



BEYOND NILKHET Dhaka's second-hand book markets

ASHIF AHMED RUDRO

The second-hand book market is a buoyant one and there are places in Dhaka, other than Nilkhet, where your desire to buy books meets affordability. With a keen eye and some bargaining skills, it is possible to make a deal at these places.

PURANA PALTAN

The Purana Paltan book market is quite paltry in size. It's located on Topkhana Road, across the street from the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque, basking under the shade of the metro construction. The shops stand on the footpath and the feeling of congestion is very real but they make up for it with



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN



their collection.

The market is surprisingly busy for such a compact size and every person who walks by cannot help but steal a look. In the large pile of old books,

one can hardly track the title they are looking for. But setting aside their collection, the best thing about this place is how reasonable the prices are.

"I bought four books at Tk 80. The shopkeeper said to me whatever I pick, it's Tk 20 only. I got classics of Bangla literature including Kazi Nazrul Islam and Rabindranath Tagore. That's unbelievable," said an excited Tahsin Ahmed, who added that he was going to scout the market a bit more and see what else he could find.

An avid reader in his early 50s was seen buying 67 books at once! And it only cost him less than Tk 2,000. "He's a regular customer. He works at

the secretariat and likes to collect. He comes by every few weeks and always buys in such bulk," explained Md Anwar Hossain, one of the shopkeepers.

Unlike Nilkhet, this place only offers old books.

"If we start keeping new books then we will have to charge a lot more. And then there is this huge gap between the prices. The walking customers turn away when they hear high prices so we just deal in used books," added Md Anwar Hossain.

STADIUM GATE BOOK MARKET AT MIRPUR 2

Starting at Gate #5 of Sher-E-Bangla National Cricket Stadium at Mirpur,

this book market expands towards the Mirpur-10 roundabout.

Along the footpaths, the market is an alluring walk for the bookworms as here the stalls are on both sides of the walkway. The specialty of this place is that it has a large collection of academic books.

Non-academic books – both Bangla and English novels and with some luck, one can find rare books here as well. There are some new books too but the collection of used books outweighs the new books by a hefty number.

So, where do all these books come from? A young seller by the name of Md Babu says, "We have a few parties," which is another way of saying "I know a guy who knows another guy."

"Sometimes students come to sell their used books. Sometimes people return novels after they have read them. We are more than happy to buy those. But mostly we buy from the parties. There is no hard and fast rule," he elaborated.

Both of these markets start at 10:00am and keep going till 10:00pm. Seven days a week, without any holidays. If you have a list of books to buy, you can certainly achieve that but the wiser method is to start browsing with an open mind with plenty of time on your hands. If you browse long enough and can bargain properly, you can strike an amazing deal for sure.

BCL factions clash at RU

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A clash erupted between two factions of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) at Rajshahi University (RU) Saturday night.

The clash took place between supporters of RU unit BCL President Mostafizur Rahman and Suhrawardy Hall unit BCL President Niaz Morshed around 11:00pm over the use of guest room in the hall, sources at RU said.

At least five BCL men were injured in the clash, involving cocktails and brickbats, according to Mostafizur.

University Proctor Professor Ashabul Haque and Student Advisor Professor Zahangir Alam intervened around 1:00am to bring the situation under control. The clash finally subsided around 3:00am.

Mostafizur said, "We will discuss the incident with BCL central committee."

However, our university reporter could not contact with Niaz for his comment.

Professor Ashabul said, "It was an unwanted incident. The administration will investigate the matter."

Hall Provost Zahangir Hossain said, "We searched few rooms. Some broken bricks and broken chairs, tables were found."

DEFAULT LOAN

Travel ban imposed on 4 sons of ex-minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chattogram

A Chattogram court yesterday issued a travel ban against four businesspersons, also sons of former minister Nurul Islam, from leaving the country on charges of defaulting on a loan of Tk 30 crore.

