

# Childhood lost in streets

Glue-sniffing homeless children continue to struggle for survival, as authorities trade blame



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Children huffing glue is, unfortunately, a common sight in the streets of Dhaka. This photo was taken late last year.

NILIMA JAHAN

Children huddled in a corner huffing plastic bags is a common sight in Dhaka. Though rehabilitation efforts are needed urgently, the authorities that should be concerned only seem to be shifting the responsibility from one to other, while the children continue to suffer on the streets.

For example, 12-year-old Sharif (not his real name) has been living on the streets of Karwan Bazar for the past seven years. He does not know who his parents are, or if they're alive at all.

At night, he prefers to sleep near the rail line, although the government's rehabilitation centre for street children is just a five-minute walk from there. The shelter houses around 100 children between the ages of eight and sixteen who once lived on the streets.

Rakib (11), collects scrap materials in the same area. He prefers to live and work on the streets, although he is aware of the shelter which provides free food four times a day, along with clothing, sanitation, recreation and education facilities.

Both Sharif and Rakib confessed that like most other street children in the area, they are addicted to various kinds of drugs, primarily sniffing glue used for repairing leather or rubber products. Colloquially called "dandy", this substance is popular as it's cheap, but children also consume cannabis, cigarettes, and sometimes yaba.

"They usually buy glue from hardware shops," said Md Kalu Mia, owner of a nearby scrap store. He said children are influenced easily, so whenever one sniffs glue, others want to try it. "Soon enough, everyone in the circle gets addicted," he said.

These children also work as couriers between dealers and buyers. According to Sharif, there are around 20-25 cannabis dealers in Karwan Bazar rail gate area.

"Sometimes we help people buy the drugs. We buy cannabis at Tk

100 per packet from Shanta, Nirob, Anwar, Chikni and Arufa," said Sharif. Referring to yaba as "baba", he mentioned the places where the pills can be bought.

According to them, every time they supply to buyers, they receive tips of Tk 20-50. "A few customers even give us a couple of baba as tips," Rakib said matter-of-factly.

When asked how they manage this despite the presence of law enforcement and government's "zero-tolerance" policy against drugs, Sharif said police usually don't arrest them.

"They sometimes arrest us in front of public, but later free us after some

The OC added that they are open to working on this issue. "These children should be sent to government shelters and we have already sent some of them there," he added.

However, despite having basic facilities for living, the two shelters run under Street Children Rehabilitation Programme of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs in Karwan Bazar and Kamalapur areas have no rehabilitation facilities for drug-addicted children.

The two shelters house nearly 250 children, but those who are addicted to dandy and other drugs rarely stay.

Sharif and Rakib were taken to the Karwan Bazar shelter several times by the staff, who regularly scout the stations to invite children to the shelter, but in their own words, "We escaped because we cannot beat the craving."

The shelters do not lock children in rooms, and they can get out in the afternoon if there is an emergency. The addicted children take advantage of that and eventually escape.

"This is a major challenge for us, as we cannot hold them for long. Rather, they influence other children from the shelter to go with them," said Mamun Bakaul, a resident social and health worker of Karwan Bazar Street Children Rehabilitation Centre.

According to Mamun, the rehabilitation centres' staff received a one-week psychological training from the National Trauma Counselling Centre (NTCC). They were trained to motivate street children and encourage them to go to shelters.

But this counselling does not work for addicted children, Mamun observed. In most cases, local drug dealers have a stronger influence on them, and it's easier for them to peddle drugs using children.

"They work for a very minimal amount of money or drugs, and police are reluctant to arrest minors."

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Although the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs looks after issues related to women and children, we don't have any mechanism to introduce a large scale service for the drug addicted children.

**DR ABUL HOSSAIN**  
PROJECT DIRECTOR OF STREET CHILDREN REHABILITATION PROGRAMME

beating. Police even know who sell drugs, but they don't do anything because the dealers regularly pay them a share," claimed Sharif.

### REHABILITATION OR RUNNING IN CIRCLES?

Contacted, Shamim Ur Rashid Talukdar, officer-in-charge (OC) of Tejgaon Police Station said the allegation is "baseless."

"These children don't have any moral sense or education. We are really very worried about them. We can't always apprehend minors, and they cannot be taken to court in the condition they remain in," the OC said.

## COST OF LABOUR MIGRATION

# Factoring in sub-agents' role crucial: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Recognising sub-agents and ensuring governance are required to control the expenditure of excessive money that migrant workers have to pay for overseas employment, speakers said at a discussion yesterday.

