

# Human smuggling on the rise

Dhaka has become a major transit point for trafficking of women and children

AVIK SANWAR RAHMAN

Dhaka city has become a major transit point for external and internal human trafficking, according to the Action Against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children (ATSEC) Bangladesh Chapter.

The anti-trafficking action group carried out a survey on 406 women and children and found 178 of the victims sexually abused in and trafficked out of Dhaka.

The scope for work has heightened the trend of human trafficking. The Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) has recorded a case against Pacha Bibi for human trafficking. Pacha Bibi, who was arrested, had smuggled more than 500 teenage girls within two years from Mymensingh with a promise of well-paid jobs in Dhaka, complained Rafiqul Islam whose daughter Rokhsana was one of the victims.

With the licensed brothels in Tanbazar in Narayanganj and on English Road in Dhaka disman-

tled, mini brothels sprouted in residential areas and hotels in the capital.

The teenage girls are sold and resold to such brothels and also to those in Tangail, Jamalpur, Goalondo, Baniashanta, Mymensingh and Jessore.

Dhaka is also prone to external trafficking because of the shady business by travel agencies, most of which are located in Arambagh, India, Dubai and Kuwait are the main destinations of external trafficking from Bangladesh and prostitution, body organ sale, 'domestic work' and 'job' as camel jockey have been the main traps.

Three traffickers were arrested in a hotel in Arambagh on 23 February, 2003 when they were preparing to send four boys, aged 10-12, to Dubai for jobs as camel jockeys.

Salma Akhter Jotsna was sent to Dubai through Zia International Airport on March 2003 by her husband's friend Zulhas with the allure of a better job.

She was sold to an Arab and subjected to sexual exploitation. Jotsna came back home after her

father offered Zulhas Tk 50,000 for her return. After she arrived on May 15, Jotsna was admitted to One Stop Crisis Centre of Dhaka Medical College, established for one stop medical, police and lawyer's service to the victims.

Although the government has a safe custody shelter in Lalmatia for the women victims, it did not build any such home for boys. However, the BNWLA has a shelter for boys in Lalmatia and another for women in Agargaon.

According to the ATSEC survey, 69 per cent of the victims are females, trafficked internally and externally, while 51 per cent belong to the 11-18 age group, 52 per cent are illiterate or can only sign their names and 81 per cent are from the poor class.

"The reasons for trafficking are mainly poverty and lack of awareness, and ATSEC is concentrating on awareness building," said Khadiza Bilkis, project director of ATSEC Bangladesh Chapter.



Young women like these, attracted to the city in search of jobs, are targeted by traffickers.

## Kamlapur operating against the odds

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Kamlapur Railway Station, being the major railway link of the country has been operating persistently, over the last forty years, despite all the problems it has been facing.

Kamlapur Railway Station, at present, has 14 Inter-City trains and 11 other Mail and Express Trains. When an official of the station, was asked about the problems, he said: "We are constantly facing shortages. We have underhanded labor and we do not even have extra train coaches, in case of emergencies." Such emergencies occur when the coach or bogey of a particular train may need to be repaired or might even get permanently damaged. The shortage of bogeys in such situations, create suffering for the normal passengers by causing delays in the train schedules.

"Kamlapur is also extremely dirty and unclean as anybody would notice," he said. This is actually due to the shortage of sweepers needed to maintain a

station as busy as Kamlapur. "We also lack platform sheds on Terminals 1, 4 and 5 where in case of rain, heat and so on, the passengers waiting for the next train usually suffer," he said.

He further mentioned that the otherwise criminal problems of Kamlapur such as thefts, black market of tickets would have been easily curbed if the Railway Security Force would have been stricter about these very matters.

When another senior official of Kamlapur was asked about these problems, he said: "We have been operating in such dire circumstances for the last forty years. The last recruitment for the Railway Department was made in 1985 which accounts for the shortage of sweepers and other necessary employees for the station."

"Thankfully, with the recent budget, the government has granted us some funds with which we can hopefully, undertake the necessary schemes in order to overcome these undesirable problems."

## Traffic police adding to traffic problems

CITY CORRESPONDENT

City traffic is suffering from gross mismanagement on the street by traffic police. Lack of training and planning is creating havoc for the flow of traffic. The irresponsibility and lack of expertise of the traffic police on the intersections aggravate the traffic problems of the city.

