

DCC's security wing heading nowhere

The corporation's own security wing could be enforced to protect its properties and ensure services to the city dwellers

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

Lack of policing capability of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) is causing public sufferings as well as huge loss of revenues to the corporation.

The DCC has a security wing with 45 posts but at present 36 staff are working there. They do not have the capability to provide security to most of the corporation's structures including the Nagar Bhaban, the corporation's headquarters.

DCC Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka told Star City that they badly need law enforcement forces as the corporation cannot maintain security for its offices and staff and take action against those who occupy footpaths and land of the corporation.

He said most of the footpaths are occupied illegally. "We often evict illegal occupants by conducting drive but cannot maintain the result of the eviction. The occupants take their control on the footpath as soon as the DCC men left the area."

The mayor said they need help from the police to conduct such drives but in every case they have to wait for long for the police force.

Establishment of a metropolitan government with adequate policing capacity can solve the problem, a DCC official said, adding that due to lack of force the corporation incur huge revenue loss and its structures are damaged.

"The corporation needs forces to evict illegal markets, signboards on roads and to protect open spaces like playgrounds and water bodies,

During the Mughal period, Kotowal was the highest post in the city authority who was in charge of maintaining law and order and ensuring civic amenities for the citizens. In 1765, the British rulers abolished the post of Kotowal and in 1780s magistrates were appointed to address the security issues

he said.

Interestingly enough, the Dhaka city authorities had their own law enforcement force back in the Mughal period, said Prof Sharifuddin Ahmed, director of the National Archives and National Library of Bangladesh.

During the Mughal period, Kotowal was the highest post in the city authority who was in charge of maintaining law and order and ensuring civic amenities for the citizens.

In 1765, the British rulers abolished the post of Kotowal and in 1780s magistrates were appointed to address the security issues.

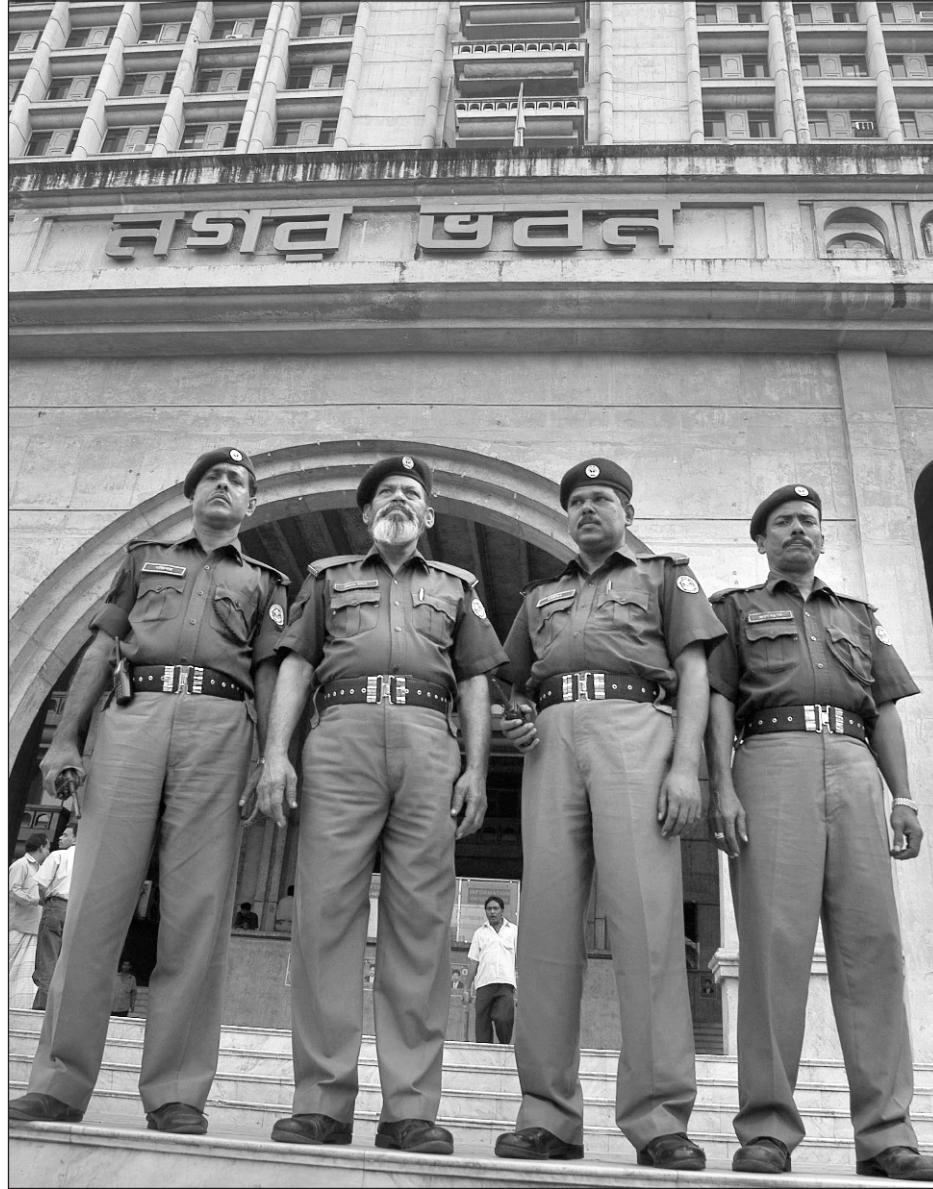
Prof Sharif said as the magistrates only looked after security issues, the city's civic services collapsed. The magistrates then appointed some sweepers to clean the city.

