



PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

Rainy days at Dhaka University

ASHIF AHMED RUDRO

Dhaka has a love-hate relationship with rain. The city desperately craves rain, yet remains poorly equipped to handle the downpour when it does come.

The city can be divided into several imaginary sections, each responding to rain differently. But perhaps no part of Dhaka handles rain quite like Dhaka University.

The DU campus is one of the few places in the city where one can still find green trees. Rain is welcomed here, almost always with a kind of festivity that only DU can harbour.

I remember when I used to live in one of the dormitories. My room was on the 9th floor. From the balcony, I had a clear view of the Kabi Jasimuddin Hall playground outside. No matter the time, if rain fell, boys would manage a football and get on the pitch.

It might not have been much of a pitch at that time. It was an uneven



field, with patches of grass and slippery soil here and there, but that did not stop the boys. When rain came, those studious people in their early to mid-twenties became children again.

It was like this in every playground on the campus. There used to be a little waterlogging problem in the playground of Haji Muhammad Mohsin Hall, but that never stopped anyone from playing in the water.

The walkway through Mall Chatter that leads to the hall para is shaded by trees, offering a breath of fresh air. But it looks exceptionally dreamy after rain.

Sometimes, one finds krishnachura shielding the harsh asphalt,

turning the dark tarmac into a much more vibrant road to take. There were days when the road ahead looked just wet enough to reflect the sky, covered with flowers that had fallen during the rain.

The mirror-like road, adorned with nature's ornaments, presents a view one would usually see only on canvas. But here, on the campus I called home, it was not just a reality, it was a routine.

The path felt as if it had come straight out of a storybook. If you were one of the more enthusiastic people, as I was back in the day, you could walk this road during the rain and you would not be alone.

There were always those few who

found joy in rain. They stepped out in the downpour to feel every drop of water that had touched the clouds.

It makes you feel alive. And you never feel out of place doing it on this campus because there is always someone dancing in the rain.

The grass of Curzon Hall looks much lusher after rain, whether it is just a little drizzle or an absolute deluge. The effect remains the same.

The ponds behind the historic edifice turn a strangely captivating colour, one that I cannot put into words. The red walls look less like stone and more like an unpolished jewel. The dark soil beneath your feet feels welcoming.

Sure, to many, this may sound like an alumnus romanticising their campus. And that is true.

But it does not take away from the beauty of this campus.

It makes me want to sing: "Rain, rain, go away, come around another way, Dhaka University wants to play, rain, rain, come right away."

Deadliest day in measles outbreak

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malnutrition, is causing the deaths of children. They noted that the number of deaths is expected to decline as cases begin to fall, likely in late May or early June.

City hospitals are still struggling with the rise in measles patients, mostly children, many of whom are being referred from district and upazila health facilities. Amid this situation, many guardians have complained of a shortage of ICU facilities.

Health Minister Sardar Md Sakhawat Husain said 86 percent of targeted children have already been vaccinated, and he hoped for a let up in the surge in four to five days.

The two confirmed measles deaths yesterday were reported from Dhaka and Chattogram divisions, the DGHS said, raising the total number of confirmed deaths to 52.

The 15 suspected measles deaths that were recorded during the period brought the total number of suspected deaths to 259.

Of the latest deaths, 11 were reported from the Dhaka division and four from the

Chattogram division. During the same period, 154 new confirmed cases were reported, raising the tally of confirmed cases to 5,467.

Additionally, the DGHS recorded 1,302 new suspected cases, bringing the total number of suspected cases to 41,793.

WHAT EXPERTS SAY
Mirza Md Ziaul Islam, head of the paediatrics department at Bangladesh Shishu Hospital and Institute, said, "Most of the children who come here have multiple health problems. Their immunity is already low, and when they are infected with measles, their condition deteriorates fast."

