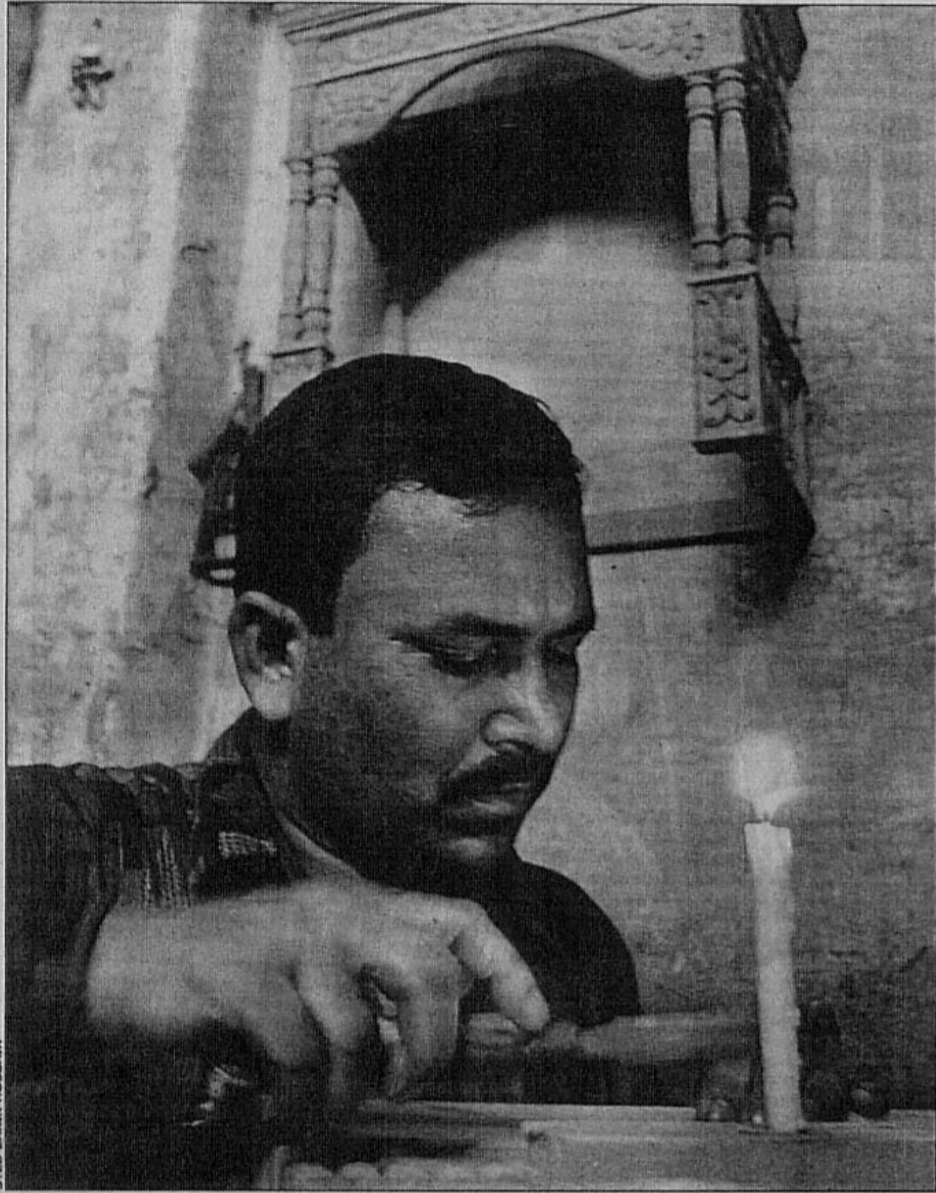


Power cuts dog Old Dhaka



A businessman works by the candlelight, a scene common to Old Dhaka that has been reeling from nagging power cuts for years.

Electricity supply to Faridabad, Gandaria and Postogola goes erratic because of worn-out distribution lines

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

The erratic electricity supply to Faridabad, Gandaria and Postogola in Old Dhaka has paralysed normal life as Dhaka Electricity Supply Authority (Desa) has not given a new lease of life to the system there over the last 10 years.

