

## Sir, are you real or fake?

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

The police, last month arrested four fake 'policemen' clad in Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) uniforms, including all accessories, from the centre of the city, who posing as members of the Detective Branch have been extorting money from Motijheel, Paltan, New Market and Dhanmondi areas.

The government has no control on the trade of Police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) uniforms and other accessories, paving way for unscrupulous individuals to pose as law enforcers and cheat people thereby.

This situation has given rise to many cases of robbery, mugging and cheating by criminals in disguise of law enforcers, mostly because of the negligence of the police and those in charge.

There are three markets in Dhaka where uniforms and other accessories of police and Rab are sold. The vendors of the markets ought to be first enlisted in police department's traders list.

"We grant the vendors permission when we are sure that our requirements can be met, and then enlist them in our list of traders," said an official of the Police Headquarters. He could not, however, explain what other requirements were necessary to get permission.

He admitted that there were no strict regulations binding the vendors to any contract.

Polwell is the biggest



One of the many shops in the Polwell Market that supply police and Rab uniforms.

among the three markets housing around 35 shops.

Although most businessmen at Polwell said they were very cautious in selling these goods to the right persons, inquiries reveal there is no stringent method to check if the buyer belonged to law enforcing authority or not.

"We know most of our customers and if we have any doubts we check their ID cards," said Amar Shaha of Jonaki police store at Polwell

super market. "Yet we have to be cautious, because attitude of defence personnel plays a major part when we deal with them," he added.

"We know by experience if the buyer is a police officer or not. An officer identifies accessories by the proper terms meant for them, whereas an ordinary person cannot," said Abbas Ali of Bangladesh police store of the same market.

The other two markets are at

Kochukhet and Rajarbagh. Police personnel are provided two sets of uniforms a year from the department that they buy them from these markets.

"Field officers find two sets of uniforms a year insufficient to look smart, so we have to resort to buying extra sets from outside," said a traffic sergeant near the Polwell market.

High officials of the police department admitted that they do not have total control

over these markets.

A problem pointed out by another official was that all members of the police department do not have official ID cards. He also said that there was no strict rule that civilians cannot use any law enforcers' uniforms.

"If someone were in police or other security service's official dress we can arrest them in cases of fraud, but the public is not prohibited in using them," he added.

Although most businessmen at Polwell Market said they were very cautious in selling these goods to the right persons, inquiries reveal there is no stringent method to check if the buyer belonged to law enforcement authority or not

STAR PHOTO

## Motorbikes lose parking slot at New Market

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The tin-roofed shed set aside for motorcycle parking at New Market, opposite the car-parking slot has been demolished, alleged frequent shoppers.

Because of easy-to-commute and park role that motorbikes play, shoppers prefer to use this mode of transport, but now find it risky to park for fear of the parts being stolen.

Riders also allege that they have to carry their helmets along, which is an extra burden and weight while shopping. These too, they said would be stolen if kept with the bike.

Shoppers believe that a new parking arrangement for motorbikes will not be made soon as informed by toll collectors. If this happens, it is likely that many such shoppers to New Market might reduce in numbers, they said.

The shed that ensured safe parking for motorcycle users was demolished almost two months back. Since then the slot is used for car parking with no specific place for motorcycle parking.

Ali Hossain, a frequent shopper at New Market said: "A week after the parking was gone, I arrived with my wife to shop at New Market. It took only few seconds for a thief to snatch my helmet away as I got off my head!"

Other bikers too, said that such incidents of snatching

have become a big problem especially to shoppers on travel in motorbikes.

They also added that as the monsoons are approaching, it would not be possible to keep the bikes out in the open.

Motorbike users and parking fee collectors said that the shed has been removed to enable more cars to be parked, fetching higher revenue. The parking fee for a bike is Tk 2 while the fee for each car for two hours is Tk 5.

The fee increases from Tk 5 to 10 if the cars are parked for more than one and half-hours, the collectors added.

