



A NARROW ESCAPE

An unidentified wounded youth (above) is being taken away after he was rescued from the rubble of a building that suddenly collapsed in Tejgaon yesterday afternoon, while Mojammel (left) was frantically trying to locate his two brothers who were trapped under the rubble.

PHOTO: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Are adopted children fairly treated?

WAHIDA MITU

A family of high social standing and a good background adopted Sofia, (not her real name) after she was born. She was educated grew up to be a young girl, but unfortunately her foster parents died and her brother looked after her since. But turbulence began when she eloped with a boy who did not meet the family status two years ago, and the brother who did not accept the marriage disowned her.

Sofia's husband expected wealth and property from her family. But as her brother disowned her, and her husband sensing no possibility of getting wealth her husband too, deserted her.

"I don't know what to do. My future is uncertain," said a depressed Sofia at the shelter home of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA).

Since then she has been waiting for her brother to take her back. Despite all her efforts and initiatives taken by BNWLA the brother remained adamant not to give her rights.

"Although I know that my brother will not accept me, my hopes have not died. I wish the

aunts of the shelter will find a suitable place for me," she said.

"Many adopted children like Sofia face such situations. They are either not properly taken care of or even abandoned or disowned and in the absence of legal adoption

sion," said Advocate Salma Ali, executive director of BNWLA adding, that most orphanages and hospitals do not follow legal procedures in adoption.

But people now take over children for adoption from individuals and thus ignorantly promote problems that Sofia

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documents guardians avoid the responsibility of adopted children whenever they wish," said Advocate Touhida Khandokar from BNWLA.

"Adoption is a good idea for both the abandoned child and for childless parents, but provisions must be legalized within the civil law," she explained.

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and many other adopted children are now facing, she said.

She suggested ensuring birth registration for all children, banning individual adoption and giving emphasis on adoption through legal procedures.

She emphasised on guidelines and rules for protection and ensuring a secure life for adopted children. These rules would help developing responsibility and accountability of

foster parents, which would eventually ensure the welfare of adopted children.

Tisha (not real name), was adopted by a rich family at the age of four. She spent a smooth childhood with her foster parents. But turmoil in her life began at her adolescence when she began to lead a carefree life mixing with other spoiled aristocratic children and not paying heed to her parents.

Her foster mother could not control her and refused to take responsibility. The foster mother, suspecting that Tisha might attack her, filed a general diary (GD) and handed her over to the police station. The police took her to juvenile prison and then to the BNWLA shelter home where she finally ended up in the women's hostel.

She is now eager to return to her adopted mother but the family does not want her back.

She is so traumatised that she declined to talk with this correspondent.

Would a real mother take such action against her daughter for such a trivial reason, was the question posed by the executive director of BNWLA.

Originals at half price outside Ekushey Boimela

SYED TASHFIN CHOWDHURY

Thousands of books, allegedly stolen from the Ekushey book fair, are sold by hawkers, outside the fair premises, under the very noses of the on-duty law enforcement personnel.

Around six to seven hawkers are at present selling these books at prices below the market retail price, attracting many book-lovers.

In a bid to generate high revenue through bumper sales hawkers offered each book at Tk 50 on February 21.

"I already bought three books from the hawker today. The prices of the books are almost half of the original price sold at

the fair," said Latifur Rahman, a visitor to the fair on that day.

This correspondent asked some hawkers about the unusual low price of the books they were selling.

"The books are supplied to us by a few members of the staff of the fair. We buy these books in bundles, each book costing us around Tk 36-45," said Halim (not his real name), a hawker who sold books at Tk 50.

To a question on security measures, the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) official on duty said that they had not permitted hawkers to hover around the fair and TSC premises, but made an exception on February 21.

But the hawkers had a contradicting story.

"We have been selling books here for the last two weeks and will be here till the fair ends," said a hawker.

These hawkers are selling a wide range of books, including novels, religious books, analytical books by local authors and some translated novels of foreign authors.

On further inquiry, it was revealed that local publishing houses, which already have their own stalls in the fair, published most of these books.

Some publishing houses alleged that the security personnel and employees of the fair authorities are stealing these books.

"It has been a common trend that books get stolen from the

stalls after the fair hours," said a salesman of the Ekushey Bangla Prokashon stall.

The salesman further pointed out that this trend has been prevailing for the last few years.

"Some members of the authority were notified about the crisis in the previous years but it was already too late to investigate into the matter," he said.

Another publisher explained their helplessness at determining the theft of books from their respective stalls.

"Each stall offers about 20 to 25 different titles, out of which at least 16 are published for the fair. As such, each stall has over 800 to 1,000 books or even more at their stalls," said a member of Rhythm Prokashona Sangstha.

He explained that because of the high daily sales and large number of books on display, the stall authorities could not maintain daily or weekly inventories.

