

# THE BUSTLE AT BANGLABAZAR

|| SHAH ALAM SHAZU ||



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

**DHAKA VIBE**

The oldest book market of the country shakes up at the beginning of every year, ahead of the Ekushey book fair. From publishers to printers, porters and binders, everyone spends a busy time the whole month.

Books, lots of them. On the shelves, on the floor -- every inch of a publisher's office is taken up by new books, while some more spill over to the warehouse. The musky smell of new books fill the air in Banglabazar. They are coming in on pick-ups, they are coming in on baskets. Alleyways are packed by rickshaws carrying bookloads. This is

Farid Ahmed, President of Academic and Creative Publishers Association of Bangladesh (ACPAB), told The Daily Star, "We're fully prepared for the book fair. Like publishers, printing presses are busy too. Most of our new books arrive by the first week of the fair. We're passing really busy days right now." Monirul Hoque, Executive

It has around 400 creative publishers, and everyone becomes frantic over the book fair. Along with publishers, anyone who is someone in Banglabazar is busy this month. Even day labourers are high in demand, said Hasan Zaydi, publisher of Pearl Publications.

The business spreads out to printing presses around the area. Every printer is occupied with book fair orders -- printing goes on night and day. It's no different for the 100 binding houses in the area as well. Binders start charging more around this time, a publisher told The Daily Star. Cover artists are in high demand too. Illustrators, painters, and graphic artists of all ages have their hands full.

Besides the 400 creative publishers are the academic publishers. All in all, there are about 2,000 bookstores. If one counts the salespersons, print workers, binders, and other staff, the print industry of Banglabazar provides for more than 1 lakh people.

**THE BOOK FAIR IN NUMBERS**  
"There will be 34 pavilions at the fair this year. Besides the pavilions, 322 publishers are also taking part in the fair," Farid Ahmed of ACPAB added.

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what the oldest book market of the country looks like around this time every year.

With less than two weeks to go till the Amar Ekushey Book Fair begins, publishers are ready to take on the monthlong fair; their days are demanding, nights are outright hectic.

Director of ACPAB, said, "We actually prepare for the fair throughout the year, but our schedules tighten right before the start of the fair."

**THE ECOSYSTEM**  
Every year in January, Banglabazar's business multiples.

## NEWLY-INCLUDED WARDS

# Roads, mosquito, waterlogging the biggest concerns

HELEMUL ALAM, DSCC

Speeding up mosquito control activities, proper waste management, repairing roads and solving waterlogging problems -- these are the main issues residents of newly-added wards expect to be solved by their mayor.

Residents of the areas also want initiatives to solve their crises regarding drinking water, dust and drugs.

A total of 36 new wards were added to the two city corporations on July 30, 2017, of which 18 were included in Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC).

Residents of these wards will cast their votes for the first time to elect a mayor of their choice in the upcoming city corporation polls, slated for January 30.

This correspondent visited four of the 18 wards -- 60, 61, 62 and 63 -- and found out about the expectations from residents.

A number of roads in Matuail Mridhabari area under ward-63 are in dismal condition, said Abdul Ahad, a resident of Mridhabari.

He said the Matuail city corporation road remains



Kutubkhali canal filled up with waste.

PHOTO: STAR

unclean round the year with solid wastes, as authority does not take any measure to clean it on a regular basis.

DSCC authorities in the last seven to eight years did not take any steps to construct the road properly, except doing some repair works partially, he said.

As garbage-carrying vehicles of DSCC use the road to dump waste in its landfill in Matuail, rubbish often drops on the road from the vehicles. But authorities concerned do not take any initiative to clean it, he said.

The busy Jatrabari-Demra road is also in poor condition, which also will have to be given proper attention along with proper drainage network, he said.

Raisur Rahman, a resident of Gobindopur under ward-62, said drug addiction is a big problem in their area, as a large number of youths in the neighbourhood are addicted to narcotics.

"We hope the newly-elected mayor will take initiative to solve this social crisis, involving law enforcing agencies," he said.

Mosquitoes and garbage management are the other major issues of the area, Raisur said.

Though around two years have passed since inclusion of their ward in the DSCC, no garbage carrying truck was deployed to collect solid waste. Solid waste is still being managed by local people, he said.

