



Bongo Bazar: A tapestry of trade, tradition, and transformation

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However, hard times create smart individuals. There are many vendors who had the foresight to branch their businesses out online and they have been able to navigate the situation better than most, regardless of the size of their business or the category of their products. Sadly, such cases are few. "Some of my friends have shifted their focus to selling their products online but I don't know how to operate social media well enough to use it to my advantage," regrets Jamal, who admitted to never having the need to learn the nuances of social media because his business was booming till now. There are many individuals just like him who have found themselves at cross roads and don't know what to do.

Even the translators have been affected by the declining business, as Rabea recalls, "We were 30, but now only 6 of us remain. A lot of us were forced to look for other work opportunities. Some of us decided to go back to the village because we were struggling to make ends meet. I know



things will get better. Sadly, most of us don't have the luxury to sit and wait."

WEATHERING THE STORM

Even though the situation is getting dire with each passing day, the spirits of the various vendors remain unbroken, as they soldier on through yet another journey of rebuilding. This is perhaps one of the only places in Dhaka where you will find hundreds of families who have dedicated years and generations to building their businesses. They made Bongo Bazar and vice versa. They have gotten back up from under ashes before. The never-keel-over attitude has been ingrained into individuals like Jamal, Abdul, and Rabea and their willingness to persevere is testament to that.

Disclaimer: Certain individuals have been interviewed under the condition of anonymity. Therefore, their names have been omitted to protect their identities.

By Irfan Aziz
Photo: Shadab Shahrokh Hai



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