Residents allege they face continuous power failures because of worn-out distribution lines. The age-old transformers repaired now and then cause voltage fluctuations. They receive estimated bills, as most meters are not in working order.

"These bills are much higher than our actual consumption," said Nazmul Ahsan, a resident from Gandaria.

"Some locals have used illegal electricity connections with the aid of some Desa officials who manipulate the extra charges in our bills," he alleged.

Enraged residents formed an association, Faridabad Kalyan Samity (FKS), to protest persistent power cuts and invited Desa Chairman Abu Alam Mohammad Abdur Rab to a recent discussion. The association leaders informed the chairman that such electricity irregularities and shortage have become a routine occurrence hampering the normal lives of over

one lakh residents.

They placed an 11-point demand to regularise the supply and ensure equal distribution of electricity.

"We cannot ensure an uninterrupted supply of water to every household because of low voltage and erratic power supply as water supply system depends on the availability of electricity," said FKS President GM Ansari.

Students suffer most, as they cannot prepare for schools because of the daily power failures. Production in small industries too has been affected, industrialists said.

"We cannot recall when we enjoyed a regular power supply. No complaints can be made as the complaint-booth has no telephone," said Zahurul Alam, a businessman in Postogola.

Contacted, the Desa chairman said: "Estimated bills may differ sometimes, but it is not always exaggerated. We have taken initiatives to address the crisis."

"We have already sanctioned 10 transformers, a land phone for the complaint centre and at least 500 new metres to avoid made-up bills," the chairman said. He denied the allegation of providing illegal lines by Desa officials.

He told Star City that they planned to make a quick survey of the areas to identify problems and will try to solve them soon.

Calls to 999 for police help go unanswered

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police's (DMP) emergency service 999 operating since last year has often failed to serve its purpose.

The 24-hour service was launched to provide immediate assistance for any caller in distress whether at home or on the streets.

Although many complain that the service is not playing its specified role, the police say the three-shift work goes in full swing.

According to some assistance seekers, the police do not attend to the emergency on the spot and sometimes advise people to go to the nearest police station.

"A gang attacked me to snatch my car on Fuller Road in March. I threw my key on the road in a flash and rang 999 for help. I was advised to go to the nearest police station," said Businessman Hassan Ahmed from Mohammadpur.

"Is this immediate service we seek?" Ahmed asked in exasperation.

An export-import business owner complained that extortionists demanded a toll of Tk 30,000 at work. He called 999 thrice for help but received no response.

"I called the police for help but did not receive any response. After the culprits left I was able to reach 999 to be told that I should contact the nearest police station," said the businessman from Segunbaghicha.

People deal with problems on their own, as they have no confidence in the police. Most business-oriented people have to pay

money in tolls for safety.

"Life is more important than wealth. I think it is wise to accept reality," said Sarwar Rahman of Khejurtoila in Tejgaon.

"I called 999 to get protection from the threat of a local hoodlum but no action was taken," said Khondaker Kamal Ahmed, a Green Road resident.

The officials of the 999 help line expressed different views. "Everyday we receive some 3,000 telephone calls for help. On receiving the complaints we inform the police control room to help the people in trouble," said Monirul Hassan, a 999 operator. "Sometimes we get false complaints. We do not pay heed if we feel the complaint is not authentic."

"When we find the control room or the patrol police busy, we then advise the complainant to call the local police station," the official said.

Assistant Inspector General of Police Mahub Hakim (Equipment and Transport) takes care of this help line on behalf of the inspector general of police. "I am not in a position to comment on the issue. But I will request those concerned to be more sincere," he said.

"We are conscious about the help line. The insincerity of operators may be the cause of these complaints. I will issue an immediate order to serve people properly from 999," said DMP Commissioner Ashraf Huda.

A gym culture growing

FAIZUL A TANIM

Dhaka residents are becoming more and more health-conscious these days and the impressive turnout at gymnasiums and fitness centres that have popped up around the city over the last couple of years bears testimony to this trend.

The first quality gymnasium in the private sector was South Avenue in Gulshan-1 which started functioning exactly four years ago.

