



ICE CREAM

Dhaka's perfect remedy for every mood

RBR

Ice cream is a sinful indulgence for anyone... I have a confession to make about this decadent, intense pleasure. I am addicted to ice cream bars and cones. My craving feels almost excessive. My love for ice cream remains as steadfast as ever. It all began in those quiet summer afternoons of my childhood, when the bell of the ice cream man would lure me into getting the orangey ice lolly treats.

Ice cream on a stick, or ice cream bars and cones, have led Dhakaites to commit to gluttony. The heat serves as an excuse, but people are using it as validation to treat themselves to ice cream bars. They indulge after office hours or classes, after an intense counselling session, after a boring meeting, after striking a deal, finishing a job, or even facing a failure; the tea-breaks are for ice cream now. This sweet treat perks you right up.

"Our freezer from Bellissimo, a premium line of ice cream brand in Dhaka, is stocked twice a week. The speciality bars like Supremo and Perletto, in Vanilla and Chocolate flavours, are an instant sell-out item. I am giving you my last two bars. We got restocked yesterday," says a chirpy teenager in a department store



in Uttara's Zohara market, as he was packing my order. I was personalising an assorted box of my favourite flavours from different brands.

The shops had company freezers from brands like Igloo, Savoy, Polar, Bellissimo, Za'n Zee, and more. Each of these companies, to stay alive in a competitive market, is coming up with innovative flavours.

The ice bar menu has moved far from Igloo's choc bar and orange lollies. In fact, Igloo has reinvented its stick ice cream menu with loads of fancy and upscale flavours. Their Exotica Almond Split and Swiss Chocolate premium bars, with crispy and nutty chocolate crust on the outside and a velvety vanilla or chocolate centre, are

unparalleled.

Then there is the salted caramel-flavoured Robusto ice cream bar, with an extra-thick, real chocolate coating on the outside from Polar; it just steals your heart in one bite. Last weekend, I was out with friends, and let me tell you, we cannot chill without chocolates and ice cream. Thus, we ended up savouring Savoy Discone ice cream in a chocolate wafer cone.

The Discone of Savoy, with a chocolate fudge centre and a thick layer of chocolate upper crust, is ambrosia for mortals. The best is the last bite of the crispy cone, filled with gooey chocolate melt. The treat leaves you licking the wrapper and your fingers, covered in chocolate drips.

Besides these local and popular brands, Fruitsicles, a home-grown, hand-crafted gourmet ice

brand, has made a place in our hearts. Their fruity, tangy, and zesty concoction of ice pops is love. This stuffy September, they are offering a new flavour, Guava-chilli. Fruitsicles pop-up carts are found at almost every city fair, and at Jatra in Banani.

The ice cream market sales are broadly divided into two categories: impulse and family purchase. The impulse category is boosted by people like me who shop for cones, cups, sticks, and ice lollies, and in the process, make up for approximately 70 percent of total ice cream sales, according to newspaper reports.

The ice cream market in Bangladesh is now worth more than Tk 2,000 crore, with 97 percent of it being dominated by branded companies. The remaining portion is occupied by locally made ice cream. Isn't that cool?

9 killed as rescue boat capsizes in Pakistan floods

REUTERS, Lahore

At least nine people died when a rescue boat capsized during flood relief efforts in Pakistan, authorities said yesterday.

The incident took place in a village near the historic city of Multan in eastern Punjab province on Thursday, a statement from the Punjab Disaster Management Authority said.

It said the boat had rescued 24 people from flooded villages when it overturned, adding that the remaining 15 were safely removed from the water.

Rescue officials say villagers have been refusing to leave their homes in some parts of rural Pakistan, especially without their cows, goats and other animals, one of their main sources of income, which often leads to forced evacuations.

The rescue work in the region is "tough because people are not cooperating", the authority said.

Floods triggered by this year's intense monsoon rains and swollen rivers have killed 946 people, including 97 in the province, in Pakistan since late June, and inundated large swaths of crops.

YEMEN'S HOUTHIS US issues new round of sanctions

REUTERS, Washington

The United States imposed a fresh round of sanctions targeting Yemen's Houthis on Thursday in what the Trump administration said was Washington's largest such action aimed at the Iran-aligned group.

The US Treasury Department said it was issuing sanctions against 32 individuals and entities as well as four vessels in an effort to disrupt the Houthis' fundraising, smuggling and attack operations.

Among the targets are several China-based companies that Treasury said helped transport military-grade components, as well as other companies that help arrange for dual-use goods to be shipped to the Houthis. The sanctions also target petroleum smugglers and Houthi-linked shipping companies, a Treasury statement said.

