



Gulshan 2 junction simply refuses the mundaneness of life. I was assigned to cover the place once again due to a new trend: people opening up shops out of the trunks of their cars. The street, which once was known for its kebabs, has now evolved into something that feels bigger, louder, and stranger, something that might just earn it the nickname: Mini Bangkok Street.

#### The old and the new

For some time now, "Raater Kebab er Goli" or "Lavender er Goli", as many fondly call it, has been the go-to spot for kebabs, fuchka, and

other quick street eats. I myself once wrote about the place, focusing solely on those staples, the skewers sizzling and the fuchka stalls buzzing. However, that was then. This time, as I walked through, I realised it had transformed into a carnival of experimentation.

Where once your options were kebab rolls and soda, now you are just as likely to find bite-sized burgers, plates of French fries, even sushi being served under the glow of tiny LED lights and fairy bulbs. I'll admit, I hesitated before trying roadside sushi, wondering if my stomach would forgive me. But I survived, and to my surprise, enjoyed it.

#### Trunks turned shops

The most fascinating addition is the emergence of trunk shops. People have

#### People's street

It's not simply the food or the impressive makeshift stalls that stand out to you; it's the people. Families taking their children for a night out, young adults forming core memories with their friends, couples out for a walk, and even people who work late at night and want a snack are a common sight here. The crowd is diverse, and for once, it feels like a place in Dhaka that really is for everyone.

Some people also come to enjoy the novelty of sushi or sandwiches on the side of the road, while others just relax and talk into the night while eating chips and chaats. An unsaid understanding exists here: it's more about blending in with the mayhem than it is about enjoying exquisite food.

#### The good, the bad, and the chaotic

Hygiene remains a matter of personal judgment, and whether you trust a pizza oven on a cart or sushi rolls on the side of a dusty road is something each person has to decide. That's the gamble of street food anywhere, whether in Bangkok, Delhi, or here in Dhaka.

In my eyes, a few safety issues were highlighted. As the crowds of people stroll, munch, and explore, some owners of cars and motorcycles, believing that they are "smart", squeeze through the narrow stretch, just inches away from pedestrians. Making the area pedestrian-only during certain hours could easily prevent the constant tension it creates. The place could breathe and become the night market it seems destined to be, free from the constant weaving of vehicles.

#### Mini Bangkok?

So, is Gulshan 2 really becoming mini-

# GULSHAN 2'S MIDNIGHT

## street food scene feels like Bangkok

literally popped open the backs of their cars and set up shop, turning sedans and SUVs into makeshift stalls. From varieties of chips chaat to perfumes and footwear, these micro-entrepreneurs are doing business from the boot of their vehicles.

The creativity is remarkable; the back of one car might be lined with packets of Lays and jars of spices, shredded chicken, beef and chopped sausages, while another could be serving cold drinks, pizzas, and even full-on plated snacks.

The vibe of the street gives a distinctly foreign feel, or at least it's something that I am not familiar with on the streets of Dhaka. If you have been out on a stroll in Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, or any other Southeast Asian night market, you would recognise the buzz, the vibrancy, and the sense that the street is alive.

Bangkok? In parts, yes. It has that buzzing mix of street vendors, food experiments, and trunk shops that give off a distinctly night-market vibe. It has the noise, the people, and the eclectic energy despite not being polished or curated. It's rough, crowded, and it seems like it just happened because people needed a place to eat, connect, and hustle.

And maybe that's the charm. It does not need to be a copy of Bangkok or anywhere else. It is our own messy, exciting version of a night street, where kebabs still hold their ground, but sushi rolls, bite-sized burgers, fries, and kulfi have muscled their way in. Where car trunks double as stalls and where, at midnight, you can't help but feel that the city is refusing to sleep, daring you to join in.

**By K Tanzeel Zaman**

**Photo: Shahrear Kabir Heemel**

