



THE ART OF BARGAINING

A survival skill in Dhaka

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One of the basic traits of any metropolitan city is that it calls for a specific set of skills from its residents. Dhaka is no different. Out of all the specific skills it takes to cruise through Dhaka, bargaining is one of the most elemental ones.

Learning the hard way

You might be wondering what is so special about Dhaka that it needs a special bargaining skill? After all, you have bargained all your life — how different can it be?

Dhaka demands determination in its everyday function, and that includes bargaining too. Everywhere else, you can bargain following a rule of thumb. Unfortunately, Dhaka has no such rule of thumb. You have to know your way around to bargain successfully in this city. And the only way to do that is to learn through experience.

Which means you will need a few months' worth of experience, and a few bitter ones at that, to learn bargaining the Dhaka way. Take me for example; I once bought a pair of jeans for Tk 1,500 only to later find out that you can get those for Tk 400 if you play your cards right.

Know your audience

Perhaps the most important skill in bargaining is knowing your audience. You will have to adopt

different approaches for different types of bargaining.

When talking to a rickshaw puller, you will need to be calm and consistent. The louder you are on the road dealing with the transports, the lesser chance you have of striking a deal with them. Rickshaws will try to take advantage of the fact that you might not know your route. Successfully bargaining with them requires prior knowledge of the road.



Clothing stores, on the other hand, need a very different approach. Based on the location of the shopping mall, their asking prices will vary. And your bargaining offer needs to take that into account. It sure helps if you know your fabrics and their price range beforehand.

The trick here is that you have to be calm. It can be a challenge to hold your composure after hearing

their asking price, but do not let it influence you and be ready to walk out of the store, on to the next one when needed.

Bargaining at the wet market depends on the time of the day and the weather. On the other hand, you will have very limited chance of bargaining at a grocery.

Accept that it is trivial

A lot of people get enraged when bargaining. If you plan on living in Dhaka, then it is better if you accept that bargaining everywhere is a trivial part of everyday life in this city. The sooner you accept this the less you will be bothered by it.

When I first came to Dhaka, I met with my uncle. I remember him calling for a rickshaw who asked for double the usual fare. Instead of losing his cool, he offered half the usual fare. This invoked a reaction from the rickshaw puller. "That's not the usual fare," he had said, and my uncle retorted coolly, "Neither is what you are asking. Now you want to go at the usual fare or keep playing this game? I have time."

Surprisingly, this had worked at that time. It also taught me a valuable lesson that has helped me ever since — always keep your cool when bargaining.

Bargaining is nothing fun. It's tedious and often annoying. But it is a part of everyday life in Dhaka. Just like waiting in line, the inevitable signal at Bijay Sarani, and a number of other things. I have accepted it. Have you?

NCP ready for either 'ballot or bullet revolution': Patwary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Citizens Party (NCP) Chief Coordinator Nasiruddin Patwary yesterday said the party is ready for either a "ballot revolution" or a "bullet revolution".

"If Bangladesh continues on the democratic path, NCP is ready for a ballot revolution. But if blood must be shed, we are ready for a bullet revolution too," Patwary made the remarks at a discussion organised by Jatiya Sramik Shakti at the NCP headquarters in the capital's Banglamotor.

The NCP leader accused leftist organisations of betraying the working class, saying they have used the red flag as a political façade.

Referring to a particular religion-based party, Patwary said, "We do not believe in politics that exploit religion for votes — like adding a few words to the constitution or visiting madrasas for photo ops and then forming partnerships with the Awami League. We reject such hypocrisy and want to rebuild a future where no one's religious values are destroyed amid divisions."

Coming down on BNP, Patwary said, "If BNP stands against reform, its fate will be no different from Sheikh Hasina's. Sheikh Hasina at least fled to India; where will Tarique Rahman flee?"

Patwary announced that the NCP will form a "Reform Alliance" ahead of the next general election. "The process is already underway," he said, urging voters to support reform over party loyalty. "Whether you wear the scale or the sheaf of paddy badge, in the polling booth, you should vote for reform."

He also warned against the risk of a one-party-dominated parliament. "In the next parliament, we do not want to replace one fascist with another," he said.

NCP Joint Convener Sarwar Tushar blamed BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami for obstructing institutional reforms, saying both parties prioritise political gain over national progress.

Govt decision on Nov 13

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government will now clarify its position... People have expectations of us," she said.

Government sources said some advisers may sit today to analyse the situation and possible outlines to be discussed at Thursday's advisory council meeting.

On November 3, the interim administration urged parties to resolve disputes within a week, warning that otherwise it would "act as necessary".

As the government weighs its next move with less than a month before the expected announcement of the election schedule for polls in early February, political analysts say time is running out.