In response, China's foreign ministry said yesterday that it opposed the US "abuse of unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction", which "violated international law and the basic norms governing international relations."

Northern region drying up

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call this kind of steady, ongoing change a "robust" trend," Rayhan said.

"It means the drying pattern in Bangladesh has been strong and consistent, not just due to random weather or short-term events. The study shows that Bangladesh is one of the places in the world where water storage has been going down consistently over the study period."

A GLOBAL CRISIS

The study warns that nearly six billion people in 101 countries – about 75 percent of the global population – have lost freshwater over the past two decades.

Researchers found that 68 percent of land-based water loss came from groundwater alone, contributing more to sea level rise than the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets combined.

"These findings send perhaps the most alarming message yet about the impact of climate change on our water resources," said Jay Famiglietti, the study's principal investigator and a Global Futures Professor at ASU's School of Sustainability.

"Continents are drying, freshwater availability is shrinking, and sea level rise is accelerating. The consequences of continued groundwater overuse could undermine food and water security for billions of people."

Lead author Hrishikesh A Chandanpurkar added, "Glaciers and deep groundwater are like ancient trust funds. Instead of using them sparingly during crises such as prolonged droughts, we are depleting them without replenishment, edging towards an imminent freshwater bankruptcy."

According to the United Nations, by 2030 the world will need at least 30 percent more water, 45 percent more energy, and 50 percent more food.

Climate change is compounding this crisis in Bangladesh, as declining Himalayan meltwater inflows and sea level rise are already causing saltwater intrusion in northern districts, further reducing both surface and groundwater availability.

As a downstream nation, the country also faces a regional disadvantage. Upstream extraction in India and Nepal continues to affect flows. This imbalance worsens seasonal stress across the country.

GROUNDWATER EXTRACTION

The country extracts about 32 cubic kilometres of groundwater every year, 90 percent of which is used for irrigation and 10 percent for domestic or industrial use.

"Due to such over-extraction, groundwater is being contaminated with salt and heavy metals. Twenty-four percent of lands are now exposed to extremely elevated arsenic, salinity and groundwater depletion hazards," said Dr Anwar Zahid, former director of groundwater hydrology at the Bangladesh Water Development Board.

"We've observed that groundwater levels in urban areas, particularly Dhaka and the Barind Tract, have been declining permanently at an alarming rate. This implies that the water level is not being recharged even after monsoon. With increased extraction, fluctuation of groundwater levels has

also increased with time."

A 2019 study found Bangladesh losing groundwater at an average rate of 8.73 millimetres per year. In 2006, the number of shallow pumps was 11.8 lakh; by 2019, it had risen to 16 lakh. Dhaka Wasa alone pumps about 3.3 million cubic metres of water every day – enough to fill 20 Mirpur stadiums.

For families in Dhaka, tube wells are increasingly unreliable, forcing many to rely on costly water deliveries.

In Keraniganj, villagers face water scarcity for months. "From March to June, we get no water," said resident Akhil Chandra Das.

Farmers also struggle. "All the farmers use groundwater to irrigate their paddy field because it is cheaper than surface water. To irrigate one bigha [33 decimals] of boro, it takes Tk 3,000 for a season. But to irrigate with surface water, we need to hire day labourers or install shallow machines which are even costlier," said Shimul Ali, a farmer from Rajshahi's Paba upazila.

"However, since it rained a lot this year, we didn't need to irrigate our fields."

Meanwhile, coastal villagers face salinity intrusion in drinking water, leaving them dependent on rainwater harvesting or unsafe sources.

DRAWBACKS AND SOLUTIONS

"The population is increasing every year, and so is the demand for freshwater, particularly for irrigation and industry. Naturally, our natural water storage is shrinking day by day," Dr Zahid told The Daily Star.

He stressed the need to shift towards surface water and rainwater retention.

Large-scale rainwater harvesting has not materialised, while chronic urban waterlogging prevents effective recharge. Experts warn that without urgent updates and enforcement, water governance will remain inadequate.

A 2023 global study published in Nature and supported by NASA's GRACE satellite data shows Bangladesh losing significant amounts of freshwater annually.

According to the World Bank (2021), groundwater levels in parts of Dhaka are dropping by nearly 2-3 metres every year, threatening long-term water security.

This crisis is further compounded by salinity intrusion in coastal regions and reduced dry-season flows of major rivers such as the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna.

"Without urgent interventions in sustainable water management, Bangladesh's freshwater decline could severely impact agriculture, public health, and overall resilience to climate change," warned urban planning expert Ahmed Mukta.

