

PATHFUL: A LITTLE HELP GOES A LONG WAY

|| ARUN BIKASH DEY ||



PORT CITY CHRONICLES

A woman brims with joy as members of Pathful hand her one of their trademark nutritious lunchboxes. The organisation distributes 40 of these boxes to under-privileged people every week on Monday. Below, members of the organisation line up packets right before lunchtime, to be distributed among people.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

On October 22, 2018, a group of students could be seen distributing food to under-privileged people on the streets of Chattogram's Patiya upazila.

These days, this is not exactly a rare sight. As volunteering and donation organisations have increased around the country, everyone from school kids, university students to adults can often be seen distributing food and other ration to those with less privilege. In spite of this, there's something about this group that makes them stand out.

It all started one fine afternoon in October, 2018. Like any other day, the students were chitchatting to spend their time. Suddenly they came to a realisation – that they should stop spending all of their time like this and spend some of it doing something more meaningful.

They decided to save money from their tiffin or pocket-money every day. The plan was simple. A total of 14 friends would save Tk 5 a day, Tk 35 a week, and put in a fund for social action. This was the beginning of Pathful, a social organisation run by college and university students of the area.

Seven more students joined them and with the money collected from all 21, they took their action to the streets, and on October 22, distributed their first batch of food packets.

By the next week, they were joined by many more, putting the number of members to 50. With the added money, the organisation decided to make this a regular thing. They planned to provide under-privileged people with a serving of nutrition-rich lunch every week.

Since then, the group has been distributing 40 lunchboxes to the disadvantaged people of Patiya every Monday.

Besides the lunchbox programme, Pathful does and plans to do a host of other social activities. In its 17 months of operation, the organisation has distributed raincoats to rickshaw-pullers during the rainy season, clothes to under-privileged people on the occasion of Sharadiya Durga Puja, blankets during winter, and iftar and sehri to the poor during the month of Ramadan.

Additionally, they have an environment friendly initiative of taking out nails stapled on to trees and making people aware of this cruelty. Last year, members visited an old

home and hosted a fruit festival for senior citizens there.

When this correspondent visited Patiya Model High school on a Monday to know about Pathful's activities, he saw eleven-year-old Kalu standing on the playground, with a lunch packet in hand and smile on his face.

Kalu lives by the platforms of Patiya Railway Station. He spends his day loitering around the school's premises, begging from students and passersby to collect money to buy food. For him, a free, nutritious lunchbox means a lot.

"I live with my mother on the railway station. I have to beg for my food because

week," he said, adding, "We also have 35 guest members who contribute to the organisation between Tk 144 and Tk 499 every month, and we also have 10 donor members who contribute at least Tk 500 every month," the third-year student of management told this correspondent.

"At present we cannot afford to extend the programme more than once a week," said Nayan Mitra, another university third-year student. "Once we have more funds, we want to extend it to two or three times a week."

Praising the activities of Pathful, mayor of Patiya Municipality Harun-ur-Rashid said, "The humanitarian initiatives of Pathful will play a role as a guiding light for



she can't afford it," Kalu said. "Mondays have become the best day of the week for me, thanks to these free lunches."

Like Kalu, a number of street children including Puja, Palash, Sumi, and Tareque were also grateful to Pathful for the initiative. On the day, packets were distributed around the school, Patiya Railway Station, Patiya Bus Station and Patiya Abdus Sabur Road area.

The organisation currently has around a hundred members, said Iftekhar Bin Alamgir, a founder.

"Of them, 55 are active members who contribute Tk 35 to the organisation every

the youth of the area."

"They devote their time thinking about those with less privilege, and try to do something to improve their circumstances. This is, indeed, a noble initiative," Mayor Harun said.

The mayor has a point. The consistency with which Pathful has continued its activities has proven to be an inspiration to many young people in the area, evidenced by its growing number of members and donors. Even if its scope of operation is small, what matters is the big hearts working behind it, and sometimes even a little help can go a long way.

PORT CITY

POLLS 2020



Bid to increase voter turnout

EC launches campaign

MOSTAFA YOUSUF

The Election Commission is motivating residents across the port city to turn up at polling centres on the election day (March 29) to cast their votes using electronic voting machines as "EVM is more convenient and easy to use".

The regional election office of Chattogram recently launched a campaign in this regard.

Initiated in Anderkilla area, the campaign also took place in Chattogram Press Club and Kazir Dewri areas, among others. As part of it, the election officials are handing over leaflets on how to cast vote using EVM.

The leaflets also elaborates the benefit of EVM and how the machine can identify voters.

Hasanuzzaman, regional election officer of Chattogram, told The Daily Star that voters' apathy is not good for democracy.

"EVM is easy to use but many have confusion over it. That is why we have launched the campaign," the election official added.

He said the campaign aims to make people aware of "modern voting methods like EVM". It will continue till the last day of election campaign (March 27).

This campaign also generated curiosity among electorates in the face of declining presence of voters as seen in the recently held by-polls to Chattogram.

Abu Foyez, a resident of Anderkilla, said, "I couldn't vote in last year's national election due to a scuffle in front of my polling centre. I got the leaflet, but I'm still not sure if I will vote this time," he said.

Neyaz Uddin, a grocer at Kazir Dewri,

said it did not matter whether the EC is using EVM or manual methods.

"What we need is an environment where people can cast vote without intimidation or harassment."

On January 13, the EC held a by-election to Boalkhali-Chandgaon parliamentary seat where only 22.94 percent vote was cast.