The country's labour migration sector is largely dependent on sub-agents for recruitment of workers from different parts of the country, who often lack adequate literacy, they said.

However, these sub-agents remain unaccountable because their presence in labour migration process is not recognised by law, they added.

Economics Study Center of Dhaka University organised the discussion on the DU campus, titled "The Cost of Migration: Overseas Employment Scenario for Bangladesh".

Presenting a paper, labour migration expert Rahnuma Salam Khan said four to five sub-agents exist at different layers between a worker's first step for overseas job and his employment in the destination country. Referring to government data, she said last year about 3.99 lakh migrant workers were sent to the Saudi Arabia. These workers were supposed to pay Tk 1.65 lakh each as migration cost, set by the government.

However, the average cost the migrant workers are paying for jobs there is Tk 4 lakh each. This means, there is a huge amount of money workers spend as "hidden cost" of migration, she added.

Shariful Hasan, head of Brac Migration Programme, said the state lacks an effective mechanism to hold sub-agents accountable, although the labour migration sector largely relies on them. He said stopping "visa trading" can be an effective way to ensure governance in the sector.

One reason behind "visa trading" is high demand for work permits for countries, said MA Razzaque, research director of Policy Research Institute. Unscrupulous syndicates take advantage of such demand, which is often created due to high unemployment rate, he said.

Ananya Raihan, chief executive officer of Infolady Social Enterprise Ltd, also addressed the discussion, chaired by Prof Selim Raihan of DU's economics department.

## KHALEDA'S IMPRISONMENT

# Oikyafrent to stage protest rally Saturday

UNB, Dhaka

Jatiya Oikyafrent has decided to stage a protest rally on February 8 in the capital, marking the second anniversary of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's imprisonment.

The decision came at a meeting of Jatiya Oikyafrent steering committee yesterday with its convener Dr Kamal Hossain in the chair at his Motijheel chamber.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, Gonoforum Presidium Member Advocate Mohsen Rashid announced the programme.

Reading out a written speech on behalf of Dr Kamal, Mohsen said their alliance will hold the rally at Dhaka Reporters' Unity (DRU) protesting Khaleda's jailing.

He said their programme is also meant for pushing their demand for the release of BNP chairperson.

Mohsen said Oikyafrent top leaders will address the programme that will begin at 11am.

On February 8, 2018, Khaleda was sent to Old Dhaka Central Jail after a lower court sentenced her to five years' imprisonment in the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case. The High Court later doubled her five-year jail term.

## ATTACKS DURING CITY POLLS

# Bring perpetrators to book: journos

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Journalists yesterday strongly condemned attacks on media workers covering Dhaka city polls, and demanded immediate arrest of the perpetrators.

They were speaking at a protest programme organised by the Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) in front of Jatiya Press Club.

Many expressed their frustration at the failure of law enforcers and election officers in ensuring safety and security of journalists during the recently-concluded elections.

DUJ President Abu Zafar Surja said the attackers have to be brought to book by Saturday, otherwise the union would wage a tougher movement.

Journalists are fighting for freedom of expression and democracy, but they are being attacked repeatedly for it, said DUJ General Secretary Sohel Haider Chowdhury.

At least 10 journalists from different media houses were attacked and assaulted while performing election duties on Saturday.

Many were obstructed and humiliated allegedly by leaders and activists of the ruling party.

Mostafizur Rahman Sumon, one of the victims of Saturday's violence, on Monday night filed a case with Mohammadpur Police Station, accusing some unnamed men loyal to DNCC Ward-34 councillor Hossain Khokon.

# An homage to Bangabandhu

Ekushey book fair celebrates Father of the Nation



A number of publishers at this year's book fair have designed their stalls and pavilions focusing on the Father of the Nation.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

SAYYED MOHMUD ULLAH

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman remains an inseparable part of anything to do with Bangladesh, and with this year marking his birth centenary, the Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela is celebrating the Father of the Nation in full fervour.

Besides the main entrance of the month-long book fair -- held on Bangla Academy premises and the adjacent Suhrawardy Udyan -- a number of pavilions and stalls have embraced the theme in their design and publications.

"Since 1991, we have published at least 80 books on Bangabandhu and some 200 on the country's Liberation War," said an official of Agamee Prakashani.

Shariar Alam, a stall attendant of the publishing house, said that they have made a separate catalogue of books on Bangabandhu.

He said some of their best-sold books include "Sheikh Mujib Amar Pita" by Sheikh Hasina, and "Bhasha Andolon o

Sheikh Mujib" by Mazharul Islam. "Among 104 published books this year, Bangla Academy itself has published at least 25 books on the life and work of Bangabandhu," said its Director General Habibullah Sirajee.

