

The bustling Chawk Bazaar

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Did you know that Chawk Bazaar was previously called Badshahi Bazaar? And did you know that even in Mughal times the area was a busy business hub of Dhaka? And that it was a bustling social centre, too? From glorious histories to neglected legacies to being a significant commercial centre to boasting an interesting food scene, what actually makes Chawk Bazaar, Chawk Bazaar?

How does one define the Chawk? What is Chawk Bazaar in a nutshell? To find out, one ought to explore its streets!

The roads are excruciatingly chaotic - labourers carrying loads of various goods over their head, rickshaws caught in the traffic, a 'bhel-puri wala' on the side of the road, a very tall minaret watching over the 'mohollah'.

And on both sides of the roads are shops; markets selling all kinds of goods: chocolates and show-pieces and toys and perfumes and cosmetics and sports items. The Chawk is a wholesale market, and it supplies this wide array of products to many places in the whole city. If you are planning on buying in bulk, this is where you can get some lucrative deals.

Chawk Bazaar was once a social hub as well. It was, according to SM Taifoor's Glimpses of Old Dhaka (published in the mid-twentieth century), "... the meeting ground of great ulema who gave their lectures...", and it was also where people "... discussed possible and impossible stories of the courts and harems..."

Chawk Bazaar is home to



Streets of DHAKA

PHOTO: TOUKIR AHMED TANVEE

Nurani Cold Drink, which has been in business for more than half a century, tirelessly serving lassi and lemonade from morning till midnight. They break and chop ice with a large hammer. They toss lassi, during its preparation, from one cup to another with an almost mathematical precision that has been perfected over decades. And locals drop by every now and then - a short break for a much-needed rejuvenation which Nurani's lassi and lemonade always bring.

The area is also famous for hosting the age-old iftar bazaar during Ramadan, along with many other street food and bakeries.

Walking on one of the roads will take you to a very old and grand structure. It is among the remaining vestiges of the Boro Katra, which was once a caravanserai, an inn for travellers. Built by Bengal's

Subahdar Prince Shah Shuja (son of Emperor Shah Jahan) in 1644, the building is a very important Mughal monument of Dhaka. Go inside the Boro Katra to explore it further: thick walls and a labyrinth of narrow corridors and high steps in the staircases. Boro Katra is soaked with antiquity.

So, what really defines Chawk Bazaar? What is Chawk Bazaar all about? It is about its age-old stories and edifices, its status as a commercial hub, its food scene. But I reckon it is about the crowd, the people, the endless conversations, and the whirlwind of chaos and confusion which run in its streets. Isn't it what Chawk Bazaar - and the streets of Dhaka at large - is all about?

To watch the video series of 'Streets of Dhaka', log on to Star Live, the official YouTube channel of The Daily Star.

First flamingo in Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 20
marauders in our wetlands!

Then when spring came, a bird-watcher photographed a flamingo in Moheshkhali island of Cox's Bazar. We saw the lovely image of a flamingo feeding on the muddy bank of Kohelia Channel in Matarbari, once known as a noteworthy bird-habitat.

Maybe, this single bird is the lone survivor of the flock seen in Jamuna or the one who travelled alone for the first time in Bangladesh. Perhaps, it is a young bird that in autumn left Chilika Lake, the breeding ground of Greater Flamingo in Odisha, and has been exploring new feeding ground here. We know that the newly fledged chicks of many species of birds disperse far

and wide seeking new foraging territories.

Although the Greater Flamingo has been living in Gujarat, Rajasthan and Odisha, it had never been seen in Bangladesh. In 1967, Prof Haruner Rashid speculated the occurrence of Greater Flamingo in East Pakistan, and following his lead the Ripley Guide in 1982 named Bangladesh as a country where that species could occur. The speculations finally came true in December last year, albeit in an unfortunate circumstance.

Flamingo is a very strange bird in many ways. It stands five feet tall but weighs only three kilograms on average. Like pigeons, it feeds crop-milk to its chicks. Its white feathers turn pink to crimson-red when it

feeds on the right algae and plankton. It has a long life of up to 30 years. It lives in large flocks, and may die young in zoo if not kept in a flock of 20 or more. There are only six species of flamingos in the world with a single species -- Greater Flamingo -- in the two continents of Asia and Europe. Besides, Africa has a second species of flamingo. The Americas have four species, but Australia has none.

