



## Exploring the richness of Dhakaiya Subbasi dialect

RBR

I thought that Urdu and Hindi were analogous to some extent -- a totally misread perspective, which changed when I did a bit of research on Dhakaiya people's vernacular or street dialect.

"We Dhakaiyas have two styles of speech that we converse in, one is an ancholik Dhakaiya Bangla and the other is Dhakai Sukhbhas, Subbasi or Khoshbas," says Akter Jahan, a writer who composes stories in her original Dhakai Sukhbhas dialect.

The real meaning of Sukhbhas, an Urdu word, is well-off or happily settled, and relates to the language spoken between the then locals and the overseas merchants, whose native languages were different. "Thus, Sukhbhas or Subbasi is a Bengali-influenced dialect known as Dhakaiya Urdu and Hindi, and is now spoken by the original residents of Dhakaiya community, and it is often mistaken for Urdu," Jahan clarifies.

The dynasty rule of invaders in Bengal led to the amalgamation of their original speaking tongue of Urdu, Sanskrit, a base of Hindi, Persian, Arabic, and Turkic loanwords to the dialect of Bengali. This made Hindustani an Indo-Aryan language, as a lingua franca or communication mode in the streets of old Dhaka.

The 65-year-old energetic, nature-loving matriarch was born and brought up and even married in Amligola Mahalla, near the Kella area. Prior to her retirement, she ran the family business of plastic industry with her husband. However, the retired couple now lives a tranquil life in Kathaltoli Pukur paar in Keraniganj. Surrounded by greenery, and in sync with nature, Akhtar Jahan is honing her writing skills.

Her mother was educated in Urdu and Persian, as was the medium in those years, but she was the first generation Dhakaiya who were schooled in Bangla.

"My buri ma or grandmother always sat us kids down in her courtyard for



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'kejcha kahani ashor' or storytelling sessions. Her vivid description in our Dhakaiya Subbasi language, with the precise tonal emphasis, gave our imagination wings. Our Dhakaiya culture is colourful and rich, we

have geets in our dialect for every celebration, be it wedding or bathtime," quips Akter's daughter Ishrat Jahan, adding that the stories of her great grandmother were not found in any fairytale books she read.

"I am trying to document our old stories in Subbasi language, or as we say Dhakai jobane boyan. Our kids are teased in school for the way they speak, and as a result, they shy away from the original dialect. I want the golod or mistake that our noya postan or new generations are making to be corrected. They should know their roots and social landscapes. If this

lingua franca is not documented, then it will be lost to time," Jahan shared.

Peheli or dha dha, which are riddles, kohut or proverbs, rhymes, and songs in Dhakaiya Subbasi tongue; were common practice in cultural gatherings at old Dhaka. Now, this sort of ashor or cultural session are lost.

Akhtar Jahan's short stories like "Din Badler Sedma", "Zendegir Bioscope", "Mohabbater Qissa", and "Fakarer Bolli" were published in reputed dailies and literary magazines.

"Akhtar Jahan's writing in this Dhakai regional language is not only a new addition to Bengali literature, but in her stories, we find a realistic picture of Dhaka society and culture in the post-independence period since the partition of the country," Ishrat adds.

"We as kids sang songs for the rain to stop and the sun to shine. We went around houses knocking on doors singing aloud and our neighbours gave us grains as favours, and we cooked community meals. Everything we did had a fun factor in it. Dhakaiya people are financially well off and love showdows and celebrations. We took aristocracy from the Mughals and trading as our career choice from the merchants. Being a Dhakaiya is something you cannot copy from TV serials or Bollywood movies. It is in our DNA," Akhtar Jahan says boldly.

## MOB VIOLENCE Govt taking action against perpetrators Says home adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Adviser Lt Gen (retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury yesterday said the government was taking legal action against mob violence whenever and wherever it occurred.

He urged citizens to remain calm, emphasising that law enforcement alone could not control every situation.

"Even the police have become victims of attacks. If people become agitated, it creates problems. It is not possible to control everything solely by force," he told

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## Holding polls this year

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months, we all expected the policing system, law and order to be restored through short-term reforms. It has happened to an extent, but not up to our expectations," said Nahid.

"In the current law and order situation and policing system, I don't think it is possible to hold a national election," the 26-year-old said in his first interview as NCP head at his government provided villa in Dhaka.

Nahid, who was until recently an adviser to the interim government, is the first politician of significance to cast doubt on Yunus' timeframe for an election.

Political analysts believe his youth-led party could significantly reshape national politics, dominated for decades by Hasina's Awami League party and her rival, former prime minister Khaleda Zia's BNP.

