



SOCIAL LIVES YOU DON'T SEE Dhaka's domestic workers un-filtered

RRB

Have you ever given a thought to the social life of Dhaka's toiling masses? Our service helps, our guards, drivers, office staff, cleaners, grocer, fishmonger, and vegetable vendor -- people who make up the backbone of our household management system, and office too.

They are the foot soldiers, doing the menial job of supporting our ritzy lifestyle from behind the scenes.

Parul is a lively 23-year-old, extremely smart, and eager to learn. She is married and works as a house help, earning close to TK 15,000. Her husband is yet to find his footing in this city of dreams.

Her friends are Sultana, a migrant worker, who returned home and married the boy she was in love with. Then Rupa, who had been working in Singapore as a child caregiver,



PHOTO: LS ARCHIVE

came back, got married, and now has her own child. Tripti, a chirpy, happy girl from the foothills of Garo Pahar in Haluaghata, Mymensingh. Tripti married a vagabond and has a beautiful, healthy girl. Parul has lots of such friends, who all have an income and job in the service help industry, but unfortunately, they are all married to vagrants, while these girls are all doers.

This is the story of most of the mid to lower-income group of girls. But today, I will not dwell on their decisions, and hardships; instead, I will tell you the fascinating social life of the likes of Parul and her fellow mates.

Money or no money, their social status depends on their social media personality; the main objective is to look fashionably pretty and happy in the photos. The megapixels of cell

phone cameras, up-to-date information on beauty products, and fashion trends matter the most for these girls and boys doing blue-collar jobs. Dhollywood, Bollywood, and access to the internet have changed their previous plain-Jane lifestyle to this happening one.

I am intrigued by Rahima's success. Rahima, who is working as a part-time house help in three houses, earns close to TK 32,000. She lives in a flat, not the slums, with her driver husband, her son, who is trying for overseas employment, and is now idling his time as a delivery boy. Her ailing mother, and a divorced daughter with a grandkid, burden her finances.

Yet, Rahima has had a bank savings deposit scheme running for years now. She has a bank balance. She hires taxicabs and takes her family to

recreational parks and goes to 300ft for the viral duck and chapti experience.

On the other end of the spectrum are girls like Rabeya, a 15-year-old with a fairy-like, surreal beauty. She came to Dhaka from a madrasa background in hijab and all, and now, she is doing a job in shooting studios. She got off the track.

Then there is Hasan, a 40-year-old guard, who lives his life on credit, and yet, his social life is full of merriment, weddings, birthdays, and Nobanno celebration all go on in his tiny room at the garage he lives in.

Interestingly, unlike the previous generation of housekeepers, service people, or housemaids, the current batch of migrants coming to work as domestic workers in Dhaka have etched their mark and found financial stability and a better life. Mind you, they too belong to Generation Z.

With all their shackles and harsh realities, this new generation of house helps of Dhaka, living in urban slums and shacks, is making the best of their lives. Let's not forget the fact that they, too, must deal with health problems, parental responsibilities, and other troubles life gives them, like us.

And please, we should also modernise our mindset regarding our service personnel. This is not the 1950s, when you could beat them for breaking your crystal glass. You are no one to give them the freedom or permission to live life on their own terms. They work hard to deserve a good life, and you learn to respect their slogan in modern Dhaka.

I just want to say that Dhaka, with its enormity and kindness, has embraced these young aspirants and villagers. I think this is the true spirit of Dhaka; everyone here finds a comfort zone.

ACC won't need Investigators digging approval

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To qualify, candidates must have at least 20 years of experience in law, education, administration, judiciary, auditing, law enforcement, financial institutions, or anti-corruption work. Disqualifications include permanent residency or citizenship in another country or unauthorised foreign investments, the draft added.

Contacted by this newspaper, Iftekharuzzaman, head of the ACC Reform Commission, said the draft ordinance is an improved version of the existing law. "However, some strategically important recommendations made by the ACC Reform Commission have been carefully omitted."

For example, he said the reform commission had recommended the creation of a "Selection and Review Committee" to ensure transparency in the selection process of commissioners and accountability of the commission.

He added that the government dropped the provision requiring disclosure of the names of shortlisted candidates for public information.

"They've also dropped the provision of reviewing the performance of the ACC on a half-yearly basis to ensure accountability."

"The proposal to increase the number of commissioners from three to five has also been ignored," said Iftekharuzzaman, also the executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh.

He added that these dropped recommendations had gained support from almost all political parties. "The government arbitrarily rejected the recommendations because some quarters within it hold different views."

"This is a frustrating and anti-reform precedent created by a government that wants to be known as a reformist, for which it formed reform commissions and sought national consensus on reform proposals."

The draft ordinance also proposes the establishment of special judge courts in every district where the ACC has offices.

These courts will be set up immediately after the ACC establishes its offices. District offices will be empowered to conduct preliminary scrutiny of complaints, which, once vetted by any ACC office -- district, divisional, or headquarters -- will not require re-evaluation.