The hunters did not know that the bird they killed was of high status, as it is rarely seen. To them our advice is: if you don't know a bird, don't shoot it. Take its photos, which may make you famous. Killing birds is outlawed in Bangladesh and may also land you in jail sooner or later.

Struggling still

FROM PAGE 1

nation by setting fire to a number of motor vehicles, hundreds of roadside shops and other private and public establishments and by uprooting and damaging a huge number of trees on medians of the capital, especially in Motijheel and its vicinity.

In a quick response, the government within a month after the incident gave Tk 50,000 to each of the 200 small traders who had shops on footpaths around the mosque.

"Without the help we would not have survived at the time. Book publishers also gave us time to pay back the money for the books that had been burnt. They also supported us by giving new books to start our business all over again."

Like Nurul, other traders and their businesses are yet to recover fully from the economic setback.

Talking to The Daily Star, more than a dozen victims of the mayhem expressed frustration over the fact that



the culprits had not been identified and brought to book.

They said an extensive investigation should be carried out to bring those, whom they call "the enemy of the people and the nation", under trial and hold them responsible for compensating the victims.

"We want the culprits whether they are from Hefajat or any other party to be brought to book through a proper investigation," said Nurul who sells books on Islam on the footpath in front of the south-gate of the national mosque.

Abdul Majid, of Comilla, who also sells Islamic books, Abdullah, of

Shyamoli, who sells old books, and Zahid Khan and Mohammed Liton, who sell toys on the footpaths near the mosque, echoed Nurul's view.

Abdullah looked deeply concerned while seated before his shop. He has been struggling hard to maintain expenses of his two children's education and repayments for the loans he took before and after the incident.

"What was our fault that our businesses we so depend on for living hand-to-mouth were destroyed?" said an angry Abdullah.

Zahid said he had taken a loan of Tk 50,000 from an NGO to restart his business that suffered more than Tk 1 lakh loss.

"We couldn't overcome our losses. We are still suffering," he said.

Meanwhile, Liton has still been giving installments for Tk 1 lakh loan taken from his relatives.

He said many people left their conventional businesses failing to bear the loss.

Big fall in pass rate

FROM PAGE 1

Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said while announcing the results at a press conference at his ministry.

For the first time, he said, the government this year has introduced a new method of checking answer scripts in the SSC exams. The method is called "standardisation of answer scripts", he said.

The step was taken following a research conducted by the Bangladesh Examination Development Unit (BEDU) on the existing answer evaluating system, he said, adding that they had been working for the last three years to develop a standard for evaluating the scripts.

"Therefore, we were ready to accept such results as we knew that the measure would have an impact on the overall results," Nahid added.

Termining the previous evaluating system "very faulty", the minister claimed that previously, the scripts were not checked properly as "many of the teachers used to give away marks taking the number of pages [of answers] into consideration".

"What has been the usual practice for years is that the listed examiners from the boards would first collect the scripts, then check them and finally return them to the boards. There was no monitoring mechanism or any specific rule on checking the scripts."

The research of BEDU, a part of the Dhaka education board, found out that different examiners were giving different marks to answers written exactly in the same way.

"Some students got poor marks even after writing well while some got good grades despite performing bad," Nahid said.

As part of the new evaluation method, the government trained chief examiners, who later trained other examiners following a guideline.

The chief examiners along with other teachers set model answers to the SSC questions and forwarded them to the examiners. "The examiners checked the answer scripts thinking that the model answers were the standard answers."

Previously, the head examiners did not check the scripts rather they used to give a report on it, but the new method ensures that the examiners would go through the scripts as well, he said, adding all those measures were taken in consultation with academicians.

"We are considering our three-year effort positively. Now the students will be more serious about their studies. The teachers will also be more sincere about teaching and grading answer scripts. Now, we will be able to get the real picture."

Asked who was responsible for the previous "faulty evaluating system", Nahid blamed "the previous method of evaluation" for that.

"No one had ever thought about reforming the evaluating method. We have done this following research of three years."

DEBACLE IN COMILLA BOARD

A deep fall in the pass rate due to students' poor performance in English and Mathematics has pushed down the

overall pass rate in Comilla board this year.

With only 59.03 percent examinees coming out successful, the board is at the bottom of the list of boards with highest success rate.

