

Sitting pretty on shops

DCC shelves most shops on the upper floors of New Market extensions. Yet, extortionists pocket sums from renting the unallocated shops out to people illegally.

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

At least 500 shops at the three extensions of Dhaka Government New Market are still unallocated, although the nearby pavements and sidewalks are occupied by hawkers and vendors because of so-called space constraint.

Only the shops on the ground floors of the New Market extensions -- Chandrima Super Market, Bonolata Market and the D-Block Market -- have been allocated to businessmen. The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) shelved allotments of most other shops on the upper floors.

The DCC should allocate the shops to the hawkers, freeing the pavements and the overhead footbridge from encroachment, said a shopper. The shop owners and salesmen aired the same view.

Although the three markets were built in 1984, allotment of the shops began in 1986. The allotment stalled halfway through the process

ten years ago because of a High Court injunction following cases filed by the New Market shop owners' associations, sources said.

The cases came after a group of shop owners was evicted during construction of the three extension markets, explained DCC sources.

Quddus Mollah, a former member of the New Super Market Samity, is among those who filed the cases, said a tailor on condition of anonymity.

"The land acquisition office, Dhaka (DC Dhaka), made a commitment that the shops would be given back to the evicted shop owners," said a DCC high official preferring anonymity. "But the authority of controlling the markets was handed over to the DCC after construction. The DCC followed its own guidelines in allocation, which led the evicted shop owners to file the cases," he explained.

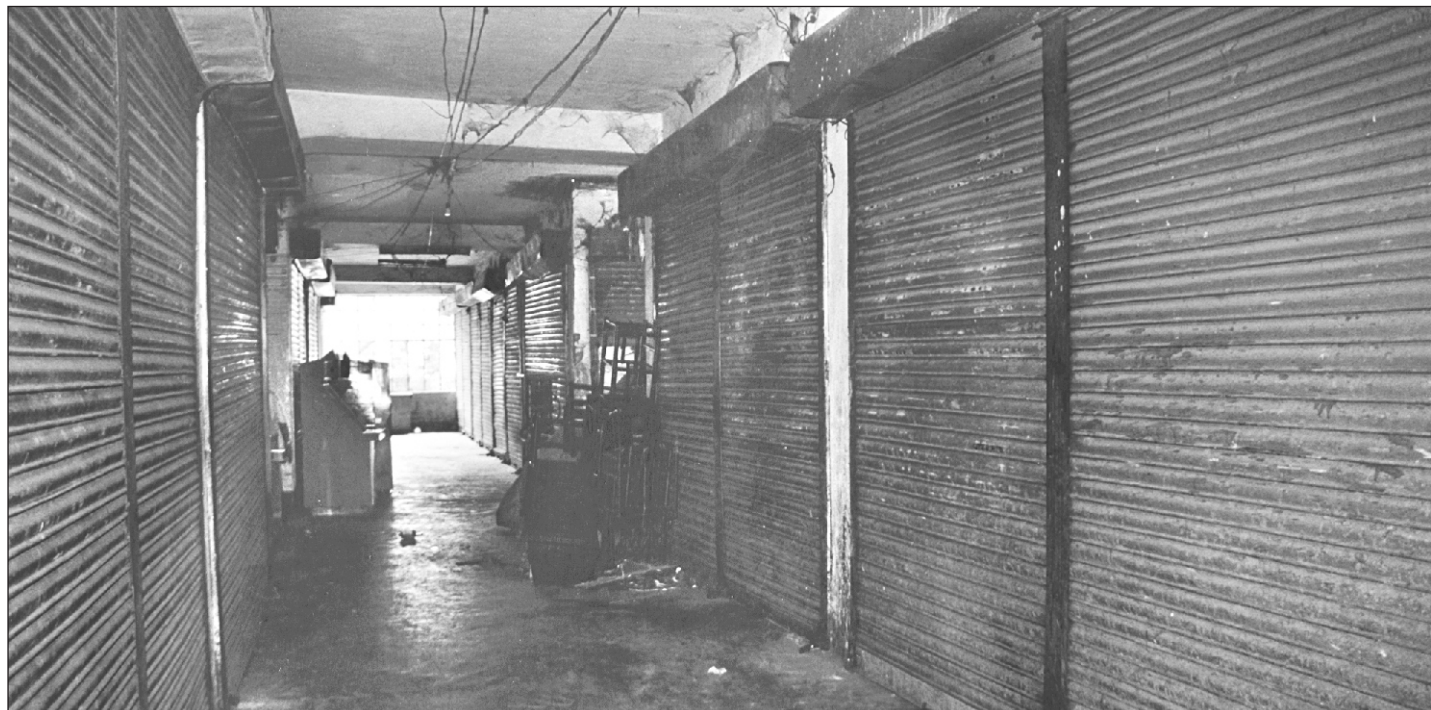
The DCC insiders said the allocation of the shops was halted upon a directive of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development