Mohammad Iqbal Hossain, a resident of Polashpur under ward-60 said dust, water and mosquitoes are the main problems of their area.

"My whole family has been suffering from asthma or

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# Waiting to enjoy fruits of 'city life'

MATHEWS CHIRAN, DNCC

Although new wards came under Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) in 2017 through a government gazette, residents got councillors as their local representatives only last year through by-polls at ward levels.

Although a year has gone by and full-fledged city elections are knocking at the door, problems in the wards remain the same.

This correspondent visited wards 37 through 41 yesterday and talked to locals about the major issues in their areas.

Ward-39 includes Nurerchala, Khilbariktek and Syeednagar, where waterlogging remains the biggest woe. Even during dry weather, parts of the road are muddy and slippery due to overflow of drains on the road. Such condition has been going on for years, locals said.

This correspondent yesterday saw people wading through ankle-deep drainwater, while shop owners were stuck in their stores on both sides of the road in Baridhara Mohila Samity lane under Nurerchala.

"This happens every Friday. Water overflows from the drain as all inhabitants of the area use water at the same time at noon. The waterlogging stays for four to five hours, and when its gone, it leaves mud," said businessman Russel Rahman, who has been enduring such experience for more nearly five years.

"The road is not in good condition either," complained Sazia Akhter who was standing nearby.

Ward-40 includes Bhatara Thana. According to locals, cemented roads were constructed in the area while it was under union parishad. But after that, no visible development took place for the road.

"Some part of the roads have become damaged and sewerage slabs are entirely broken, but no one cares to fix them," said Abul Kalam, a pharmacist living in the area for 30 years.

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An alley in Nurerchala area submerged in water.

PHOTO: STAR

## Social taboo on mental health must end: speakers

Discussion held at BSK

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With an aim to address the rise of mental health as a worldwide crisis, Walk to Serenity -- a US-based non-government organisation -- yesterday organised a discussion titled "Mindset Walk: Mental Health Matters".

The programme was held at Bishwo Shahitto Kendro (BSK), said a press release.

Speaking at the programme, Ariful Islam, convener of Walk to Serenity, said social taboo regarding mental health in the country need to be dispelled immediately. He sought cooperation from all to face the challenge posed by the deterioration of public mental health.

In his speech, Helal Uddin Ahmed, assistant professor of National Institute of Mental Health and Hospital, stressed on the need for children to grow up in safe environments that keep them away from negativity.

Noted psychiatrist Mekhala Sarkar, beautician Kaniz Almas Khan, and actors Bonna Mirza, Moutushi Biswas and Bahna were present at the discussion, among others.

## Still suffering from setback of 2015 movement: BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP yesterday said the party is still facing a political setback caused by the movement it waged in 2015.

The party's Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir made the comment as a response to criticism within the party about BNP's failure to wage a movement.

"BNP is still in movement," he said while addressing a programme at Jatiya Press Club.

The party -- that has been out of power for over a decade -- is now being criticised by different quarters including the ruling Awami League for its "failure in waging a strong movement against the government".

Fakhrul said BNP is a liberal political party that moves forward with its own characteristics, and wants to go for a movement, after resolving certain issues.

"We are going to court, calling for talks and participating in the election -- these are all parts of our movement. We will go for bigger movement gradually," he said.

The BNP secretary general further said, "We have experienced a damage in the movement during 2014 election and 2015, and we had to struggle to overcome that damage."

BNP boycotted the January 5, 2014 election and started a movement demanding fresh election in 2015. The party waged countrywide movement, but it did not see success.

A huge number of party leaders and activists went into jail after facing cases, and the party's image was in crisis, for reportedly torching vehicles and killing people.

Disappointment took an acute turn in the minds of BNP men as they are being repressed, oppressed, killed and disappeared and thus they are not taking to the streets against the misdeeds of the government, Fakhrul said.

The job of a political leader is to encourage such demotivated activists and supporters, Fakhrul added.

He said his party is participating in the Dhaka

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## RAPE OF GARMENT WORKER IN SAVAR Human chain demands exemplary punishment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Garments Sramik Sanghati yesterday demanded exemplary punishment of the rapists of a garment worker. The victim was raped in Ashulia of Savar on Tuesday.

