

Karwan car chaos

Karwan Bazar, one of the city’s commercial hubs, suffers a severe lack of proper parking spaces

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

The bustling Karwan Bazar, one of the most important commercial hubs by any measure, is confronting problems due to lack of proper parking lots.

The area houses a number of multistoried buildings where some prominent commercial organisations set up offices. A large number of cars visit the area every day and are parked haphazardly since there is no demarcated parking area.

The car owners leave their vehicles on the road at risk. "Since I don't have any chauffeur, I have no option but to leave my car on the road," said Khairul Kabir, who comes to Karwan Bazar for his business. "Pilferers may steal car parts anytime," he added.

Commuters now find it difficult to travel through the Karwan Bazar main road that has a width of 150 feet. Haphazard parking on both sides of the road narrowed it down.

A commercial area should have a proper parking place, feel most of the regular visitors to the area. Moreover, there are a kitchen market and warehouses gobbling up much of the area. "It is neither a commercial area, nor a kitchen

market," grumbled Hasan Ali who works at a private organisation.

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) took up a plan to develop Karwan Bazar as a commercial area during the Jatiya Party rule, said an official. The kitchen market and warehouses were to be shifted to the other side of Tongi Diversion Road. But it never happened and the area became messed up.

During the tenure of mayor Mohammed Hanif, the DCC laid out a plan to build a multistoried parking facility in the area, for which a huge patch of land inside the Karwan Bazar kitchen market was earmarked.

Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka took the same decision. But the proposal hit a snag, as the DCC lacks funds for construction.

The place has already slipped into the hands of musclemen. It is now beyond view, as kitchen market shops ring it. The DCC said the shops are not illegal but temporarily allocated.

"The DCC thought of different options for that," said Abul Hasnat, executive engineer of zone No. 6.

Now there is a proposal for offering the space to a developer under the build, operate and transfer system, he said.



Vehicles parked haphazardly in front of office buildings at Karwan Bazar due to lack of parking facilities.

Indigenous beauty

CITY CORRESPONDENT

They did not follow in their ancestors' footsteps. They adopted a different lifestyle. They nurture aspirations for a better future. Leaving behind their homes in the country's hilly regions, young *adhibasi* (indigenous) women are migrating to the city to carve out a niche in the capital.

The green of the hills and forests no longer surround them. Instead, most are employed within the four walls of Dhaka's numerous beauty parlours, offering their services to beauty-conscious urban women.

Mostly belonging to the indigenous Garo tribe, these young girls and women are found in almost all the beauty parlours in the city. The

majority of them are Christians, coming from Madhupur, Durgapur, Mymensingh and Sylhet.

"It was from the early days of the beauty parlour business that these indigenous girls began to show up for employment," said Razia Begum of Dreams Beauty Parlour in Dhanmondi.

"Since there was an invisible taboo for women of the middle or upper classes to join such a profession, the joining of indigenous girls eased the problem," she said. Now, the attitude of people has changed and many women from the educated classes are becoming entrepreneurs of the industry, she added.

Most of the Garo girls were brought into the profession by relatives or acquaintances. "My

niece who worked with a beauty parlour brought me here four years ago," said Bithi, a Garo girl from Sylhet working at Wang Chinese Beauty Parlour. "I mastered the skills and am now earning Tk 7,000 a month."

Their wages depend on dexterity. "Seniors are more skilled and highly paid," said Sathee who works at Persona in Dhanmondi. "It needs time as well as innate quality to become an expert in hairstyling or skin treatment," she said.

The girls take lots of pleasure in their work. They are well at ease in the ambience of luxurious parlours. "We work together in a cosy atmosphere that feels like living at home," said Lucy, who also works at Persona. "This job is convenient for me, since it does not require much education, is secure and has few risks," she added.

They work six days a week from 9.00 in the morning to 8.00 in the evening. The indigenous beauticians take a break from their busy schedules once a week. In most cases, they get lodging free. "This is a big help for me since I need not pay house rent," said Lucy who lives with her husband and kids in a room provided by her employer.