Contacted, Prof Abdul Khaleque, chairman of the board, said students' performance in the two subjects was extremely poor and that put a negative impact on the overall results.

Of the total 1,82,979 students taking part in the exams, 19 percent students flunked the Mathematics exam while 14 percent the English test, he said.

"Besides, the performance of the students from the humanities group has also been quite poor this year," he told The Daily Star. Only 41.14 percent of the students from that group passed the exams.

"I have already asked my officials to look into the institutions that underperformed," Prof Khaleque added.

Analysing the overall results, it was found that students in all the education boards have done poorly in Mathematics. The average pass rate in the subject came down by 3.84 percent-

flashing V-sign. A feeling of sheer happiness was writ large on their faces.

"I am extremely happy as my hard work has paid off. I would also like to give all the credits to my teachers and parents," said Humayara, a student of the capital's Viqarunnisa Noon School and College. She got GPA-5.

More than 17,81,962 students -- 9,10,373 boys and 8,71,589 girls -- from 28,359 institutions across the country took this year's SSC and its equivalent examinations under the 10 boards. Of them 14,31,722 students passed the tests that began on February 2.

Of the 437 Bangladeshi students who sat for the tests under eight foreign centres, 412 passed, making the pass rate 94.28. A total of 112 of them got GPA-5.

This year, some 2,266 institutions saw a cent percent pass rate. No students passed from 93 institutions and 82 of them were madrasas.

Like the previous year, Rajshahi board topped the charts in terms of success rate with 90.70 percent.

Such successes, however, lead to a concern for many students as they now would have to face stiff competition to

BOARD	PASS RATE 2017	PASS RATE 2016	GPA-5 2017	GPA-5 2016
Dhaka	86.39	88.67	49481	40,833
Rajshahi	90.70	95.70	17349	17,594
Comilla	59.03	84.00	4450	6,954
Jessore	80.04	91.85	6460	9,444
Chittagong	83.99	90.44	8344	7,666
Barisal	77.24	79.41	2288	3,113
Sylhet	80.26	84.77	2663	2,266
Dinajpur	83.98	89.59	6929	8,899
Total	81.21	88.70	97,964	96,769

age points from last year, shows data provided by the boards.

MADRASA AND TECHNICAL BOARDS

Madrasa and technical boards have seen a drop in this year's success rate as well as in the number of GPA-5 achievers.

The pass rate in Madrasa board came down to 76.20 percent from last year's 88.22 percent. A total 2,610 students secured GPA-5 this year. The number was 5,895 last year.

Some 1.93 lakh out of 2.53 lakh came out successful in Dakhil examinations.

In Technical board, 106,239 students took part in SSC (vocational) and Dakhil (vocational) exams. The pass rate is 78.69 percent against last year's 83.11 percent. A total of 4,187 students got GPA-5 this year. Some 7,097 got the highest grade last year.

JUBILATIONS

Schools across the country wore a festive look ahead of the results yesterday. Students and their parents, who had been on their nerves for some time, erupted in jubilation as soon as they received the results.

Some danced while some took selfies

get enrolled in good colleges.

GIRLS DID BETTER

Like in last year's Higher Secondary Certificate exams, girls have fared better than boys in the SSC exams. The pass rate of the girls is 0.85 percentage points higher than that of the boys in all the 10 educational boards.

"This is a very good sign for the society," Nahid said.

The pass rates of the girls and the boys are 80.78 and 79.93 percent.

However, in terms of GPA-5, the girls lagged behind boys. A total of 53,488 boys and 51,273 girls secured the highest grade.

SCIENCE STUDENTS LEAD

As usual, students from the science group in the eight general education boards fared the best with a pass rate of 93.35 percent, followed by 80.21 percent from the business studies and 73.38 percent from the humanities groups.

"Several years ago, the number of students studying science was declining, which was alarming," Nahid said, adding "positive results came after the government took some measures in this regard."

THE WAY THINGS WERE THEN

Hefajat-e-Islam placed its 13-point demand from a rally in the capital on April 6, 2013. Later on, the law ministry came up with its opinion on the demands. In its opinion, the minister said six out of the 13 demands went against the constitution and added that the remaining seven were well covered by the existing laws.