Sometimes traffic on 'VIP roads' is inexplicably stopped

for 15 to 20 minutes and commuters are forced to pay higher fares due to the delays. On the intersection of Fakirapool Bazar intersection, yesterday, at 10:30 am, traffic of the VIP road virtually stood still for 20 minutes. "I was waiting for the manual green signal of the traffic police and when the time came after 20 minutes I suddenly noticed that the amount on the metre of the taxi cab had doubled during this halt," said a commuter.

Taxi cabs, CNGs, bus and truck drivers also complain that some traffic police use extortion to claim Tk.100 to

Tk. 200 without any reason or for waiving the punishment if any driver has broken any traffic rule.

The on duty police sergeant, Iftekhar, however, blamed the VIP persons of the city for stopping traffic on the Fakirapool intersection.

## Karwan crisis

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Roads at Karwan Bazar, a major thoroughfare of the city, have become extremely inconvenient for commuters since a large part of these roads were illegally occupied and in very bad shape.

The main road of Karwan Bazar that stretches between Karwan Bazar Kitchen Market and Karwan Bazar Masjid Market has a width of 150 feet. But, the sellers from the surrounding markets expanded their business space, which left the road much narrower. In some places, they can be seen to be seated almost in the middle of the road with their commodities.

Moreover, the road causes a bone-shattering ride since its surface in most places is potholed and in some cases missing altogether.

"Maybe large vehicles like buses or trucks that are plied through these roads have caused the bad surface," commented Hamidul Haque, who works at a private organisation in Karwan Bazar.

A huge pile of garbage can permanently be seen dumped at the north end of this road. Mostly this is the organic waste of the vegetables and fruits that are sold in the surrounding markets. Though most other forms of garbage are also dumped there.

"Everyday huge trucks full of vegetable or fruits are brought in the area that dump straw, papers, or rotten vegetables on the road," noted an official of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC).

However, the DCC authorities noted they try to clean up the garbage on every alternate day using huge trailers with the sides covered. "We try our best

but lack the necessary resources to keep the roads clean," said Mohammed Abul Hasnat, Executive Engineer of Zone 6, DCC.

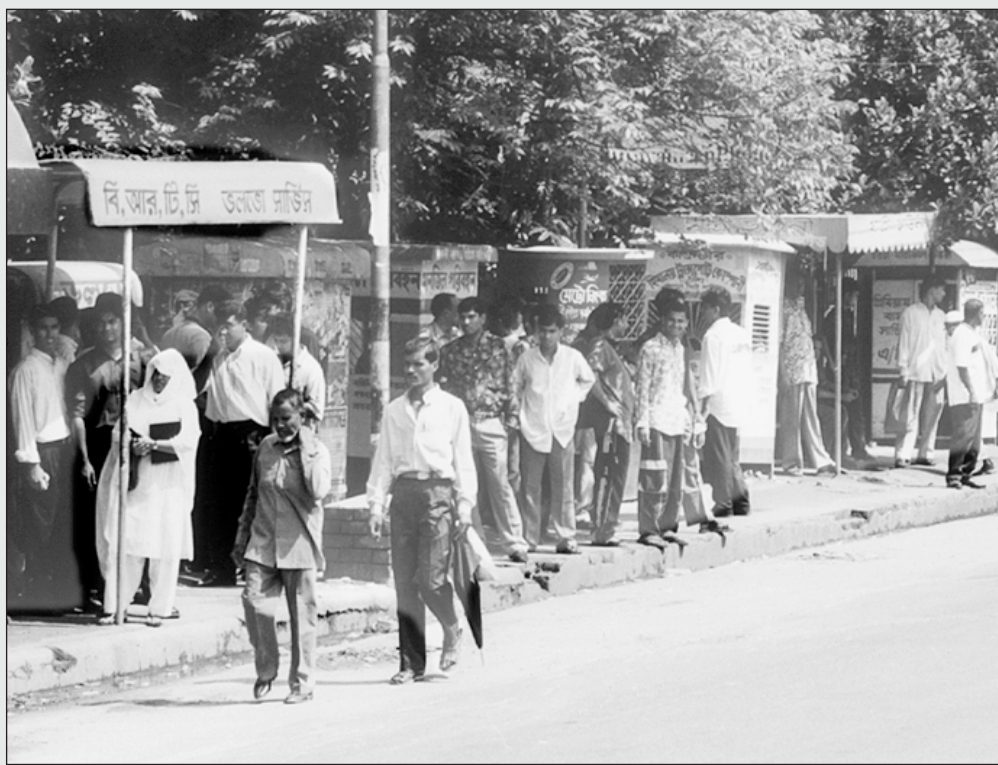
There is a legal warehouse permitted by Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha (RAJUK) at the ground floor of the DCC zonal office at Karwan Bazar. But another illegal makeshift warehouse (*aarat*) has been made adjacent to the DCC office that blocks entirely the road leading eastward from the front of the Water and Sewage Authority (WASA) office. The road is of 30 feet width that connects the eastern area of Karwan Bazar with the main road.