Most beauty parlour owners expressed happiness with the performance of the indigenous girls. "They are very enthusiastic and quick at learning," said Baby Shahnaz, owner of Shahnaz Beauty Parlour at New DOHS.

"We should appreciate the way they are earning a living," said Kaniz Almas Khan, owner of Persona, where at least 40 Garo girls work.

Apart from helping their families back at home, some women are trying to pave their way for a better life on their own. Eva Nokrek is studying at Open University and plans to sit for SSC examinations next year.

She wants to pursue higher studies and expressed gratitude to her employer for providing her enough time to study.



Dhaka's beauty parlours have become a home away from home for young Garo women migrating to the city.

High rising house rent

On average, house rents have increased three-fold over the past decade

SHIMU RANI DAS

Many tenants of Dhaka city have recently received notices from their landlords informing them that their rents will go up in the coming months.

House owners claim that they are doing this in view of the reformulation of the holding tax by the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), which has taken this measure to increase its revenue earning. The holding tax varies depending on the area and location of the house or property.

While landlords and the DCC plan on earning extra money, the tenants are left to bear the brunt of this controversial move. In the nearly four lakh holding tax units

of the city, tenants live in 90 percent of them. The rest belong to owners.

With house rent on the rise through one pretext or the other, the city's middle and lower-middle classes are left struggling to make ends meet with their limited income. In a survey of Consumer Associations of Bangladesh (CAB), it was found that monthly house rent had increased by a staggering 300 percent between 1990 to 2000.

About three quarter of Dhaka's total population live on rented houses. Nearly 65 percent or more of their monthly income is spent on paying the rent.

"As a teacher, I have a small salary. With house rent and the prices of necessary goods

increasing almost every day, I'm finding it exceedingly difficult to pay my rent and also maintain a minimum living standard at the same time," said Arnab Saha of Dhanmondi.

House owners on the other hand are saying that they have been forced to raise rent for the sake of reality.

"Apart from the high price of essentials, the rate for various utility services like water, gas and electricity is always on the up. That's why we are left with no other option," said Faruk Ahmed, a landlord.

House owners have the authority to increase the rent but they are supposed to go by certain rules if they want to do so. Under the House Rent Control

Ordinance (1991)'s article 16(2), rent can be readjusted every two years through an understanding between the owner and the tenant. However most landlords are either unaware of the act or doesn't care to implement it.

"The majority of the tenants too have no idea that there is a law about house rent and the owners are taking advantage of this ignorance," said, Kazi Faruk, general secretary of CAB.

"Mostly, people of middle class and lower middle class are the worst hit. They usually don't have houses of their own so they have to live somewhere. But the exorbitant rent is making their Dhaka experience a nightmarish one," added Faruk.

Thirty-fold rise in urban population over past century

CITY CORRESPONDENT

We see the evidence of rapid urban expansion daily in Dhaka. But the figures still come as a shock -- over the past century the urban population of Bangladesh has risen thirty fold, and in the past forty years almost tenfold. By contrast the figures for the rural population have risen four times and doubled in the same time frames, according to Rita Afsar, of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS).

Since the early 1970s, urban migration has accounted for almost two-thirds of urban growth, which reached 25% in 2000. From a study of 62 random villages researchers found that two thirds of rural migration is to the cities, while in 1998 there were almost 17 migrants per 1000 people in urban areas.

These figures were presented by Rita Afsar in a paper on internal migration in Bangladesh at a three-day conference which concluded yesterday at the city's Sonargaon Hotel.

"Internal migration is important in terms of the sheer numbers," say Prof. Ronald Skeldon from the University of Sussex, who also took part in the conference which was titled 'Migration, Development and Pro-poor Policy Choices in Asia.'

"In addition, it is almost impossible for any government to accurately judge the number of its urban and rural populations, because these numbers are always changing. There are so many temporary and seasonal migrants."

According to Afsar, most internal migrants in Bangladesh were young adults, both male and female, between the ages of 15 and 34.

