

Coffee shop of freedom for trafficking victims

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Kafé Mukti, a coffee shop of freedom was opened recently for the victims of human trafficking in the country to help them become self-reliant in life by providing them with jobs.

Four cafes managed by women victims of human trafficking were launched by International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Dhaka as a pilot project.

The first one was opened in North South University in Kemal Ataturk avenue in June last year. After its huge success three more cafes were opened on January 12.

Located in department of social welfare, department of women affairs and the secretariat building, these small coffee shops are already grabbing attention.

Eight women from shelter homes of Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), the Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) and Thengamara Mahila Sabuj Sangha (TMSS) were appointed at these coffee shops as managers and salesperson.

One of the managers of Kafé Mukti rescued from Jessore eight months ago said, "The biggest mistake of my life was to trust the wrong person with a bad intention. But I found hope after a long, long time. It feels as if I have been given a second chance in life"

Another lucky girl with a future plan said, "I plan to set things right now by using this opportunity. When I am ready I would like to buy some land and settled down"

Kafé Mukti is a venture of an IOM project "Prevention and Protection of



Victims of Human Trafficking in Bangladesh", which is supported by Bangladesh government, Norwegian and Danish Embassies in Dhaka. Nestle group provided with free coffee vending machines at these shops.

Zakia K Hassan, National Programme Officer of IOM said, "As the name suggests, Kafé Mukti is a symbol of self reliance and economic emancipation of the oppressed women. We plan to develop the café as a model for empowerment of women trafficking victims in Bangladesh"

"The society usually isolates these women. By making them self-reliant we want to give them back their dignity and lost status in the society. Creating acceptance is also a goal", she added.

More coffee shops will be opened soon, she said. However, in the future the project aims to venture in other areas of trade and business as well to incorporate these women in to the mainstream with ease, she mentioned.

These women are also being trained in management and accountancy to run the cafes. In the future they will be introduced to many other traits including laundry, salesmanship, beauty salon service and more, she said.

Grants will also be provided to help them step forward with the newly obtained knowledge.

Portion of the profit earned from the cafes will be given to the managers. Part of it will be used to further expand the project.

The initiative would inspire others to create similar opportunities for women facing oppression in the society, Hassan hoped.

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ALL FOR A MORSEL OF FOOD



The city is expanding every day. Life is becoming cruel with unemployment rising faster. Working people hurry to their workplaces while the jobless do something for a living. Both do it for a morsel of food. As most people look for fast food at cheaper prices it comes as a morsel of hope for the roadside vendors. They sell cakes, boiled eggs, chanachur and many such items just to feed the hungry mouths at home.



Numerous posters have been pasted by different coaching centres on roadside trees in front of a college in Mirpur. The posters try to lure the parents into sending their wards to those coaching centres for admission in reputed schools and colleges.

Licence hassles at post offices

CITY CORRESPONDENT

His fingers lingered on the computer keyboard like an elementary student getting his first lessons on a computer. Too bad, he is no elementary student. And too bad for the sixteen odd people queued before him to deposit the charges for driving licences and other car related documents at the Sub Post Office in Mirpur 2.

With each tapping noise he made with his fingers amid the awkward pauses, the queue of people expectantly tilted their heads forward hoping that the line would move forward.

But it did not. And when the queue finally did move, it took an agonizingly long time.

"I have been standing in the queue since 10:00am. And now it is 12:30pm," said Mahbulul Alam, a resident of Mirpur who was waiting with his car licence.

"I have been on this spot for over half an hour now. Anyone barely moved in the meantime. I almost feel like my legs have grown roots," he said, "what on earth is he [the clerk] doing in there! Why is the queue not moving forward?"

It was not before 1:30pm when a sweaty, visibly tired Alam finally came out of the post office.

There were only about 14 people in the queue when

I came here in the morning. Who would have thought it would take over three hours to get the job done! At least I did not," he said. "It is not a very complicated process either that it would require so much time."

According to the postmaster, there is only one computer and one clerk to process the documents

documents in exchange for bribe and hands it over to the counter for fast processing.

"The main reason we have to wait so long is because the clerk at the counter receives only one document from the people in the queue and probably two from people who are not even standing in the

1:00pm and found the counter empty. After waiting for some time, she finally came in and told me that I have to get a seal on my letter before coming back to her registration counter," he said.

"I had to linger around to get an envelope, get the letter signed and sealed in three separate counters.

And I had to wait for over an hour to get the job done as the clerks were out for lunch," said a visibly annoyed Hossain.

Moshiur Hossain, another client who came to post a letter alleged that he had to wait well over 20 minutes to get an envelope.

"I asked the person at the counter for an envelope and then suddenly found she was not there. It was over twenty minutes later when she finally came back and handed me an envelope," he said.

"The post offices are possibly the best examples of procrastination in providing services at government offices," he said. "I myself am a government employee. And I would never make a client wait while I enjoy my lunch."

"If I see a colleague out somewhere and see people waiting for him, I would do my best to help the client in the absence of my colleague. This is common etiquette, and these people seem to lack that," he added.

According to the postmaster, all the post offices in the city would soon be digitalised and computers would take over manual methods. This would speed up the job at post offices.

"It is only a matter of a few months when computers will be brought in to smoothen all the processes," said the postmaster.



and receive money for licence and car tax related jobs.

"We lack manpower and logistics. If we had another computer in this booth, things would have been much more smoother. The customers would benefit greatly," he said.

Some of the payees waiting in the long queue alleged that a peon takes

line," said Sazzad Hossain, who came to pay the licence charges.

However, the post office authorities denied the allegation.

Shahrier Hossain, another Mirpur resident told this correspondent that he has been waiting for around an hour to get his letter registered.

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