Some of their titles include "Bangabandhur Ditio Biplob: Ki o Keno?" by Dr Harun-ur-Rashid; "Ballad of our Hero, Bangabandhu" by Syed Shamsul Haq, "Bangabandhur Karajibon" by Dibbaduti Sarkar, and a reprint of "Karagarer Rojnamcha" written by Bangabandhu himself.

The Daily Star Books, Ittyadi Prokashoni, Shikha Prokashoni and Prothoma Prokashon have also brought several books on the Liberation War and Bangabandhu this year, said salespersons at the stalls.

Yesterday evening, a large group of youths were seen thronging the stall of Centre for Research and Information (CRI) on Bangla Academy premises.

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# DU publishes list of 63 expelled students

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka University (DU) authorities yesterday published a list with names of the 63 students who were expelled for getting enrolled at the university through fraudulent means.

The accused students enrolled at the university by unfair means through the course of six years. They are said to have deviated from fair exam etiquette during the admission tests from 2012-13 to 2017-18 academic sessions, said the list signed by DU Controller (exams) Md Bahalul Haque.

The students were expelled on January 28 of this year. The list has been sent to each students' hall and faculty, said Proctor Prof AKM Golam Rabbani.

On Monday, a group of DU students, led by Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducus) member Tanbir Hasan Shaikat gave the authorities a five-day ultimatum for publishing the names of the expelled students.

## CONFERRING PHD DEGREES

# HC questions whether univs are following rules

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday wanted to know whether public and private universities are conferring PhD and equivalent degrees to students properly following rules and regulations of the University Grants Commission (UGC).

The court ordered the UGC to inquire into this issue and submit a report to it in three months.

At the same time, the court directed the Dhaka University's vice chancellor to inquire into the reported allegation against one of its teachers of earning his doctorate degree submitting a 98 percent plagiarised

dissertation, and to submit a report before the court in 60 days.

The HC bench of Justice FRM Nazmul Ahasan and Justice KM Kamrul Kader came up with the order following a writ petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer Advocate Md Moniruzzaman Linkon, seeking necessary orders.

He submitted the writ petition on January 26, based on a report published on the web version of Bangla daily Prothom Alo on January 21, which said 98 percent of the doctoral thesis of DU Associate Prof Abul Kalam Lutful Kabir of medicine technology department was not an original work.

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পাইলস, ফিস্টুলা, কোষ্ঠকাঠিন্য, অ্যাপেন্ডিসাইটিস, পলিপ, কোলোনক্যান্সার, কোলন, রেকটাম ক্যান্সার ও ল্যাপারোস্কপি

পেটের বাদানালী ও মলবারের (Colon, Rectum and Anus) বিভিন্ন সমস্যা যেমন: অস্বাভাবিক পত্র রক্ত যাওয়া, মলবারের পাইলস সমস্যা, ফিস্টুলা, এনালফিসার, রক্ত আমাশয় (Ulcerative Colitis), বিনা অপারেশনে পাইলস চিকিৎসা, স্ফায়ার না কেটে সর্বাধুনিক ল্যাপারোস্কপিক পাইলস অপারেশন, মলবারে বাতের অপারেশন বায় হস্তের কার্য, বায়হাস্ত স্বতন্ত্র ভাগের জন্য (Obstructed Defecation) STARR অপারেশন, পেটের তেত্র বাদানালীর ক্যান্সার (Colon Cancer), Colonoscopy, পায়ুপথ ক্যান্সারে (Rectum Cancer) মলবার না কেটে অত্যধিক স্ফায়িং পদ্ধতিতে পেটে বায় না লাগিয়ে অপারেশন, ল্যাপারোস্কপিক পদ্ধতিতে পেট না কেটে কোলন ক্যান্সার অপারেশন, শিশুদের পায়ুপথের সাথে রক্ত যাওয়া ইত্যাদির অত্যধুনিক ও বিশ্বমানের চিকিৎসা সম্পর্কে জানতে হলে বইটি পড়ুন।

বইটি লিখেছেন বাংলাদেশ এবং উপমহাদেশের পাইওনিয়ার কলোরেক্টাল সার্জন

হৃদযন্ত্রকৌশল সার্জারিতে বিশ্বকাপ সর্বকালের সর্বকালের সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ বাঙ্গালীর সন্তান

অধ্যাপক ডাঃ এ. কে. এম. ফজলুল হক

সম্পাদনা: ডাঃ আসিক আলমাস হক

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