

Ansars find no answers for 8 month delay in wages



Ansars deployed at the Mohakhali flyover to maintain traffic have not been paid since January this year.

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Ansars deployed at the Mohakhali flyover to maintain traffic have been in dire straits, as they have not been paid since January this year.

Last year, the Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP), the implementing agency of the flyover, employed 175 ansars to handle the traffic.

On April 20 this year, 75 ansars were withdrawn from the site because they proved redundant.

The Dhaka Transport Coordination Project (DTCP) in a letter on July 7 signed by its Additional Executive Director Abdul Baten requested the project director of Roads and Highways Department (RHD) under the DUTP to pay the outstanding salaries from Tk 50 lakh (traffic management funds). But the ansars did not get paid to date.

The letter further said the non-payment of salaries cannot be accepted at all after obtaining services from the ansars.

Baten also expressed disappointment, as the Chinese contractor of the Mohakhali flyover did not carry out any traffic management work. The letter also asked the project director not to

pay the contractor any amount from the funds.

Approached by phone, Mohakhali Flyover Project Director Shahabuddin declined to comment on any issue of construction, including salary of the ansars, saying, "I am not entitled to talking to the press. Go and find whether or not the ansars are paid."

The ansars at their camp at the Mohakhali flyover site told Star City that they have been surviving on meagre rations supplied by the Ansar Headquarters.

"Quite often, the rumour is around that we will get paid in the first week of this or that month. Nothing has so far been done or materialised. I don't know how my family members have been surviving in the village?" said Hafizur, commander of the ansar camp.

"The shopkeepers have also stopped giving us credit," Hafizur said with an air of frustration.

Tofail, an ansar, said, "The other day, my wife from our home village came to see me. She thought I went missing. She also let me know the village shopkeepers have also stopped giving them credits. This is how we are surviving."

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The concept of love has gone through a wholesale change over the last decade or so and now Bangladeshis are more bold and fearless in expressing their affection.

Nowhere is this change more visible than in Dhaka but lovebirds still have to fight against the odds regularly.

Abir and Nila were travelling in a rickshaw as they couldn't find a quite spot to sit after roaming all around the city. Suddenly three police constables stopped them at Shegunbagicha and rather indecently inquired: "What is the relation between you two?"

The brash query made the two youngsters speechless and they felt insecure. Noticing that, the potbellied senior constable growled: "You give us Tk. 200 or we'll arrest you."

Abir asked what their fault was and got the reply, "You were behaving indecently."

Surrounded by the men in uniform, Abir and Nila could do little to protest the totally false allegation and even the

crowd that had gathered around, didn't show them any sympathy.

In a tasteless twist to the incident, the frightened couple were made to hold their ears and perform sit-ups in front of the audience before they were let go.

Just as Abir and Nila found out, others too will tell you that the city is not an ideal place for the people in love. It's fair to say that there's hardly an open spot in Dhaka where couples can visit without the fear of harassment.

There are parks and open spaces like the Sehrawardi Uddyan, the Osmani Uddyan, Ramna Park, Chandrima Uddyan, Crescent Lake etc. but these are unprotected areas and anti-social activities and crime thrive there.

"Decent people can not go to the city's parks," said Emon.

"Fast food shops have become the meeting place for hundreds of couples like us. But can everybody afford to go to food joints regularly?" asked Emon's girlfriend Rehnma.

A court for women

AVIK SANWAR RAHMAN

A three-day meeting of South Asian women activists to realise the rights of women ended in Dhaka last Wednesday. As part of the meeting, a symbolic 'Court of Women' was held at the China-Bangladesh Friendship Centre, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, on August 12, where South Asian women who have endured beatings, rape and other abuse with little hope of getting justice shared their stories.

Testimonies of various women from South Asian countries were delivered in front of a jury board comprised of eminent personalities including Nomzamo Winnie Madikizela Mandela, the president of the Women's League, African National Congress, South Africa; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak of Columbia University, USA/India; Salma Sobhan, lawyer and founder member of Ain O Shalish Kendra, Bangladesh; and Faryal Ghaur, Women's Rights Activist, and artist of Pakistan.

The members of the jury listened to the live testimonies and viewed video tapes of the women throughout the day. The story of an Indian woman revealed the peculiar philosophy of a brothel where male customers who are HIV positive believe that they would be cured of their disease if they could have sex with young women. Like her many young women are systematically becoming the victim of the ignorant and heinous practice of men.

The testimonies of the women also revealed the fact that institutions of the state like the police, judiciary and

health systems, that are supposed to ensure the rights of citizens to justice, redress or care, are often the greatest violators of the rights of the people, particularly the poor and the vulnerable.

The testimonies also brought out the violence and injustice of the laws of the states on trafficking and HIV/AIDS. Incarceration of illegal immigrants has added to the misery of those who fall prey to traffickers, who are also often subject to exploitation and abuse in police stations. The women in the court also complained of forced testing, for HIV/AIDS at detention centres.

The forced repatriation of trafficked women to homes where they may face conditions of violence, discrimination or stigmatisation, and the irrelevant rehabilitation policies for survivors of trafficking, are some aspects of the dehumanising violence that deny rights and justice to the women.

The "court" issued a 12-point statement, including a need to improve the quality of grassroots education for the long-term eradication of patriarchal values, which it said is one of the causes for human trafficking and other forms of violence against women.

"We want a regional as well as an international court with transborder jurisdiction to allow perpetrators to be punished," said Salma Sobhan a leading Bangladeshi lawyer and one of the members of the court's jury board.

This was the 18th sitting of the "Court of Women".