and Cooperatives. "The ministry asked us not to allocate any shop unless it provides us with new guidelines," said the official.

A web of extortionists collects money, leasing the unallocated shops out to people illegally. "Some rented shops out to them and set up warehouses," said a photo studio owner.

The rent of each unallocated shop ranges from Tk 500 to Tk 2,000, but the money ends up in the hands of the criminals. The DCC officials claimed that they did their best to resist extortion. "Last December, we ran an eviction drive and sealed the shops but the extortionists reopened and rented them out," said the DCC official. However, he denied any involvement of the DCC men in extortion.

Not only the government is being deprived of revenues, the Dhaka Electricity Supply Authority (DESA) is also missing out on huge billing since most unallocated shops have illegal power connections.



Shops at Chandrima Super Market, an extension of New Market, are shut, as they were not allocated. On the other hand, hawkers occupy pavements and sidewalks near-by because of so-called space constraint.

Living on rags



SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

Her eyes look dull from the arduous task from dawn to dusk. She heaves a deep sigh mingled with despair. Yet, Kulsum Begum cannot afford a pause in her work.

Kulsum and her fellows make a living by sorting rags. Discards from garment factories popularly known as *jhut* are sorted by people like them and sent for recycling.

In case you drop in their workplace at section No. 10 of Mirpur, your eyes

will encounter heaps of remnants brought from the garment factories. It is a makeshift structure that should rather be called an enclosure than a room where they do the job of sorting. The place is stuffy, full of dust and suffocating.

The discards include materials of every type used in garment factories -- from cloth scraps to threads to zippers to plastic parts. "We sort out and make bundles of similar things," said Kulsum.

"Mostly, the small pieces of cloth

are recycled into cotton," said Mohammed Razzak who ties up the bundles. "The bigger pieces are used to make pants or bags," he added. *Jhut* sells at Tk 50 to 75 a maund.

Kulsum who has been into the job for ten years just shrugged when asked how she sorted the rags. "All I can tell is that I get Tk 30 a day after work," she said. "It's hard to survive on that."

As the work does not pay enough, the workers want to leave it. Her fellow worker Hadisa Khatun wants to quit the job for the better.

Rejoinder and our reply

The general manager of the Japan Garden City Ltd. in a rejoinder about a report ran by The Star City on April 13, 2003 headlined "Hazards wait in the wings" claimed that once complete, the Japan Garden City will have a better environment than the rest of Mohammapur area.

He said that Asaduzzaman, executive engineer of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripokkho (RAJUK) did not approve the project, rather the Town Council of RAJUK approved it.

"The project of Japan Garden City shall not affect the existing supply of gas or electricity in Mohammapur".

"DESA will supply the required electricity to Japan Garden City through a separate transmission drawn from either Kamrangirchar or Mirpur," the rejoinder added.

"The company has obtained permission from the WASA to install deep tube-wells to ensure uninterrupted water supply for its clients."

"Japan Garden City is located beside 100 ft wide Ring Road and therefore the question of any unusual traffic congestion does not arise at all," it maintained.

Our reply

In the RAJUK file on the Japan Garden City, the chief inspector's report was missing, which is a must before approving any building plan. The chief inspector of RAJUK said that he did not know anything about the project before its final approval.