The ordinance expands the ACC's jurisdiction to include corruption involving Bangladeshi citizens abroad, as well as foreign nationals residing in the country. It defines "known income" as lawful income and broadens the commission's powers to include case filing, investigation, and inquiry.

and engineers expressed concerns over the safety of this highly technical mode of transport.

WHAT'S A BEARING PAD?

On elevated structures such as bridges and metro rail lines, bearing pads are placed between the viaduct and the pillar. In this case, four bearing pads were installed on each pillar.

Experts said elastomeric bearings transmit loads from the superstructure to the pillars and absorb vibrations caused by the movement of metro trains.

These pads, each weighing around 100kg, are installed without mechanical anchorage, relying on the compressive force from the superstructure's dead load to generate adequate friction and resist lateral movement under service conditions.

On September 18 last year, one of the four bearing pads fell from pillar number 430, disrupting metro rail services on the Agargaon-Motijheel section for around 11 hours. However, no casualties were reported.

PROBE LAUNCHED

The road transport and bridges ministry initially formed a five-member committee yesterday, and it was

instructed to submit a report within two weeks.

However, the appointment of Abdur Rouf as head of the committee drew criticism, as he was serving as the managing director of Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd (DMTCL) when the September incident happened.

To address this concern, the ministry later added the chief engineer of the Local Government Engineering Department, bringing the total number of members to six, and placed the committee under the supervision of Sheikh Moinuddin, special assistant to the chief adviser for the road and railway ministries.

Contacted, Abdur Rouf said as per the committee's terms of reference, they will examine whether the recommendations provided in the probe report of the September incident were implemented, identify the causes behind Sunday's incident, determine who may be responsible, and provide recommendations to prevent recurrence.

"We have sought design and other relevant documents from DMTCL, including details of the contractors and consultants," he told The Daily

Star last night. "We will look into all aspects of the incident."

Contacted, Sheikh Moinuddin, who is currently in US and coordinating with the committee remotely, said the bearing pad is not supposed to become dislodged within such a short time. "This makes the matter puzzling."

"So, we have to investigate whether substandard materials or construction were involved, or if any flaws went unnoticed when operations began," he told this correspondent over the phone.

He added that they would hire foreign experts if local experts failed to identify the cause. "We will take corrective measures if any flaws are found."

Moinuddin also said they need to examine whether DMTCL has an expert team in place to conduct annual or biennial inspections of vulnerable equipment. "If there isn't one, we have to create one."

The Uttara to Agargaon section of the country's first metro rail was launched in December 2022, while the Agargaon to Motijheel section became operational in November the following year.

who is seeking nomination from the Barishal-2 constituency.

BNP leader Nazim Uddin Alam, who is seeking nomination for Bholi-4, echoed the same.

After completing meetings with two divisions, Tarique then met with district leaders from the Khulna and Sylhet divisions. The meeting took place from 5:30pm to 6:45pm.

Abdul Quiyum Chowdhury, president of Sylhet BNP, who is seeking the nomination, said: "A conspiracy is underway against BNP. For this, everyone must work together in unity. There is no alternative. The party has instructed us to work for the nominated candidate."

From 8:30pm to 9:30pm, Tarique held a meeting with the nomination aspirants of the Dhaka division.

He told them that the list of those selected to contest in the polls with the BNP ticket would be announced through a press note soon.

"We should not allow anyone to take advantage of our stubbornness," said Shah Reazul Hannan, joint convener of Gazipur district BNP and a nomination seeker, quoting Tarique.

The BNP is a big party and differences of opinion are natural.

"But there will be many opportunities for party leaders and workers in the future," he said.

BADC constructing lab

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of DNCC, said there was no need for BADC to build a laboratory on the retention pond as the city corporation offered it land at a different location.

He further said the DNCC sent letters to BADC several times since February this year, asking it not to build structures on the retention pond.

When contacted, BADC Chairman Md Ruhul Amin Khan claimed that the plot of land in question was acquired for the Department of Agriculture in 1958. Covering an area of 68 acres, it is classified as cultivable land.

The land was chosen as the site for constructing a tissue culture laboratory according to the allocation in the Development Project Proposal approved by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC), he told this newspaper through BADC's Public relations department.

Iqbal Habib, vice president of Bangladesh Poribishe Andolok (BAPA), said Goidartek

was first marked as a retention pond in the Structure Plan 1997 of the Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (DMDP). It was later included in the Detailed Area Plan 2010," said, vice president of BAPA.

ENVIRONMENTALISTS SOUND ALARM

Experts warn that failure to preserve Goidartek pond will intensify

'Graffiti book, not altered map'

CA's office bins Indian media reports on gift to Pakistan army official

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Chief Adviser's Office has dismissed Indian media reports claiming that Prof Muhammad Yunus presented a flag, featuring an altered map of Bangladesh incorporating India's northeast, to a top Pakistani military official as "completely false and imaginary".