Begging: not an easy way to make a living

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Rina, an eight-year-old girl walks into Dhaka city from Kamrangirchar each morning to earn money by begging. She does not know when she started begging. But as far as she can recall she used to come to the city while in her mother's lap. Now she roams around Dhaka University campus and begs throughout the day.

Everyday she earns at least Tk 30. For her earnings, she has to adopt different devices for different people. In order to earn just one taka, she puts in a huge effort. "Many people may think that begging is an easy profession. But in reality it is not, because we the beggars have to convince people that we are needy," explains Rina.

One day, Rina disappeared from the campus. Many of the students knew her and were sympathetic to her, not just because she was poor but also because of her eloquence. She reappeared again, but it seemed that a shadow had descended on her. "Now I don't feel like begging any more, because sometimes many so called

gentlemen behave like beasts," says Rina.

What was the reason behind her disappearance? Initially she tried to pretend that nothing had happened to her. Many enquired, but she continued to make-up answers and lies.

Later it was revealed that her mother prohibited her from telling anything to anybody. But at last, she vented out her anger and divulged the secrets which were haunting her days and nights.

"The day I disappeared, a well suited man -- who was driving a car -- told me to come along with him in response to my request for one taka." Then the man gently reassured her that he would give her Tk 20. "I was hungry and did not think twice about the proposal. I agreed," says Rina.

Afterwards she was taken to an unknown flat. She did not dwell on the details but says, "When I went home I was bleeding. But the man payed beyond my expectation. He gave me Tk 50."

Rina's case is not an isolated incident in the city. Many Rinas are facing such appalling incidents every other day.



Rina's case is not an isolated incident in the city.

useful telephonenumber numbers

OURIER SERVICES

International

Air Borne Express- 9561371, 9561372, 9550724
Air Couriers Intl (BD) Ltd.- 8815970
Aramex International Courier- 9558003, 9559582, 9565075
Airspeed Express- 9563494
Asian Courier Services Ltd.- 8313543
Baishakhi Courier Service- 9558606
Banmgladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114
Bangladesh Courier Sercive- 9563989
Bengal Express- 9560642, 9552666
Bangladesh Intl Courier- 953636
Continental Service Ltd.- 9552948, 9558425
DHL Worldwide Express- 9881703-7, 9886305-9, 9882057
Enem Express- 9330699
Fedex Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114
Modhuban Courier Service-

9550884
Overseas Courier Service- 9352431, 8321169
Pacific Courier- 9568446
Reliance Express Service- 9558515, 7110249
Sky International service- 9660442
Skynet world Wide Express- 9558062,9560258, 7114787, 7113184
TNT Express- 9566662, 9558239, 8618155
Union Courier Service- 9341722
United Parcel Service Air alliance Ltd.- 8826429, 8810223

National
Asian courier Service Ltd- 8313543
BAE- 9884851
Central Courier Service- 9881118
Confidence Courier Service Ltd. 9567036
Chisty Courier- 7110177-9, 7100842-4
Cosmopol Services- 9552793, 9557975

LIBRARY & INFO-

Libraries, Cultural and Information Centers

Central Public Library- 8626001-4, Shishu Academy- 9564128
Shilpakala Academy- 8614673
Bangla Academy- 8619550
Islamic Foundation- 9550280, 9556407
Nazrul Institute- 9114602
Ford Foundation- 8116133
Alliance Francaise- 8611557
British Council- 8618867-8, 8618905-7
Community Development Library- 8113769, 8113604
Goethe Institute Int'l- Dhaka- 9126525-6
Indian Information Centre & Cultural Library- 8615096
The Russian Cultural Centre- 9116314, 9118531, 9118314
Drik Photo Gallery- 9120125, 8112954, 8123412

TIPS

Do you know according to Dhaka City Corporation, you must deposit your waste at the collection site

ROUTING

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 Jadugha

CITY BUS ROUTE

Bus No. Route

1 Gulistan-Shahbagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 10, 11, 12
2 Gulistan-Shahbagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 1, 2
3 Gulistan-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Mahakhali-Airport-Azampur
4 Shyampur-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Airport-Tongi
5 Sayedabad-Kamalapur-Motijheel-Airport-Joydebpur-Gazipur
6 A Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Gulistan 1, 2
6 B Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 1, 2
6 C Motijheel Shapla chattr- Malibagh- Farmgate- Gulshan 2
7 Sadarghat-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 2
8 Chittagong-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asad Gate-Kalyanpur-Gabtol
9 Demra Rani mahal-Motijheel-Kalbagan-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 10, 11, 12
10 Sadarghat-Gulistan-Kakrail-Malibagh-Rampura-Biwa Road-Tongi Bridge
11 Sayedabad-Motijheel-Fakirapool-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Tongi Bridge
11/A Sayedabad-Khilgoan-Malibagh-Rampura-Airport-Tongi Bridge
12 Shanir Akhra-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asadgate-Mohammadpur
13 Motijheel-Shahbagh-New Market-Jhigatola-Shangkar-Mohammedpur
14 Signboard -Motijheel-Shahbagh-New Market-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 12
15 Chittagong Road-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Mirpur 12
24 Gulistan-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Airport-Uttara-Bipile

Starts from

Golap Shah Mazar
Phoolbaria bus station
Phoolbaria bus station
Shyampur
Sayedabad
Kamalapur
Kamalapur
Motijheel Shaplachattr
Sadarghat
Chittagong Road
Demra Ranimahal
Sadarghat
Sayedabad
Syedabad
Shanir Akhra
Motijheel
Signboard (Chittagong Road)
Chittagong Road
Gulistan