At least 50 leaders and activists of the organisation formed a human chain at Jatiya Press Club in the capital to press home the demand. They also brought out a procession which marched adjacent roads.

Speaking at the programme, Taslima Aktar, president of the workers' rights organisation, said rape is increasing due to the culture of impunity.

"Not only the culprits, but the government, administration and law enforcers are responsible -- for failing in their duty to prevent rape," she said.

Citing living standards of some 30 lakh garment workers in the country, Taslima said most of them live in severe insecurity. "Despite having a huge impact on the country's economy, garment workers are neglected both in their homes and at workplaces," she added.

Among others, the organisation's general secretary Julhasnayeem Babu and organising secretary Aminul Islam Shama also spoke.

On January 14, the garment worker was allegedly gang-raped by her house owner and three others in Ashulia, after the victim and her husband failed to pay a month's house rent. On Wednesday, police arrested the house owner after the victim filed a case with Ashulia Police Station.

## 'He instilled the belief'

Speakers say at Sir Fazle Hasan Abed's memorial about his contribution to alleviating poverty

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It was the morning of July 23 last year. National Professor Anisuzzaman was waiting in front of an elevator at the ground floor of Brac Centre Inn in the city to pay a courtesy call on Brac founder Sir Fazle Hasan Abed.

Suddenly, someone placed his hand on Prof Anisuzzaman's shoulder from behind. It was Sir Fazle.

They got in the elevator and reached Sir Fazle's office room together.

"There, he, without hesitation, said 'I have been diagnosed with brain cancer; doctors have given me four months.' I could say nothing but Oh! No," said a bereaved Prof Anisuzzaman yesterday, speaking at a memorial programme arranged by Bengal Foundation at its premises in the city last evening.

At one point of the conversation, Sir Fazle told Prof Anisuzzaman that he had decided to not continue with medical treatment.

Two days later, Sir Fazle announced



Prof Anisuzzaman speaks at the event.

PHOTO: STAR

at a Brac trustee board meeting that he and Prof Anisuzzaman, who also had been with Brac since its early days, would no longer serve their posts in the trustee board.

At the event, eminent citizens recalled Sir Fazle's illustrious life

and his nearly five-decade visionary journey in the field of development, saying his initiatives were unmatched in Bangladesh and beyond, and those tremendously helped lift millions of people out of poverty.

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## 174 students graduate BYLC leadership programmes for 2019

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center (BYLC) hosted the graduation ceremony of its signature leadership programmes for 2019 yesterday.

A total of 174 students from different English and Bangla medium schools and madrasas graduated from BYLC's 10-week long "Building Bridges through Leadership Training" (BBLT) and six-week "Building Bridges through Leadership Training Junior" (BBLTJ) programmes, said a press release.

Participants were trained on theoretical and practical concepts of leadership, critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication.

This year, the two programmes addressed issues on climate change, safe spaces in the city, and civic responsibilities. Both BBLT and BBLTJ were funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Speaking at the event, chief guest Harry Verweij, Dutch ambassador to Bangladesh, said, "The youth of the country deserve a platform to realise their full potential and work together to build a prosperous, just, and inclusive Bangladesh."

In this speech, Ejaz Ahmad, founder and president of BYLC, said leadership is all about working with others to make progress on the challenges facing a community or country.

Over the past decade, BYLC has trained over 5,000 graduates through eight programmes aimed at different age groups to build connection among youths from different backgrounds, equip them with leadership skills, instill values of empathy, tolerance, and inclusiveness in them, and connect them to jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities.

## Policeman dies after falling off building

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A police constable died after falling off a building in the capital's Shabbagh area yesterday morning.

The deceased, Sudhangsu Kumar Biswas (26) of Jhenidah, joined as a constable in 2015.

He sustained critical injuries after the fall around 10am. He was taken to Rajarbagh Police Lines Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries, the official said.

Police suspected that he might have killed himself -- jumping off the third floor of the eight-storey building of the Central Command and Control Centre of police.

Sazzadur Rahman, deputy commissioner (Ramna zone) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said they are investigating whether it was suicide or accident.

Sudhangsu's body was sent to Dhaka Medical College morgue for autopsy.

Pintu Sarker, a cousin of the deceased, told The Daily Star yesterday Sudhangsu was distressed in recent weeks, due to some family issues involving him and his wife.