



PHOTO: PIYAS BISWAS

## MANOBOTAR DEYAL A HUMANE INITIATIVE BY LALBAGH SPORTING CLUB

JABIR MISBAH

Manobotar Deyal is an innovative humanitarian activity that has sparked curiosity all over the country. As the name suggests, it is a wall where people can donate their extra clothes for anyone to take without having to pay a single dime. However, at the Manobotar Deyal established by Lalbagh Sporting Club, not only do people give away their old clothes, but a whole collection of new dresses are also available for the taking.

The club began this project in November 2017. Since then, they have given away clothes to over 3,000 people, averaging about 80-100 clothes per day. "We are always looking forward to doing unique activities and when we saw that this is something that can help the deprived, we wanted to do it right away," says Asadur Rahman Ripon, the club executive. The project is a

direct initiative of one of the many organisations of the club, named Dhakaiya Oikko. Asad Ashraf, a member of the club, came up with the idea from a post he had seen on Facebook of a similar practice in Netrokona and informed his seniors right away, to which the club responded positively. The buildup cost of the wall and the maintenance of the project, are maintained by the financial support of the club's members and the gracious reception of the locals.

"*Diye gorbo noy, nitey lojia noy, ebhabo hobe manobotar joy*" - Tajuddin Taj, a working member of Lalbagh Sporting Club came up with this slogan for the wall, emphasising on the point that people are too shy to avail the services of this initiative. But with proper approach from the club, this is a problem that has already been solved. A club member is always active around the place and keeps an eye out for people who are looking at the

wall, he then moves forward to talk to the person, invites them over and tells them to take whatever they need. Some are too shy to take things in front of other people, so the club member calls them into the clubhouse and lets them take the free clothes in privacy.

The winter season has been phenomenal for the project, as every day after 10 pm, it is a common scene to see a rickshaw puller in worn out clothes coming up to the wall in search of cold friendly attire, and his search is met with a warm smile from the club's members. Ripon shared a story of how a veiled woman who couldn't read was staring at the wall for a very long time and when he went up to her and explained the concept, tears welled up in the woman's eyes as she told them of her hardship in winter for not having enough warm clothes.

Dhakaiya Oikko has marketed the project

at a very minimal level, as they believe that word of mouth is the biggest tool for such humanitarian activities. They got popular based on their spirit and the few Facebook posts made by the club. Despite the minimum marketing effort, their initiative has had a splendid reception, as within the space of a month, Lalbagh Sporting Club inspired the building up of two other Manobotar Deyal in Bhater Mashjid and Khaje Dewan areas of Old Town.

Locally and even internationally, they have caused quite a stir. Ripon has received calls from Bangladeshis residing in Montreal and Malaysia, speaking of their support for the project. The club has also been contacted by different places all over the country. Many have called wanting to share their support or wanting to know how to make up a Manobotar Deyal of their own, and the club has reached out to these help seekers

promptly. Students from Jahangirnagar University have been in frequent touch with the club as they are targeting to make a wall at their campus very soon.

"Lalbagh Sporting Club is very passionate towards their project and it is an amazing sight to see people getting help from it," says Yacob, a nearby shop owner. "The club keeps the clothes ironed and lays them out at 6 in the morning and keeps them till midnight for anyone to take." This act of humanity is not only limited to the locals, as people as far as Gazipur, Uttara and Savar have sent over clothes through courier services.

"Since it has very little cost to bear and brings a huge smile to our faces, we plan to continue this as long as we can and we hope to inspire the country in building up more hubs of Manobotar Deyal to help the poor and destitute," informs Ripon.

## The four wheeled school



PHOTO: PIYAS BISWAS

SADIA TAHSIN

Bhrammoman School, as the name suggests in Bangla, is a mini mobile school, built inside a bus that accommodates underprivileged children, making education accessible to them. The main idea behind introducing this unique method of education, initiated by Akij Foundation, is to carry a school to children who are unable to attend an institution. The interior of the bus is designed by Dr Jamalun Nessa, Professor, Department of Microbiology, University of Dhaka. The bus is equipped with a wide range of classroom necessities, starting from white boards and fans to colourful, educational charts and posters.

In February 2014, Akij Foundation introduced Bonoful, a programme to make education accessible to the underprivileged community of the nation. The



main campus of Bonoful is in Uttara, and the bus is an extension of the programme. Two young adults conduct lectures at Bhrammoman School, where students also spend time drawing pictures and having snacks.

Back when it started, the bus covered two areas, Kamalpara and Mirpur Diabari, whereas at present, they cover Eastern Housing, Mirpur Beribadh and Pakuria, Uttara. The foundation has now set up an actual campus at Mirpur

Diabari, given the high number of students in that area. The students of the Bhrammoman School are often taken to the main campus to spend some time inside a real school and have day-long activities that include football matches, poetry recitation competitions, handwriting contests and many other activities.

Bonoful follows the national Bangla curriculum, in both the main campus and Bhrammoman School. Moreover, they provide the children with special materials for English, Bangla and Mathematics courses. Having started their journey in 2014, Bonoful's first batch of students will be taking their PSC exams in 2019. Nazmul Hossain, coordinator of the Akij Foundation School and College, informs that they plan to train the students with technical skills in order to prepare and shape them for their future.



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