and buttered toasts and bread. My most sinful choice for such a breakfast is the soft brioche French toast with a seasonal fruity compote.

But for the Bengali Babus that we are, our quintessential nashta or breakfast is always from a local sweetmeat shop like Bismillah Misti Mukh & Bakery Ltd, Bonoful, or Muslim Sweets across the road.

The choice includes fresh seasonal vegetables mash or labra, tempered with dry chilli, fenugreek, cumin, mustard seed in mustard oil, and infused with an earthy depth of hing (asafoetida), served with hot paratha

and roshogolla. An alternative to this menu is the chunky vegetable stew with pea lentils cooked in clarified butter or ghee, and soft omelettes with lots of onions, green chilli, and mint, and a glass of chilled matha, a popular Bangladeshi yogurt-based drink.

The deep-fried luchi, mixed vegetable bhaji, and bhundia, a fun dessert of fried chickpea flour bubbles dipped in sugar syrup from the legendary Medina Mishtanna Bhandar in Lalbagh, have always been a crowd pleaser. This menu has been going strong for the last 50 years.

Sweetmeat breakfast has put Deshbandhu Sweetmeat, Alauddin Sweetmeat, and Medina Mishtanna Bhandar in the spotlight.

I remember walking down the quiet alley, early in the morning, from our house in Purana Paltan to the corner

around the North-South road, where the legendary Maranchand sweetmeat shop was located. You could smell the hot parathas and labra from afar. Packed in brown paper bags, I used to walk back home with Mashi, our nanny.

On the way back, she would pick madhabilota flowers for me and collect a slab of home churned butter, made by a single mother of four children, who was our neighbour. My father vouched for her products. At times, he would stop by her kitchen, on his way back home from work, to collect a pack of salted or sugared cchana or curdled milk. I just had to share this anecdote because Dhaka in the 70s was like a quaint suburb. And mornings were dreamy, pollution free, and safe.

Anyway, coming back to Friday breakfast, I must add that from times gone by up until now, old Dhaka has remained a sought-after place for breakfast.

Hajir biryani in Alauddin Road sees queues from 6:00Am. Basically, it is a meal of beef tehari cooked in mustard oil, and their parcels are wrapped in a packet of dried jackfruit leaves. This is indeed legendary and till date, it remains so.

Chicken soup, the local version of white sauce broth with chicken pieces, bone marrow stew, or nihari and paya, is a legacy of old town's Mughal settlements, served with soft butter naan and oil-free parathas. These breakfast items are yet to be dethroned from our list of favourite breakfasts aside from a homely one.

However, dunking hot parathas, bakarkhani, and toast biscuits in a piping hot cup of sweet milk tea is still my all-time favourite Friday breakfast.

## Referendum likely on PR for upper house

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thought of sending only the July Charter, but later we realised that it might create misunderstandings. Therefore, we have decided to send both the charter and the implementation plan. The plan, however, is intended for the government."

He said the charter and the plan could be sent to the parties on Sunday night or Monday morning.

A source, requesting anonymity, said the implementation plan would not carry a specific timeframe, but the commission would seek a pledge from political parties to implement the charter.

According to several commission members, the commission aims to have the July Charter implemented during the tenure of the interim government.

Meanwhile, the commission has revised three contentious commitments which several parties had objected to.

One of the pledges was that the July Charter would take precedence over the constitution and existing laws. Jamaat and the NCP agreed to this, but the BNP and some other parties opposed.

To address the objections, the commission brought changes to the wording. The revised version will say that where constitutional amendments are required to implement the reforms -- such as the prime minister's term limits, presidential powers, or appointment of the Election Commission -- the charter's recommendations will take priority over existing provisions.

In short, the charter will prevail over provisions, not over the constitution as a whole.

## Gazipur gets a new seat, Bagerhat loses one

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and 3; Satkhira-2, 3 and 4; Manikganj-2 and 3; Dhaka-2, 4, 5, 7, 10 and 14; Gazipur-1, 2, 3, 5 and 6; Narayanganj-3, 4 and 5; Faridpur-2 and 4; Shariatpur-2 and 3; Brahmanbaria-2 and 3; Cumilla-1, 2, 6 and 10; Noakhali-1, 2, 4 and 5; and Chittagong-7 and 8.

The EC Secretariat yesterday issued a circular in this regard. The notification was published in the form of a gazette later at night.

The commission held hearings for four days from August 24 after receiving claims, objections, recommendations, and opinions on draft boundaries, EC Senior Secretary Akhtar Ahmed said in the notification. The draft was published on July

30. A total of 1,185 objections and 708 recommendations were submitted afterwards.

The hearings were held on the redrawing of boundaries for 84 constituencies in 33 districts.

The boundaries were finalised after a review of the information and arguments presented during the hearings, and making necessary amendments to the constituencies, Secretary Akhtar said.