"At that time only hotels Sonargaon and Sheraton had good gyms. We felt that fitness centres should be considered as health maintenance establishments and should be spread across the city. Our vision took shape on June, 2000 and there was no looking back," said Murshed Sayeed, consultant and specialist for South Avenue.

While South Avenue played the pioneering role, the idea quickly generated excitement among other interested parties. Soon Sports Zone was set up in Mohakhali, Thunderbolt

emerged in Dhanmondi, Ratan's and the women-only Leap opened in Gulshan and finally the exclusive Gold's Gym chain centre came into being. And according to gym instructors, business is booming.

"We had introduced equipment from the Life Fitness brand from the very beginning to gain the confidence of the clients," said Numayr Enam, director marketing of Thunderbolt.

"What these gyms provide are convenient locations, top quality equipment, wonderful atmosphere, good instructors and most importantly, a sense of security," said Shahriar Taha of Gulshan while working out at South Avenue.

Anwar Hossain, a businessman and a regular member of Thunderbolt and many others echoed the same sentiment.

"Although new gym users may not see results in the first couple weeks of working out, they will most definitely start to feel better. After some time, they can start noticing the difference," says Israar Khan,

senior manager of Gold's Gym in Bashundhara City.

"We have also added cardiovascular equipment from Startrack, Flex Strength machines and Ivanko free weights which are globally renowned and offer the best quality service. Because of our initiative, Startrack has decided to market its products in Bangladesh as it is a brand for the Gold's Gym chain," Khan informed.

Almost all of these gyms maintain a separate duration exclusively for women. Gold's Gym however, has an independent floor for ladies.

Most of them offer steam rooms, sauna, Jacuzzis, personal lockers and aerobics classes with special instructors. Gold's Gym even has a swimming pool.

People of different age groups prefer to use the gyms at their convenience. Mothers and housewives mostly come around in the morning.

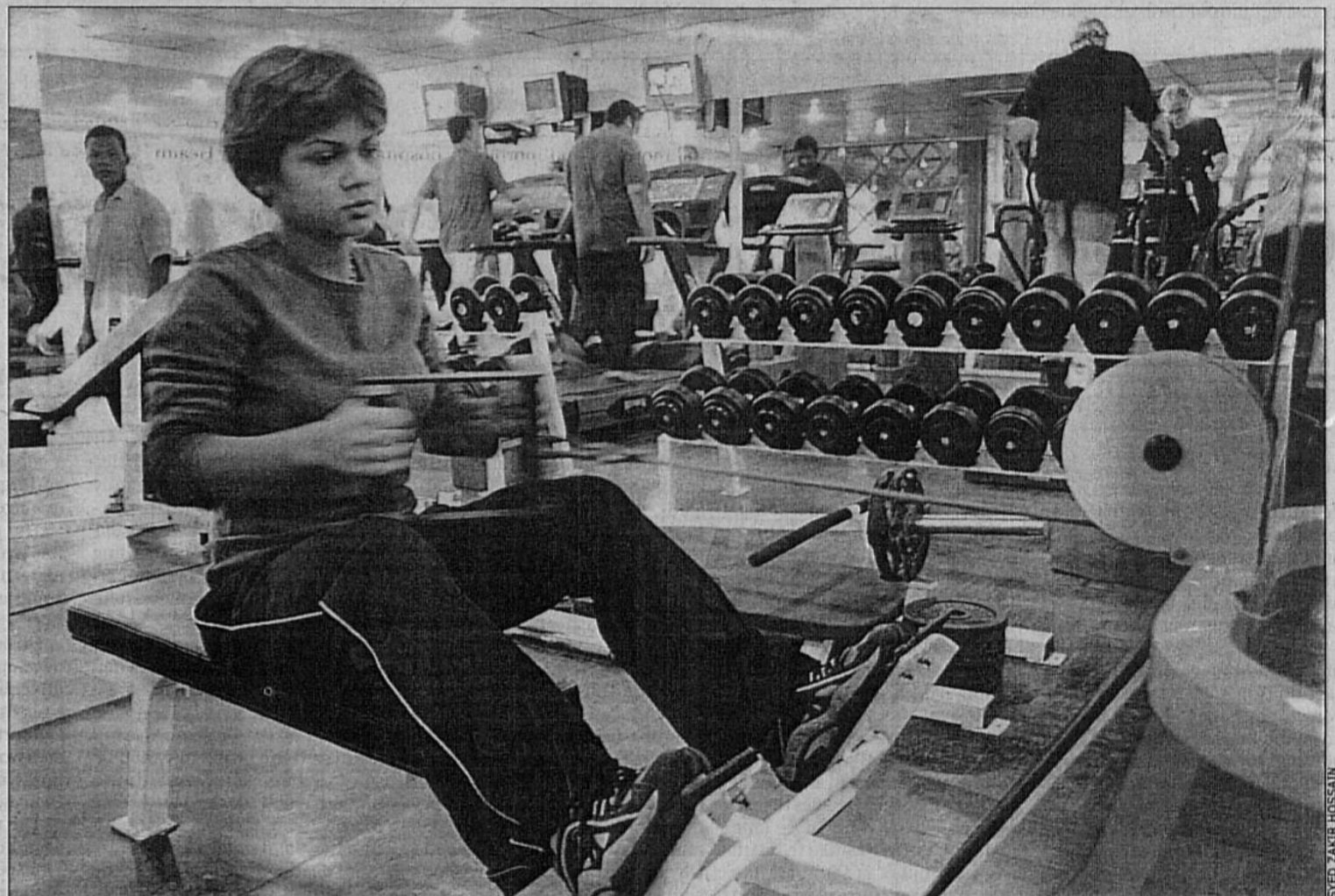
"After dropping off my child at school, I had nothing better to do in the past other than

