

# Ward libraries far from deadline

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) is unlikely to meet its deadline for establishing a public library in all the 90 DCC wards to encourage people to read. However, only ten libraries have been set up so far.

Sources said a decision had been taken at a meeting held at the Prime Minister's Office to have all the libraries operational by next February. However, the DCC informed in the next meeting held on August 30 that setting up the libraries in 32 wards had to be deferred due to the recent flood in the city.

DCC insiders however said that at present the project is limping because of paucity of space, lack of infrastructure and fund crisis. DCC officials also said that the project was not entirely their responsibility as the Corporation was only asked to provide space for the libraries.

Initially it was planned that the libraries would be set up in the community centers owned by the

**DCC insiders said that presently the project is limping because of paucity of space and funds. Officials also said the project was not entirely their responsibility as the Corporation was only asked to provide space for the libraries**

DCC. But it has only 38 community centers.

"So it was later decided that the libraries will be in any DCC office that is able to provide room for it or on any place owned by the DCC," said a concerned DCC official.

He said the local commissioners and zonal officers have been told to propose the probable location of the libraries.

"We have already received 60 such proposals from them but all of them are not suitable as they are private properties," said the official.

Ward commissioners were also

asked to convince local elites to donate furniture for the library but that bid failed too.

"We can not hold them responsible for being unable to convince people. It is not their mandatory job. Moreover, it is only natural that people might feel disinterested in investing in libraries as there will be no output for them," the official added.

DCC sources said that there was

no permanent fund flow for the project. "We have two employees at each library and it becomes hard when there is no fund to pay their salaries," said an official.

The Department of Public

Library under the Ministry of Cultural Affairs sanctioned an allocation of Tk one lakh each for five libraries last year. Since then no funds have been made available for the project, informed a DCC official.

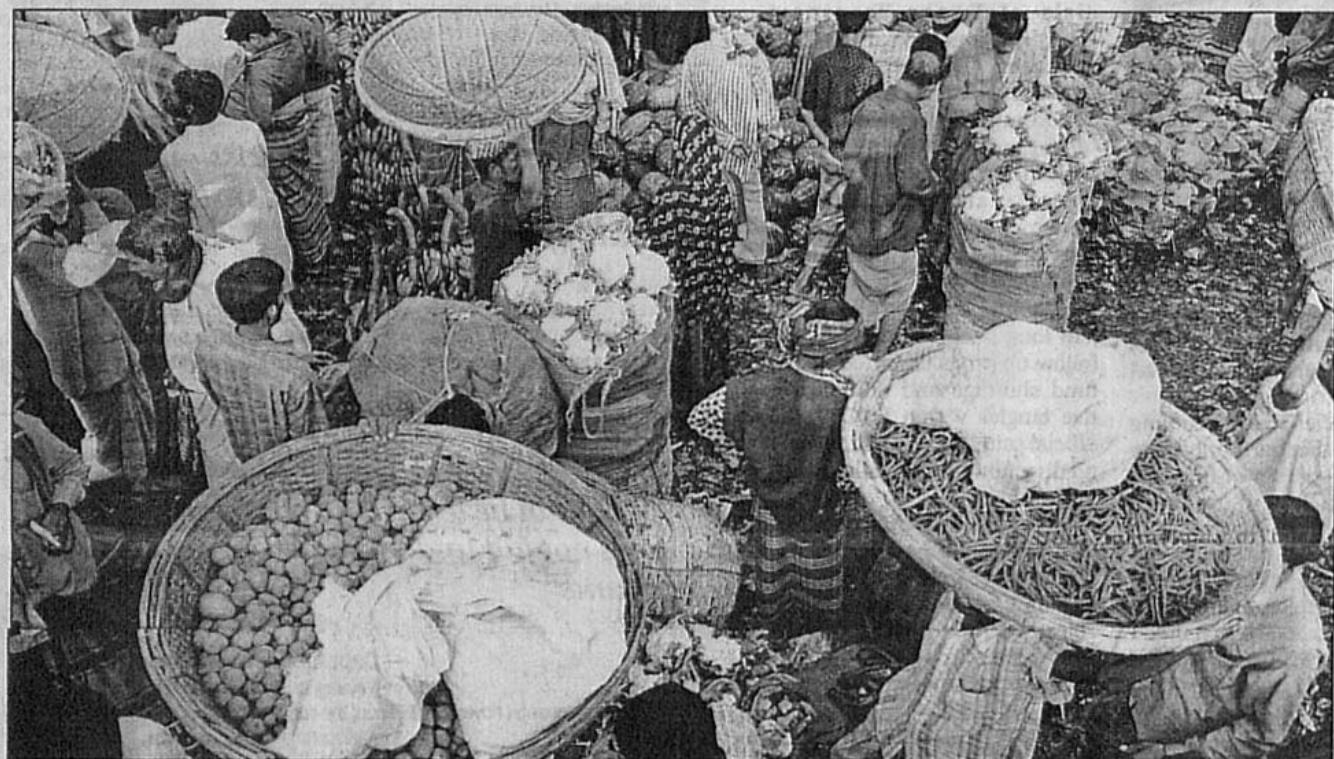
The Central Public Library has already provided books worth Tk 20,000 for each library as a start.

