

FOOD ADULTERATION

## Mobile court drive set to end

IMRUL HASAN

Dhaka City Corporation's (DCC) mobile court drive against production and selling of adulterated food will not continue anymore as the magistrates who are conducting the drive will be engaged in their judicial job, sources in the DCC said.

"Due to the involvement of magistrates in a large number of cases and insufficient number of police personnel, our drives against food adulteration will be discontinued," said Colonel Md Azizul Haque, the chief health

officer of DCC.

The government last year formed a total of 35 mobile courts in a vigorous campaign against adulteration of food in Dhaka City and elsewhere. After a successful drive before and during the Ramadan, the courts resumed the drive on December 26.

The drive has some positive impact on food business in the city, but a section of dishonest businesspeople continue their malpractices even after being punished.

"The situation is of course better than what it was in the

past, but the drive was not that much effective," said first class magistrate Rokon-ud-Doulah who led a mobile court.

"Some businesspeople have changed their approach, which is a good sign," Rokon added. "While visiting a superstore in Gulshan for the second time we noticed that standard of their items was upgraded what we hadn't seen during the first drive."

A high official of a mobile court said every businesspeople should know about the rules and laws related to his trade and they should follow the rules

strictly.

However, some sweetmeat and fast food shop owners are unhappy about the mobile court drive. They said the mobile courts have fined them despite the fact that there are no specific rules regarding maintenance of hygiene and use of chemicals in food items.

Selim Muzaffar Ahmed, one of the directors of a shopping complex on Kuril Biswa Road, said, "The drive is definitely a positive initiative, but a clear guideline is needed so that the businessmen are aware of their faults."

When contacted, Md Mokhtar Ahmed, a magistrate who led a mobile court, said: "Every shop owner has legal right to appeal against the mobile court's judgement. But in most cases they don't appeal and it proves that they are guilty."

Finding widespread irregularities and unhygienic situation in food business, the government formulated the Pure Food Act, 2005. The new law has the provision to fine the adulterators from Tk 75,000 to Tk 2 lakh and sentence them to maximum three years in jail.

The drive against food adul-

teration slowed down after the Eid-ul-Fitr due to the vast administrative activities for Saarc Summit and the country-wide panic caused by serial bomb blasts. After a break of two months, the mobile courts resumed the drive in December.

"We were in action during the month of Ramadan. The overall standard of food items selling in the city is now better than before. So the drive can be slowed down gradually," a high official of DCC said on condition of anonymity.

## Rail lines and surroundings an eyesore

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

Contrary to beautified roads, medians and footpaths, the rail lines in the city are dirty, and the bad odour gives a negative impression to passengers.

The track from Kamalpur railway station to Mohakhali crossing is in a very bad condition that passengers usually keep the window shutters down. The same goes for the rail line between Kamalpur and Narayanganj.

Kamalpur railway station has more than 13,000 passengers on weekdays and the number exceeds 20,000 on weekends. It is impossible for one cross the city area without hold their noses and shutting their eyes.

"The bad odour and view compels me to keep the windows shut. If one dares to look out, a scene of toilets, garbage and other dirt which are intolerable is visible," said Rafiqul Islam, a weekly passenger of Bangladesh Rail.

"When I enter the city by road, feel proud as a citizen but when I take the train, I feel sad," said Badruzzaman Khan, another weekly passenger on Dhaka-Mymensingh route.

A look from a train window is the same throughout the journey a large number of slums with 10 times more dwellers, a number of dirty kitchen markets, lines of open toilets, dumping grounds and others.

"Open toilets and dumping grounds compel us not to look out of the window till the train passes Tongi," said Rokanuddin, another passenger.

The journey from Kamalpur to the Airport station is a common stretch to all parts of the country except Narayanganj, with the Khilgaon kitchen market first followed by the Khilgaon Bishwa road slum, that continues to the Malibagh and Maghbazar kitchen markets and the Maghbazar

slum. This slum glides into the slums on the Sonargaon road.

The situation is deplorable after the Film Development Corporation (FDC) crossing where Karwan Bazar, the biggest wholesale and kitchen market is situated followed by the Tejgaon then Nakhla para slums, whose density and pollution is at its highest.

"Evenings are the worst, especially crossing the Karwan Bazar fish wholesale market. It stinks! Businessmen dry containers, mats and the awful smell of drying fish reach at its peak at this time," said Riaz Uddin, a regular passenger.

Water bodies alongside the railway lines in this area are now used only as toilets and dumping ground spreading bad odour round the clock.

"Every inch on the both sides of the railway lines is highly contaminated. We cannot bear all this, but are compelled to do so as fares are cheap," said Rafiqul Islam, a Dhaka-Chittagong passenger.