Although the Titas gas officials keep denying, Mohammapur is well known for having extremely low pressure of gas in winter due to high density of population. The general manager said Titas Gas will have a separate gas line for the Japan Garden City.

The reporter did not talk about any problems relating to the electricity supply of the DESA.

The general manager did not mention in the letter for how many deep tube-wells they have obtained permission from the WASA. The WASA officials said they have given permission for only two deep tube-wells. But when a potential customer contacted the sales office of the Japan Garden City, they said three deep tubewells would be installed.

The existing road in front of the Japan Garden City is only 36 feet wide -- not 100 feet wide. During peak hours the Ring Road close to the Japan Garden City is a nightmare for road users.

Females in a spin

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The driver, the conductor and other commuters forced Luna, a young female commuter in the city, off a bus one morning, after she dared to protest against the physical harassment by some male passengers.

"I was left standing in the middle of the road on the first day of a new job," she said.

The situation for the independent female commuters is worsening as the public transport system is running hopelessly short of vehicles resulting in overcrowding.

Some 4,200 public buses including 400 of the Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) are plying through the city of 10 million people everyday, traffic officials

said.

Female commuters are often barred from boarding overcrowded city buses that offer no special facilities for them as the bus operators fear landing in trouble should any female commuters make a complaint.

A student of Dhaka University said she was once pushed out of a bus as she took time to get off. She said the driver and the conductor of the bus told her that she was a woman, so she should not board a city bus, which is always crowded.

BRTC operates six buses for female commuters in six different routes in the city. The routes are Gulistan to Khilgoan, Gulistan to Uttara, Gulistan to Mirpur-12 via Eden College, Gulistan to

Narayanganj via Postagola, Gulistan to Narayanganj via Bishwa Road and Gulistan to Gulshan-1.

BRTC officials said due to lack of awareness, the female-only buses are half-empty most of the time.

But the commuters complain that the services are too few and infrequent to be reliable.

The city's public transport system is currently dogged by a massive vacuum with the disappearance of two-stroke autorickshaws and banning of rickshaws on some roads which is affecting all commuters.

In October last year, Communication Minister Nazmul Huda told a daily that they were seriously thinking how to improve the plight of female commuters. As yet there has been little progress.



crisis telephone numbers & city bus route

HEALTH

Hospitals

Heart
National Institute of Cardio Vascular Diseases (NICVD),
- 9130800, 9122560-59

Burn
Dhaka Medical College Hospital
Burn Unit-8626812-6

Cancer
National Cancer Institute-
80149148826561-65
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib
Medical University-8612550-4,
861455-9

Diabetes
Diabetic Research Hospital
(BIRDEM)- 9661551-5,
8616641-50

Mother & Child Care
Shishu Hospital- 9119119,
816061-62
Azimur Mother & Child Health
Training Institute- 8624827,
8624980

Eye

Islamia Eye Hospital-9110794,
9119315
National Eye Hospital- 8117202,
8114807

Dental

National Orthopaedics (Pangu)
Hospital- 9114075, 9112150

Orthopaedics

General
Dhaka Medical College Hospital-
8626812-6
Holy Family Hospital-
83111731-25
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib
Medical University Hospital-
8612550
-4, 8614545-9
Bangladesh Medical College &
Hospital- 8115443, 9118202,
Shamarita Hospital- 9131901
Suhrawardy Hospital -- 9130800,
9122560-69
Salimullah Medical Collage

Hospital -- 7310061-4, 7319002-6
Cholera Research Hospital
(ICDDR)- 8811751-60
Infection Disease (I.D) Hospital
602429, 601835,
T.B. Hospital 608031-34,
600211-5,
Azimur Maternity Hospital
503329,
Sromojibi Hospital 240066-69,
Monowra Hospital 8319802,
8318135

Blood Bank

Red Crescent Centre- 9116563
Sandhani (DMCH)- 8624040
Sandhani (SMCH)- 7310061,
7310061, 7319022
Dhaka Medical Collage Hospital-
8626812-9

