

## DOYAGONJ MARKET

# DCC helpless: Sweepers living for 14 years

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) sweepers are occupying the first floor of its market at Doyagonj having encroached it 14 years back, causing the government a huge loss annually. The market and its shops situated in the business hub of the city are high in demand but DCC could not lease, rent out, or sell 108 shops on the first floor as sweepers, along with their families are living there since the market was constructed in 1992.

Although DCC evicted the encroachers in 2002, the city authority could not hold on to the possession of the floor area for long as the sweepers came into occupation once again one and a half years back.

Such illegal occupation has brought the DCC a loss of Tk 1.14 crore each year, which could have been easily earned from monthly rents had the shops been leased out. Apart from this loss, DCC is obliged to pay all dues the Dhaka Electricity Supply Authority (DESA) for electricity consumed by the encroachers. DESA has already sent DCC several notices requesting clearance of the overdue bills.

Besides the monthly rent, the DCC could have earned a large amount in deposits for the space, if rented or leased out.

The DCC sweeper colony is located behind the Doyagonj market where these sweepers have been living for generations since the early British period and are not ready to leave, until they are provided with alternate housing.

Almost all sweepers in the area are non-Bengali speaking. "We are here since the British period. Why should we leave if there is no alternate housing for us?" said Arato, a sweeper living on the first floor of the market with his family.

"If the authorities evict us we will stop working. If the colony that is under construction could ensure houses for all of us we would leave the place," said Amitabh, another sweeper.

Businessmen are worried that the market might catch fire at anytime from the kitchens of these illegal occupiers as there are at least 40 shops on the ground floor selling inflammable materials like mobil and other petroleum products.

"Our businesses are at stake as they have made the entire area dirty. Since we have been trying to evict them, they are harassing us on purpose by piling garbage in front of the shops and keeping the area unclean," said Chowdhury Monwar Ali Beg, proprietor of Maa Steel House.

"We made several requests to the DCC to have these residents

removed, but we feel that the city corporation is somehow reluctant or are not capable of doing so. We have lost hope in getting rid of them," said Akter Hossain of J Alam and Brothers.

The sweepers said they were cautious about the shops that are selling oil on the ground floor.

"If the market catches fire we will be affected too. So we are also very cautious while cooking and do not disturb the businesses unless they do something wrong to us," said Devi, another first-floor resident.

Officials of DCC's revenue department admitted that these shops have a high demand at present and they are losing huge revenue because of this encroachment every year.

"It is true that we are losing revenue every year but we stand helpless on humanitarian grounds," said Akteruzzaman Khan, deputy chief revenue officer (Market), DCC.

DCC's estate officials said the decision of evicting these sweepers should come from the policy makers as the encroachers are the employees of DCC itself.

"We are ready to carry any decision passed down from the authorities. But it would take time as the matter is very sensitive," said Abu Taleb, chief estate officer DCC.

Officials of DCC's Bazar circle admitted that it is their failure on

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their part that they cannot free the market from encroachment, but that they too were helpless.

"We hope to get back the market very soon but it would not be an easy task," said Moshir Rahman, zonal executive officer, zone-2, DCC.



Sweepers have been squatting this DCC market at Doyaganj over a decade while DCC stands helpless on humanitarian grounds.



Rows of rickshaw vans lie idly in front of the Bangabandhu National Stadium, causing losses both to the owners and pullers during the hartal hours yesterday.

## New traffic

FROM PAGE 21

premises during the entire month to keep the space in front of hotels and restaurants for smooth movement of vehicles.

The traffic month begins September 20 and will continue till Eid-ul-Fitr. Traffic police will be given 200 new motorbikes while members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) will get 50 motorbikes soon to patrol the city, the ministry decided.

Besides Ansar members and 600 community policemen will also work alongside the traffic police during this period.

The authority will also conduct 15 mobile courts to seize about 13,000 unlicensed CNG-run autorickshaws and cabs to check use of these vehicles in criminal activities.

Different service providers like WASA, T&T, Dhaka City Corporation will be requested to avoid road digging during the month so that their activities will not increase sufferings of the commuters.

## DCC struggles to arrange car park

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However, the Prime Minister's Office then ordered the DCC to evict those shops after cancellation of the secret DCC allocation. The shop owners immediately moved to court and obtained a stay order on the eviction move by the city corporation.

In the meantime, DCC built a public toilet inside the designated parking space after getting fund from the Asian Development Bank for building 100 public toilets in the city.

Beside the DCC construction, a local influential also has constructed a building under the banner of Pragati Sangha, a club to serve as a recreation centre for local youths.

The DCC zonal office, responsible for maintenance and monitoring of DCC assets, is situated hardly 100 metres away from the illegally encroached spot. The zonal office did not have any clue about the encroachment on its

designated car park.

The Estate Department officials said they have not permitted any organisation to use this place let alone constructing a building.

"Any kind of structure except that public toilet in that park is illegal and we will evict these immediately," said Abu Taleb, chief estate officer of the corporation.

Expressing helplessness of the DCC over maintaining possession he said the corporation conducted several eviction drives against the encroachers but failed to maintain possession over the places.

"The encroachers return to the places as soon as we leave. Dhaka Metropolitan Police can help the DCC authorities over maintaining possession on the places," he said.

## Dhaka: Yesterday

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beautiful parliament building anywhere else. In other countries one cannot go in the vicinity of the parliament but in our country one can enjoy its beauty very closely. Other than this Ahsan Manjil, Salimullah Hall and Curzon Hall are also the places to be proud of.

**TDS:** What do you envisage for Dhaka in future?

**ZP:** If I had an option, I would not have been living here. Decentralisation process must be expedited soon, otherwise the situation will get worse in this already densely populated city. The city should have some model towns on the outskirts. I wish the city always looked like the way it does during long holidays, especially during Eid. The roads are choked with lots of private cars, which are the main reasons of traffic jam. The government should stop importing cars and introduce good city service transport system.

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Zakaria Pintu, captain of Swadhin Bangla Football team and first captain of National Football Team spoke to Wahida Mitu of Star City.

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Polwell Market-Friday  
BCS Computer City-Friday  
Isha Khan Shopping Complex-Friday  
Rajlaxmi Complex-Friday  
Stadium Market-Friday  
Bangabazar Market-Friday  
National Museum-Thursdays  
Ahsan Manzil-Thursdays  
New Market-Tuesday  
Gausia Market-Tuesday  
Mouchak Market-Sunday  
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday  
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday  
Eastern Plaza-Sunday  
Farmview Super Market-Sunday  
Muktijuddha Jadughar-Sunday  
Dhaka Zoo-Sunday  
Shishu Jadughar-Sunday