According to the law regarding delimitation of constituencies, the boundaries of Jatiya Sangsads constituencies should be redrawn based on the population distribution from the latest census, while keeping administrative units intact for convenience.

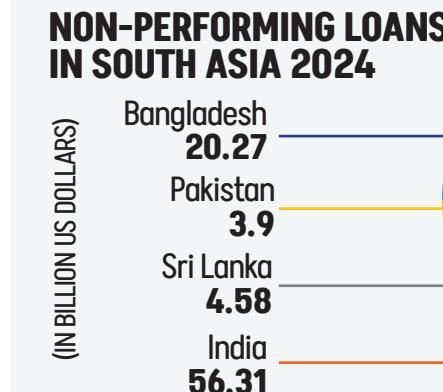
## Bangladesh tops

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of Asia's total, marking a decline from the previous year.

Bangladesh stood out for its worsening trend, with default loans rising to \$15.80 billion in 2023. Its NPL ratio steadily mounted over the last five years, climbing from 7.7 percent in 2020 to 9 percent in 2023.

The ADB said this pointed to structural weaknesses in credit underwriting and resolution.

Economists attributed the surge to years of regulatory laxity, political interference, and the legacy of the past government.



They noted that loan classification rules had long been relaxed under political pressure, masking the true scale of defaults. The Bangladesh Bank has recently begun disclosing the actual picture, which, they warned, means the reported volume of bad loans is likely to rise further.

Zahid Hussain, former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office, said that before the political changeover in 2024, loan classification rules were kept relatively lax. The previous government repeatedly rescheduled loans of large conglomerates, masking the true extent of defaults.

He added that Bangladesh Bank also withheld the actual picture of distressed assets. "The situation has now shifted, with the central bank beginning to disclose the real state of non-performing loans. But as loan classification rules tighten, the reported volume of bad loans will likely rise further," he told The Daily Star.

Citing India's example, Hussain noted that while it once struggled with a mountain of bad loans, sweeping banking reforms helped bring defaults under control.

Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (Sanem), also cited India as an example, saying the country managed to bring the situation under control through strict enforcement of rules and regulations.

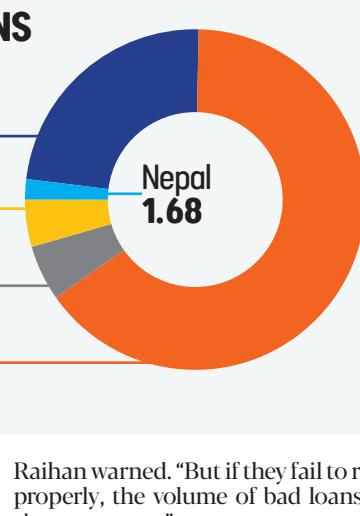
In Bangladesh, he said, the banking sector saw a notable shift after the new

governor took office at Bangladesh Bank.

He added that even Nepal now manages its loan portfolios better than Bangladesh, while the governance structures in Sri Lanka and even Pakistan are comparatively stronger.

Raihan also said that under the previous government, classification criteria were repeatedly altered to understate defaults, while politically connected business groups borrowed heavily -- some of them fugitives and embroiled in corruption.

"I'm not sure if all of their loans have been classified as defaults yet,"



Raihan warned, "But if they fail to repay properly, the volume of bad loans will rise even more."

### WHAT CAN BE DONE

Raihan argued that reforms must continue and go beyond the central bank, requiring stronger laws, better coordination across ministries, and above all protection from political interference. "The next elected government must be fully committed to carrying these reforms forward," he said.

The ADB report said Asia's NPL market has seen remarkable progress in recent years, but it remains crucial to prepare for potential downside scenarios. "Progress has been uneven across countries, underscoring the need for tailored approaches to NPL management," it said.

The report warned that a prolonged global slowdown, exacerbated by trade disputes and geopolitical conflicts, could trigger new waves of NPLs in Asia, especially in highly leveraged corporate sectors and economies reliant on external trade and commodity exports.

To navigate these challenges, it suggested strong regulatory frameworks, efficient market structures, and proactive policy interventions.

The ADB said continued efforts to enhance judicial efficiency, improve market transparency, and foster investor participation will be key to developing a more effective and integrated secondary NPL market across Asia.

## SC upholds Tarique

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Replying to a query, lawyer Zakir hoped that the BNP acting chairman would return home in November or December this year.

Earlier in the day, while delivering the verdict, the SC expressed doubts whether the accused had made the confessional statements voluntarily.

The apex court also expunged the HC's observation suggesting that the home ministry could conduct a fresh investigation. Additionally, it directed the authorities to free if any accused is still in jail in connection with the cases.

