

MY DHAKA

What I learned from Dhaka

ASHIF AHMED RUDRO

The city has quite a reputation. It is cruel, unforgiving, and even hostile to newcomers. However, Dhaka simultaneously embraces all, gives a chance to anyone who dares to venture into its crowd, and most importantly, teaches everyone some valuable lessons. Here are some of the things that I learned from Dhaka.

Time management

Elsewhere, outside Dhaka, one can complete a few chores within a short period of one hour. In Dhaka, it feels like there is no such thing as “one hour”. Everything takes more time, and in order to function in this city, one has to learn how to manage one's time. One has to learn what needs to be done immediately, what can be saved for later, and what can be done over the weekend.

My years in Dhaka have taught me how to properly manage my time, and hard as it can be, it's a useful skill.

Prepare for everything

Dhaka can be unpredictable. The sun can be too much, it may rain quite



heavily, and you might need to stay in wet shoes for hours. Sometimes, there might be a commotion coming your way, and you might be stuck in traffic for a while. It could also happen that you face absolutely no issues, no traffic on your way, and arrive an hour earlier than you hoped. Anything can happen in Dhaka, so the average Dhaka resident should be prepared for anything. Dhaka has taught me to carry a



backpack everywhere. In it, I keep a first aid bag, a small towel, a pair of extra socks, an umbrella, a book, a battery pack, sunglasses, a headset, a waterproof folder, one hundred takas in change, and several other items. All of these were found to be necessary at one time or another, and I have learned to be prepared for any situation that might occur.

Learn your variables

When I used to live in my hometown, I never bothered to learn about the surroundings much because it was not really needed. In Dhaka, you learn

to check the weather before going out. You wonder if any processions or exams are going on in any particular area that might cause congestion. You wonder if any particular roads might be blocked for construction or any other reason.

Dhaka has taught me to learn about variables as much as possible, and it has taught me to plan.

Value of a holiday

I never knew the value of my free time in my earlier years. The busy and routine-confined life in Dhaka has taught me how important holidays are and how great it feels to just sit back and enjoy a day off. I imagine most of Dhaka feels this way, which must be why Friday morning starts rather slowly in Dhaka.

Courage to fight

My early days in Dhaka were challenging. Being new to the city, I got on the wrong bus more than a few times. I ended up in new and unfamiliar places, and sometimes, due to my own fault, I got into worse situations. However, this is Dhaka and tough as this city can be, it also taught me how to get back up from those places and situations, and I returned home a little wiser. All these experiences taught me courage and how to keep my head in difficult situations.

As unforgiving as Dhaka can be, it can also be nurturing and a land of chances. And a great teacher, especially to the young adults. I certainly learned a lot from Dhaka. What about you?

## Yunus reaches Rome to join WFF event

**BSS, Rome**

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus reached Rome yesterday evening to join the annual World Food Forum (WFF).

Bangladeshi Ambassador to Italy ATM Rokebul Haque received Prof Yunus at Rome Fiumicino Airport around 5:00pm (local time), according to the Chief Adviser's Press Wing.

Earlier in the day, a Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight carrying the chief adviser and his entourage departed Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka around 11:30am (Bangladesh time).

According to the tour schedule, Yunus will deliver a speech as a guest at the main session of the WFF.

He will also hold meetings with prominent figures on the sidelines of the event. In those meetings, talks will focus on global issues such as food security, poverty alleviation, and sustainable development.

The WFF is a flagship event of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, where policymakers, researchers, and entrepreneurs from across the globe exchange views on the future of food systems.

## Public admin secy vows neutrality during polls

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The newly appointed senior secretary to the public administration ministry, Ehsanul Haque, said yesterday that he has taken responsibility to ensure the field administration acts neutrally during the upcoming general election.

"We, the officers of the administration, can conduct the election impartially if we are given the scope," he said while speaking to reporters at his office.

He said that if the field officers get an appropriate atmosphere and scope to work independently, they will be able to hold polls neutrally. "If the field administration does not work neutrally, we will take action," he said, adding that officers inclined to any political party will be out of the election duties.

Yesterday, the government appointed Ehsanul Haque, who was serving on contract as senior secretary of the Road Transport and Highways Division, as senior secretary to the Ministry of Public Administration (MoPA).