The destination of the stools from enormous number of open toilets is either the open spaces or water bodies making adjoining areas unbearable for living.

"I cannot open the windows on the southern side of my house because of bad smell and unpleasant sight of the rail lines," said Rokeya Akter, a resident of Boro Maghbazar.

Slum children use the rail lines as toilets and there is none to check such misdeeds.

"The shortest route to my residence is along the rail lines, which I use with much caution as they are dirty with human faeces," said Kasem, a retail green grocer who buys his vegetables from Karwan Bazar and sells them at Nakhla para.

Passengers too, are responsible for making the situation bad. Although the railway authorities have requested

passengers not to use toilets within the city limits most of them do not pay heed to the request.

"The use of toilets is forbidden when the train is in the station but passengers ignore the rule, thus making the station dirty," said Nitendra Chandra Shaha Station master-2, Kamalpur station.

The Bangladesh Railway (BR) authorities too want to improve the situation but cannot do so due to various obstacles.

"Long term planning and a big sum of funds are required to improve the situation, along with attention from high level government authorities," said M Abdullah, additional director (infrastructure) BR.

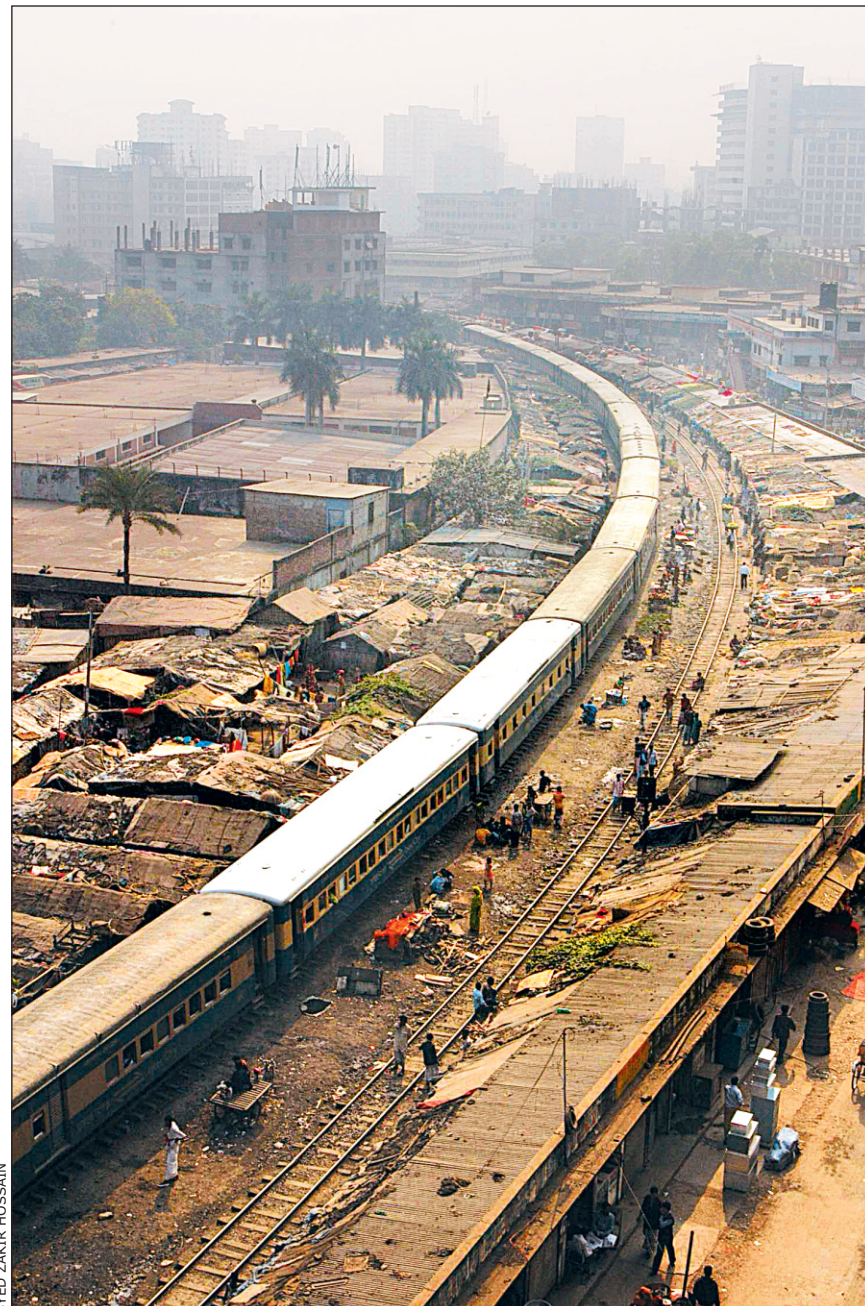
Another BR official said the slums are considered as a 'vote bank' and for many other reasons this issue has been politicised.