Judge Muzahidur Rahman of Chattogram Money Loan Court passed the order following an application of the plaintiff in a case in this regard filed by the Uttara Bank of Chattogram's Agrabad branch on November 26, 2023.

The accused are Mujibur Rahman, managing director of Sanowara Dairy Foods Limited, and its three directors – Jahidul Islam, Kamrul Islam, and Wahidul.

Nurul Islam is an Awami League politician who served as the minister of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment.

Failures stifle successes

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ruling Awami League, pledged in their manifestos to rid the city of mosquitoes.

Atiql's other promises included making the northern part of the city healthy, vibrant and modern while Taposh's campaign said the southern part would be beautiful, well-governed and developed.

Experts and urban planners said at the time that the two candidates made many promises that city corporations had no jurisdiction or capacity to implement.

Atiql promised to set up an Integrated Vector Management System that would work with the help of the health ministry, the Wasa, and the DSCC to effectively tackle mosquitoes.

Taposh said he would destroy the mosquito breeding grounds on a regular basis.

But in 2023, at least 980 people died of dengue in the city and many others were seriously ill. The city corporations spent over Tk 500 crore on mosquito control efforts, but the health directorate in a pre-monsoon survey found the highest density in mosquito population in five years.

Taposh told The Daily Star last week that so many people died because they did not get proper care. He argued that other countries

also see dengue outbreaks but fewer people die there.

Regarding air quality, Atiql pledged to cut pollution through mist blowers and modern technology while Taposh also made similar promises.

But the World Air Quality Report 2023 named Dhaka as the second worst capital.

Both mayors told this newspaper that they would reduce air pollution and plant a large number of trees.

Atiql added that his office would be paperless, and thanks to technology, people would not have to go there in person to get services.

In the last four years, the DNCC evicted grabbers and removed garbage from Lautala and Ramchandrapur canals in Mohammadpur, Paris canal in Mirpur and Shutibhola canal in Satarkul. It also evicted grabbers from 26 parks and playgrounds.

The DSCC has excavated and ensured water flow through the Old Channel of the Buriganga, started restoration and beautification along 8.7 kilometres of Manda canal. The corporation is currently removing waste and evicting grabbers from Jirani canal in Manda, Kalunagar canal in Hazaribagh, and Shyampur canal in Shyampur.

The mayors also hope to generate electricity from waste.

On their campaign trails and on different occasions, Atiql and Taposh said flooded neighbourhoods would be a thing of the past.

The corporations clean the drains and have breathed new life into the canals, but city dwellers still see waterlogged streets in monsoon.

To reduce traffic congestion, Taposh's camp said they would regulate public transport by having separate lanes for fast and slow-moving vehicles, while Atiql vowed to introduce dedicated transport for students. Both of them pledged to implement late mayor Annissul Huq's plan for Bus Route Rationalisation (BRR), which they said would bring discipline on roads. The BRR project started with 150 buses, but currently has 30.

A study by the US-based National Bureau of Economic Research last year ranked Dhaka as the slowest city in the world. The World Bank and Buet's Accident Research Institute in a report said average speed of vehicles on Dhaka streets was 4.8km/h in 2022.

Taposh made good on his promise of increasing revenue without raising taxes. DSCC collected Tk 703 crore in 2020-2021, Tk 879 crore in 2021-2022, and Tk 1,031 crore in 2022-23 fiscal years.

Both of them said they would

evict vendors from footpaths. The corporations conducted several drives, but the footpaths still remain occupied.

Adil Mohammed Khan, president of Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP), said, "The mayors were sincere in combating mosquitoes. But their programmes were ineffective because they were not taken on time."

Adil lauded DNCC for receiving citizen's complaints through an app. Local governance expert Tofail Ahmed said everyone who participated in city elections made pledges beyond their jurisdiction.

"Candidates make lofty promises on their manifesto, knowing that they can't implement those. It has become a tradition. It is nothing but betrayal to the voters," he added.

In 1608, Dhaka was made a provincial capital during the Mughal era. It was declared a municipality in 1864. After Bangladesh became independent, Dhaka was made the capital of the country. In 1990, a city corporation was formed to run it.