They warn that the stalemate reflects a deeper structural crisis, one that could jeopardise the upcoming transitional election if not resolved constructively. They urged parties to abandon rigid postures, compromise, and act in the national interest.

"It seems the situation has thickened, the crisis has deepened," said Prof Al Masud Hasanuzzaman of Jahangirnagar University's government and politics department.

"We've constantly seen that political parties have approached the July charter with narrow calculations, seeking advantage wherever possible. Now, at this final stage, they are engaged in pressure politics, trying to influence decision makers through political manoeuvring," he said.

"It seems the ball is now in the government's court, and the chief adviser will announce the decision unless something unexpected happens.

"If the parties' reaction is positive, it would be good for the country, but if not, it signals trouble for Bangladesh and could directly affect the election

negatively," he added.

Dhaka University political science Prof Sabbir Ahmed said the government must now act decisively. "It must have the courage to declare its position. Some will be pleased, others won't. But I don't think anyone will walk away from the electoral field," he said.

He suggested the government do its homework, assess the pros and cons of each option, prepare its stance, and give parties a day to respond.

"In my view, the government should announce its decision within a week at most. It's already been delayed too long. Not every decision will align with every party's interest," he added.

"Those who can rise above their egos at this moment will improve their public image. That's something political parties need to understand."

North South University's Prof Sk Tawfique M Haque said the government appears ready to move ahead independently. "Had the parties reached consensus, it would've been easier for the government. But from what I know, it's preparing to announce a decision on its own. The hope is that the parties will accept," he said.

He cautioned that the decision will likely go against one or more major political groups, risking further complications.

"The government should announce its decision and then call the parties one last time to urge them to accept within this framework."

"The parties must adopt an accommodative attitude and a mindset ready to compromise for the sake of the national interest," he said.

Leaders of political parties, however, sounded firm on their stances.

At a programme in Thakurgaon, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday alleged that

attempts were being made to delay the election.

"Postponing the election would spell disaster for us and for the country. We want the interim government to waste no time in announcing the election schedule and to take steps to establish an elected government without delay."

At a press conference in Dhaka yesterday, Jamaat-e-Islami Assistant Secretary General Hamidur Rahman Azad said all parties had worked together for nine months with the consensus commission, but delays in their actions created complications in implementing the charter.

He said Jamaat had invited the BNP for talks, but the latter declined. "Still, if the BNP invites us for dialogue, we will respond," he added.

At a discussion on "Revolution and Solidarity Day", organised by Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal in Dhaka, BNP Standing Committee Member Salahuddin Ahmed said the party would join any dialogue if invited by Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus. "But why are we being invited through another party?" he asked.

National Citizen Party Joint Convener Sarwar Tushar blamed BNP and Jamaat for the failure to reform national institutions. "Jamaat talks about bending fingers to get ghee out, while BNP talks about taking to the streets. Both parties think only of their own interests," he said.

"BNP had earlier agreed with the commission, the July charter order, and the referendum. Now they're denying it," he added, accusing the government of "playing a game of snakes and ladders with the people."

"Without a legal foundation for the July charter, no electoral environment can be created," he warned.

Climate finance fuels 'debt trap'

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below the LDC average of \$30.49.

Overall, for every \$1 Bangladesh receives as grants, it gets \$2.70 in loans, placing it among nations facing the steepest climate-debt risks. Across LDCs, over 70 percent of climate finance arrives as loans.

"At COP30, Bangladesh will urge the world to replace loans with justice, through 100 percent grant-based adaptation finance. This is not charity; it's moral accounting," Khan said, citing an advisory from the International Court of Justice.

The period spanning 2009 to 2022 witnessed a substantial and worrying acceleration in Bangladesh's climate-related liabilities.

In this period, Bangladesh accrued \$3.4 billion in climate-related loans, data cited in the research showed, highlighting the country's growing dependence on external borrowing for adaptation and resilience.

Total external debt service costs for LDCs surged to \$50 billion in 2021 from \$31 billion in 2020, with climate

loans rising faster than repayment capacity, according to a report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). For over a decade, LDCs like Bangladesh have consistently received more climate loans than grants.

In response to mounting risks, Bangladesh formulated its National Adaptation Plan (NAP) in 2022, identifying 113 high priority interventions across eight sectors, including water resources, agriculture, and urban resilience.

Experts estimate the plan will require \$230 billion, or about \$8 billion annually, from 2023 to 2050.

But historical data reveal an enormous financing gap. From 2002 to 2023, Bangladesh secured only \$1.41 billion in adaptation funds, less than 1 percent of its projected needs.

Similarly, while the country needs \$3.23 billion annually for mitigation under its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), it has allocated just \$360 million a year between

2020 and 2024, only 11 percent of the requirement.