As the water level continued to decline, last month, the government announced fifty unions in 26 upazilas of Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, Naogaon and Chattogram as severely water-stressed. Of the unions, 47 are in Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, and Naogaon, while three are in Chattogram's Patiya upazila. The government is working on preparing a guideline to restrict water abuse in those areas.

Nepal gets new PM

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loose umbrella title of the youth protest movement.

Thousands of young activists had used the online app Discord to debate the next steps – and name Karki as their choice of next leader.

Karki, dressed in a red sari dress, took the oath but did not make a further speech. She smiled and bowed with her hands pressed together repeatedly in traditional greetings.

"It is a moment of victory... finally the power vacuum has ended," said Amrita Ban, a Gen Z protester.

"We did it", key youth protest group Hami Nepal posted on Instagram, calling for unity.

"Honour the lives of those who sacrificed themselves for this moment".

Dipak Kaphle, from the president's office, said Karki had been appointed to lead an "interim government... to conduct an election for the House of Representatives within six months".

That would mean parliamentary elections before mid-March 2026.

Protests led into long-standing economic woes in Nepal, where a fifth of people aged 15-24 are unemployed, according to the World Bank, with GDP per capita standing at just \$1,447.

At least 21 protesters were among those killed, mainly on Monday during the police crackdown on demonstrations against corruption and poor governance that was sparked by a ban on social media.

Parliament, major government buildings and a Hilton Hotel were among the sites set ablaze by protesters on Tuesday.

KP Sharma Oli, the 73-year-old leader of the Communist Party, then quit as prime minister. His whereabouts are not known.

More than 12,500 prisoners who escaped from jails across the country during the chaos "are still at large", police spokesman Binod Ghimire told AFP.

Nepal's army said it had recovered more than 100 guns looted in the uprising, during which protesters were seen brandishing automatic rifles.

Japan expands sanctions against Russia

AFP, Tokyo

Japan yesterday expanded sanctions against Russia over its invasion of Ukraine, freezing the assets of more people and groups as well as slashing the Russian oil price cap.

Tokyo will freeze the assets of 14 individuals and 51 organisations, including Russian officials, company executives and pro-Russian figures in Ukraine, according to the foreign ministry.

Japan will also cut the current oil price cap to \$47.60 from \$60 per barrel, which was set in 2022 by the G7, aiming to restrict Russia's revenue.

Funding uncertainty stalls

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with the Centre for Injury Prevention and Research, Bangladesh (CIPRB). The World Health Organisation provided technical support.

FIVE STRATEGIC GOALS

The strategic goals include improving pre-hospital care for road crash victims; ensuring standard treatment at primary healthcare facilities; optimising the functioning of all hospitals to reduce mortality and reintegrate crash survivors into productive life; and providing logistics, essential medicines to health facilities along major highways.

The other goals are strengthening management of road traffic injury data and developing monitoring and evaluation system for post crash management; and enhancing multi-sectoral collaboration to strengthen post-crash response.

Achieving these goals will require the involvement of more than a dozen stakeholders, including various ministries, governmental and non-governmental organisations, and the WHO.

UNCERTAINTY OVER FUNDING

The funds for implementing the plan were supposed to come from the Fifth Health, Population, and Nutrition Sector Programme (HPNSP), but the interim government scrapped the programme, said an official of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), seeking anonymity.

Instead, the government decided to take up two projects to complete the unfinished task of the Fourth HPNSP and continue supply of emergency products to public hospitals. No allocations were made in the projects to implement the three-year plan, added the official.

"Funding is now uncertain, and it is difficult to say when the implementation can begin," the official said.

When contacted on August 31, Prof Syed Zakir Hossain, line director of the NCDC Programme at DGHS, said they have drafted a project proposal that includes an allocation for the plan.

"But we have to wait until the project is approved. If the plan's implementation window closes in the meantime, we may have to revise the strategy."

Saidur Rahman, secretary at the Health Services Division, told this correspondent yesterday that they would expedite the process of the project's approval to implement the plan as soon as possible.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The implementation of a post crash response plan has become more urgent than ever with the country witnessing a sharp rise in road crash fatalities.

According to official data, 13,827 people were killed and 18,077 injured in road crashes between January 2023 and July this year.

However, the actual number is much higher, as many incidents go unreported.

According to the WHO Global

Status Report on Road Safety 2023, an estimated 31,578 people were killed in road crashes in Bangladesh in 2021 – six times the official count for that year.