In the judgment, the SC said, "The circumstances under which the confessional statements of the accused were obtained have given rise to serious doubt about their voluntariness, inasmuch as the alleged mastermind of the offence, Mufti Abdul Hannan, was produced before the magistrate to record a second confessional statement long four years after making the first and at a time when he had been in a condemned cell for a prolonged period. The remaining accused gave their statements before the magistrate after being in police custody for a long time, as discussed above."

"Furthermore, the confessional statements of three accused were recorded by a single magistrate on the same day, with unusual haste in gross violation of the prescribed rules. The prayers of most of the accused for retraction of their confessional statements on the ground of inhuman torture on the persons and their unauthorised detention in custody by the law-enforcing agencies without the order of a magistrate and the aforesaid circumstances have rendered the confessional statements

highly doubtful as to their voluntary nature."

After the verdict, principal defence lawyer SM Shahjahan told reporters, "Justice has been served, and the Appellate Division has further ensured it. We are grateful."

Another defence lawyer, Mohammad Shishir Manir, said it has been proved that the accused were not involved in the incident. "We sympathise with the victims, but no one can be punished without evidence."

In his reaction, BNP's Law Affairs Secretary Kayser Kamal said, "Out of political vengeance, [deposed prime minister] Sheikh Hasina implicated Tarique Rahman in the cases. The Supreme Court verdict has proved that Tarique Rahman is innocent. It has also proved that Sheikh Hasina never wanted justice for the killings, including that for Ivy Rahman's."

On December 1 last year, the HC acquitted all 49 accused, including Tarique and Babar, overturning trial court verdicts that had convicted and sentenced them for the grenade attack on the AI rally.

The state later filed the appeal with the Appellate Division, challenging the HC verdict.

A section of lawyers including SM Shahjahan, AM Mahbub Uddin, Md Bodruddoza Badal, Md Ruhul Quddus Kazla, Emdadul Haque Azad, Kayser Kamal, Jaaid Bin Amjad, Gazi Kamrul Islam, Salaz, Zakir Hossain Bhuiyan, Siddique Ullah Miah, and Md Maksud Ullah appeared for the accused while Additional Attorney General Abdul Jabber Bhuiyan, deputy attorneys general Abdurrahman Al Mahmud, Md Jahirul Islam Sumon, and Md Asad Uddin represented the state during hearing of the appeal.

## Reforms cannot be sustained

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Saying that no country can ever claim to have solved the corruption problem, he stressed the need for accountability and judicial independence.

Valerian urged Bangladesh to enact a beneficial ownership transparency law to trace stolen assets and called for stronger international cooperation to return laundered money.

He said he found "genuine commitment" from the chief adviser, chief justice, and regulators to make the transition succeed, adding that the sacrifices of last year's uprising "cannot have been in vain".

Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of TIB, said that Bangladesh loses at least 3.4 percent of its GDP every year due to money laundering, which fuels inequality and hampers development.

A total of \$234 billion has been

## ACC moves for Interpol red notice for Hasina, Joy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission has initiated a process for the issuance of Interpol red notices against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her son Saeed Wazed Joy, accused of corruption in the allocation of six plots in the Purbachal New Town Project.

On Wednesday, ACC investigators sent two letters to Police Headquarters, addressed to the Inspector General of Police (IGP), requesting action. The letters stated that despite arrest warrants issued by a court, Hasina and Joy remain abroad. To ensure justice, steps should be taken to trace their whereabouts and facilitate their return to Bangladesh to face trial.

Copies of the court order, arrest warrants, first information report (FIR), charge sheet, and a draft red notice form were attached to the letters in support of the request. According to officials, the police will forward the letters to the home ministry, which will then approach Interpol.

Media reports indicate Hasina has been in India since August 5, 2024, following her ouster in a mass uprising, while Joy resides in the United States. Other family members are also living abroad.

The ACC began probing the alleged plot scam last December and filed six cases on January 12. Besides Hasina and Joy, the accused include Hasina's daughter Saima Wazed Putul, sister Sheikh Rehana, Rehana's son Radwan Mujib Siddiqi, and daughters Tulip Rizwana Siddiqi and Azmima Siddiqi.

According to the ACC, while in power, Hasina and her family abused authority by securing 10-katha plots each in Sector 27 of the Purbachal housing project, despite being ineligible.

On July 31, Dhaka's two special judge courts framed charges against 23 individuals in the six cases and ordered trials to begin.

## Judge overturns Trump funding cuts to Harvard

AFP, New York

A US judge ordered the Trump administration on Wednesday to overturn deep funding cuts to Harvard University that froze more than \$2 billion over allegations of antisemitism and bias at the Ivy League institution.

The administration, which vowed to appeal, insisted its move was legally justified over Harvard's alleged failure to protect Jewish and Israeli students amid campus protests against Israel's war in Gaza.