Toll collector, Selim Mia said: "We collect a maximum of Tk 350 to 500 a day from bike parking while Tk 7,000 to 8,000 at best is collected daily from the car park." "This is a reason why rent collectors evicted the bike-parking shed," he added.

Mohammed Shafiu Alam, rent collector, Bazar Circle-2 of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), who is in charge of the parking at New Market said that hawkers built a makeshift toilet beside the shed that turned out to be a place for the sale of drugs like Ganja and Heroin.

Mohammed Shahabuddin, ex-secretary of the New Market Malik Shamity agreed with Alam and added that hardly five bikers used the shed, putting to waste a large part of space.

Shafiu Alam added that if bikers start pressing for a parking place, a tin-shed parking could be put up anytime.

## Small industries in trouble for crisis of scrap metals

DURDANA GHIAS

Chan Mia, owner of a small furnace at Islambagh, is sitting in front of his small factory with a blank look on his face. He melts scrap metals in his furnace which is the only source of income for his family. For the last six months he is striving to survive with the factory because of a crisis of metals.

There are several hundred small furnaces in Shyampur, Jatra Bari, Rayerbazar, Islambagh, Jinjira, Lalbagh, Kamrangirchar and other parts of the Old Dhaka. Most of these factories are closing down because of the crisis.

Chan Mia and his peers buy

spare and scrap metals from the traders at the Becharam Goli of Rajani Bose Lane of Mitford Hospital area and melt those to make metal bars. Then they sell the bars to traders who supply those to industries dependent on metal such as electric cables and toilet settings.

"Previously I used to buy 1 kg metal for Tk 80 but now I have to buy the same for Tk 140," said Chan Mia. The selling price of 250 grams of metal is now Tk 35. This situation is going on for the last six months.

Md Sirajul Islam, a member of metal traders' co-operative society at Rajani Bose Lane said: "There is a shortage of every type of metal in the market. Previously

I used to buy 1 tonne metal a day but now I am buying only 200-300kg."

The supply of metal comes mainly from Chittagong where old ships are scrapped. Old ships are good source of metal. Bidders, mainly from Dhaka, buy the ship metals and sell those to the Old Dhaka traders for melting.

Sirajul said: The price of every type of metal, both local and imported, has increased in the market.

Six months ago the prices (per kg) were -- copper Tk 110, brass Tk 85, steamer brass Tk 110, lead Tk 30, local zinc Tk 40 and imported zinc Tk 80. The current prices are -- copper Tk 30, brass Tk 220-270, lead Tk 75, local zinc

Tk 120, imported zinc Tk 300-340. Asked why the prices have increased, the metal traders alleged that some dishonest traders in Chittagong are selling the metals abroad or 'smuggling' them to India creating a crisis in local market. This is happening because the price of metal is much lower in Bangladesh than in India.

"If I could buy more metals I would have a good profit but now I am just covering my costs," said Sirajul. He said another reason of the crisis is old ships are being brought to Bangladesh in a few numbers due to dollar crisis.

Golam Mostafa, a copper trader and president of the co-operative society, said: "We [Bangladesh] are buying the old ships spending foreign currencies but we are not getting the metals from these ships even though we are ready to buy these at quite a higher price."

"Some dishonest businessmen are smuggling out the metals forcing many small furnace factories to close down," he said.

"Previously we used to buy metals at much lower price so we could supply metals at a reasonable price. But now we are buying it at a higher price for the artificial crisis. So the selling prices have increased," said Mostafa.

"Industries like electric cables are dependent on metal as a raw material. The price of cables also increased because of this crisis," he added. "From our co-operative society we are planning to take this issue to the commerce ministry. The government should immediately stop the smuggling of metals."



Business in this shop on Rajani Bose Lane in Old Dhaka, has come to a standstill.



A makeshift shop of motor parts has been set up on the central reservation of a road in Dholai Khal area of the capital.

STAR PHOTO

SK ENAMUL HAQ