Many of the measles patients have heart or kidney complications, while a large number of children are suffering from severe malnutrition or pneumonia, he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Despite a reported drop in measles cases in some upazilas, the Shishu hospital continues to receive a growing number of patients in critical condition, and as of yesterday, there were 89

measles patients admitted to the hospital, he added.

Replying to a question, he said the infection rate will gradually decline as the nationwide vaccination campaign continues, and as infections decrease, the number of deaths will also fall.

Fazle Rabbi Chowdhury, associate professor of internal medicine at Bangladesh Medical University, said a review of the measles deaths shows that many of the victims were unvaccinated, severely malnourished, and had comorbidities.

The situation might not have arisen if the scheduled special campaign in 2024 had been carried out on time to bring unvaccinated children under coverage and allow their immunity to develop.

He said children require at least four weeks to develop immunity after vaccination, and therefore the infection rate is expected to decline in late May or early June.

Several other experts also predicted that the infection rate would come down in late May.

Health Minister Sardar Md Sakhawat Husain said no new measles cases have been reported from 30 high burden upazilas where the vaccination drive began on April 5.

He told journalists at a city hotel programme that infection rates in the four city corporations have also dropped following the April 12 rollout.

On April 20, the nationwide measles vaccination campaign got underway.

The minister said it takes about three weeks for antibodies to develop. "We have not yet reached that period, and it will take another four to five days before the current surge begins to decline," he added.

Asked about the ICU shortage hampering the treatment of critical measles patients, the health minister acknowledged the matter. "Within these constraints, ICU facilities have been expanded not only in Dhaka but also outside — such as in Manikganj — while the ICU capacity in Rajshahi has been increased."

Other names in contention on the Indian Political Action Committee (I-PAC), a consultancy handling surveys and strategy, also backfired. The firm was once led by Prashant Kishor, whose guidance had helped the party make significant gains. With his exit, however, the party's overdependence on I-PAC appears to have cost it dearly.

The biggest question now is who will be the next chief minister.

After defeating Mamata in her stronghold, Bhabanipur, Suvendu Adhikari is seen as the frontrunner.

Other names in contention include state BJP president Shamik Bhattacharya, former state president Dilip Ghosh, Sukanta Majumdar, and former journalist and Rajya Sabha member Swapan Dasgupta. There is also speculation that the BJP may opt for a less prominent figure, as it has done in the past.

(Suvjit Bagchi works for Prothom Alo)

Chalan Beel farmers rush to harvest

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Sholmari to prevent flooding. Similar protective measures have been taken by villagers at two sluice gate areas where water had already begun to seep into the croplands.

Despite the urgency, many farmers are harvesting traditionally rather than using combined harvesters to save on costs.

"Paddy is currently selling

for Tk 1,100 per maund, which is lower than last year. If we use combined harvesters, the increased costs would result in a huge loss. We are harvesting by hand to remain profitable," explained Ashrafur Islam, a farmer from Shatpukuria village.

With approximately 60 percent of the paddy still in the fields, the next two weeks are critical. Agriculture officials and farmers agree

that if the weather stays clear and the temporary dams hold, the entire crop can be safely brought home.

Officials from the local agriculture office continue to monitor the situation closely as the harvest continues in full swing.

Due to the onrush of water from upstream, the Atrai river has been swelling rapidly over the past few days, with water levels rising at least 10 feet

in the last three, said Emdad Hossain, sub-divisional engineer of the Natore Water Development Board.

As of yesterday, the river was flowing 2.69 metres below the danger level (a little over 12 metres).

"We are closely monitoring the situation in Singra, which is most vulnerable to flood. So far, the situation is under control," he said.

What caused TMC's rout

FROM PAGE 1
85-90 percent this time. However, two new parties — the Indian Secular Front and the Am Janata Unnayan Party of Murshidabad — drew away a portion of this support, weakening the Trinamool's base. Their full impact will be clearer once final vote shares are available.

Then there is the Hindu vote. Securing around 55 percent typically puts a party within reach of victory. Based on seats won and leads, analysts believe the BJP may have secured 60-65 percent, or more.

