

An exercise in honesty

Bidyanoondo runs stall without salesmen

SAYYED MOHMUD ULLAH

There are over 700 stalls and pavilions at this year's Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela, and there are salespersons in all of them... except for one.

To buy a book there, one has to look at the price list hung on the wall, slip the price of the book into a box, pick up the book and walk out.

While there have been similar initiatives in a small scale in other places of the country, this is the first for the book fair, which was set up by a nonprofit named "Bidyanoondo" (Learn for Fun) on the Bangla Academy premises of the fair. The stall has been installed at the northern edge of the academy's pond.

"Honesty is the key to success of the stall, and earning money from here will be used in the 'Ek Taka-e Ahar' (Bidyanoondo's charitable feeding programme at a token cost of Tk 1) service for underprivileged children in different parts of the country," said Aunonto Arfat, who was seen stocking books at the stall, at around 3pm when fair opens on weekdays.

He said they set up the "honesty stall" for the first time at the book fair this year; they had a conventional book stall in the last year.

The stall, named "Ek Taka-e Ahar", has its books on shelves. Two cutouts of children are seen holding a placard that reads "The money from sales at the stall will be spent in

feeding us. Please pay the price of the books in the box", while another notice at the stall says "A stall without salespersons", to eliminate visitors' confusion.

The stall has turned a few heads, with a large crowd seen gathered around it yesterday.

"I have paid Tk 176 into the box for a book on ethnic communities named 'Mro Rupkotha'. I am happy to know that food for underprivileged children will be provided with my money," said Aanika Tahsin, a third-year student at Dhaka University.

Stall volunteer Arfat left the stall soon after the opening, but visitors at the fair were seen buying books without much of a problem.

Arfat later shared some activities of Bidyanoondo to The Daily Star over phone.

"Since the inception on December 22, 2013, we have been working relentlessly to bring a sustainable transformation in our society, especially by helping underprivileged children with food and basic education in urban areas," he said.

Arfat said these children are not begging or stealing food from anywhere. Rather, they are buying their own food, maintaining a good order. And, the price of the lunch box is only Tk 1.

When asked if he had seen anyone taking a book without paying, he smiled and said, "No, that hasn't happened yet."



A buyer takes out money to pay for a book in a designated box at Bidyanoondo's "stall with no salesmen". Inset, A message on a placard asking customers to pay on their own.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

ROHINGYA REPATRIATION

Four senior MPs demand all-party House committee

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four senior MPs of the ruling alliance last night proposed formation of an all-party parliamentary committee to work out a solution to the Rohingya crisis and repatriate them to their country.

They also suggested the Speaker to fix a day for discussion on the burning issue in parliament.

Speaking on point of order, Awami League MP Mohammad Nasim, Workers' Party President Rashed Khan Menon, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haq Inu and Bangladesh Tarikat Federation Chairman Syed Nazibul Bashar Majibhandari came up with the proposal.

Nasim first raised the issue saying the problem has not been solved, although different foreign leaders are visiting Bangladesh and giving assurances, while only three Rohingyas have so far returned to their country.

"As the parliament session is going on, honourable Speaker, please fix a day for discussion on the Rohingya problem so that lawmakers from all parties can discuss ways to solve the problem," he said.

Nasim, also a presidium member of AL, said an all-party parliamentary body can be formed if necessary and they can visit India, China and Myanmar to take necessary measures to resolve the crisis.

Inu said it is necessary to inform the country's people and the international community about the views of the MPs of 11th parliament on the Rohingya issue.

Menon raised the question about the justification of the bilateral agreement signed between Bangladesh and Myanmar over sending Rohingyas to their homeland.

Majibhandari also proposed the formation of an all-party body on how to resolve the Rohingya crisis.

China biggest investor in 5yrs

State minister for foreign affairs places BIDA statistics at JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh received more than US\$ 28 billion from 45 countries in the last five years with China investing the highest amount of US\$ 8.1 billion.

In reply to a question by ruling Awami League lawmaker Israfil Alam from Naogaon-6 at Jatiya Sangsad, State Minister for Foreign Affairs M Shahriar Alam placed the statistics prepared by Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA).

According to the statistics, the top 10 countries in terms of investment size are: China (US\$ 8.1 billion), UAE (US\$ 7.8 billion), Saudi Arabia (US\$ 2.4 billion), Singapore (US\$ 2.2 billion), the UK (US\$ 1.9 billion), the Netherlands (US\$ 1.7 billion), the USA (US\$ 1.2 billion), India (US\$ 976 million),

Thailand (US\$ 637 million) and Japan (US\$ 384 million).

The state minister also said the country's diplomatic missions are maintaining good relations with various organisations, multinational companies alongside governments to increase foreign investment.

Besides, efforts are on to sign various investment and trade deals with more countries, he said.

PRISONERS TO GET PHONE CALL OPPORTUNITY

Meanwhile, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan told the parliament that the government has initiated a project to allow prisoners to talk to their relatives over the phone.

However, militants, top terrors and prisoners of sensational cases will be excluded from the facility, he said.

The minister also informed the House that the prisoners' conversations will be monitored and recorded as per a guideline.

A pilot project was launched in Tangail jail earlier, said Asaduzzaman.

The minister was replying to a query by treasury bench member Didarul Alam from Chattogram-4.

Responding to another question by Awami League MP M Abdul Latif from Chattogram-11, the minister said a total of 1.21 lakh drug related cases were filed against 1.63 lakh people in 2018.

