



# “Not for bachelors!”

## How Dhaka’s housing market humiliates men

A walk in any alley around notable areas of the capital city shows a common sight: “To-let” signs and notices glued on walls, with one line that stands out every time — “Not for bachelors.”

Many young students and working professionals come to live in Dhaka city, away from their families, in pursuit of an education or employment. Although Dhaka wholeheartedly welcomes anyone who can afford it, the same cannot be said about landlords or neighbours. Life in Dhaka city is not easy for young men whose families do not live here.

Most landlords seem unwilling to rent their apartments to bachelor men. They are often stereotyped, considered noisy, troublesome, irresponsible, likely to delay paying rent on time, or likely to offend other tenants in the building. However, in many cases, despite their initial reluctance, landlords often set aside their stereotypical bias against bachelors, but at a hefty price.

Take, for example, the Merul Badda area of the capital city. Back in the days before BRAC University fully shifted its permanent campus to that area in 2023, many students looking for apartments reported being turned away at the main gate by the guard as soon as they mentioned they were

bachelor students.

Referring to the anomaly, Afif Rahman, an undergrad student of BRAC University, said, “Now the very same landlords are reserving their apartments for students only, for almost double the rent, that too for a single washroom, mosaic-floored apartment without even an elevator!”

In some areas of Dhaka, bachelor men often face higher rents than families, according to numerous complaints.

Riad Uddin, an undergraduate student of East West University, talked about his struggles finding a place with his roommate. “When I was looking for an affordable apartment a few months ago, almost all apartments were for females or families,” he said.

“The few landlords willing to let us in their building charged extremely high rent and utility fees. It almost felt like we had to pay an added tax for renting an apartment as bachelor men in Dhaka.”

Forced to pay an unreasonable amount of rent, those who do manage to find a place often end up sharing it with other bachelors as a sublet to reduce the financial burden. But even then, their plight does not end here.

Even if they are taken into a building half-heartedly, many bachelor

men complain that they rarely receive the same freedom and respect as families.

Devjoti Mondal, an undergraduate CSE student, complained, “Even though we pay rent like everyone else, we don’t get the same freedom other self-respecting tenants get. Despite occasional emergencies, like anyone else, we constantly get warned about when we can or cannot enter the building. Despite our good behaviour, we get abrupt eviction notices with no proper reason.”

He continued, “It has come to a point where we cannot even choose an internet service provider of our own choice, even that falls under the landlord’s say-so!”

Md Hadiul Islam Purno Mridha, a working professional who lives in a sublet apartment in Dhaka, faces similar challenges balancing his work and bachelor life.

He shared in this regard, “Despite paying extra under the guise of rent, we have almost no satisfaction as tenants. Landlords gatekeep basic needs such as access to the roof, a key to the main gate, and even running tap water on a timely schedule.”

The struggle does not end there. Living away from family also takes an emotional toll on them, adding to

the challenges of daily life, whether a student or a working professional.

“When you live with your family, at midnight, if you open your fridge, you will find at least something to eat,” expressed Syed Farhan, an undergraduate student of a private university. “But loneliness hits the hardest at night when you live in a sublet apartment, and you find your fridge almost empty, with nothing to eat.”

He further claimed, “It gives you a real and hands-on idea about the harsh truth of living in Dhaka city; the kind of reality check that may feel like a punch in the gut. For example, if I spend Tk 15,000 on groceries and another Tk 10,000 on rent and utilities, I know I have to earn more than that just to survive in this city! And God forbid, if you fall sick, you are on your own.”

Still, some try to see the silver lining. Reflecting on his own journey, Afif Rahman confessed, “Living alone, away from your family, teaches you important life lessons early on, which you wouldn’t learn otherwise. It makes a person more mature than their age.”

**By Minhazur Rahman Alvee**

**\*Certain names have been changed upon request**

**Photo: Ashif Ahmed Rudro**