The clarification came in a statement from the chief adviser's press wing yesterday evening, following reports by leading Indian media outlets alleging that during a recent meeting, Prof Yunus presented the flag featuring the map to General Sajid Shamshad Mirza, chairman of Pakistan's Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee.

Clarifying what was actually presented, CA's press wing said, "In fact, Chief Adviser Professor Dr Muhammad Yunus presented to the Pakistani general The Art of Triumph, a collection of colourful and diverse graffiti drawings painted by students on various walls throughout the country, including the capital Dhaka, during the July mass uprising."

The book, published by the July Memorial Foundation, serves as an illustrated document of the uprising and includes "historical images of the revolution achieved through the sacrifices of students and the public."

Addressing the controversy over the map on the cover, the statement said, "On the cover of the graffiti collection, behind martyr Abu Sayed of the July mass uprising, a blood-red map of Bangladesh is displayed."

It noted that while the map's proportions may appear distorted due to the graffiti style, "claiming that any part of India's northeastern region is included in the graffiti map is completely false and imaginary."

A comparative analysis between the actual map of Bangladesh and the graffiti version shows that it "almost exactly reflects the real map of Bangladesh," the statement added.

The collection has also been gifted to other world leaders, including UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, former US president Joe Biden, and ex-Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau, the press wing mentioned.

The statement urged the media to refrain from spreading misinformation and encouraged fact checking before publishing any sensitive geopolitical content.

waterlogging in key areas of the capital as it stores excess rainwater during the monsoon.

The areas that are likely to be affected include Mirpur, Kalyanpur, Rokeya Sarani, Kazipara, Shewrapara, Agargaon, Sangsab Bhaban, Mohammadpur, Rayerbazar, Satmasjid Road, and Pilkhana areas.

Kalyanpur canal and its five branches carry water to the retention pond from where it is pumped into the Buriganga River.

Iqbal Habib said any encroachment on the retention pond will deal a heavy blow to the city's flood protection system.

He explained that the entire area once functioned as a seasonal water retention zone by holding water during the monsoon. This helped preserve the area's water retention capacity. However, that capacity has already diminished due to extensive landfilling for construction and is likely to decrease further.

Adil Mohammad Khan, president of Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP), stressed that government agencies must adhere to the laws they impose on others.

If state institutions themselves disregard the law, what is the point of making laws at all? Government agencies must be held accountable for filling up retention ponds or waterbodies."

Commission for immediate rollout

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recommendations to the government around noon today. Members of the advisory council are likely to be present, said a Chief Adviser Press Wing statement following a meeting of the consensus commission presided over by Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus.

According to sources at the commission, it will urge the government to first issue the order to formally initiate the process of implementation. This would then be followed by an ordinance to hold a referendum seeking public endorsement for the charter.

Under the proposed framework, the next parliament would serve a dual role for its first 270 days, functioning as a legislature and as a constitution reform council, tasked with debating and approving the charter's constitutional-related proposals.

A source in the commission said they were in a last-minute discussion on having an alternative path to implementation if parliament fails to complete the job within the 270 days.

The source said the proposals could be deemed effective automatically after 270 days since those would have been approved by the referendum.

According to sources, the commission had initially planned to submit recommendations to the interim government yesterday. However, members felt it was necessary

to hold a formal meeting with Yunus before finalising the draft, since the chief adviser is the commission's chair.

The aim was to ensure consensus and allow for any additions or revisions the chief adviser might have suggested. Yunus did not propose any, a source present in the meeting said.

The chief adviser showed a positive attitude towards the proposals, commission Vice President Prof Ali Riaz told reporters after the meeting.

Yunus stressed the preservation of all documents, videos, audios, and photographs related to the commission's activities, from its formation to final recommendations.

"These are invaluable assets. As a nation, it is essential to preserve and be open to everyone in the long term to understand in what context and through what process, we reached what decisions," he said.

These will serve as living historical records and vital resources for future researchers, he said, adding, "These documents will remain for generations to come. These will be at the centre of future political discussions."

The commission will likely leave it to the government to decide who would issue the implementation order, the president or the chief adviser, and whether the referendum should be held on the day of the next polls or earlier.

importance of maintaining discipline within the party to ensure a smooth and peaceful election process.

Quoting Tarique, ARM Mamun, a nomination seeker from Jhenaidah-3 constituency, said: "Our leader's instruction is to maintain a peaceful environment between the supporters of the two BNP nomination seekers groups."

Around 20 nomination seekers attended the meeting across the three constituencies in his district, said Nazrul Islam Khan, convener of the Pirojpur BNP.

"Tarique Rahman directed leaders and workers not to express any excitement or celebrate after receiving the party ticket. He also instructed us to avoid causing any chaotic situations in the area ahead of the polls," said Nazrul, who is also seeking the party ticket.

Nomination seekers from 39 constituencies in the Rajshahi division have been called to the Chairperson's office, said Mizanur Rahman Minu, former mayor of Rajshahi City Corporation.