Eye Bank

Sandhani International Eye Bank-
8614040

Ambulance Service-

Fire Service & Civil Defence
Ambulance 9555555, 9556666-7,
9567734, Fire Services Siddique

Bazar (HQ) 9556667,
Mohammapur 9112078, **Tejgaon**
605272, **Khilgoan** 7218329,
Lalbagh 505778, **Mirpur** 9001055,
Cantonment 605168, **Tongi**
9801070, **Palassey** 509670,
Demra 7400111, **Postagola**
7410771, **Narayanganj** 9715644,
Sadarghat 7119759,
Mirpur 10 Circle 9002269,
9001055, **Mirpur TVG Complex**
9001189, **Narayanganj Port**
9715365,
Hajiganj (N Ganj) 9715531,
Mondalpara (N. Ganj River)
9712015, **N. Ganj Bander** 9712095,
Dhaka EPZ (Savar)
7701444, **Markajul Al Islami**
9127867, **Anjuman e-Mafidul**
Islam 324067, 239808, 248166,
Holy Family Hospital 8311721-5.

Ambulances For Dead Body

Anzuman Mafidul Islam (Kakrail)
9336611, Gandaria 7319808,
7318166,
Al-Markajul Islam 9127867,
324069.

UTILITY

Electricity

Electricity Complex-
PDB- 9566061-5,
9560170-9

Electricity Complex
(DESA)- 8616737-43,
8617626
DESCO- 8123138-40
Complaints (Rural
Electrification Board,
Dhaka)- 8916424-8

Gas

Titas Gas Exchange
(Emergency)- 9563667-
8
Kawrnabazar-8112135-42
Mirpur- 8014132-3
Mohammapur-
9117215, 9113903
Mohakhali- 9884741,
9885922, 8824993
Motijheel-9667612

WASA

WASA (PABX)-
8117829-31
Mirpur- 9000519

Mohammapur-

8120192
Fakirapool-9115343
Asad Gate- 8917492
Uttara- 9559142,
Segunbagicha- 7316348
Pagla- 8113900-39

Fire Services

Siddique Bazar (HQ)-
9556667
Mohammapur-
9112078
Khilgoan- 7218329
Mirpur- 9001055
Tongi- 9801070
Demra-7400111
Postagola- 7410771
Sadarghat- 7119759
Mirpur 10 Circle-
9002269, 9001055
Mirpur TVG Complex-
9001189

CITY BUS ROUTE

Bus No.	Route	Starts from
1	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 10, 11, 12	Golap Shah Mazar
2	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 1, 2	Phoolbaria bus station
3	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Mahakhali-Airport-Azampur	Phoolbaria bus station
4	Shyampur-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Airport-Tongi	Shyampur
5	Sayedabad-Kamalapur-Motijheel-Airport-Joydebpur-Gazipur	Sayedabad
6 A	Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Gulistan 1, 2	Kamalapur
6 B	Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 1, 2	Kamalapur
6 C	Motijheel Shapla chattr- Malibagh- Farmgate- Gulshan 2	Motijheel Shaplachattar
7	Sadarghat-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 2	Sadarghat
8	Chittagong-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asad Gate-Kalyanpur-Gaboli	Chittagong Road
9	Demra Rani mahal-Motijheel-Kalbagan-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 10, 11, 12	Demra Ranimahall
10	Sadarghat-Gulistan-Kakrail-Malibagh-Rampura-Biwa Road-Tongi Bridge	Sadarghat
11	Sayedabad-Motijheel-Fakirapool-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Tongi Bridge	Sayedabad
11/A	Sayedabad-Khilgoan-Malibagh-Rampura-Airport-Tongi Bridge	Syedabad
12	Shanir Akhra-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asadgate-Mohammapur	Shanir Akhra
13	Motijheel-Shahbagh-New Market-Jhigatola-Shangkar-Mohammedpur	Motijheel
14	Signboard -Motijheel-Shahbagh-New Market-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 12	Signboard (Chittagong Road)
15	Chittagong Road-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Mirpur 12	Chittagong Road
24	Gulistan-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Airport-Uttara-Bipile	Gulistan