



## BED TEA

### A Quiet Ritual Across Time

RBR

In 1930s colonial Dhaka, bed tea was the first act of waking life. Balancing a tray of porcelain cups, a pot of steaming milk tea, and a plate of biscuits, the master of the house reclined against embroidered cushions, unfolding the newspaper, while his wife joined him. Together they sipped their bed tea—sweet, milky, comforting—exchanging gentle words before the city's bustle intruded.

For them, this ritual was more than refreshment; it was a symbol of refinement, a colonial custom reshaped to Bengali taste, a cocoon of intimacy at the threshold of the day. Bed tea was intimacy made tangible, a quiet ceremony that marked the transition from rest to rhythm. In those moments, tea was not just a drink but a cultural marker, a sign of belonging and care.

Dhaka's beautiful, slow-paced colonial habits have now completely taken a U-turn. By the 1970s, the city's mornings grew faster, and bed tea began to fade. The streets pulsed with life—rickshaw bells ringing, vendors calling out, workers gathering at cha-er dokan, the tea stalls that lined the lanes. Tea was poured into glass cups, strong and sweet, brewed over coal fires. Clerks, students, and labourers sat shoulder to shoulder, dipping biscuits into their tea, debating politics or gossiping.

Unlike the exclusivity of bed tea, the tea stall was democratic, a place where everyone participated in the same ritual, stripped of hierarchy. Bed tea, once a symbol of leisure and intimacy, gave way to communal energy and conversation.

Yet many old timers and couples still held on to the idea, and their habit of bed tea became fodder for people like me—someone who loves tea and harbours fanciful imaginations of rituals.



I developed the habit of having bed tea because of stories I heard from my aunt, who was newly married to a tea estate manager at the time. She would sit in the tea gardens with her English tea set, the pot wrapped in a hand-embroidered tea cosy, pouring with such grace that even the steam seemed ceremonial.

At 92 now, she has placed in my hands a few pieces of her antique English porcelain dinnerware and

teacups—fragile treasures, yet strong with memory. Later in life, whenever I visited her, I recall her mornings and evenings: crisp cotton saris, pearl strands around her graceful neck, tiny danglers catching the light, and always the tea, always the ritual. Watching her, I absorbed more than the taste—I learned the rhythm of housekeeping, the joy of baking, the quiet dignity of order.

But my rituals are nothing elegant like hers. Mine are rushed, and I cannot begin my day before two cups of steaming black tea liquor, steeped in ginger and cloves. My husband brews the perfect morning tea I love—it charges my battery. Even though I claim to be a tea person, I always brew a runny, flat tea. What I truly love is the aroma of tea brewing, filling the house, marking the start of our day. For some thirty-odd years now, our mornings at 6 a.m. have begun on that fine note, a rhythm of life that continues to this day.

Fast forward to today, and Dhaka's mornings are transformed. Bed tea has all but vanished, replaced by hurried breakfasts and the vibrant culture of roadside stalls and cafés. Young professionals often begin their day with coffee, signalling a cultural shift.

Bed tea survives only as nostalgia, remembered fondly by older generations or offered occasionally in boutique hotels as a gesture of charm. Now bed tea retains its symbolic role—comfort, hospitality, and continuity—though modest compared to the porcelain cups and leisurely mornings of Dhaka's elite past. Bed tea today is not about refinement but about warmth, a simple act of beginning the day together.

Bed tea has travelled from the private luxury of colonial Dhaka to the communal energy of modern tea stalls. It may no longer define Dhaka's mornings, but its memory continues to whisper the gentle pace of days gone by.

## UPDF's youth wing leader shot dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

A leader of youth forum of United People's Democratic Front was shot dead by unidentified assailants in Rangamati Sadar upazila yesterday.

His two sisters, Kripa Sona Chakma and Bhagya Shobha Chakma, sustained bullet injuries as they tried to save their brother.

The deceased was Dharma Sing Chakma, 42, central vice president of the Democratic Youth Forum, Muhammad Abdur Rakib, superintendent of Rangamati police, told The Daily Star.