"The publishers update their inventory on the last day of the fair and that is when they notice the thefts. Taking advantage of this very detail, the criminals steal books from each stall throughout the entire month of February," said Harun, a staff member of a stall.

Despite the allegations, fair authorities and security officials said that they are unaware of such incidents.

"We did not receive any complaints from any publisher of such thefts," said Jalal Ahmed, an official on duty at the Fair

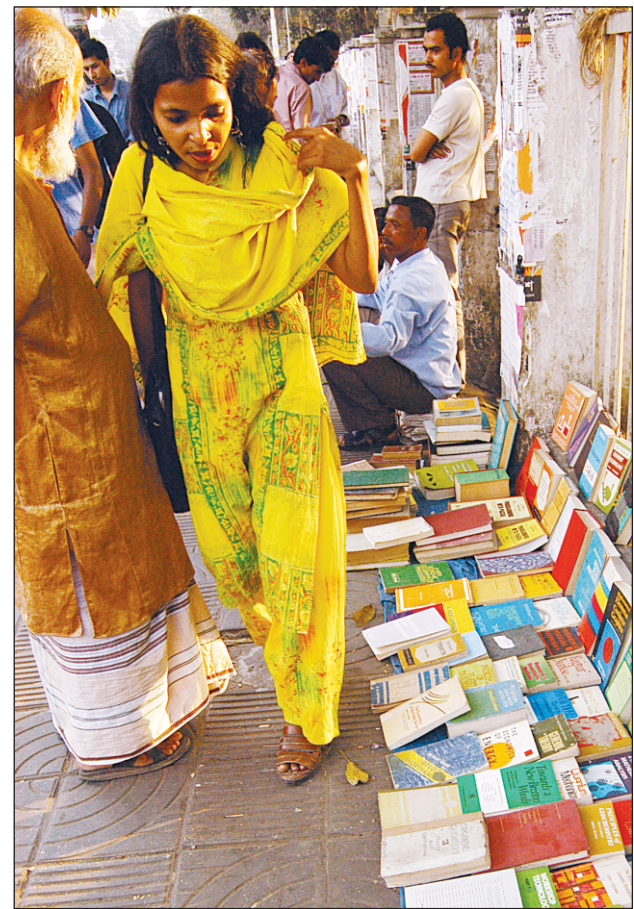
Information Centre.

The Rab and Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) personnel at the fair provided similar responses.

"We have noticed hawkers near the fair premises and will take necessary action against them. But we are not aware of any book thefts and sales outside by these very hawkers," said Abul Kalam Manjur Morshed, Director General of Bangla Academy.

He said that over 200 armed policemen and Rab officials have been on-duty round the clock.

"We are amazed how these thefts can elude such tight security. Nevertheless, we will investigate into the matter," he said.



Books are sold outside the fair premises violating the rule.

Textbook shortage a growing crisis every year

KAUSAR ISLAM

Businessmen have once again taken the opportunity of over charging a few books with the crisis of secondary education textbooks in the market.

They said that although the academic year starts on January 1, the peak time for the book business starts from first week of February. Retailers admitted the allegation of charging more than the price fixed by National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB).

"No one can blame us, we are here to do business. The publishers are not giving the government the fixed 20 per-

cent commission, so we are bound to charge little extra," said Hasan, a bookseller in Nilkhet.

The booksellers also said that another reason for this crisis is cancellation of the uni-track education system.

"Every year we collect second hand books but we didn't do that this year as we thought it would not be worth if the uni-track education system started," said Rafique Ahmed, another bookseller.

Students and guardians are worried about the situation with two months of the academic year already gone by.

"The schools and classes are now on in full swing, and

without the relevant textbooks we are bound to lag behind," said Moynuddin, a class nine student.

Denying the allegation of textbook crisis in the market the NCTB said they would in a few days reprint some books to meet the demand.

"There is no crisis in the market. The situation is under control. We will reprint a few books immediately and supply to the market," said Dr Gazi Md. Ahsanul Kabir, chairman, NCTB.

Class six; nine and 10 see a larger shortage of textbooks, while there is a short supply of a few books of class seven and eight.

Many publishing houses

had brought this matter to the attention of the NCTB three weeks back and had request the reprint of some textbooks books, but the board had failed to take action accordingly.

Booksellers and businessmen said that the acute crisis is for books on religion, physical education and home economics. But the board authorities said that with the dispatch of a mobile team the problem was solved.

"The crisis was manipulated. A few publishers had stocked up the books for illegal gain," said the NCTB chairman. "When we asked them to submit their supply list to us, we found many had supplied

mush lesser books than their commitment," he added.

However, he said that they were going to reprint some books including Business Entrepreneurship, Introduction to Business, Higher Math to name a few.

"As the law is not in our hands, we could not establish a mobile court during the time of our need. If it were possible, the situation would have been under control," he said, blaming some dishonest businessmen for this unwanted situation.

This year the NCTB published a total of 1 crore 56 lakhs of different kinds of textbooks for secondary level students.

