

## Hawkers rule sidewalks ahead of Eid

**DWAIPAYAN BARUA**  
 As the Eid draws nearer, the suffering of the commuters goes beyond tolerable limit with hawkers and makeshift shops occupying more areas of footpaths and streets everyday. These illegal street hawkers and makeshift shops have occupied the footpaths in many busy areas and roads, including New Market area, Station Road, Agrabad Commercial area, Chittagong Export Processing Zone, Momin Road, Kazir Dewry, Hawk Bazar, Muradpur, Sholoshahar Gate no. 2, Bahoddarhat, Dewanhat intersection and Aturer depot. The illegal occupation of footpaths and roads by hawkers puts the passers-by into a miserable condition. The pedestrians are forced to undergo a great hassle to find their way through these occupied footpaths and come down on the streets. Manjurul Hoque, a teacher of Chittagong Govt City College, said almost everyday he has to remain stranded in the jam for 15 to 20 minutes on the road at the New

Market area on way to college. Auditya Barua, a student of Chittagong (Govt) College, said "I always get late to my classes for the congestion." Parveen Akhter, working at a non-government organisation, sometimes go to her office on foot due to traffic jam on the road. "There is no space in the footpath to walk and on the road too due to illegal parking of vehicles," Parveen said. "And I face unpleasant greetings from the passers-by while stuck up in gridlock," she added. Muggers and burglars can easily do their evil jobs and people frequently fall victim to different types of crimes in these situations. A two kilometre-area of Station Road, in front of the New Market and parts of Jubilee Road has already been captured by the vendors. They expanded their business to half of the roads. At least 1500 makeshift shops have been set up here. Most of the hawkers have been doing their business here for the five to ten years. Several of them are even for decades.

The hawkers said, "they were evicted several times but had to return to the professions again finding no alternatives." Hasan, a hawker, said that they somehow were able to convince the authorities concerned showing their inability to go elsewhere. "We are not able to possess shops in a market with the little investment we have. It compels us to run business in the streets under the open sky," he said. The middle and lower class people are to depend on the hawkers and makeshift shops for their Eid shopping as well as normal shopping throughout the year. Different kinds of second hand readymade garments, clothing, shoes, household goods, utensils and other items of everyday use are sold here at a bit cheaper rate, said Sharmin Akhter, a garment worker who was buying a shirt for her son. She said, "I can't afford to shop at New Market or other shopping malls where the price of anything is higher." "The vendors and makeshift shops offer us garments and other items at a rate that we can afford,"

she added. Md Masud Rana, secretary of Chittagong Metropolitan Hawkers' Association, said occupation of footpaths and roads causes sufferings to the people. But we have to run our business for make a living, he added. "We don't want to create public nuisance or cause hindrance to public or vehicular movement," Masud said. The hawkers said they had long been demanding for their rehabilitation in any suitable and available space to run their business. "We also don't want to pay toll to different quarters and be harassed at the same time, said Anwar Ali, a hawker at the New Market area. "The authorities assure us of rehabilitation during eviction, but nothing is done later," he said. "It is true that the Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) and Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) developed several markets such as Zahur Hawkers' Market for our rehabilitation. But many of us are yet to be rehabilitated," he added.



With the Eid drawing nearer, the hawkers and vendors have started occupying footpaths and roads. The picture was taken in front of the Chittagong New Market.



The Sudarshan Bihar, top, of Agrasar Complex at Huarapara in Raozan and bottom from left, Agrasar Balika Mahabidyalaya, Statue of Buddha, orphan girls at the Agrasar Orphanage and two orphan boys are busy in making handicraft at the Agrasar Complex.

## Agrasar Complex needs funds to survive

**SHAHIDUL ISLAM**  
 Agrasar Complex stands apart with its wide range of noble activities spanning from education to the service of distressed humanity. The Complex is situated at Huarapara village in East Guzra Union under Raozan upazilas, traditionally a Bouddha-dominated locality and 20kms away from the metropolis. Agrasar Mohather, one of the top Buddhist religious leaders of the subcontinent and inhabitant of this village, established the 'Sudarshan Bihar' sometime in the eighteenth century. After his death in 1944, his successor Vishudhananda Mohather, another reverend Buddhist personality, turned the temple into the complex, named after his Guru Agrasar, with a view to spreading the light of edu-

cation and culture among the people and serving the poor. The institution has now sprawled on a 32-acre vast land with a primary school, a girl's high school, a girl's college, a Pali college, public library, boutique and block printing project, research and publication project, industrial project, relief and rehabilitation project and an orphanage project. In 1944, the orphanage named Agrasar Mohather Anathalay was established to bring hope and meaning to life of the orphan children. About 400 orphans reside here, study free of cost and take technical training in the industrial and block-boutique projects at the complex. "We spend Tk 1,000 to Tk1,300 for each orphan a month. The government gives

us a monthly grant of Tk 400 only for 80 orphans," said the complex director Dr Sunithananda Mohather. He said our prime object is to make the orphans self-reliant and till date about 30,000 children under this project have become self-reliant and now established in the society. The Agrasar Pali College was established in 1944, Agrasar High School in 1967, Agrasar Girls College in 1985 and the Agrasar Technical Training Centre in 1974, said Dr Sunithananda to a group of journalists at the complex recently. "The complex works for the welfare of the society and education alongside religious practice," he said. "It has in recent time been suffering from financial crisis," he added. Due to financial crisis, the voluntary activities of the complex are gradually narrowing

down and the authorities could not yet implement a 50-bed hospital project. The foundation for the hospital was laid in 1991. Dr Sunithananda said "After the death of Vishudhananda Mohather, most of the foreign donors have suspended their financial cooperation to the complex." "We used to get regular grants from Japan, Switzerland, Norway, Holland and a few other countries. Now only Switzerland and Norway provide us some grants, which is not sufficient to run overall activities of the complex successfully," he said. He urged the affluent section of the society to extend their cooperation for the complex to enable it to continue its welfare services in future.

