

Inside National Botanical Garden's new barefoot trail

The connection between people and the earth never truly fades. It's a quiet pull we often forget in Dhaka: a city built of brick and concrete. There is no smell of soil here, only paved roads and a lifestyle shaped around shoes. Yet, those who remember dewy village paths or the softness of mud under their feet know how even a moment of touching real earth can bring a gentle, surprising peace to the heart.

In a city where daily life runs on footwear, the National Botanical Garden, located at Mirpur, has something unusual to offer. It's an invitation to walk barefoot! Known for its flower gardens, greenery, ponds, and peaceful walking routes, the botanical garden now provides a new sensory experience designed to help visitors reconnect with nature through the simple touch of the earth beneath their feet.

The newly opened barefoot trail is



simple, yet thoughtfully designed. At the entrance, two signboards welcome visitors with information on the benefits of barefoot walking and a clear set of safety guidelines. The trail is constructed in step-like segments, with each section offering a different surface underfoot: cool sand, wooden logs, pebbles, soft soil, shallow water, and finally, an ankle-deep layer of cool mud. The path is bordered by bamboo fencing.



The moment I stepped in, the cool sand greeted my feet with comforting relief. Walking over the wooden logs introduced an uneven, grounding rhythm. The pebbled walkway followed, each step awakening different pressure points and sharpening my senses, while the patch of soil felt like a familiar village road after rain. The muddy pathway, soft and cool, brought a quiet, unexpected joy. By the time I completed



the loop, a calmness had settled over me, and the restlessness I had carried slowly melted away.

Visitors joined the initiative with excitement, while others wandered in out of curiosity.

"I came here to experience it with my family," said Mahbub Morshed, a businessman visiting the trail for the first time. "However, we need to be more aware that some people were still coming in with shoes, which really shouldn't happen. Other than that, it's a wonderful experience."

Shirin, a homemaker who regularly comes to the botanical garden for yoga with her group, decided to visit the new trail after hearing about it.

"It's really effective in serving its purpose," she shared. "Children growing up in the city rarely get to visit villages, but our connection with the soil is inseparable."

Even though the trail is a long walk from the main gate, I really appreciate the unique experience it provides."

Speaking of effectiveness, barefoot walking is known to stimulate nerve endings, improve circulation, and reduce stress. The signboards along the trail explain that it can also help regulate blood pressure, activate natural acupressure points, and even support better eyesight!

Beyond these physical benefits, the trail encourages a slower, more mindful pace for Dhaka residents, something they often struggle to find in their busy daily lives.

Abdul Latif, a retired banker who lives in Eastern Housing near the Botanical Garden, shared his thoughts.

"In one word, it's therapy," he said. "For the elderly community or those with health concerns, it's rare to find a place like this in the city, although people of all ages can benefit from it. Visitors do come from different parts of Dhaka, but I believe every neighbourhood should have trails like this."

For new visitors, the instructions are simple: walk slowly, take small steps, and pause if you feel discomfort. Check your feet afterwards and wash off at the water point near the gate. Those with diabetes or foot injuries should consult a doctor before trying.

To reach the barefoot trail, purchase a ticket at the main gate, priced at Tk 30. From there, walk to the area known as Jatrabari, where you will find a beautiful wooden gate titled 'Barefoot Trail'.

In a city that rarely slows down, this 50-metre trail is more than just a walk; it's a quiet reminder that the earth beneath our feet has the power to heal, to restore, and to calm the mind. It offers visitors of all ages a chance to reconnect, not just with nature, but with themselves as well.

By Jawwad Sami Neogi
Photo: Jawwad Sami Neogi

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