On the same day, Siddique Zobair, senior secretary (contractual) attached to the MoPA, was posted to the National Academy for Planning and Development (NAPD) as a senior secretary.

## Next JS may get

**FROM PAGE 1**

Commission members said it may suggest asking the public "whether they support the consensus reached through the commission's dialogue with political parties".

A member said the body is likely to recommend that after the election, MPs of the next parliament perform dual roles – carry out legislative duties and undertake constitutional reform within a specific time.

"They will be given 90 to 120 days to complete the reforms outlined in the July Charter, after which they will resume their standard legislative responsibilities," the member said.

The commission was supposed to submit its recommendations on the charter's implementation along with the final version of the document to the government yesterday, but it could not.

Ali Riaz said, "Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, head of the consensus commission, is now out of the country. To whom will we submit it now?"

He also told The Daily Star that the commission is holding informal discussions with political parties on three outstanding issues – under which process, law, order, or ordinance the referendum will be held; what questions will be included in it; and when the referendum will take place.

"All political parties have agreed to hold a referendum," Riaz said. "Now the commission is trying to bring them to a common ground on the remaining three issues, and that is why we are holding informal talks with them. We have made progress on those issues as well."

Although Riaz claimed progress made, a commission member said leaders of the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami in separate unofficial meetings with Riaz yesterday stood firmly on when the referendum should be held.

The BNP insists the referendum be held on the same day as the national election, while Jamaat demands it be held before the polls.

During the meeting, BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed discussed the pros and cons of both options and reiterated his party's firm position.

A source present quoted Salahuddin as saying a pre-election referendum would be costly, could see low turnout, and might delay the polls due to uncertainty over results.

"If the referendum is held along with the polls, it will save costs, ensure better turnout, and eliminate fears of delaying the elections," he told the commission.

A three-member Jamaat delegation of Nayebe-Ameer Syed Abdullah Muhammad Taher, Assistant Secretary General Hamidur Rahman Azad and party leader Shishir Monir also met the commission.

They reiterated the party would not change its position on when the referendum should be held.

"We have announced programmes demanding that the referendum be held before the election," Azad told reporters.

## Awami League ran a 'monstrous regime'

**FROM PAGE 1**

"The culture of extrajudicial killings began with Siraj Sikder's murder," Tajul continued.

At one stage, tribunal member Justice Md Shofikul Alam Mahmood reminded the prosecution, "We are trying individuals."

Tajul then said explaining the political context was essential to understanding the motives of the accused.

Speaking to journalists during a recess, Tajul said, "Our argument began by describing how the Awami League government turned into an authoritarian regime where misrule and oppression became institutionalised."

He said the background was crucial to understanding how the three accused became perpetrators of crimes against humanity.

The other two accused in the case are former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal and ex-inspector general of police Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun.

Tajul argued that the July 2024 uprising was the outcome of years of repression and fear under what he called a "tyrannical rule". He claimed that the military-backed caretaker regime of 1/11 paved the way for AL's

return to power through a "stage-managed election" in 2009.

He said the regime later turned Bangladesh into "a land of enforced disappearances and killings". Crimes were carried out systematically by law enforcement and intelligence agencies. He alleged that the government amended the Code of Criminal Procedure so that ruling party members are not prosecuted.

Tajul further accused Hasina's government of destroying the election system by abolishing the caretaker government system. "The judiciary was exploited as a tool to establish fascism."

At that point, tribunal Chairman Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mozumder remarked that he had once proposed to a Judicial Reform Commission, a mechanism to ensure judicial accountability, but it was ignored.

"Judges cannot be allowed to act as they please. There is no system to hold anyone in the Supreme Judicial Council accountable if they commit an offence," he added.

The chief prosecutor detailed alleged patterns of state atrocities, including secret detentions, torture, and extrajudicial killings disguised as "crossfire."

He described the use of a so called

"Aynaghor", where detainees were reportedly tortured, given shocks to their genitals, and lethal injections.

Victims' bodies, he said, were often dumped on railway lines to make it appear as accidents or thrown into rivers, after the bodies were disembowelled and tied to cement bags.

According to Tajul, such actions were carried out under "direct orders from the then prime minister and her associates". He said the commission on enforced disappearances received 1,800 complaints, though the actual number of victims was around 6,000, with about 1,000 still missing.