"Whenever we plan to evict slums alongside the rail tracks, high levels of government authorities forbid the action. There is no possibility of eviction this year because of the forthcoming elections and we have already been unofficially notified not to do so," said the official.

On the other hand, members of Dhaka City Beautification Cell (DCBC) -- the supervising body for the beautification of the capital -- said they could try to improve the situation if they are assigned to do so.

"The entire property is owned by the railway. If they ask us and get support from various governmental departments, we can take steps to bring the railways within the city beautification project," said Commodore Sohail Farouque, member secretary DCBC.

But, he added that the project could be complicated and demands a concrete decision from the government.



Both sides of the rail lines from Karwan Bazar to Kamalpur lined with dirt.

### city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.

*"It all happened within seconds of the accident. It was always in my mind that I must reach the window and keep my children's faces above water so that they can breathe"*

-- Noor Nabi

A 30-year-old father of three

Said while talking about making an important decision to save either his children or his wife when the whole met with a serious bus accident in Savar on Friday.  
Source: The Daily Star

*"We had no option but to keep the hide prices low as the cost of chemicals and salt required for processing rawhide already went unusually high"*

-- Tipu Sultan

President, Bangladesh Finished Leather Goods and Footwear Exporters Association (BFLFEA)

Said when asked about the conflict over hide price of sacrificial animals after Eid, on Friday.  
Source: The Daily Star

*"Agencies' tendency to flout rules and negligence to public suffering cause not only obstruction to public movement but also endanger public health"*

-- Nasir Uddin

Resident of Badda

Told Star City venting his anger on the negligence of agencies during road digging, on Sunday.  
Source: The Daily Star

*"We did not get bonus during Eid-ul-Fitr and the owners continued to deprive us of the bonus for this Eid."*

-- A garment worker in Dhaka

Told Star City about not getting the festival bonus from the readymade garments factory owners, on Sunday.  
Source: The Daily Star

*"You can not hold a meeting with a sleeping person"*

-- Munsef Ali

Election Commissioner

Told journalists about calling a meeting after the High Court order on voter list and the CEC's illness, on Sunday.  
Source: Prothom Alo

### NOT EASY TO GET HOME



Crowds struggled their way to find a place even on bus-tops in a desperate effort to get home in time a day before for Eid-ul-Azha. Those who were fortunate, managed to get home, while those left behind had to perform Eid prayers at what point they were stuck at.

## Rescued babies find home at last

NOVERA DEEPTA

The two infants rescued from the Sabujbagh area on January 3 this year have found a permanent home. An army officer and his wife took them in for adoption last Monday (January 9).

The foster father, a major in the medical corps of Bangladesh army, said preferring anonymity: "The babies are completely in good health and we are taking good care of them. We will do our best to ensure a bright future for both of them just the way we would have done for our own children."

The babies, a 17-day old boy and a 10-day old girl, were rescued from the house of one Jharna Begum of Khilgaon. Jharna claimed that she bought the babies for Tk 22,000 from a middleman, named Shilla, a special attendant of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Police have arrested Jharna Begum and Manik, Shilla's husband, but have not been able to trace the real parents yet.

Two days after their rescue,

police on January 5 handed over the infants to the temporary custody of one Rukhsana Begum of Madhya Badda when she came to Sabujbagh Police Station after watching a TV report on them.

Rukhsana said: "I watched the babies on ATN Bangla and was so moved that when my youngest daughter Oishi told me to bring them home, I rushed to the police station."

When she arrived, Rukhsana found the babies lying on the "ice-cold" floor of the police station. "The boy had already caught a cold and the girl could hardly open her eyes. I just could not leave them there like that."

Rukhsana and her family looked after the babies for five days. But their joy did not last for too long. She said: "Police suddenly came to my house on January 9 morning, with the foster parents and took them away from us."

An emotional Rukhsana said: "I cannot forget their faces. The police could have asked me if I was interested in adopting the babies. They became a part of our family. My children lost their



The two newborn babies rescued by the police from a housewife in Khilgaon.

own siblings."

The middle-aged couple, which adopted the babies, is childless and had been looking for newborn babies for adoption since they heard that they could not have children.

"After doctors confirmed that

we cannot have children, we had been, for the last few years, looking forward and planning to adopt a child. When I read the news about these two unfortunate infants in the Prothom Alo, I did not waste any time in deciding to adopt them," the foster father said.