Besides, there is a three-day holiday ahead of the election day, which may result in low turnout at polling centres, which also compelled the EC to launch the campaign, according to the regional election office sources.

Mentionable, BNP's mayoral candidate Shahadat Hossain recently demanded that the EC change the polls date as many people may leave the city getting a three-day weekend before the polls day.

He said the election should be held on March 31 instead of March 29.

CAMPAIGNING CONTINUES

Yesterday, Awami League mayor candidate Rezaul Karim and BNP's Shahadat Hossain campaigned in various areas of the city, seeking votes from residents.

A good number of leaders and activists of both the parties and its associate organisations were with them during the campaign, unperturbed by fears of coronavirus that have been looming over citizens in the last couple of days.

Scores of locals were also seen gathering at the campaign spots.

Mayor and councillor aspirants launched campaigning for the polls on March 9. After the deadline ended for withdrawal of candidacy, the EC said 223 candidates -- 7 for mayor and 219 for councillor posts -- will run for the election.

Pro-BNP councillor candidate quits race

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Alleging that he was intimidated by law enforcers, a BNP-backed councillor candidate has withdrawn his candidature for the March 29 Chattogram city polls.

Election Commission (EC) sources said Azizul Haque Masum, the candidate of ward-18 (North Bakalia), submitted a withdrawal letter to the returning officer concerned on the last day (March 8).

Returning Officer Hasanuzzaman said Masum did not mention any reason behind it.

Asked about his allegation, Masum said, "Will it bring any result if

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'No need yet to defer polls over coronavirus' CEC urges law enforcers to ensure security of polling agents

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda yesterday urged election officials and law enforcers to ensure polling agents' security and smooth access to voting centres during the city corporation polls.

The CEC was addressing a views exchange meeting with election officials, executive magistrates and law enforcers entrusted with election duty, at Chattogram Circuit House.

The allegations of driving out polling agents from centres have become usual although those are found untrue during investigation, he said.

He urged all concerned to play their due role to hold a free, fair and peaceful election.

The CEC said there will be a three-day vacation just before the election day from March 26.

"Following the vacation, people may go outside the city. So we have decided to keep government offices open for half-day on the election day to increase voter turnout," said Nurul Huda. "We will also allow vehicles on roads in a limited scale," he said.

Replying to reporters' query on coronavirus issue, the CEC said as the government is yet to declare emergency, there is no reason to postpone the polls.

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Int'l Math Day observed at DU

DU CORRESPONDENT

International Day of Mathematics (IDM) was celebrated yesterday on the Dhaka University campus amid much enthusiasm.

DU Vice-Chancellor Prof Md Akhteruzzaman inaugurated the day-long event at AF Mujibur Rahman Ganit Bhaban.

The VC said, "We should present Mathematics simply, in a way that would make it more attractive to new generations. Students must gather mathematical knowledge to build a society based on science."

He hoped this event will help create a platform for researchers and mathematicians.

President of Bangladesh Mathematical society Prof Nurul Alam Khan, Secretary Prof Md Showkat Ali and convener of IDM committee Prof Md Shahidul Islam were also present at the event.

2 'abductors' arrested in M'singh, Gazipur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-14) claimed to have arrested two alleged child abductors from Mymensingh and Gazipur in separate drives early yesterday.

The arrestees are: Zaman Khan (48) and a seventeen-year-old.

The teenager was arrested from Mymensingh while Zaman from Gazipur, said Rab.

In Rab interrogation, the accused said they abducted 13-year-old madrasa student Md Mahub from Pubail area in Gazipur on March 7, said Assistant Police Superintendent (ASP) Jonaed Afrad.

Following this, they allegedly demanded Tk 5 lakh from the victim's father Md Saidul Islam, hailing from Betgachhia village in Dhobaura upazila of Mymensingh, the official added.

As Saidul could not pay the money, the duo beat up the boy and left him in Azmatpur area in Kaliganj of Gazipur, thinking he was dead, the ASP said.

The following morning, police rescued the boy in a critical state and admitted him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where he is undergoing treatment now.

Rab-14 started a drive to arrest the abductors after Saidul lodged a complaint over the incident.

A Rab team accompanied by ASP Tafiqul Alam raided Gouripur area and arrested the 17-year-old from his house and based on his confessional statement arrested Zaman.

The two were handed over to Kaliganj Police Station. A case was filed in this connection, said the police official.

Man held with Tk 63 lakh 'stolen money'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-7) in a drive yesterday arrested an employee of a chattogram-based business organisation from Dhaka's Mirpur with Tk 63 lakh in cash, allegedly stolen from the company's office in Chattogram on March 12.

The arrestee -- Md Tushar Mahmud Rashel (26) hails from Barguna.

Assistant Director of Rab-7 Media Wing Mashkur Rahman said Tushar is a fourth class employee of "Jihong Medical Product BD Limited" of EPZ area in the port city.

"For staff's salary, the company had stored Tk 65 lakh inside its office vault. Tushar, as per his plan, broke open the vault, stole the money and went into hiding," said the AD.

The company has filed a case with EPZ Police Station, said the AD.

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e-Tender Notice

This is to notify for all concerned that the following tender have been published through e-GP Portal.

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Package No.	Name of work	Publishing date & time	Last selling date & time	Closing date & time
	444183	Vehicle Goods	Purchase of 02 (two) Nos Brand new Car	15 March, 2020 12:01	01 April, 2020 12:01	01 April, 2020 13:01

The interested persons/firms/supplier may visit the website www.eprocure.gov.bd to get details of the tender. This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender registration in the National e-GP Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP helpdesk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).


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