Those parties have demanded early elections, arguing that power should be returned to a democratically elected government.

Nahid said the NCP, which was formed just last week, would be ready for the polls whenever they are held.

However, he added that before elections can be held, it would be crucial to reach a consensus on the so-called "Proclamation of the July Revolution" -- a charter that the interim government plans to prepare in consultations with political parties and student activists.

The document is intended to reflect the aspirations of the Bangladeshi people and honour the people who died in last year's violence. Student protesters dropped calls for changes to the constitution after the interim government said it would prepare the proclamation.

"If we can reach that consensus within a month, we can call for elections immediately. But if it takes more time, the election should be deferred," he added.

Many affluent people across Bangladesh are helping finance the party, said Nahid, adding that it will soon look to crowdfunding for a new office and creating a fund for the election.

## Teacher crisis plagues public med colleges

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According to the DGME, the college has 343 teacher posts, of which 206 posts or 60 percent are now vacant.

### NEW INSTITUTIONS

The Awami League government had focused on establishing new medical colleges in various districts, but largely overlooked manpower issues, deepening the crisis, according to the sector insiders.

At least 23 medical colleges were established between 2008 and 2021, and the manpower crisis is particularly acute in the new institutions, DGME data shows.

These colleges have 252 professor posts, out of which 189 or 75 percent are vacant.

Among them, the Netrakona Medical College, Noakhali Medical College, Pabna Medical College, and Shaheed M Monsur Ali Medical College currently have no professors. Eighteen other medical colleges only have one to five professors.

They are Cox's Bazar Medical College, Jashore Medical College, Satkhira Medical College, Shaheed Syed Nazrul Islam Medical College in Kishoreganj, Kushtia Medical College, Gopalganj Medical College, Shaheed Tajuddin Medical College in Gazipur, Tangail Medical College, Jamalpur Medical College, Manikganj Medical College, Patuakhali Medical College, Rangamati Medical College, Habiganj Medical College, Nilphamari Medical College, Naogaon Medical College, Magura Medical College, Chandpur Medical College, and Sunamganj Medical College.

Only Mouda Medical College in Dhaka has 13 professors against 15 posts.

All these medical colleges, except Noakhali, Cox's Bazar and Pabna medical college, were established

during the Awami League's rule. Three medical colleges were established in 2008 during the then caretaker government.

### PROMOTIONS 'OVERDUE'

Ex-BMA president Prof Rashid said the government does not regularly promote teachers, which led to a massive backlog.

"They [authorities] don't hold meetings [for promotions] unless they are under pressure. As a result, teachers lose interest, and new doctors do not feel encouraged to take up teaching jobs," he said.

He recommended establishing a separate system to handle the recruitment and promotion of medical teachers.

The BCS Health Cadre Specialists Doctors Forum, a platform representing government doctors, including teachers at government medical colleges, has been protesting the delays in promotions.

As this issue remains unresolved, meetings of the two committees responsible for promotions cannot be held," Prof Nazmul said.

However, a committee, led by the secretary of Health Education Division, is working to address the issue, said Prof Nazmul.

He said the process for promotion of

teachers of around 20 subjects, which

do not involve such complexities,

has resumed. Efforts are being made to mitigate the teacher shortage by appointing teachers under "current charges".

Prof Nazmul said the authorities

were identifying doctors with

postgraduate degrees and are

currently posted at upazila-level

hospitals so that they can be

reassigned to medical colleges to

address the teacher shortage.

"We look forward to some positive

developments within a month or two,"

he told The Daily Star.

During February 25, they announced a two-hour work abstention every day from March 8 if the government did not promote them. They threatened to go for an indefinite work abstention if their demands are not met by March 11.

Mirza Md Asaduzzaman, convener of the platform, said around 7,500 doctors across different grades, including medical college teachers, are awaiting promotions. There have been no promotions in some departments since 2017, according to him.

He pointed out that the number of

seats for students at government

medical colleges increased over the

years, but not the number of teachers.

According to insiders, the teacher

shortage is particularly severe on

some basic subjects. In many cases,

teachers from other departments or

non-teacher doctors are called in to

teach these.

Anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, pharmacology, microbiology, pathology, forensic medicine and community medicine are considered less attractive due to limited financial prospects and fewer job opportunities, they said.

**POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS 'SOON'**

Prof Nazmul Hosain, director general of the DGME, said the process of promotion was already slow before the uprising, but it came to a complete halt for some time.

The main reason behind the

problem in promotions, he explained,

is the complexity in determining

seniority between cadre and non-

cadre doctors.

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