HEFAJAT'S DEMAND	LAW MINISTRY'S OPINION
1 Reinstatement of the phrase "absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah" in the constitution as one of the fundamental principles of state policy.	The demand goes against the basic spirit of the constitution; therefore, there is no constitutional obligation to meet it.
2 Enact a law with provision for capital punishment for maligning Allah, Islam and Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and launching smear campaigns against Muslims.	The existing law was adequate to ensure punishment for this offence. Only one or two Muslim countries have such legal provisions.
3 Stop all propaganda and "derogatory comments" about Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) by the "atheist leaders" of the Shahbagh movement, bloggers and other anti-Islamists; arrest them and ensure their stern punishment.	Such offences could be well taken care of with the existing laws.
4 Stop attacking, shooting, killing, genocide and persecuting the Prophet-loving Islamic scholars, madrasa students and people united by the belief in Allah.	There was no incident of genocide.
5 Release all arrested Islamic scholars and madrasa students.	Those arrested during recent violence [in 2013] were not Islam-loving people rather the law enforcers held them on specific allegations of breaking the law.
6 Lift restrictions on mosques and remove obstacles to the holding of religious programmes.	Certain disciplinary measures were taken against the backdrop of recent "unpleasant" incidents at Baitul Mukarram mosque.
7 Declare "Qadianis" non-Muslim and call a halt to their publicity and conspiracies.	Referring to Articles-28, 41 and 44 of the constitution, the ministry said the constitution leaves no room to meet Hefajat's demand for declaring "Qadiani" people non-Muslims.
8 Stop foreign cultural intrusions including free-mingling of men and women and candlelit vigils, and put an end to adultery, injustice, shamelessness, etc. in the name of freedom of expression and conscience.	The demand goes against the constitution. Freedom of individual and speech, and free-mingling of men and women are recognised in the constitution as fundamental rights. Enactment of any law curtailing fundamental rights would be against Articles-7 and -26 of the constitution and would become void. If such laws were enacted, hundreds of thousands of female workers would be unemployed, severely hampering national development. Co-education in schools, colleges and universities would have to be dissolved, which would hamper women empowerment and would be against the spirit of the constitution.
9 Stop turning Dhaka, the city of mosques, into a city of idols, and stop setting up sculptures at intersections, colleges and universities.	It was the constitutional duty of the state to prevent disfigurement, damage or removal of all monuments, objects, and places and objects of special artistic interest or of historical importance. The country would be isolated in the international arena if Bangladesh, a partner of various UN conventions on cultural heritage and also Unesco activities, accepts Hefajat's demand and stops setting up sculptures at intersections, colleges and universities.
10 Scrap anti-Islam women policy and education policy and make Islamic education mandatory from primary to higher secondary levels.	There was no reason or scope to scrap the women development policy and education policy as the policies were formulated as per constitutional provisions and the mandate of the United Nations. The women policy is not against Islam and the issue of religious education was included in the education policy.
11 Stop threatening and intimidating teachers and students of Qawmi madrasas, Islamic scholars, imams and khatibs.	Law ministry found no specific allegation in this regard and the government did not receive any such allegations.
12 Stop propagating hatred among the younger generation of Muslims by misrepresentation of Islamic culture in the media.	Law ministry observed that it was a punishable offence under existing laws if any religious sentiments were deliberately misrepresented in cinemas and plays.
13 Stop anti-Islam activities by NGOs, evil attempts by Qadianis and conversions by Christian missionaries in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and elsewhere in the country.	The law ministry referred to Article-41 of the constitution that gives freedom of preaching and practicing any religion. It further clarified that hurting religious sentiments of others was punishable under existing laws.

HAORS' DYKE WOES

WDB officials admit neglect, irregularities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) officials admitted negligence and irregularities in the construction and maintenance of embankments in Sunamganj haor that eroded in early flash floods about a year ago, the ACC DG claimed yesterday.



Syed Sheikhul Arafen (Janu) dies at 56, Qui today Friday, May 5, 2017, Baad-Asr at Gulshan Azad Mosque.

Mr. Arafen, son of Late Mr. Syed Ashrafuddin Ahmed & Mrs. Khursid-ara Ahmed, passed away at the United Hospital in the early hours of 2nd May, 2017. After a well attended Janaza he was laid to rest in the Banani graveyard.

A well established businessman and a member of the Executive committee of Dhaka Club for many years. He leaves behind four sisters, three brothers and many well-wishers to mourn his death. He will be sorely missed yet will continue to live in the hearts forever.