He said police handed the body over to his family after post-mortem, adding that the two injured were taken to Chattogram for treatment.

The incident occurred around 7:00am in the Kutukchhari residential area. An armed group surrounded the house of Dharma. As he attempted to flee, the attackers opened fire, killing him on the spot, said a statement of the

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## 3 more die of measles in 24hrs

STAR REPORT

Three more patients died of measles in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, raising this year's death toll to 37, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Of the three, two deaths were reported in Barguna district under the Barishal division and one in the Dhaka division.

In addition, the DGHS recorded two more deaths with measles-like symptoms during the same period, taking the number of suspected measles deaths to 174. Both suspected deaths were reported in Dhaka division.

In the last 24 hours, 1,115 new suspected cases were recorded nationwide, including 127 cases confirmed through laboratory testing.

Since March 15, a total of 3,192 measles cases have been confirmed, while 21,467 people have been identified as suspected cases, the DGHS report said.

During the same period, 11,243 patients have recovered and returned home after treatment.

## Strait of Hormuz now open

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blockade of Iranian ports would remain until a peace deal was reached.

"The naval blockade will remain in full force and effect as it pertains to Iran only, until such time as our transaction with Iran is 100% complete," he said on Truth Social, adding the process "should go very quickly".

He also claimed that Iran has "agreed to never close the Strait of Hormuz again. It will no longer be used as a weapon against the World".

He also said Iran was removing mines from the Strait with US assistance.

However, Trump criticised Nato over what he described as an offer to help secure the waterway, telling the alliance to "STAY AWAY".

The US-Israeli conflict with Iran, which began on February 28, has killed thousands and destabilised the Middle East. It also effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz, through which about a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas passes, triggering a historic oil shock.

Following Araqchi's remarks, oil prices fell about 11 percent, extending earlier losses.

The International Monetary Fund this week lowered its global growth forecasts and warned the world economy could tip into recession if the conflict persists.

Later, in an interview with AFP, Trump said there were "no sticking points" left for a peace deal with Iran.

"We're very close. Looks like it's going to be very good for everybody. And we're very close to having a deal," Trump said in a brief telephone call with AFP from Las Vegas, adding there were "no sticking points at all" left with Tehran.

"The strait's going to be open; they already are open. And things are going very well," he added.

Trump, at an event in Las Vegas, also described the war as a "little diversion"

during his second term, amid polling showing public unease.

"We had the best economy in the history of our country in my first term. And we're blowing it out now... And despite our little diversion to the lovely country of Iran... we had to do that," he said, referring to Iran's nuclear ambitions.

A Quinnipiac University poll published Wednesday found 65 percent of US voters blamed Trump for



Women inspect their destroyed home upon returning to Nabatieh in southern Lebanon after a 10-day ceasefire was announced yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

rising gas prices linked to the Strait's closure. Only 36 percent approved of his handling of Iran, while 58 percent disapproved.

Trump had said on Thursday that talks could begin as soon as this weekend, but that appeared increasingly unlikely by yesterday afternoon due to logistical challenges in assembling officials in Islamabad, where the talks are expected.

Despite his optimism, Iranian sources told Reuters that "gaps remained" before a preliminary deal could be reached.

A Pakistani source involved in mediation said there had been progress in backchannel diplomacy and that an upcoming meeting could produce a memorandum of understanding, followed by a comprehensive deal within 60 days.

"Both sides agree in principle. Technical details come later," the source said, speaking anonymously.

One key sticking point is Tehran's nuclear programme. The US has

on transferring enriched uranium to the US had taken place.

Meanwhile, a US-backed ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon appeared largely to be holding, despite reports from the Lebanese army of Israeli violations.

The deal has been praised by major countries, and the UN has commended the US for brokering it.

The Israeli military said it was lifting wartime restrictions, allowing civilian movement and economic activity to return to normal, although Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned that the campaign against Hezbollah was not over.

Trump, however, rebuffed this idea, promising that the US would work with Lebanon to "deal with" Hezbollah.

