



#FASHION & BEAUTY

# History and legacy in every stitch

Dhaka at its core holds quite a bit of history. For many of us, New Market, as popular as it is to retailers, has a lot of fond memories. In our attempt to sail through nostalgia and history, we found an interesting shop at New Market, Bashir Uddin Tailors and Fabrics — this is the story of a sartorial pedigree.

## Bashir Uddin begins

Bashir Uddin built his tailoring business in the '50s, which later turned into a tailoring brand that is famous to this day.

The shop has a very loyal client base, affirming them for generations of the same family who prefer this historic place for their unique and detailed work.

After the passing of Bashir Uddin, only two of his sons, Abdul Hai and Abdus Salam, tried to push the business forward. Abdul Hai had a place at Bangabandhu Avenue in the late '80s for a while, but not everything worked out. Finally, Abdus Salam managed to carry forward his father's legacy and keep the business running, which is the "Bashir Uddin Tailors and Fabrics" of New Market, as we know it today.

## Sewn in the family

Presently, the business is run by two brothers who are the grandchildren of Bashir Uddin. Md Harun, the elder brother, and Md Hasan are the two faces in the shop aside from the five tailors who work at the factory.

The two brothers carry out two very different tasks to keep the business running. Hasan, the younger one, has been with the business for the last 15 years, since finishing college. He runs the administrative, logistical, financial, and other aspects of the

business and being as busy as they are, it's a challenge.

Harun on the other hand, had the opportunity to learn from their father, and he is directly involved in the handiworks that make Bashir Uddin Tailors such a hit.

## The cut and stitch

Bashir Uddin Tailors and Fabrics is known for making panjabis, but they also make coatees, sherwanis, kabli sets, etc.

"It's about how we cut the pieces. Let me reiterate that we are known for making panjabis and the way we cut the pieces is unique. I have seen how others do it and it's not the same," said Harun, the savant tailor who has been part of the business since 1993.

"So, is it just the cuts?" I asked curiously, and Harun pulled out a recently completed panjabi from under his counter. "Look at the stitches," he asked, and I leaned in closer for a better look. Even to a layman like me, with no expertise in stitches and tailoring, the difference was unmistakable.

"These stitches are hand-sewn. It's one of our specialities and you can tell just by looking at it. Other tailors cannot pull this off," he said proudly. "You can even hand stitch a whole panjabi if you want to," he added, confirming what I had been thinking — it's the sartorial equivalent of a secret recipe.

## Popular through generations

Nurul Amin Sentu is the oldest living tailor who has been involved with this business. He worked with Bashir Uddin himself, and later with his son, Abdus Salam. He knows the unique styles that this business offers. Even in his retirement, he sometimes calls on the shop at New Market; out of a love that only 50 years of working together can build.

"I have fashioned panjabis for at least one president of the country.

Countless other political persons and big shots were always coming to the shop, and I crafted for them too," he recalled. "Politically and historically important figures in the history of Bangladesh, from any party, you name them; we've tailored for a lot of them."

"Sometimes, many of these people would come with their children at the shop and that's how those kids know about us," added Sentu, saying that the two brothers who are running the business presently are doing well and he's happy to see the legacy continue.

"I know about your shop because I got married wearing a sherwani that my father got from you," said a customer, and Harun was practically beaming at the admiration.

Today, many prefer to buy ready-made panjabis, but Bashir Uddin Tailors never had to worry about losing clients.

Take the Eid season, for example. They stop taking orders by 8-10th Ramadan and are busy the rest of the month trying to deliver the 1,500 or more orders on time. At least 150 orders are pretty normal in any average month. Their charges, while higher than most other tailors, were never an issue for their loyal customers.

## Future thoughts

While the two brothers are doing a great job at keeping the business alive, knowing the history and legacy of it, one must ask what the future holds. The unique cuts and stitches that Bashir Uddin has passed on are known now only to a few.

Hasan, the younger brother, who looks after the administrative side of the business, wants to learn the tricks of the trade.

"My brother does most of the cutting and such. I've been involved with the business since 2008. I did learn a thing or two, but there are a lot of other things that I need to take care of, so there's that. But I want to learn more," said the young man.

"It's a family business and the way we do it is unique. Naturally, I want it to carry on, so I want to teach it to my younger brother. And my son, who albeit young, but I'd love it if he picks up the family business when he grows up," added Harun, the couturier.

If you are a younger customer, perhaps you might check them out to see what all the fuss is all about. However, if you are one of the older customers, this is your reminder that Bashir Uddin Tailors and Fabrics are not only alive, but also proudly holding up their legacy.

By **Ashif Ahmed Rudro**  
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