



PHOTO: STAR

Dhaka's art of waiting

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With its never-ending traffic and overflowing population, Dhaka has certain unique characteristics. From calling everyone “mama”, to shouting “Oi Khali, Jaba?”, there is something very “Dhakaesque” about these traits, and the art of waiting is definitely one of them.

JUST WAIT FOR IT

Everywhere you go in Dhaka, you have to wait. Whether it is standing at a bus stop or at the metro, the food court or even the hospital; if you are in Dhaka, you just have to wait for it, regardless of whatever “it” is. Your turn will come... eventually. It may be five minutes or five hours, that we cannot say with certainty, but “eventually” you will get your turn.

KEEP WAITING

The average Dhaka resident has long ago realised that waiting is just another regular part of their day and they have slowly become masters of the art.

Most people resort to sticking their earbuds in and playing some sort of song or audiobook. Take me for example: I find that the wait for a bus becomes a little less tedious if I play 90s grunge music. Once inside, it is another round of waiting for the traffic signal to pass or the congestion to clear out before I can reach my destination. So once again, I turn to music.

Sometimes, people are seen reading books, which is a good habit, but quite a rare sight in Dhaka.

Most turn to their phones. A card game, some arcade or puzzle, maybe a turn-based strategy game or even a

football simulator will do the trick. Some people even refuse to do anything else and pull out some good old YouTube shorts.

Then there are some people who truly belong to this city, and you can just tell by how casually they wait. They do not seem to care much that the bus is late, or that the line is long at the counter. These people have mastered the art of waiting so much that they can get many of their chores done remotely over the phone.

Not only that, they even get the munchies. From Jhalmuri or Halim to peanuts (which takes a lot of effort to eat and I still cannot comprehend why anyone chooses that for a snack), these people will basically have afternoon-tea while standing in the queue. And some of the peanut popping ones will blow the

peanut skins everywhere.

WAIT YOUR TURN (PLEASE!)

Dull as it is, sometimes the waiting will become even more annoying because of certain entitled people. You wait in line at the metro or at a counter for a long period of time, and when it's your turn, some people decide that they cannot wait any longer and try to cut in line.

It's an interesting sight to see so many people so worked up over something so silly. People will wait for hours because of traffic jam, but it's the queuing that really bothers them. Perhaps it is one of the defining characteristics of a city that there will be some rude people who just cannot wait their turn.

Don't be one of those people. Wait your turn. After all, this is Dhaka. All you can do here is wait.

Blaze rages thru

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By midnight, at least 25 firefighting units, including two from Sitakunda upazila's Kumira, were still struggling to bring the situation under control.

Witnesses said the firefighters faced difficulty sourcing water nearby and were relying on reservoirs at adjacent factories.

Meanwhile, workers of a nearby factory refused to share water and reportedly chased the firefighters away around 10:00pm. At the same time, rain started pouring and continued till the filing of this report around 2:00am.

Speaking to The Daily Star around 8:00pm, Shahidur Rahman, fire consultant of Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority in Chattogram, said, “The fire has engulfed the whole building. There's nothing we can do until the building collapses, which might occur at any moment, or the fire burns out on its own.”

Jaśim Uddin, deputy director of Chattogram Fire Service and Civil Defence, told this correspondent, “The fire spread rapidly because of the highly flammable materials stored inside. Firefighters are struggling to bring the blaze under control. We have modern equipment and are trying our best, but low water pressure has made it more challenging.”

Anwar Hossen, assistant director of the fire service, said, “The fire is completely out of control. Due to the intense heat, windows and walls have collapsed on several floors. Chemicals stored inside the building are making the blaze even stronger.”

Rifat Hasan, financial manager of Adam Caps & Textiles, said, “The fire broke out shortly after lunch around 2:00pm. Our cutting and sewing sections are on the third and fourth floors. As soon as the fire started, we evacuated every worker safely. The fire originated in the storage area, where raw materials and fabrics were kept.”

Borhan Uddin, senior executive at Jeihong Medical, said most of their raw materials and export-ready products stored on the sixth and seventh floors were completely gutted.

Yasin, a worker of Jeihong, said, “After lunch, one of my female co-workers told me about a burning smell coming from the third floor. We traced it and upon reaching the seventh floor, we saw thick black smoke and flames. We immediately rushed downstairs and alerted the others.

While hurrying down the stairs, several female workers fell and were injured. They were later taken to the BEPZA medical centre.”

French PM survives two confidence votes days after reappointment

AFP, Paris

French Prime Minister Sebastian Lecornu survived two confidence motions Thursday, just days after appointing his new government and making a key political concession to stay in power.

The votes followed Lecornu's decision Tuesday to back suspending a divisive 2023 pension reform, in a bid to keep his cabinet afloat long enough to pass a much-needed austerity budget by year's end.