"Israel will not be bombing Lebanon any longer. They are PROHIBITED from doing so by the U.S.A. Enough is enough!!!" Trump said, in another social media post.

Pakistan, acting as mediator, said a parallel ceasefire in Lebanon was essential to any broader agreement on Iran.

The deal does not require Israel to withdraw from southern Lebanon, where Israeli troops have been destroying villages and infrastructure after ordering residents south of the Litani River to flee. The area makes up about 8 percent of Lebanese territory.

Meanwhile, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned that respect for international law is under strain.

Marking the 80th anniversary of the International Court of Justice, he said: "Today, violations of international law are unfolding before our eyes."

"The force of law must always prevail over the law of force."

The ICJ has recently drawn attention, including in a case brought by South Africa against Israel, alleging breaches of the UN Genocide Convention.

## IMF, WB assure

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additional package at a press conference at the IMF headquarters in Washington on Thursday night, he said Bangladesh, like many other Asian countries, has been affected by the energy shock due to its heavy reliance on imports.

"We are working with the authorities in terms of policy support and on the programmes, and negotiations are ongoing," he said. "We'll have to just wait and see how those things pan out."

### \$3 BILLION EMERGENCY FUND

The government is aiming to secure around \$3 billion in emergency assistance from development partners including the IMF and World Bank to cover surging energy and fertiliser import bills for the March-June period triggered by the war.

A Finance Ministry impact analysis estimates Bangladesh will need an additional \$2.61 billion in foreign exchange to meet these costs. Total import expenditure on oil, liquefied natural gas (LNG), and fertiliser over the four-month period is projected at approximately \$5.62 billion, an 86.7 percent jump from a year earlier, it added.

Bangladesh is trying to secure funds from the multilateral lenders, as they have launched special programmes for war-affected countries.

The World Bank announced it could mobilise up to \$100 billion over the next 15 months, surpassing the \$70 billion provided during the Covid-19 pandemic. The IMF has separately declared up to \$50 billion in emergency support for developing and low-income countries, while the Asian Development Bank has unveiled a dedicated package for its Asia-Pacific members.

### REGULAR BUDGET SUPPORT

Beyond the emergency assistance, Bangladesh is set to receive more than \$2 billion in budget support from three development partners in the current fiscal year.

Beyond emergency assistance, Bangladesh is on track to receive more than \$2 billion in regular budget support this fiscal year: \$1.3 billion from the IMF's \$5.5 billion loan programme (in two instalments) by June, \$400 million from the World Bank, and \$750 million from the ADB.

However, progress hinges on meeting IMF reform conditions—many of which remain unfulfilled, particularly around exchange rates and revenue. Failure to satisfy these benchmarks could jeopardise financing from other institutions as well.

Krishna Srinivasan was candid about Bangladesh's fiscal performance, saying the country has not done well in terms of revenue intake.

"Revenue intake has slipped over the last three years. A lot of reforms are needed—both on the fiscal side and on the revenue side," he said, adding that there is work to be done across all three programme pillars: revenue reform, financial sector rehabilitation, and exchange rate adjustment.

Officials said Bangladesh is also pushing for additional budget support from the development partners under relaxed conditionality, similar to arrangements made during the pandemic. Discussions are underway with the World Bank to repurpose up to \$1.5 billion in undisbursed funds from existing projects toward new initiatives or policy support.

## Octane imports now beyond storage capacity

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stock at a time," said Anindya Islam Amit, state minister for power, energy, and mineral resources.

The fuel demand for April and May has already been secured, and preparations for the June schedule are underway.

"We are fully prepared to meet the fuel demand for April and May," Amit added.

Amid the rising stock, the government has increased the octane supply to filling stations by 25 percent from the average daily release in the first half of April.

Currently, depots are supplying about 1,382 tonnes of octane daily, up from 1,115 tonnes between April 1 and 15.

Officials hinted at a further increase in supply due to lack of storage facilities after the unloading of the latest shipment.