Four among the ten libraries that have become operational have been set up inside DCC-owned community centers -- Islambag Community Centre, Shahidnagar Community Centre, Paltan Community Centre and Mogbazar Community Centre. The rest are Suchana Community Centre Public Library at Ring Road in Mohammadpur, Shahid Commissioner Raju Memorial Library, Koshaituli Public Library, Shayesta Khan Help Centre Library, Nazira Bazar Physical Centre Library and the library inside the commissioner's office of ward 74.

"At least 15 people turn up to read everyday," said one project official. The libraries have not started a membership system yet and visitors are not allowed to take books outside.



PHOTO STAR



With an overwhelming abundance of vegetables in the wake of winter, prices have drastically reduced.

## Veggie depression over

MANISHA GANGOPADHYAY

The usual post-Eid drop in prices of vegetables is happening once again with the advent of winter.

The ample supply and low price are a far cry from the abnormal situation in the vegetable market during Ramadan.

In a matter of weeks, the shortage of winter vegetables caused by monsoon floods in India and Bangladesh have been forgotten with many different varieties, some of which were unavailable or outrageously costly just over a month ago, swamping the kitchen markets.

The drop in the price of the eggplant, which had inspired many news headlines during the Ramadan for its exorbitant

price, is most remarkable. It is selling at five times lower than the Tk 80 per kg before Eid.

The price of cucumbers has also come down to around Tk 10 from Tk 40.

The declining prices of staples such as onions and spinach have provided much relief to the people from all walks of life.

Vegetable customers have long waited for the winter specialities whose presence in the markets was sparing. The near-empty counters, baskets and sacks offering few options like wilted coriander or shrivelled cucumbers are thankfully over for this year.

"We are relishing the prospect of buying sweet potatoes and beans, which were virtually non-existent in the markets before Eid. We do not have to eat raw or bruised

tomatoes anymore," said Moni, a regular shopper at the Karwan Bazar Kitchen Market.

Cauliflower, coriander, radish, turnips, ladyfingers and cabbages are among the myriad of varieties of vegetable bountifully offered at kitchen markets of the city at over half their prices from the previous week.

Sellers from all corners of Dhaka have confirmed the abundance of all kinds of vegetables.

"Everything is available in large quantities now," said a vegetable seller in Hatipul. The variety of spinach present in the market is a testament to that. Heaping piles of lal shak, palong shak, mula shak have made their debut appearance this week.

## TASTE TURKISH TREATS

A six-day show titled 'Turkish Food and Cultural Festival', organised by Hotel Sonargaon, began in the city on Wednesday. Embassy of Turkey in Dhaka and Qatar Airways are the sponsors and co-sponsors of the festival. The festival that has attracted food connoisseurs to the authentic taste of Turkish kebab, cheese and bread concludes today.



SYED ZAFAR HOSSAIN

## useful telephone numbers

### COURIER SERVICES

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The Nazrul Institute- 9114602

Ford Foundation- 8116133

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British Council- 8618867-8,

8618905-7

Community Development Library- 8113769, 8113604

Goethe Institute Int'l- Dhaka- 9126525-6

Indian Information Centre & Cultural Library- 8615096

The Russian Cultural Centre- 9116314, 9118531, 9118314

Drik Photo Gallery- 9120125,

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