As a result of the continuation of such atrocities, the previous government used its full force against the unarmed young people and killed over 1,500 people and injured over 30,000 others.

Tajul said the regime used lethal weapons, drones, and armoured personnel carriers to crush protesters. If the government had not fallen on August 5, it would have killed many more to cling to power, he said, adding that orders were issued to shut down TV stations.

The prosecution will resume its arguments today.

## Ctg port tariff hike

**FROM PAGE 1**

He warned that the impact would go beyond industry. "It's not only the businessmen who will suffer. The burden will fall on the common people, the end consumers."

Mohammad Amirul Haque, a former director of CCCI, termed the hike "a conspiracy to cripple Chattogram Port".

"You haven't raised tariffs in Mongla or Payra Port. So why only here? Please, do not carry out such conspiracies against Chittagong," he said.

He dismissed the claim of a 41 percent increase as misleading. "You have increased the tug charge five times and show us fancy calculations. Do you think we are children?"

The government announced the decision to increase service charges at the port on September 14, to be effective from October 15.

Under the new schedule, the tug charge for vessels exceeding 20,000 GRT has been raised from \$632 to \$3,415 – a 440 percent increase.

"The law clearly says charges must be cost-based. It doesn't say you should make Tk 2,913 crore net profit," Haque said, urging a dialogue. "If the government must raise it, then talk to us first."

He also criticised the move to lease the fully equipped New Mooring Container Terminal (NCT) to UAE-based DP World.

"If you need investment, take 40 percent from the private sector or go to the stock market. But why hand it over to a foreign operator?" he asked.

"We know who's behind whom – who's with DP World, who's linked with Maersk or MSC, who visits which office. We have got all the information. If you want, we can give it privately," he said.

Exporters also fear losing international orders due to rising costs.

"Our cost of doing business is already higher than in Vietnam, India or Malaysia," said Salim Rahman, first vice-president of Bangladesh

Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA). "In my 29 years of experience, I've never seen the port incur losses. Then why increase tariffs by 41 percent?"

Nasir Uddin Chowdhury, a former BGMEA first vice-president, called the move "suicidal", warning that buyers would shift to Vietnam or India if costs went up.

Syed Mohammad Tanvir, managing director of Pacific Jeans, said, "Frequent policy decisions are raising business costs. Competitor countries are reducing costs while Bangladesh is doing the opposite. The port is the backbone of the economy. I hope the government will suspend the tariff increase."

Khairul Alam Suzan, director of Bangladesh Shipping Agents Association (BSAA), proposed limiting any increase to 10 percent.

MA Salam, chairman of Asian Group, said, "We want the port to stay profitable, but not at the expense of business competitiveness."

Habibur Rahman, vice president of Bangladesh Reconditioned Vehicles Importers and Dealers Association (BARVIDA), said, "The port made huge profits despite the economic slowdown, yet it is raising tariffs. The dollar rate alone has already increased costs. We hope the chief adviser will review this decision."

Meeting moderator SM Abu Tayyab, president of International Business Forum's Chattogram chapter, warned that higher service charges and surcharges by shipping lines would make business "unbearable". The hike is "tantamount to killing the port", he added.

SM Saiful Alam, president of C&F Agents Association, its General Secretary Showkat Ali; and AM Mahbub Chowdhury, vice president of Chittagong Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, also spoke at the meeting.

## MPO teachers call strike after police 'excess'

**FROM PAGE 1**

Their demands include raising the house rent allowance to 20 percent of the basic salary, increasing the medical allowance to Tk 1,500 for both teachers and employees, and raising the festival allowance for non-teaching staff to 75 percent of their basic pay.

As the teachers occupied the road, traffic in the Paltan area came to a standstill. Police diverted vehicles through alternative routes, while commuters were seen walking to their destinations.

Around 11:00am, a 13-member delegation of the teachers met with finance ministry officials at the Secretariat. After returning, they said the discussion had yielded no progress and vowed to continue their movement.

Police moved in around 1:50pm after the demonstrators had blocked the road for several hours.

Witnesses said over a hundred police personnel, led by Ramna Division Deputy Commissioner Masud Alam, fired sound grenades and used water cannons to disperse the crowd. As some teachers refused to leave, police baton-charged them, reportedly leaving several injured. The protesters returned to the streets multiple times, chanting slogans and resuming their sit-in despite repeated attempts to remove them.