Surprisingly, three out of five

rural migrants find work in the cities within one week of arrival, earning between Tk 1500 and 3000 per month. Most migrants rely heavily on relations and friends to find housing and work and already have an idea about the kind of work they will do and where they will live, prior to arrival.

"Migrants are generally looked down upon," said Prof. Skeldon. "They are seen as peasants. That needs to change."

They face various problems after arriving in the city. Among them are the lack of low cost housing, physical insecurity, eviction from homes, skewed distribution of basic services and the resulting health problems.

"The Government needs to work with the internal migrants in solving their various problems," Prof. Skeldon commented.

Ninety seven percent of all the migrants arriving either live in slums or squat on public land. Although with time their living conditions improve.

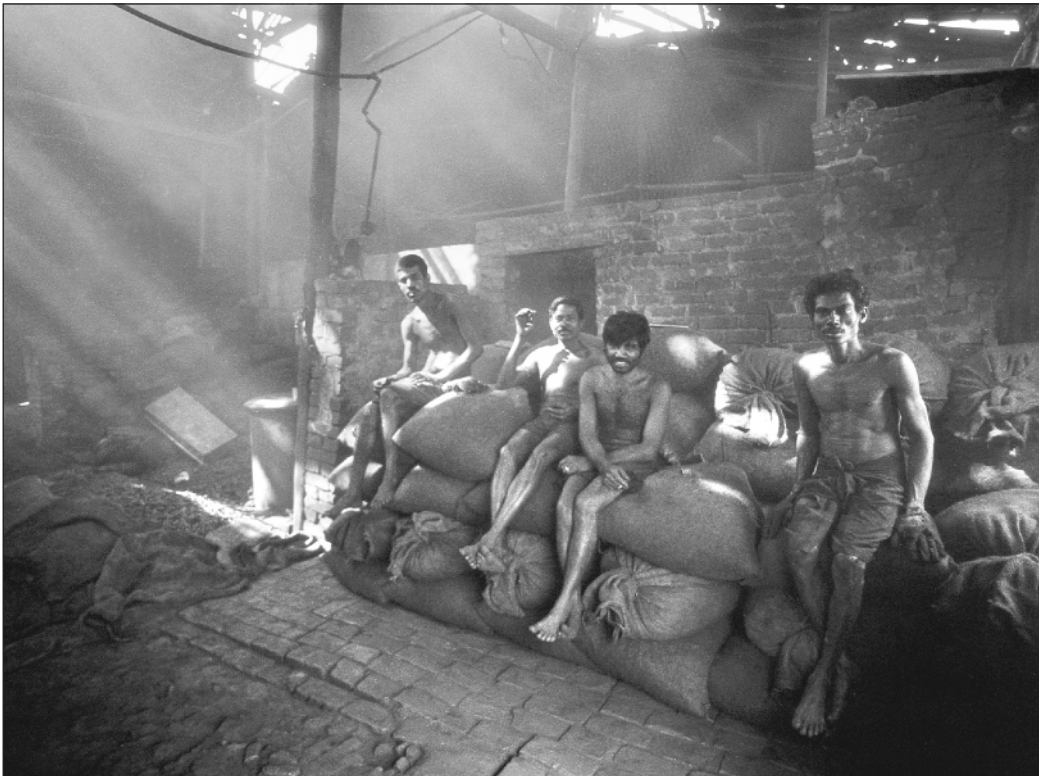
The results of urban migration have been interesting and contrary to what theory states, reported Afsar. Instead of transferring rural poverty to urban areas, and rural resources (for example manpower) to cities, there is in fact a flow of resources towards the rural areas. Migrants send money back to their villages, which is used to improve living condi-

tions. In addition urban migrants often buy land and become absentee landowners, renting or leasing out their land to others in the village.

Rita Afsar's paper "Internal Migration and the Development Nexus: the Case of Bangladesh" can be found online at www.livelihoods.org

The conference was organized jointly by the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), Bangladesh, and the Department for International Development (DFID), UK.

The photographic exhibition accompanying the conference continues at the Drik Gallery.