NCP won't sign July charter at this moment

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clarifying these matters amounts to political farce.”

The NCP decided not to sign the charter after the government and the consensus commission made hectic unofficial efforts to persuade the party into signing the charter for several days, sources in the government, the commission and the party said.

On Tuesday night, the NCP held an informal meeting with the commission, during which its leaders made it clear that it would not sign the charter unless the reform process is advanced through the issuance of a constitutional order.

The following day, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus met Nahid, who had served as an adviser before resigning to form the party.

Yesterday, two advisers also sat with Nahid.

A key member of the commission held a three-hour long discussion, starting at 10:00pm with the NCP convener and other party representatives.

Meanwhile, the chief adviser in a message last night called on all TV and online media to broadcast the July charter signing ceremony live.

Yunus, who also chairs the consensus commission, will attend as chief guest at the South Plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad complex at 4:00pm.

“To every Bangladeshi – wherever you are, at home or on the move, in your shops, factories, crop fields, or playgrounds – tune in and be part of this historic moment!” he said in the message.

“Despite our political, religious, or ethnic differences, we stand together as ONE UNITED NATION,” he added, according to the Chief Adviser's Press Wing.

Commission Vice-President Prof Ali Riaz yesterday said the charter is grounded in consensus on 84 issues, some with notes of dissent.

He hoped that party leaders who had been involved in the dialogue would attend the signing ceremony.

Any party that participated in the talks but is unable to sign today will still be allowed to do so later.

He described the NCP's announcement that it would not sign the document before reviewing the draft of a proposed July National Charter Implementation Order as “unfortunate”.

“We understand that this reflects their political position,” he said. “However, we remain hopeful that, considering the overall situation, they will eventually sign the charter.”

Riaz reiterated that the commission would submit the implementation

ISSUES AGREED UPON	
Inclusion of “equality, human dignity, social justice, democracy, and religious freedom and harmony” as basic principles	○
Lifetime cap of 10 years as PM	○
Permission for MPs to vote against party lines, except on no-confidence motions, finance bills	○
Opposition MPs to chair 4 key standing committees	○
Establishment of permanent HC benches in every division	○
Regulation of presidential clemency powers through legislation	○
Election of the president by secret ballot of both houses	○
CONSENSUS WITH NOTES OF DISSENT	
Selection process for the CA of the caretaker government	○
PR system for a 100-member upper house	○
Bar on party chiefs from serving as prime minister	○
Appointment of the senior-most SC judge as CJ	○
Representation of women in parliament	○

They also handed over invitations to Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman, and NCP Convener Nahid Islam.

Formed in mid-February, the consensus commission was tasked with reviewing proposals from six major reform bodies covering the constitution, judiciary, electoral system, Anti-Corruption Commission, and public administration.

It drafted the 84 proposals after two rounds of talks. Half of these issues were constitutional reforms.

BNP and its allies submitted notes of dissent on at least nine issues.

The final draft of the charter was sent to parties on September 10, and a third round of talks on its implementation began the next day.

During these discussions, parties agreed that non-constitutional reforms would be enacted through ordinances and executive orders, while constitutional changes would go to referendum.

Although parties accepted the idea of a referendum, they failed to agree on its timing, procedures and framework.

BNP's top leaders, at an unofficial virtual meeting joined by Tarique Rahman yesterday night, decided that it will sign the charter today.

Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed will sign the charter on behalf of the party.

“Our party's position is in favour of signing the July charter. We will sign it. It will be a historic moment,” said Salahuddin.

“We will keep the promises we'll make on behalf of the party,” he added.

Salahuddin briefed the meeting about the charter in detail, including notes of dissent.

However, several leaders expressed dissatisfaction over no mention of the anti-autocracy movement against HM Ershad in the 1980s in the preamble of charter despite the party's demand.

“We, however, decided not to make it an issue since the signing ceremony is tomorrow and everything is already finalised,” said a Standing Committee member.

Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Porwar said several of their key concerns remained unresolved.

If they see any scope for resolving these issues through dialogue, they will have no objection to attending the signing ceremony, he said at a programme at the Institution of Diploma Engineers in Dhaka.

“We have received the invitation, but we are still thinking about what role we will play tomorrow,” he added.

Jamaat Assistant Secretary General Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair told The

Daily Star that talks on implementation of the charter will continue even after the signing.

The seven political parties demonstrating simultaneously for a proportional representation system and other demands, including Jamaat and Islami Andolan Bangladesh, also sat last night.

They decided that each party would make its own decision regarding the signing, multiple sources confirmed after the meeting.

Four of these parties had taken part in the commission talks.

After the meeting, leaders of Islami Andolan and Khelafat Majlis confirmed that they would sign the charter.

Islami Andolan Secretary General Maulana Yunus Ahmed said, “We are going to attend the signing ceremony. We also want the signing process to be completed.”