A national survey conducted in 2016 revealed that nearly two-thirds of road crash victims died on the way to hospitals, while three-fourths didn't receive any form of pre-hospital care.

A 2019 World Bank report said that improvement in trauma care – a key component of post-crash response – could save over a million lives globally, potentially reducing deaths from road injuries by up to 30 percent.

Trauma care refers to the medical management of patients who have suffered severe injuries from accidents or violence, with the aim of treating and rehabilitating them from the moment of injury through to recovery.

"Though Bangladesh has made remarkable improvement in expanding healthcare facilities over the last 30 years, trauma care facilities did not expand in the same pace because of scarcity of logistics and skilled human resources at all levels," said the plan.

It noted that Bangladesh currently doesn't have any strategy, protocol, or guideline for pre-hospital care to ensure emergency medical services at crash sites or to protect those providing roadside assistance.

"The present situation demands strengthening the full spectrum of the post-crash response system," it added.

Frustration as counting drags on

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fully trained in manual counting, the process started very slowly," he admitted.

He also explained that voting itself began late in two halls, and in some centres was briefly paused. Two large halls, each with over 1,000 voters, saw very low turnout until the afternoon, when long queues formed around 4:30pm, half an hour before voting was supposed to end.

As rules required all voters in line to cast ballots, boxes from those halls only reached the commission around 9:30pm on Thursday, pushing the start of counting to 10:00pm.

Missing polling agents added to the holdup, Alam said.

DEATH, RESIGNATION

The crisis deepened when Prof Mafruhi Sattar, a member of the five-strong election commission, resigned yesterday evening, citing the body's "failure to address irregularities and ensure a level playing field". Earlier on Thursday afternoon, three pro-BNP teachers assigned to centrally monitor the polls quit over allegations of irregularities.

Prof Sattar told journalists that the allegations – rigging, vote manipulation, and mismanagement – were true.

The pro-BNP Jatiyatabadi Shikhhok Forum's Jahangirnagar University unit, of which Prof Sattar is the convener, "strongly condemned the farcical election".

In a statement last night, it said they believe the spread of misleading information against BNP's student wing Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD)

on the night before the election and the irregularities on election day are linked.

The election was "arranged to ensure the victory of candidates from a particular political group. We also demand a fair settlement of the complaints and the holding of an acceptable election," the statement read.

However, the Islami Chhatra Shibir-backed Shikhharthi Oikya Forum, questioned Prof Sattar's resignation, terming it a "farcical act" and dismissing the allegations of irregularities as "baseless".

Their assistant general secretary candidate Ferdous Al Hasan asked how Prof Sattar, despite being the chief of the pro-BNP teachers' forum, was made a member of the EC.

Zahiruddin Mohammad Babor, convener of JCD's JU unit, said Prof Sattar's resignation from the commission proved that the allegations they raised earlier in the day were true.

Earlier in the morning, the atmosphere grew heavier after the sudden death of Jannatul Ferdous Moumita, 32, a fine arts teacher who had been working as a polling officer at Pritilata Hall. She fell sick while reporting to duty and was declared dead at Enam Medical College Hospital in Savar.

Prof Sultana Akter, returning officer at Nawab Faizunnesa Hall, accused the election commission and university administration of mismanagement that pushed Moumita beyond her limits.

ANGER, SUSPICION

Despite the explanations, candidates and officials accused the commission of

poor preparation, inadequate planning, and mismanagement. They argued that the administration had failed to consult experienced hands despite the scale of the polls, which required tallying three separate ballots per voter.

Students too voiced discontent. "We were excited and hopeful, but this delay is killing that joy," said public administration student Shazid Sikder Shawon. "If the process is fair, why is it taking so long to count just 11,000 votes?"

The Shibir-backed Oikya Forum demonstrated demanding the completion of counting by night and threatened to launch a tough movement otherwise. Swatantra Shikhharthi Sammilan, another panel, also pressed for immediate results.

At a press briefing, Oikya Forum general secretary candidate Mazharul Islam alleged that BNP-backed teachers and JCD leaders were conspiring to stall the process by raising "flimsy excuses".

An executive member candidate from the panel, Mohammad Ali Chisty, said in the Ducus polls at Dhaka University, results for some 40,000 votes were announced within hours. "Here we have only 11,000, yet everyone is exhausted and disappointed. If needed, more manpower should be deployed."

Meanwhile, Shibir's Dhaka metropolitan (east) unit brought out a procession from the north gate of Baitul Mukarram in the evening, protesting against the delay in vote counting at JU.

Joined by central leaders, the procession ended at the Jatiya Press Club.