It is the local musclemen having connections to every political party, who built the warehouse, said sources inside DCC.

Since the owners of the warehouses basically lease their spaces to sellers, they try to occupy as much space as they can, sources added.

There was a plan to develop Karwan Bazar as a commercial area during the ruling period of Jatiya Party, said a DCC official. The kitchen market and warehouse were supposed to be shifted to the other side of Tongi Diversion Road, he added. However, it has not happened as yet and the area became totally messed up.

"The area of Karwan Bazar was developed by RAJUK and handed over to DCC," noted executive engineer Abul Hasnat. "Now the DCC has no other option but to continue as things are going now," he added. He said kitchen markets and warehouses can not be shifted unless there is a proper place with proper road communication. However, he noted the roads will be carpeted very soon.



## Ticket counters cluster sidewalks

BISHAWJIT DAS

Many of the city's sidewalks are being taken over by bus ticket counters, much to the trouble of pedestrians.

The long lines of counters are creating a nuisance and adding to, instead of easing, travel hassles so common in the city.

The pavements around the Banani and Gulistan bus stops, for example, are almost

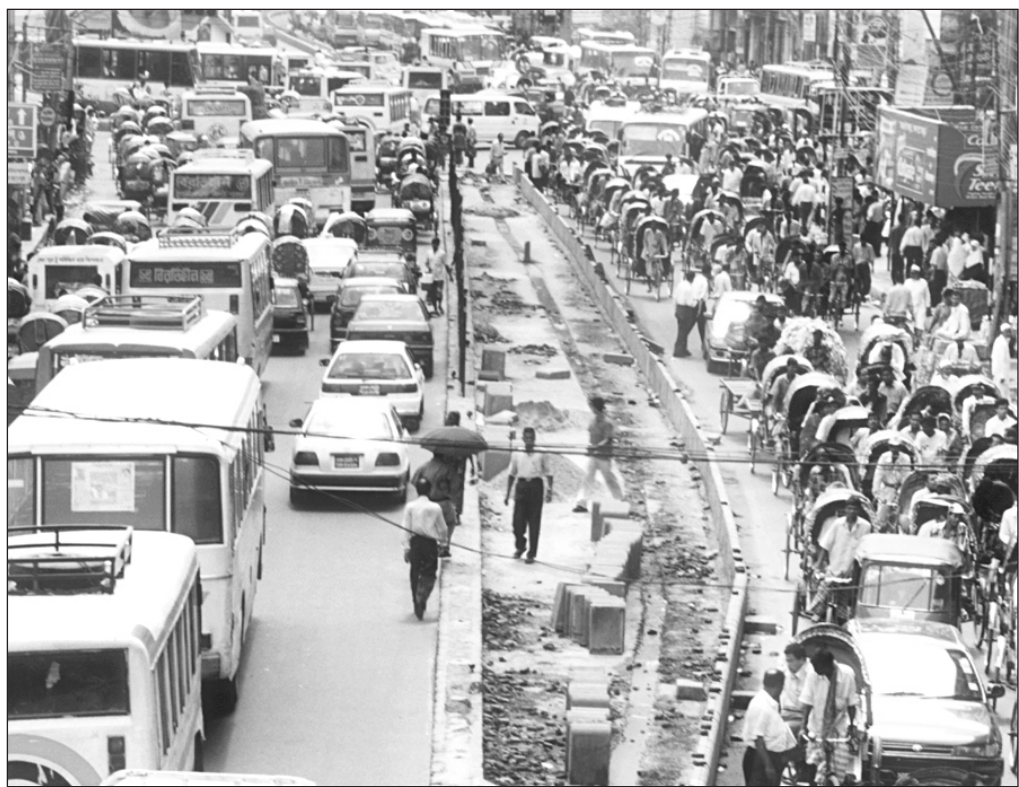
fully occupied by counters for the various bus services and their routes.

The area of pavement around Banani bus stand alone has 10 ticket counters.

The trickle-down effect of this is that the overhead footbridge near the Banani bus stand is now less used, as people prefer not to have to jostle their way through the human traffic jamming the area around the access to the bridge.