“However, our protests will continue to press for the legal recognition of the July Charter, protection of the July activists, and a referendum before the next national election,” he added.

Nagorik Oikya President Mahmudur Rahman Manna, 12-Party Alliance Spokesman Shahadat Hossain Selim, Jatiyatabadi Samomona Jote Coordinator Fariduzzaman Farhad, Biplobi Workers Party General Secretary Saiful Haque, Bangladesh Rashtra Sanskar Andolan President Hasnat Quiyum, Nationalist Democratic Movement Secretary General Mominul Amin, Bangladesh Labour Party Chairman Mostafizur Rahman and Gono Odhikar Parishad General Secretary Rashed Khan confirmed their parties would sign.

However, four leftist parties – the Communist Party of Bangladesh, Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (Basod), Bangladesh JSD and Basod (Marxist) – announced at a joint press conference they would not sign the charter.

Basod General Secretary Bazlur Rashid Firoz said, “We cannot sign any charter, even with a note of dissent, that requires commitment to change the four existing fundamental principles of the constitution – democracy, socialism, secularism, and nationalism.”

He criticised a move to obstruct anyone from challenging the charter in a court in future.

The leftist parties are also against the proposal to drop the Declaration of Independence issued by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on March 26, 1971, and the Mujibnagar Government's Proclamation of Independence on April 10, 1971, from the sixth and seventh schedules of the constitution.

Hasina deserves

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case against Hasina, former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal and ex-inspector general of police Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun.

She should face the maximum punishment for every life lost.

“Hasina killed at least 1,400 people – she deserves to be sentenced to death 1,400 times. Though that is legally impossible, justice will only be served if she is handed the highest punishment.”

The chief prosecutor also appealed for the highest punishment for Kamal, leaving the tribunal to decide on Mamun since he has turned approver.

Police members, Chhatra League and Jubo League activists, cabinet members and lawmakers committed the crimes under Hasina's direction, he said.

“They believed that by pleasing Sheikh Hasina, their future would be safe. That made her the centre point of all crimes.”

Leaked phone conversations circulating on social media showed Hasina issuing one directive after another to take revenge, Tajul said.

Describing Hasina as a hardened criminal, Tajul said: “After so many killings, injuries and the discovery of numerous Aynaghars where dissidents were confined and killed extrajudicially, she has shown no remorse.”

Instead, she repeatedly called for killings, vandalising and torching homes.

“If justice is to be ensured in Bangladesh and such crimes prevented in the future, this nucleus must be dismantled through the legal process. The lifeblood of these atrocities must face punishment,” he told the court.

As the supervisory authority over police and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), Kamal played a key role in planning and directing the crimes, Tajul said.

He was part of the “gang of four” – along with Salman F Rahman, Anisul Huq and Obaidul Quader – and held meetings at his residence to plan the suppression and killing of demonstrators.

He conveyed Hasina's orders to the IGP, deployed police personnel and acted as the commander on the ground.

“Given his central role and active involvement, he deserves no sympathy. Therefore, we have appealed for the highest punishment for him,” Tajul said.

On former IGP Mamun, Tajul said the prosecution would not make further submissions since he had turned approver.

“We believe he made a full and truthful disclosure about this case and others, including enforced disappearances.”

Tajul also urged the court to order compensation for all victims – both killed and wounded – by confiscating the convicts' assets to support affected families.

Over the past five days, the prosecution presented its arguments supported by international and Bangladeshi law, citing precedents from global tribunals.

The crimes were “widespread and systematic” and committed with full knowledge of their consequences, Tajul said.

“The prosecution has shown how the entire state machinery was mobilised to carry out these atrocities. We cited international jurisprudence on command responsibility and joint criminal enterprise. The evidence clearly qualifies these incidents as crimes against humanity,” he told journalists after the day's proceedings.

According to him, Hasina's objective was to perpetuate her family's and party's rule until 2041, eliminating all political opposition.

When the anti-quota movement began as a peaceful protest, her government saw it as a threat and launched a brutal crackdown, using helicopters, drones, armoured personnel carriers and lethal weapons.

“To crush a non-violent civilian movement, the state used every force – police, BGB, Ansar, intelligence agencies, and even the army in limited deployment, though the army did not participate in the killings,” Tajul said.

“There are no mitigating factors in her case – every factor is aggravating. Hasina, from the top of the command structure, personally ordered the killings with a vindictive and vengeful mindset.”

The evidence was “as strong as the Himalayas” and “crystal clear”, Tajul said, adding that if this evidence is presented before any international court, the highest punishment for each accused will be ensured.

The state defence counsel, representing Hasina and Kamal, will place his argument on Monday.

At the briefing, Tajul said the army, as a patriotic force loved by the people, largely acted responsibly during the July uprising.