In March, when the US-Israel war on Iran escalated, the average daily supply stood at 1,217 tonnes—slightly higher than 1,193 tonnes of March last year.

At the time, the government had

imposed a supply ceiling to match March 2025 demand levels following panic buying.

However, amid uncertainties over timely shipments and tightening stock margins, the BPC reduced daily supply by around 100 tonnes, though officials did not formally acknowledge the cut.

But the long queues still persist at filling stations in Dhaka and Chattogram. Motorcyclists and cars that run on octane were seen lining up from early morning, with many failing to get fuel after daily supplies to the pumps ran out.

The increased release aims to ease pressure at pumps, though restrictions on distribution may remain in place as stations need to serve as many customers as possible, said BPC officials.

In addition, the "fuel pass" system will be gradually introduced all over the country, they said.

As of yesterday, the petrol stock stood at 19,500 tonnes, enough to meet demand for at least two weeks. Besides, there is regular production from local condensates in five fractionation plants.

Diesel stock stood at 81,600 tonnes, enough to meet a week's demand. However, a total of 110,000 tonnes of diesel consignments in three shipments are awaiting unloading at Chattogram Port.

The refined fuel stocks are at a comfortable level, Amit said.

Jet fuel reserves, in particular, are sufficient for nearly six weeks, with adequate supply planned for April and May and preparations underway for June, he added.

ERL, the country's lone refinery, is currently operating two of its four units, producing limited quantities of petrol and bitumen.

Crude oil stocks have run out after three consignments were delayed due to disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz following the outbreak of war.

However, the authorities have secured two new shipments via the Red Sea from Saudi Arabia's Yanbu port. The shipments are expected next month.

"We hope ERL will not face a complete shutdown as the first consignment is scheduled to arrive in

the first week of May. Meanwhile, we are utilising the downtime to carry out maintenance on two units," said ERL Managing Director Md Sharif Hasnat.

ERL contributes only about one-fifth of the country's total fuel supply, according to Amit.

To manage the situation, the government has approved increased imports of refined fuel to offset the shortfall, he said, adding that plans are underway to install a second unit at ERL with an annual refining capacity of 3 million tonnes by 2029.

The government is also preparing to float an international tender in May after finalising whether to go for foreign funding or domestic resources.

This will allow Bangladesh to diversify crude import sources beyond the Middle East, reduce exposure to global volatility and regional disruptions, he said.

ERL, which was established in 1968, has a refining capacity of 1.5 million tonnes, while the country's annual demand exceeds 7 million tonnes of refined fuel.

## Mob kills 2

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brother Fazlu, 28, said locals and police.

On information, police went to the spot. Pannu and Fazlu were killed on the spot and Nazmul was critically injured but was rescued alive by police, said Aminul Islam, inspector (investigation) of Manikganj Sadar Police Station.

Nazmul was first taken to Manikganj 250-bed Hospital and later sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, he added.

"During primary investigation, we have found evidence of rape attempt on the girl. However, details will be known after getting the autopsy report," Aminul told The Daily Star.

No complaint was filed and no one was arrested as of filing of this report around 9:00pm yesterday.

Additional police personnel have been deployed in the area to fend off any untoward incident, he added.

Talking to reporters, Atika's uncle

Rabiul Alam claimed that the teenage boy went into hiding after killing his niece by tying a cloth around her neck. Later, the agitated people beat up the teenager's father, uncle, and brother.

Her mother Arifa Begum, in a choked voice, said, "Why did you kill my daughter? You need money; you should have told me. I would have given you money. My daughter was killed for her earrings and gold chain."

Meanwhile, Nargis Begum, wife of deceased Pannu Mia, complained, "If my son [the teen] was guilty, he could have been handed over to the police. But why were my husband and brother-in-law killed? Why was my elder son [Nazmul] beaten up?"

Mohammad Sarwar Alam, superintendent of Manikganj police, said there might be an attempt to rape the girl child and to rob her jewellery. And then she was killed.

Police are investigating the incident and legal action will be taken upon investigation, he said.