Speaking to media, DC Masud said police used sound grenades to disperse teachers after repeated requests to clear the road went unanswered.

"We urged and warned them to move to restore traffic flow. Those

who refused were briefly detained, but there is no intention to file cases or cause harm."

Following the police action, teachers and employees regrouped at the Central Shaheed Minar to continue their protest.

Teachers said they have long faced discrimination compared to their counterparts in government institutions. They described the government's recent decision to increase their house rent allowance by only Tk 500 as "disrespectful and unrealistic."

"We work as hard as government teachers but face discrimination. We get only Tk 1,000 as house rent, and recently the government proposed raising it to Tk 1,500, which is a mockery to us," said Mostafa Kamal, a madrasa teacher from Noakhali.

Kawsar Mahmud, a teacher from Bogura's Sherpur upazila, said, "Our total salary is only Tk 14,600. We cannot rent a house for less than Tk 3,000, but the government wants to give us only Tk 1,500. How can we run a family on such a meagre income?"

Leaders of the National Citizen Party (NCP) joined the rally to express solidarity with the teachers. Hasnat Abdullah, chief organiser (South) of the NCP, said, "After serving for 32 years, a teacher earns only Tk 22,000. They live like third- or fourth-class citizens but are expected to deliver world-class education."

"Teachers are being humiliated and beaten on the streets. Such actions have no place in a civilised country. The authorities must apologise and release the detained teachers immediately," he added.

"We will continue the movement until the government accepts the just demands of the teachers," he said.

Earlier on August 13, teachers had issued an ultimatum to nationalise MPO-listed institutions by September 14 but postponed their strike after assurances from the ministry. Recently, the finance ministry approved a proposal to raise the house rent allowance for teachers and staff by Tk 500, prompting the teachers to return to the streets.

## Detained army

**FROM PAGE 1**

the ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina and 23 top- and mid-ranking current and former army officers, in two cases of enforced disappearances, secret detention, and torture in the 15 years of Awami League rule.

On the same day, in a third case, formal charges were pressed against two other army officers, who had served in the BGB, and two police officers over the killings of 28 people and crimes against humanity committed in Rampura during the July uprising last year.

Altogether in the three cases, 25 current and former military officers have been formally charged; of them, nine are retired or suspended.

The army said it issued an attachment order on October 8, instructing the serving officers and one on LPR (leave preparatory to retirement) to report to a designated facility at Dhaka Cantonment by October 9.

Of them, 15 complied and are now in custody, while the other has been missing since the morning of October 9.

## Israel declares victory

**FROM PAGE 1**

all 20 of our living hostages to be released together at one time".

Trump is set to arrive in Israel shortly after the expected release, and will address the Israeli parliament before heading to Egypt to host a meeting of world leaders to back his plan to end the two-year-old Gaza war and promote Middle East peace.

"Palestinian prisoners will be released once Israel has confirmation that all of our hostages set to be released tomorrow are across the border into Israel," Bedrosian said.

During a previous truce, the identification of deceased hostages was only confirmed after autopsies at Israel's Abu Kabir Forensic Institute.

Two Hamas sources, meanwhile, told AFP the group was insisting Israel free seven prominent Palestinian figures as part of the exchange – at least one of whom Israel has previously rejected.

"Hamas insists that the final list include seven senior leaders, most notably Marwan Barghouti, Ahmad Saadat, Ibrahim Hamed, and Abbas Al-Sayed," one source said, a claim confirmed by the other. Both spoke on condition of anonymity.

Israel has been refusing to release those high profile prisoners.

The source said that the group and its allies had nevertheless "completed all preparations" for handing over to Israel all the living hostages held in Gaza.

Under the terms of the plan, Hamas is to release the remaining 47 hostages – living and dead – who were abducted on October 7, 2023.

Hamas is also expected to hand over remains of a soldier killed in 2014 during a previous Gaza war.

Among the Palestinian prisoners to be released, 250 are security detainees, including many convicted of killing Israelis, while about 1,700 were arrested by the Israeli army in Gaza during the war.

After his Israel visit, Trump and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi will chair a summit of leaders from more than 20 countries in the Egyptian Red Sea resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh.

The Egyptian presidency said the meeting will aim "to end the war in the Gaza Strip, enhance efforts to achieve peace and stability in the Middle East, and usher in a new era of regional security".