At the same time, the BJP's victory opens up new possibilities while raising concerns. One key question is how a party rooted in northern India will adapt to West Bengal's intellectual and cultural landscape.

Another issue is demographic: around 30 percent of the state's population is Muslim, and how a Hindu nationalist

party like the BJP engages with this community remains uncertain.

Organisational depth remains a challenge. For decades, West Bengal has been a bastion of centrist and left-of-centre politics, and it remains to be seen how the BJP will consolidate its position.

There is also a regional dimension involving Bangladesh. The two share a 2,000-kilometre border, and the election outcome could affect bilateral ties, particularly on issues such as border management and alleged infiltration.

It would be wrong to view the BJP's rise as a short-term phenomenon. The party has worked on a long-term strategy over the past three to four years, much of it behind the scenes, and that effort is now yielding results.

Strong anti-incumbency also played a role. The Trinamool has been in power for 15 years and has

faced serious corruption allegations. Internal divisions have further weakened the party, which the BJP has exploited.

Another factor is the BJP's promise to double allowances under Mamata Banerjee's government, a pledge that resonated strongly in rural areas. A four-member household receiving Rs 6,000 would get Rs 12,000 under the BJP — a significant incentive in remote regions.

In addition, around 2.7 million "outsiders" were removed from voter rolls through the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process, a move believed to have benefited the BJP.

The party also adjusted its candidate strategy, largely fielding local faces instead of outsiders. In previous elections, it nominated defectors from the Trinamool, which did not resonate with voters. This time, it appears to have learned from that approach. The TMC's reliance

on the Indian Political Action Committee (I-PAC), a consultancy handling surveys and strategy, also backfired. The firm was once led by Prashant Kishor, whose guidance had helped the party make significant gains. With his exit, however, the party's overdependence on I-PAC appears to have cost it dearly.

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BJP sweeps West Bengal

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deal another demoralising blow to the already weakened opposition, the BJP looked set to win more than 205 out of 294 seats in Bengal's state assembly, a landmark majority.

Votes were still being counted under tight security in the state of more than 100 million people, one of five states and territories that held elections in April and May.

The results should put Modi on a stronger footing while he battles a series of economic and foreign policy challenges, including high unemployment rates and a pending US trade deal, ahead of a general election in 2029.

According to the Election Commission of India, the BJP has won 206 seats. The Trinamool Congress has secured 80 seats and is leading in one constituency. Congress has won two seats, while four others went to smaller parties.

The majority mark in the 294-member House is 148. However, with counting underway in 293 seats after polling in one constituency was countermanded, the effective majority has dropped to 147.

"The 2026 West Bengal Assembly Elections will be remembered forever," Modi said on social media. "People's power has prevailed, and BJP's politics of good governance has triumphed."

"BJP's record win in West Bengal would not be possible without the efforts and struggles of countless Karyakartas (workers) over generations."

He added, "Today, with this victory in Bengal,

the lotus has blossomed everywhere — from Gangotri to Gangasagar."

Senior party leaders and thousands of supporters celebrated on the streets of the state capital Kolkata, joyously swaying to victory tunes.

However, Mamata alleged massive irregularities in vote counting.

"More than 100 seats BJP looted. The Election

waged an aggressive campaign to dislodge Mamata from power in West Bengal.

Though there was no major violence, scuffles broke out outside several counting centres in the state, and police used batons to control the crowd. Past elections have resulted in violence.

Mamata was scheduled to hold a press conference



Commission is the BJP's commission," Mamata, surrounded by security personnel, told reporters.

"Do you think this is a victory? It is an immoral victory, not a moral victory. Whatever the Election Commission has done, along with the Central Forces and the PM & Home Minister, is totally illegal. It is loot, loot, loot. We will bounce back," she added.

Making matters worse, Mamata lost by 15,114 votes to Suvendu Adhikari, her former protégé and possibly the BJP's CM candidate, in her Bhabhanipur stronghold, media reports said.