On November 29, 2011, the government split the city corporation through the Local Government Amendment Bill-2011, saying that bifurcation would improve civic amenities. On February 1, 2012, DNCC and DSCC started their journey.

96 constituencies

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opposition alliance is seeking to corner the government on issues relating to jobs and price rise.

An engrossing battle is expected in West Bengal where some prominent candidates are trying their luck in the fourth phase.

Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury of Congress is contesting from Baharampur constituency against Trinamool Congress' candidate and former cricketer Yusuf Pthan. Trinamool Congress lawmaker Mahua Moitra, who has been a outspoken critic of the ruling BJP, is contesting from Krishnanagar while actor-turned-politician Shatrughan Sinha is trying his luck from Asanol.

The other leading politicians in Iray tomorrow include federal minister Giriraj Singh of BJP, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, BJP's Arjun Munda and G Kishan Reddy.

The fourth phase also features Hyderabad where actress Maadhavi Latha of BJP is contesting against Asaduddin Owaisi, a four-time MP from the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen party.

The first three phases of the election, which were held on April 19, April 26 and May 7, saw a voter turnout of 66.1, 66.7 and 65.68 percent respectively compared to corresponding phases in the 2019 polls.

A total of 969 million people are registered to vote in 543 parliamentary constituencies this time.

Akhilesh Yadav is contesting in Kannauj constituency in Uttar Pradesh eyeing to wrest the seat held by Subrata Pathak of BJP who had defeated Akhilesh's wife Dimple in the previous general elections in 2019.

Baharampur constituency in West Bengal is also poised for a significant

contest. Here, Congress and TMC, allies in the Opposition's INDIA bloc, will compete against each other. Following the failure in seat-sharing negotiations, TMC fielded Yusuf Pathan as its candidate from this constituency.

Mahua Moitra is trying her luck from Krishnanagar where she faces the challenge of returning to parliament after her suspension last year due to her alleged involvement in a controversy over cash for asking questions in Lok Sabha last year. Moitra, who secured this parliamentary seat for the first time in 2019, aims at a big win against BJP nominee and debutant Amrita Roy who hails from a royal family.

The fourth phase will see voting completed in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Madhya Pradesh.

Other states which are going to polls tomorrow are Uttar Pradesh (13/80 seats), Maharashtra (11/48 seats), Madhya Pradesh (8/29 seats), West Bengal (8/42 seats), Bihar (5/40 seats), Jharkhand (4/14 seats), Odisha (4/21 seats) and Jammu and Kashmir.

So far, voting has concluded for all seats in the states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Meghalaya, Assam, Manipur, Karnataka, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tripura; the Andaman and Nicobar islands; and the Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman, Diu, Lakshadweep and Puducherry union territories.

The fifth phase will kick off on May 20 and the sixth on May 25, before the election heads towards the seventh and final phase on June 1.

Separately, all 175 seats in Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly and 28 seats in Odisha Legislative Assembly will go to polls today.

Girls ace SSC again

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more girls sat for the exams than boys. "We have to look into the reasons for not performing as well as the girls."

SHINING AGAIN

Unveiling the results at a press conference in the capital, Education Minister Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury said this year, 85 percent of the girls passed the SSC exams while the boys' success rate was 82.39 percent.

At least 89,168 girls and 74,677 boys achieved GPA-5.

Board officials said since 2017, girls have been outperforming boys in terms of the pass rate, and since 2018 in achieving GPA-5 as well.

In 2017, the pass rate of girls was 0.85 percentage point higher than that of boys. This year it is 2.61 percentage points higher.

In 2018, at least 399 more girls got GPA-5 than boys. This year, 14,491 more girls got GPA-5.

Prof Tapan Kumar Sarker, chairman of the Dhaka education board, and Prof Gazi Hasan Kamal, former chairman of Mymensingh education board, agreed that girls were more sincere in studies.

Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) Executive Director Rasheda K Choudhury said girls have continued to outperform boys. Stipends and tuition fee waivers for girls are paying off.

Girls are sincere in studies as they need to continue with their education, overcoming hurdles like child marriage, insecurity, and other issues, she said.

She said, "But girls' improvement should be made sustainable. Besides, there should not be any reverse discrimination toward boys. We can think about introducing stipends for

boys as many of them are working."

BETTER RESULT
Minister Mohibul said 83.04 percent out of the 20,13,597 students who sat for this year's SSC, Dakhil, and SSC vocational exams passed.

He said under nine general education boards, 83.77 percent passed out of the 16,06,394 who sat for the exams.

Prof Tapan, who is also the chief of the Inter-Education Board Coordination Committee, said the pass rate increased by 2.83 percentage points.

He said academic activities were almost normal after the pandemic since the exams were held on full syllabus and marks, and the students had plenty of time to prepare.

"We gave emphasis on English and Mathematics, which helped students to do better," he said.

In Dhaka board, 96 percent and 88 percent of the students passed English and Mathematics this year. Last year, only 91 percent and 81 percent passed the subjects.

Jashore Education Board had the best pass rate – 92.33 percent – of all nine general education boards and Sylhet board had the worst – 73.35 percent.

Dhaka board had the most GPA-5 achievers – 49,190 – and Sylhet board had the fewest – 5,471.

Prof Rama Bijoy Sarker, chairman of Sylhet Education Board, said, "The poor pass rate in General Science and Mathematics of Humanities group affected the overall pass rate. He said there was a lack of quality teachers, especially in rural and haor areas.

Across all 11 education boards, 2,968 schools achieved a cent percent pass rate, 614 more than that of the previous year.

Asked if any action would be taken against schools from which no students passed, Minister Mohibul said only a few students sat for the SSC from those schools. "If we take action against them, students might suffer. We will need to think about alternatives for solving the problem."

Hit by bike, girl dies on her way to school

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A schoolgirl was killed as a motorbike hit her bicycle on Atwary-Panchagarh road at Jugikata village in Atwary upazila, Panchagarh yesterday.

The victim – Tithi Rani, 12, daughter of Padesh Chandra Barman from Jugikata – was a fifth grader at a primary school in Goalpara, said police.

Tithi was going to school on a bicycle. She fell onto a road after being hit by the bike and then a three-wheeler ran her over, said Atwary Police Station Officer-in-Charge Musa Mia.

She died on the way to Panchagarh Sadar Hospital, added the OC.

Stuck in lift

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told The Daily Star, "The lift abruptly stopped as we were descending from the 11th floor to the fourth. We were stuck for 45 minutes, until people at the hospital opened the lift and escorted us out. Our patient died before we could get out."

A hospital worker named Alauddin, who was in the lift, said there were 18 to 20 people stuck there.

Mumtaz's son Abdul Mannan was also stuck inside with her.

"Once it got stuck, I called the numbers written down inside the lift for emergency. Despite several tries, no one responded. We were stuck for 45 minutes and my mother suffocated to death."

Kamal Hossain, 40, who was also in the lift, alleged that some of the people they called for help had misbehaved with them instead of helping.

Biplab, an Ansar member on duty at the gate, said the hospital has eight lifts.

"When too many people get on, the lift faces problems due to excessive weight. Meanwhile, there is no one in charge of the lifts in case of an emergency."

Abdur Rahim, a patient's attendant at the hospital, said, "I was sitting on the 10th floor where my son is admitted. I heard the people crying when they were stuck inside the lift. But nobody came to their immediate aid."

Meanwhile, the hospital authorities have formed a five-member probe body, headed by Professor Rubina Yasmin of the medicine department, to investigate the incident.

The hospital's Resident Medical Officer Hasneen Jahan said, "The death of a patient inside the lift is currently under investigation. Further details will be shared after the probe is complete."

The committee has been asked to submit a report within three working days, said Md Jahangir Alam, deputy director of the hospital.