

# Bangabazar's appeal dwindling



STAR PHOTO

Vendors longingly await customers at Bangabazar, once famous for cost-effective quality garments.

SHARMIN MEHRIBAN

The Bangabazar Hawkers Market, a name once synonymous with quality garments at very affordable prices, has lost the glory it had in the nineties.

A number of new and better shopping malls that sell export quality goods, have wooed away many Bangabazar shoppers. Besides, change in the tastes of customers and a series of devastating fires have led to a drastic fall in sales and turnout, said shopkeepers at Bangabazar.

"Our sales have steadily gone down mainly because the city now has too many shopping malls and mar-

kets," said Mohammad Saidur Rahman a shopkeeper at Bangabazar.

"There is also a supply shortage of export quality garments. With the withdrawal of the quota-free access to the USA, the supply to the local markets have decreased. What used to be sold for TK 20 is now being sold at TK 40," said Mohammad Yusuf, who has been running a shop at Bangabazar for 11 years.

From his 10-year experience at Bangabazar Jalal Uddin of Beauty Fashion felt that economic hardship of the citizens, closure of garment industries and increased competition from other markets have taken away the gloss off Bangabazar.

Bangabazar not only sold export quality garments, it also was a booming wholesale market for local and foreign sarees and locally made shoes. That business is also suffering.

Mohammad Din Islam of Trisha shoes, who has been doing business for 15 years, said that the demand for local shoes have declined because exported shoes are cheaper as many businessmen import foreign shoes illegally without paying taxes.

"Imported shoes are sold on footpaths even and people prefer those shoes as they look better," said Zuhurul Haq of Meghna Shoes.

Sirajul Islam, a shop owner

at Bangabazar said that rent for shops have gone up significantly in recent years and they are paying between Tk 5000-6000 a month for a small space. "We are compelled to ask for higher prices for products to make up for the costs."

Shamim Saree House employee Babu informed that there local sarees have seen a five percent increase in price. "Despite that people are buying as the quality is good," said Babu.

But Jalil Ahmed of Reza Saree House said that despite the increase in sales, profit is going down because they are forced to sell at lower prices due to competition from other markets.

## FREE MEAL CULTURE OF JCD MEN

# Who will run DU Mohsin Hall canteen?

KAWSAR KHAN

The canteen of Hazi Muhammad Mohsin Hall of Dhaka University

have seen five managers in the last three months as the managers resigned or fled from the hall one after another under pressure from the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal

(JCD) activists.

Hall sources said the JCD cadres forcibly take free meals twice a day that compelled the managers to leave the job. The latest incident took place in the last week of August when canteen manager Babul fled from the hall due to the same reason.

The hall authorities promptly appointed a new canteen manager after every incident but the problem remained unresolved. Last month two managers had taken the charge of the canteen and left the hall after incurring huge loss in a very short time.

Hall students said it is quite impossible to run the canteen profitably as more than 50 JCD cadres take their lunch and dinners for free. On the other hand, more than a hundred other cadres allegedly take their meals paying Tk 5 to Tk 10 only.

"This trend will continue unless the authorities stop the cadres from eating without paying meal charges," a resident student of the hall said. "I fear the newly appointed manager will also leave

the canteen shortly," he added.

However, General Secretary of JCD's Mohsin Hall unit Ehteshamul Haque denied the allegation and said not a single JCD activist takes free meal at the canteen. Asked why nobody wants to run the canteen, he said it is a matter of the hall authorities.

JCD President Azizul Bari Helal also denied the allegation.

The frequent change in the managerial post of the canteen has created sufferings to the 35 canteen boys. "I have not received salary for the last two months as the managers have fled without paying our salaries," canteen boy Yunus said.

The students alleged that the quality of food at the canteen is also lower compared to other halls of the university.

Hall Provost Dr Abu Hossain Siddique, however, brushed aside the allegation of free meal culture of the JCD men. He said the canteen managers leave because the hall authorities compel them to sell foods at a very low price.



STAR PHOTO

DU's Mohsin Hall canteen with students having an afternoon meal.

15x4

7x2

7x2