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the BJP to skew the election in their favour, which was denied by the government.

For years, West Bengal was the great exception to Narendra Modi's political advance.

BJP had swept through India's Hindi speaking heartland, expanded into the west and north east, and overwhelmed once-formidable regional rivals. Yet Bengal — argumentative and steeped in a self-image of cultural exceptionalism — remained stubbornly resistant.

That made this state election unusually consequential. Yesterday's BJP victory there would rank among the most significant breakthroughs of Modi's 12-year reign. It is not merely the defeat of a three-term incumbent, but the completion of the party's long march into eastern India.

Analysts see the outcome not as a sudden upheaval but as the culmination of a decade-long political project. Unlike the BJP's rapid rise in Tripura or its earlier breakthrough in Assam, Bengal was never a lightning conquest.

"The BJP has been a major force in Bengal for three successive elections, consistently polling around 39% of the popular vote," says Rahul Verma, who is a fellow at the Centre for Policy Research.

Once it established itself near the 39-40 percent mark, he argues, "the party really needed only another 5-6% to cross the line". Voting trends show the BJP mopping up more than 44 percent of the vote this time.

Tensions flare over

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"missiles and drones that were fired at both us and the commercial ships," Cooper said.

Some cruise missiles were launched at US Navy ships, but most of them, as well as multiple drones, targeted commercial vessels, he said.

In a post on his Truth Social Platform, Trump put the number of Iranian boats struck at seven and said "there has been, at this moment, no damage going through the Strait" aside from a South Korean ship that was hit, about which he provided no further details.

In an interview with Fox News, Trump also said he sees two paths forward in his war: either reaching a good-faith deal or resuming military operations.

He told Fox News that the ongoing US naval blockade was "one of the greatest military manoeuvres ever done" and that the Iranians were being "far more malleable" in recent talks than before.

Trump caused worldwide outrage the last time he made similar threats, writing on social media last month that "a whole civilisation will die" if Iran failed to comply with his demands. He also previously threatened to bomb Iran "back to the Stone Ages" and to blow up all of the country's bridges and power plants.

Iranian state television, meanwhile, quoted a senior military official from the country as saying: "The US claim that it sank a number of Iranian war boats is false."

After weeks of relative calm in the region, the United Arab Emirates yesterday said a drone strike caused a fire at an energy installation in the emirate of Fujairah.

Fujairah is home to a major port, pipeline and other petroleum based installations bypassing the throttled Strait of Hormuz.

US and Israeli forces launched the war against Iran on February 28, after which the Islamic republic

closed the Strait of Hormuz — a vital route for oil and gas exports — while American forces later launched a blockade of Iranian ports.

Iranian state television said earlier that the country's navy had fired cruise missiles, rockets and combat drones near US destroyers moving through the strait in what it described as a "warning shot."

CENTCOM said that two US guided-missile destroyers had passed through the strait into the Gulf as part of "Project Freedom," while two US-flagged merchant vessels transited the opposite way and "are safely headed on their journey."

Negotiations between Washington and Tehran have been deadlocked since a ceasefire in the US-Israeli war against Iran took effect on April 8, with Tehran's stranglehold on the strait a main point of contention.

"For the good of Iran, the Middle East, and the United States, we have told these (non-combatant) Countries that we will guide their Ships safely out of these restricted Waterways," Trump posted on Truth Social, saying operations would begin on Monday.

Once out, "they will not be returning until the area becomes safe for navigation," Trump added.

As of April 29, more than 900 commercial vessels were located in the Gulf, according to maritime intelligence firm AXSMarine.

In response to Trump, the Iranian military's central command said any safe passage through Hormuz must be coordinated with its forces "under all circumstances".

In the early hours of yesterday, the British maritime agency UKMTO also reported an attack on a tanker off the UAE with "unknown projectiles".

Later in the day, the UAE said Iran had fired drones at a tanker affiliated with its state-owned oil giant ADNOC.