In 1813, the British government

introduced 'Choukidar' or night watchman equipped with spears. It also imposed Choukidar tax on the citizens.

In 1864 the government formed Dhaka Municipality and a magistrate was in executive charge of the municipality. The magistrate could handle the situation because he had law enforcement force and some manpower for providing civic facilities.

The situation changed when the election for the municipality started in 1884. The elected city authorities did not have any law enforcement force of their own. So they had to seek help from magistrates and forces from the law enforcement agencies.



A VICTIM OF MUGGING

'Nobody can rob me of my experience'

My love for this country, this city and the people here will not be diminished in any way. Actually this experience will even intensify my intimacy with Bangladesh

MIRIAM KUENZLI

Abruptly the list of my experiences got extended. In fact I am the victim of a bad mugging. I was on the way on a rickshaw to a photo call at the head office of the Grameen Bank on November 29.

Without any warning a black taxi came roaring from the left and jammed us. One of the passengers stretched out his arm and snatched my camera bag from my hands.

I instantly reacted by holding on to my bag. But I quickly realised that a car got more horsepower than a rickshaw. The rickshaw turned over and we all landed on the asphalt. I was so thunderstruck that I, in the first moment, did not know if I should laugh or cry.

Indeed I felt vulnerable, hurt and offended. It happened and nobody can turn back the clock. Actually I am a cautious person but I did not decide in favour of a risk-free profession and I indeed take the responsibility of myself.

There is also a good side to every experience. Therefore any reproaches are out of place. I

know so many who got mugged, threatened and beaten up. Now I am also one of them. It happens all over the world, even on the "safest" places.

My love for this country, this city and the people here will not be diminished in any way. Actually this experience will even intensify my intimacy with Bangladesh. To phrase it more precisely, I know now what I want ... to take photographs.

Maybe the camera had to get lost in order to understand how important pictures are. My obsession to record a happening and to offer those to others will continue. By today, the importance to convey my views to the people has become more important to me than ever before.

At the moment my tools are gone. But tools can be replaced, and unfortunately they will be again exposed to the risks. But my experiences can never be mugged.

Note: The writer, an intern photographer with The Daily Star, from Switzerland. She received a new camera from her family within a week of the incident.

8x10