MISATTRIBUTION

The report also flags widespread misclassification of projects, with around \$880 million, nearly 19 percent of all climate funds, wrongly recorded as climate finance between 2002 and 2023.

These projects carry a staggering loan-to-grant ratio of 28.8, artificially inflating national debt while diverting money from genuine resilience efforts.

If the new global climate finance goal of \$1.3 trillion for LDCs fails to uphold principles of fairness and equity, the report warns, "every cyclone that hits the coast will add not just loss of life, but another line of debt."

The World Bank estimates that Bangladesh experiences an annual economic loss of about \$1 billion from average tropical cyclones. By 2050, one-third of agricultural GDP may be lost due to climate variability and extreme events.

"COP30 must end this cycle by linking finance to rights, resilience, and regeneration," Khan said.

Dhaka on high alert

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Security has also been strengthened around key installations and religious establishments across the country.

In a statement last night, the Chief Adviser's Press Wing said the Dhaka Metropolitan Police and Rapid Action Battalion have launched a citywide manhunt to arrest those involved in the attacks. It also warned that any attempt to disrupt the nation's religious coexistence would be met with the full force of the law.

CHAIN OF ATTACKS

The attacks began early in the morning and continued until late at night.

The first explosion occurred around 3:45am in front of the Grameen Bank headquarters, an institution associated with Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus. Two people on a motorcycle hurled a crude bomb at the building before fleeing, said Sajjad Roman, officer-in-charge of Mirpur Model Police Station.

Less than four hours later, another duo on a motorbike threw crude bombs at Prabartana, a business establishment owned by Fisheries and Livestock Adviser Farida Akhter, in Mohammadpur, said Kazi Rafique Ahmed, Mohammadpur OC.

Around 7:30am, four crude bombs were hurled, two targeting Ibn Sina Hospital and two others in front of Midas Centre in Dhanmondi, said Shah Mostafa Tariquzzaman, assistant commissioner of DMP's Dhanmondi Zone.

In the evening, multiple explosions rocked different parts of the capital, near Mouchak intersection around 6:00pm, in front of Bangladesh Betar in Agargaon around 6:20pm, on Khilgaon Flyover around 6:30pm, and near Shah Ali Market in Mirpur around 6:40pm.

Around 10:00pm, another bomb was dropped from the flyover, said Shah Alam, inspector (investigation) of Shahjahanpur Police Station.

The day's final and most dramatic incident took place around 11:10pm, when attackers on a motorcycle hurled a crude bomb at the NCP office at Bangla Motor, leaving a bystander with minor injuries.

One unexploded bomb was recovered from the scene, said NCP

Joint Member Secretary Mushfiq Us Salehin.

He added that party activists chased two individuals fleeing on a motorcycle after the blast. "Later, three more suspects were detained nearby, bringing the total to five. They were handed over to the police," he said.

On Friday, several crude bombs were hurled at St Mary's Cathedral in Kakrail and in front of the residences for priests and teachers of St Joseph School and College in Mohammadpur.

Meanwhile, two buses were set ablaze in Shahjadpur and Merul Badda early yesterday morning, while another was torched around 7:30pm in front of Lab Aid Hospital in Dhanmondi, police said.

SECURITY ALERT

Following the incidents, the DMP banned all types of public gatherings around major government establishments in Dhaka, including the ICT premises, until further notice.

The spate of attacks coincided with the Awami League's online call for a "Dhaka Lockdown" on November 13, even though all political activities of the party remain banned.

Police's Detective Branch said it has intensified counter-intelligence operations and surveillance to trace those responsible.

"They [AL activists] have declared they are willing to go to any extent for their leaders. We are investigating their involvement along with others," said Shafiqul Islam, chief of the DB.

He said 34 AL leaders and activists were arrested in separate raids across the capital on charges of planning, financing and participating in flash processions.

The DMP also detained a 28-year-old Chhatra League member in connection with the crude bomb blasts, according to a statement from the Chief Adviser's Press Wing.

The government reiterated its unwavering commitment to interfaith harmony. Security was reinforced at churches, temples, mosques and other religious institutions across Dhaka.

"We have been arresting those involved in subversive activities based on intelligence inputs. Whenever anyone is found involved, we act," said AHM Sahadat Hossain, spokesperson of Bangladesh

Police. "Pre-election violence in Bangladesh is unfortunately common, but we are prepared to prevent and respond."

At a special security meeting at Rajarbagh Police Lines on Friday, police higher-ups reviewed the overall law and order situation and directed all Dhaka stations to intensify patrols, increase surveillance, and secure vital installations.

Following the meeting, the DMP conducted citywide security drills from 4:00pm to 5:00pm to test emergency response preparedness.

