

Project Gronthomogol: Pashe Achhi Initiative in aid of the Nilkhet booksellers

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The lockdown situation due to the coronavirus crisis took a heavy toll on a lot of small enterprises. Nilkhet, an ancient book-hub of the capital is no exception to this. The booksellers of the area with their small roadside and alleyway stores suffered tremendous loss over the last two or three months. Their customers are mostly university students, and even though the unofficial lockdown is mostly over and offices are open, universities are still closed to eliminate the risk of transmission. Hence, the sufferings of the booksellers of Nilkhet has not yet ended.

Members of Pashe Achhi Initiative, who are working to provide relief efforts through crowdfunding for the underprivileged in the times of the current crisis, were struck by the sufferings that the Nilkhet booksellers



and their employees are going through. That is how they came up with the idea of Project Gronthomogol. Tahmid

Hasan, the co-founder of the initiative said, "While travelling around the city for our usual relief works, we were one day passing by Nilkhet. All of the shops were closed, only two booksellers sat by their roadside store with books, in a helpless state without any customers. When we went up to talk to them we got to know of the financial problems that they were going through. They haven't had any sales for almost two months and couldn't even pay their house rents properly."

They realised that what these booksellers needed was an accelerated sales and book lovers who couldn't come out to their favourite place for

book hauling would love to have books delivered to them at their homes. They decided to buy books worth of BDT 25000 from the two booksellers, sell them online from their page for 200 bucks per book and use the money for their regular relief efforts.

"The initial plan was to connect the book lovers with Nilkhet amidst the current situation so that the booksellers can meet the bare minimum in life for a while. When we posted about Project Gronthomogol on our Facebook page, we really didn't expect this huge response. Books worth of BDT 25000 were all sold out within two hours. The

next day we went and got more books worth of BDT 150,000. This slot was sold out within two days", said Tahmid.

The members of the initiative take orders online through their Facebook page and collect books from Nilkhet as per the demand. The orders are managed by a 10-member volunteer team. One individual avail seven books per order. The packaging is done by two volunteers and two paid labourers, and the deliveries are done by some Pathao/Uber riders who are currently out-of-work due to the COVID-19 situation and are paid a handsome amount per delivery.

"We are also taking donations in the form of old books and have received 50-60 of these donations", said Tahmid. "We are not taking orders from outside of Dhaka since we cannot ensure a safe delivery process yet. Delivering books outside Dhaka via courier services can have severe health consequences under these circumstances", he added.

"So far we have sold almost 2000 books. Approximately 700-800 orders have been made. We really didn't expect this huge response. We are truly overwhelmed", said Tahmid. This project not only benefits the Nilkhet booksellers whose businesses have been abruptly stopped by the crisis but also underprivileged people from all classes and spheres who are benefitting from Pashe Achhi Initiative's regular relief efforts.

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