Though migrant workers often find work within days of arriving in the city, job security is low.

essential numbers & city bus route

UTILITY	OUTING	COURIER SERVICE	LIBRARY & INFO	CITY BUS ROUTE
Electricity Electricity Complex- PDB- 9566061-5, 9560170-9 Electricity Complex (DESA)- 8616737-43, 8617626 DESCO- 8123138-40 Complaints (Rural Electrification Board, Dhaka)- 8916424-8	Asad Gate- 8917492 Uttara- 9559142, Segunbagicha- 7316348 Pagla- 8113900-39 Fire Services Siddique Bazar (HQ)- 9556667 Mohammadpur- 9112078 Khilgaon- 7218329 Mirpur- 9001055 Tongi- 9801070 Demra- 7400111 Postagola- 7410771 Sadarghat- 7119759 Mirpur 10 Circle- 9002269, 9001055 Mirpur TVG Complex- 9001189	International Air Borne Express- 9561371, 9561372, 9550724 Air Couriers Int'l (BD) Ltd.-8815970 Aramex International Courier- 9558003, 9559582, 9565075 Airspeed Express- 9563494 Asian Courier Services Ltd.- 8313543 Baishakhi Courier Service- 9558606 Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114 Bangladesh Courier Service- 9563989 Bengal Express- 9560642, 9552666 Bangladesh Int'l Courier- 953636 Continental Service Ltd.- 9552948, 9558425 DHL Worldwide Express- 9881703-7, 9886305-9, 9882057 Enem Express- 9330699 Fedex Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd- 9565114	Libraries, Cultural and Information Centers Central Public Library- 8626001-4, Shishu Academy- 9564128 Shilpakala Academy- 8614673 Bangla Academy- 8619550 Islamic Foundation- 9550280, 9556407 Nazrul Institute- 9114602 Ford Foundation- 8116133 Alliance Francaise- 8611557 British Council- 8618867-8, 8618905-7 Community Development Library- 8113769, 8113604 Goethe Institute Int'l- Dhaka- 9126525-6 Indian Information Centre & Cultural Library- 8615096 The Russian Cultural Centre- 9116314, 9118531, 9118314 Drik Photo Gallery- 9120125, 8112954, 8123412	Bus No. Route Starts from 1 Gulistan-Shahbagh-Banglaminor-Farmgate-Mirpur 10, 11, 12 Golap Shah Mazar 2 Gulistan-Shahbagh-Banglaminor-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 chattar- Mailbagh- Farmgate- Gulshan 2 Motijheel Shaplachattar 7 Sadarghat-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 2 Sadarghat 8 Chittagong-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asad Gate-Kalyanpur-Gabtolli Chittagong Road 9 Demra Rani mahal-Motijheel-Kalbagan-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 10, 11, 12 Demra Ranimahat 10 Sadarghat-Gulistan-Kakrail-Mailbagh-Rampura-Biwa Road-Tongi Bridge Sadarghat 11 Sayedabad-Motijheel-Fakirapool-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Tongi Bridge Sayedabad 11/A Sayedabad-Khilgaon-Mailbagh-Rampura-Airport-Tongi Bridge Sayedabad 12 Shanir Akhra-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asadgate-Mohammadpur Shanir Akhra 13 Motijheel-Shahbagh-New Market-Jigatola-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
Gas Titas Gas Exchange (Emergency)- 9563667-8 Kawrnabazar- 8112135-42 Mirpur- 8014132-3 Mohammadpur- 9117215, 9113903 Mohakhali- 9884741, 9885922, 8824993 Motijheel- 9667612	TIPS Do not use mobile phones while	Museum and Zoo National Museum- 8619396-9 Open: 10 am 5 pm, Friday 3 pm- 8 pm, Thursday closed Muktijuddha Jadughar- 9559091 Open: 10:30 am 6:30 pm, Sunday Closed Bangabandhu Smiti Jadughar- 8110046 Open: 10 am 5 pm, Wednesday closed Ahsan Manzil Open: 10 am 5 pm, Friday: 3 pm - 7 pm, Thursday Closed Shishu Jadughar- 9666466 Open: 10 am- 6 pm, Sunday Closed Sonargoan Jadugha		