He further informed the House that a total of 6.91 crore yaba tablets, 449kg of heroin, 60,342kg of hemp, 7.18 lakh bottles of phensedyl were recovered during anti-drug drives last year.

Hospitals don't care for terminal patients

Says expert about palliative care

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Neither government nor private hospitals show interest in providing treatment to patients whose sicknesses have reached an incurable stage; rather, the hospitals prefer patients who need expensive treatment, like surgery and dialysis, a senior physician observed yesterday.

Prof Nezamuddin Ahmed, chairman of palliative medicine department at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), made the remarks while speaking at a roundtable at the capital's CA Bhaban.

The discussion on "Creating awareness on palliative care" was organised by Bangla daily Prothom Alo and AYAT Education, a non-government organisation, working on health issues.

Prof Nezamuddin said treatment and humane care are needed simultaneously for severely ill people, and palliative care -- a specialised medical care for terminally ill patients -- is the right solution in this regard.

"Such 'death-denying' mindset has to be changed through extending palliative care services. We have to engage youths in this sector to bring the change," he added.

He also demanded that the government establish a

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DRUG DEALING

Stern action against cops involved: IGP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Inspector General of Police Mohammad Javed Patwary yesterday said stern action will be taken if any member of police is found involved in illicit drugs business.

He also said his objective is to turn police stations into centres of services for people across the country.

The IGP made the remarks while addressing an award ceremony at Rajarbagh Police Lines on the third day of Police Week.

Some 514 police officials were awarded IGP Exemplary Good Services badge for their performance in 2018.

Police units successful in drives against arms and drugs, and best performing police personnel in a parade were also awarded.



In absence of proper waste management, residents of Dhaka's South Manda resort to dumping garbage in a pond. Inset, an earthen road in the area.

SOUTH MANDA

Deprived of basic amenities for years

MATHEWS CHIRAN

Structures of various shapes and sizes, many of which are unfinished, surround a pond, filled with murky black water.

The waterbody is also covered by aquatic plants, and has become a waste-dumping hotspot for locals. In addition, human excreta are being directly discharged into the pond through pipes from the surrounding residences, where around 500 families reside.

This is not a scenario of a remote or rural area in the country. The area is part of Dhaka, known as South Manda under Mugda Police Station, home to around 6,000 people.

According to the residents, once the pond's owner decides to fill it up, they will start looking for a new waterbody to dispose of waste.

This is how more than 2,000 families in the area have been taking care of their waste management issues for more than four years.

Moreover, most of the narrow roads in the area are not carpeted or suitable for

traffic movement and pedestrians' use.

Deprived of basic civic amenities, residents are resorting to pollution, and constructing narrow and uneven earthen roads on their own.

Most of the area used to be under water. It started developing back in 2010, according to locals.

"Our area became a part of Dhaka South City Corporation one year ago. Still, we are being deprived of our basic needs," said Mohammad Ali, a homeowner who has been living there since 2014.

"The roads remain muddy as water cannot recede for lack of drainage system. The situation worsens during rainy season," he added.

Ahmed Ali, president of Bait-ul-Falah Jame Mosque and Orphanage, said, "Vehicles often get stuck in mud. At times, drivers refuse to enter the area or charge exorbitant amount."

"Homeowners built the roads

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Want to complete late mayor's unfinished tasks

Says DNCC by-polls candidate Atiqul Islam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Atiqul Islam, ruling Awami League-backed mayoral candidate for Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) by-polls, yesterday vowed to ensure sustainable and automated services for city dwellers, if elected.

He said he wants to complete unfinished tasks of late mayor Anisul Huq.

Atiqul said this at a dialogue titled, "Why do I want to be the mayor?" organised by Jatiya Press Club on its premises. Presided over by Saiful Islam, president of the press club, a number of journalists and editors participated in the discussion.

The DNCC mayoral post fell vacant following the death of Anisul Huq on November 30, 2017. On January 9 last year, the EC had declared the schedule of the DNCC by-polls and elections to the new

wards, setting February 26 for voting.

The polls were not held as the High Court stayed the election schedule for six months. On January 16 this year, the HC cleared the way for holding the polls.

At yesterday's discussion, Atiqul said, "Dhaka is for all of us... we have to work together... we have to complete the late mayor's unfinished works... for a liveable Dhaka."

It is high time to recover occupied playgrounds, rivers and canals for the sake of future generations, he said.

"The ongoing eviction drive [on Buriganga] is a signal. Not just eviction drives, we have to bring about a sustainable solution. We have to rehabilitate street vendors too," he added.

Atiqul stressed on adopting automation

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SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Govt couldn't follow HC guideline: Reazul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Human Rights Commission Chairman Kazi Reazul Hoque yesterday said finding a way to stop sexual harassment against women is now a call of time, as the government did not comply accordingly with the High Court guidelines to this end.

The HC directive is to follow the guidelines until a specific legislation is enacted, he told a consultation meeting organised by NHRC in association with UNDP's Human Rights Programme, on "Combating Sexual Harassment and Way Forward" at the capital's Cirdap.

Although the government issued a circular to implement the guidelines, which were for educational institutions and workplaces, the reality is that not much monitoring has been done to this end, Reazul said.

Among the directive was to form committees and to oversee how much they could do to stop harassment, he said.

"These issues did not come to light accordingly," he said, adding that perhaps the monitoring was not satisfactory

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