NATIONWIDE DIRECTIVES

The security alerts extended beyond the capital.

Railway authorities were instructed to step up vigilance to prevent sabotage targeting rail tracks, stations and rolling stock.

In a letter to railway managers in Pakshi and Lalmonirhat on Sunday, officials warned of possible attacks and ordered night patrols, enhanced lighting, 24-hour depot security, fuel storage protection, and ID checks at all entry points.

Managers were also told to regularly inspect CCTV systems, tighten access to workshops, conduct platform checks twice daily, and monitor ticket counters and waiting areas for suspicious activity.

Earlier, on November 3, Emul Haque, officer-in-charge of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station, sent a letter to the National Institute of Ophthalmology in Dhaka, instructing authorities to strengthen on-site security to prevent sabotage.

The Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd (DMTCL), operator of the city's metro rail, has cancelled all staff leave until further notice, in anticipation of possible unrest.

Although the order did not specify a reason, insiders told The Daily Star that the precautionary move came amid intelligence warnings of potential political violence this month.

As the capital braces for November 13, officials said law enforcement agencies have been placed on highest alert.

"Every attempt to destabilise the country will be dealt with swiftly and firmly," a senior Home Ministry official said. "Our priority is public safety, national unity, and protecting the democratic transition."

They came, fired, vanished

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footage and trying to identify the killers."

CCTV FOOTAGE, WITNESS ACCOUNTS

The entire attack was captured on nearby CCTV cameras. One video shows Mamun sprinting through the hospital gate, with two men chasing and firing continuously.

Within seconds, they closed in and shot him from point blank range.

Another mobile phone video shows Mamun lying face-down between two buildings inside the hospital compound. One sandal had come off, and his sunglasses lay beside his head.

A man was heard shouting, "Call the doctor, hurry!" while another said in panic, "Only two men came and fired!". Moments later, Mamun was placed on a stretcher and rushed to the emergency department — just a few steps from where he fell.

A hospital source said doctors found no pulse when Mamun was brought in. He was then sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), where doctors declared him dead around 11:45am.

Md Faruk, in charge of the DMCH police outpost, said the victim's body was sent to the morgue for autopsy.

Arafat Hossain, a witness, said, "I was near the hospital gate when I saw a man running. Two men jumped off a motorcycle and started firing. The first shot was fired into the air, followed by six or seven more rounds aimed at the victim. He fell almost instantly."

Another witness added, "There

were police on the road and guards at the hospital gate — yet no one moved. Everyone just ran for cover."

Nasir Uddin, inspector (investigation) of Kotwali Police Station, however, claimed that the police rushed in just after learning about the incident.

SECOND ATTEMPT

This was not the first murder attempt on Mamun.

On September 19, 2023, Mamun was returning to his Tollarbagh home from a bar in Moghbazar. When the car he was travelling in reached the BG Press area, seven to eight criminals on motorbikes intercepted the vehicle.

Mamun got out of the vehicle amid the hail of bullets and ran, but the criminals chased him down and stabbed him in the neck and back.

During that attack, stray bullets hit a passerby, Bhuvan Chandra Shil, 55, a lawyer, who later died from his injuries.

After that attack, Mamun's family said Emon had called and threatened Mamun's life. Police then said the attackers were loyal to the top-listed criminal Emon.

Police officials now suspect the same criminal group may be behind this latest attack.

Mamun's brother, Akram Hossain Sumon, told The Daily Star that the two were once allies. "Mamun got into Dhaka College in 1990. Around the same time, Emon was a student of Dhaka City College. They formed the Emon-Mamun Gang [a criminal network] in 1992."

Sumon also said Mamun had 10-12 cases against him and that he served 24

years in prison, from 1999 to 2023, for many of these cases.

"The relationship between Mamun and Emon deteriorated in jail, and the two became arch-nemesis."

Speaking to the media at DMCH yesterday, the victim's wife, Dipa, said, "No one other than Emon could have done this. A few days ago, Emon had hired people to attack Mamun."

She said Mamun had a garment business in Mirpur, and the couple lived in Altanagar with their two daughters. "Mamun left home around 9:00am to attend the court hearing. Shortly afterward, I received a phone call informing me of his death."

No arrests were made till the filing of this report around 9:00pm last night.

'Women to get full day's pay for 5-hr workday'

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The Jamaat chief said that, if elected, people would not need to come to him with their problems; rather, he would proactively work to resolve their issues on a priority basis.

He remarked that the youth's work is not yet finished — they must continue to cleanse society of "all sorts of filth."

He further stated that, if given the opportunity to form the government, Jamaat would ensure that every child receives a quality education to help reform this "decaying society."