### theweekthatwas

**Relief distributed among 400 families**  
 Mostofa Hakim Welfare Foundation distributed relief on Wednesday among 400 families, who lost their valuables in a fire at Jelepura area under Pahartali Police Station. Executive Director of the Foundation and Ward Commissioner M Manjurul Alam distributed rice, pulse, oil and sarees among the families. He urged the people to come forward to help the distressed people of the society. Later, the foundation also distributed clothes among the widows and the distressed of Ward No 38 in the port city. Ward Commissioner Siddique Ahmed Chowdhury and former Ward Commissioner Mohammed Nurul Alam were present.

HSC students and farewell to college principal was held at the Mostafizur Rahman College on Saturday. Chittagong University (CU) Vice-Chancellor Prof Dr AJM Nuruddin Chowdhury was present as the chief guest at the ceremony with Mostafa Group of Industries Director Shafique Uddin in the chair. Southern University VC Dr Moinuddin Ahmad Khan was the special guest. Former Principal AM Fakhru Islam, Prof Shobhan Krishna Chowdhury, Prof Md Abu Taher, Md Showkat Hossain, Md Mohiuddin, Prof Md Ahsan Ullah and Prof Md Ilias addressed the ceremony. Prof Nuruddin in his speech called for providing all facilities to the students to ensure quality education. "There is no alternative to regular study to be a modern and progressive human being," he said. He also distributed certificates and prizes to the GPA-4 and GPA-5 achievers of the college. Later, former principal AM Fakhru Islam was accorded a farewell reception.

**Stop violence against women within families**  
 Speakers at a view exchange meeting urged the government to enact laws and create public awareness to stop violence against women within the families. Bangladesh Institute of Theatre Arts (BITA), an associate organisation of Action Network to Combat Violence Against Woman, in cooperation with Cox's Bazaar Action Forum organised the meeting at Rakhain Development Foundation auditorium on Wednesday in Cox's Bazar. The speakers urged the people to be aware of the negative impact of violence against women at families. Action Forum President Prof Shirin Noor presided over the meeting. General Secretary of the Forum Ashrafud Huda Siddiqi Jamshed moderated the meeting. Khurshed Ara Haque, Masuda Morsheda Ivy, Hasanur Rashid, Biswajit Pal Bisu, Abidur Rahman, Kamrul Hasan and Jahed Sorwar Soheli spoke.

**World Standards Day observed**  
 Speakers at a discussion on the occasion of the World Standards Day on Friday here called for continuing the on-going drive against adulterated food. Consumers Rights' Protection Committee organised the discussion at its office at Jamalkhan in the port city. Committee Chairman Khorshed Alam Sujon presided over the meeting. Dr Dilip Dey, Jesmine Sultana Paru, Shaharir Khaled, Mohiuddin Ahmed, Jesmin Khanam, Momena Akhter Noyon, Hosne Ara, Md Mohsin, HM Sohel, Mohiul Islam and ASM Zahid Hossain spoke at the meeting. Speakers stressed the need for building social resistance against the manufacturers, distributors and others who are involved in this evil practice at the expense of common people's health. They also urged the political, social and professional organisations to launch programmes on this issue.

**Call to help prevent blindness**  
 The speakers at a seminar on Wednesday emphasised on enhancing public awareness through media for the prevention of blindness. Bangladesh Ophthalmologists Association, Chittagong, Rotary Club of Chittagong Midtown, Lions Foundation Eye Hospital and Chittagong Eye Infirmary and Training Centre (CEITC) jointly organised the seminar on the occasion of the World Sight Day at the CEITC Imran Hall. The speakers at the seminar called upon all to play roles from their respective positions to help prevent and cure the blindness. Chittagong Medical College Principal Prof Chowdhury B Mahmud was the chief guest at the seminar. Deputy Director of Department of Health Dr Md Rezaul Karim Chowdhury and Rotary Club International Assistant Governor Rafat Parvez Khan were special guest and guest of honour. Dr Abdul Mannan Sikder of CEITC presented the keynote paper at the seminar with Dr SM Tareq in the chair.



Visitors at an exhibition of the literary works of French poet and dramatist Paul Claudel. Alliance Francaise organised the exhibition at its auditorium on Saturday.

Dr M A Karim made the vote of thanks while CEITC Deputy Manager Mohammad Shahidur Rahman conducted the seminar. Meanwhile, the speakers at another meeting titled "Sight is Right of all" emphasised the need for hygienic food, proper nutrition and mass awareness for preventing disability.

Theatre Therapy Centre for the Disabled (TTCD) in cooperation with Action Aid Bangladesh organised the discussion to mark the "World Sight Day" at TTCD office on Thursday. Theatre Therapist Mohammed Shah Alam presided over the sessions. TTCD Music Director Fariha Tasrin, President of Khulshi Disable

Development Organisation Shorifat Hossain, Ismail Hossain, Abul Hashem and Sumon Reza spoke. Later, the disabled staged a drama titled "Leading life and sight-power." The drama expressed the ongoing social condition of the disabled following the socio-economic system.