



Binge-shopping at BONGO



If there's one thing winter absolutely always promises, it's that it's the only season when you can blend the dapper look with street swag. Winter clothes exude style, be it a simple jacket, a sweater vest or a turtle-neck, this climate is perfect for the fashionista. A Dhaka dweller perhaps reaps the most from this, as the capital is

THE first stop for almost all Dhakaites during winter is Bongo Bazaar. Since its establishment in 1989, Bongo Bazaar, a cluster of shops that make up the market, has been the place to shop for clothes. Despite the increasing number of malls and branded shops, Bongo Bazaar has still managed to not only hold on to but augment its clientele.

Bongo Bazaar's attraction remains its unbeatable prices, a feature of most wholesalers and that's exactly how Bongo Bazaar works. It's a wholesale market of sorts, supplying most of the clothing and accessory shops of Bangladesh.

"We generally sell and supply three kinds of garments. One are the export quality garments that are rejected for slight defects, some are produced for the local market whilst a third we import from China, India, Thailand and other countries," explains Mamun, a shop keeper at Bongo.

While that may seem simplistic on the surface, Mamun explains that a lot more goes on in bringing the clothes, especially the famous export-quality ones, from the factory to the market place. The export-quality clothes, as stated before, are defective in nature. Slight mistakes in sewing or stitching, barely decipherable to the naked eye, make up the majority of the defects. However, once there is a mistake, the item is no longer exportable and instead of being tossed out, the defective lots are then auctioned off or sold in advance.

These lots then make their way to Bongo Bazaar. From here, the best of the rejects, those with hardly a blemish, are then brought out by local shop-keepers who sell them again at the many malls for a mark-up. So, a jacket that costs around Tk. 350

in Bongo Bazaar will set you back around three times than someplace else.

Price apart, another added bonus of shopping at Bongo is the availability of options. If you scour the shops thronging the alleys that make up the market long enough, you will find quite a few steals. Original H&Ms, Nike, Reebok, Polo Sport, Tommy Hilfiger, among others can all be found for less than half their actual worth. These also come fully branded, with original tags and everything. However, they are a rarity and thus one should not expect to strike gold at the very first go.

Even the clothes without any name brand aren't easy to write off. Almost every shop will have one thing you just will believe you must have. Be it the latest fashion or something you cannot find elsewhere such as long coats, Bongo Bazaar will usually have it all. The branded clothes usually start from Tk. 500, with more priced above a Tk. 1000 but haggling is encouraged. Other things such as jackets, sweaters, matching sets of jackets and trousers, vests and even blazers are all available. Bongo Bazaar is probably also the only place to offer overcoats and XL-sized jackets, sweaters, T-shirts and the like.

There are however a few pitfalls to avoid while shopping in Bongo. As mentioned, due to the export of clothes from China and Thailand, you will also find your fair-share of brand-name knock-offs. These garments appear to be original in every way, right down to the use of tags, but there is a difference in the fabric and also the quality. Mixed with rejected originals, it's hard to know which is the original and which is a fake.

Another problem that is being seen recently is that clothes

cannot always be found according to season. Retailers, especially those around College Gate and New Market usually purchase the good quality materials early on and by December few options may remain. It's thus prudent to shop a bit early.

One can also opt to visit College Gate instead of Bongo Bazaar, where a more trimmed down, better selection is on offer. However, the prices aren't the same and neither is the atmosphere.

If you haven't visited Bongo Bazaar yet, then put it in your bucket-list for this winter. Even if you think you don't need anything new to wear, you are guaranteed to find something you'd love to have in Bongo. Pop over for a visit and dress yourself in the latest fashion before the rest of the pack.

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PHOTO: **SHAHREAR KABIR HEEMEL**
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WARDROBE **EMI: DOORS**
WARDROBE NAHID: DOORS AND LE REVE
MAKE-UP: **FARZANA SHAKIL**