The sides of the pavement have been walled in, to prevent pedestrians crossing the road at this busy junction, and to ensure they use the footbridge. But the pedestrians have to elbow their way through the crowds of passengers waiting for buses.

"We avoid the bridge as much as possible. We don't want to face the pushing and shoving of the passengers," said Mahmud of Banani.



Mismanagement by traffic police adds to traffic problems in the city.

### newsagain

## Simi's story still not ended

CITY REPORT

The family of Simi, the young art student who felt she had no recourse in life but to commit suicide in 2001, is now facing threats from the same group of thugs who had harassed her.

These same hooligans began threatening Simi's family as soon as regular police patrols in the Meradia area ceased. With a lack of police vigilance in the vicinity for two consecutive days this week, Khalil, one of the accused in Simi's suicide case, went to the family residence and threatened to kill them all.

After the death of Simi, Home Minister, Ataf Hossain Chowdhury, deployed an increased police presence in the area to ensure safety.

The Sub Inspector of police of Khilgaon thana, Nurul Islam, said that Simi's father should apply to Rajarbagh police

barracks for a permanent deployment of police in the Meradia area. He said that Khilgaon thana was already running short of personnel and are at present forced to withdraw on-duty policemen for other emergencies. "The police force at present cannot ensure security 24 hours a day," Islam added.

In relation to the Simi suicide case, a previous Sub Inspector of Khilgaon thana, Abul Bashar, was accused with other local hoodlums Khalil, Doel, Mofazzal and Ripon. At present, all of the accused are at large subsequent to being granted bail.

Simi's mother Zerina Begum has alleged that the accused and their relatives have intimidated and harassed them on a regular basis. They threatened to intimidate Simi's elder sister, Saba, to such an extent that she too would end her life just as they had forced Simi to do.

## crisis telephone numbers

### COURIER SERVICES

#### 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

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

Overseas Courier Service- 9352431, 8321169

Pacific Courier- 9568446

Reliance Express Service- 9558515, 7110249

Sky International service- 9660442

Sky net world Wide Express- 9558062, 9560258, 7114787, 7113184

TNT Express- 9566662, 9558239, 8618155

#### National

Asian courier Service Ltd.- 8313543

Central Courier Service- 9881118

Confidence Courier Service Ltd.- 9567036

Chisty Courier- 7110177-9, 7100842-4

Dhaka Courier Services- 7236222

Solphin Courier- 9558802

Pioneer Courier Services- 9561727, 9569759

Probashi Courier Services- 9346359

Rainbow Express Parcel Services Ltd.- 8322773, 8315703

Reliance Express Services- 9558515, 7110249

Sundarban Courier Services- 9551984, 9556189, 9551656

#### Yellow Cab

Comfort 881710-4

Navana 9558065

Salida 9344477, 0171620881

Cosmo 9112959 and 8127191

Cab One 7113282-3

Nihon 8624741-2

Orion 9347277

Anudip 8125285 and 8127611

Capital 9352847

Union 8130485

Kool 0171826731

**Black Cab**

Cab Ex 9358401

Cabline 8321162

JBS Cab 019364575

Sajan 018126036

Anudip -- 8125285 and 8127611

Cab One 7113282-3

Palki 0171052500

Cab I 7113282

Jatri 0171540074

Nipun 9572277

R-Cab 8914782

Star Cab 9571919

Shihab 018202477 & 018228675

#### 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 Jadughar

Open: 10 am 5 pm, Wednesday Closed

Dhaka Zoo- 9002954, 9002020

Open: 9am 5 pm, Sunday Closed

### 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

Mohammadpur- 9117215,9113903

Mohakhali- 9884741, 9885922, 8824993

Motijheel-9667612

#### WASA

WASA (PABX)- 8117829-31

Mirpur- 9000519

Mohammadpur- 8120192

Fakirapool-9115343

Asad Gate- 8917492

Uttara- 9559142, Segunbagicha- 7316348

Patla- 8113900-39

#### Fire Services

Siddique Bazar (HQ)- 9556667

Mohammadpur- 9112078

Khilgaon- 7218329

Mirpur- 9001055

Tongi- 9801070

Demra-7400111

Postagola- 7410771

Sadarghal- 7119759

Mirpur 10 Circle- 9002269, 9001055

Mirpur TVG Complex- 9001189

### DO YOU KNOW

Fire services provide cheap, fast and efficient ambulance service too?