chatting with fellow parents. But joining the gym has made me feel fresher and it is also a constructive way to pass time," said Shaila Rahman.

Students usually arrive around noon and stay till late evening. Office executives on the other hand, can be found working out till midnight, informed Murshed Sayeed and Numayr Enam.

The rising popularity of these health centres is excellent news for entrepreneurs believed owners of most gyms. Membership is also increasing by the day.

"The government should treat these gyms from the health point of view and not as entertainment centres. Doctors and experts always stress on the importance of exercising and staying on a healthy diet. Since we are supporting that cause, our establishments should be considered under the health sector. The 15 percent VAT on health equipment should be lowered to encourage this thriving business," said Sayeed.



Gyms and fitness centres have worked their way into the city, as people become more health-conscious.

healthouting, taxicab & train timing

HEALTH	MARKET CLOSED	TAXI CAB	LIBRARY & INFO			
Hospitals Heart National Institute of Cardio Vascular Diseases (NICVD), - 9130800, 9122560-59 Burn Dhaka Medical College Hospital Burn Unit-8626812-6 Cancer National Cancer Institute-8014914, 8826561-65 Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University-8612550-4, 861455-9 Diabetes Diabetic Research Hospital (BIRDEM)- 9661551-5, 8616641-50 Mother & Child Care Shishu Hospital- 9119119, 8116061-62 Azimpur Mother & Child Health	Training Institute- 86246, 8624930 Eye Islamia Eye Hospital-9110794, 9119315 National Eye Hospital- 8117202, 8114807 Dental Dental College -9002035 Orthopaedics National Orthopaedics (Pangu) Hospital- 9114075, 9112150 General Dhaka Medical College Hospital- 8626812-6 Rushmono General Hospital- 8317819 Holy Family Hospital- 83111731-25 Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital- 8612550-4, 8614545-9 Bangladesh Medical College & Hospital- 8115443, 9118202,	Shamarita Hospital- 9131901 Suhrawardy Hospital - 9130800, 9122560-69 Salimullah Medical College Hospital - 7310061-4, 7319002-6 Cholera Research Hospital (ICDDR)- 8811751-60 Monowra Hospital 8319802, 8318135 Blood Bank Red Crescent Centre- 9116563 Sandhani (DMCH)- 8624040 Sandhani (SMCH)- 7310061, 7310061, 7319022 Dhaka Medical College Hospital- 8626812-9 Eye Bank Sandhani International Eye Bank- 8614040 Ambulances For Dead Body Anzuman Mafidul Islam (Kakrail) 9336611, Gandaria 7319808, 7318166, Al-Markajul Islam 9127867,	Gulshan 1, 2 markets-Friday Elephant Road-Friday Bishal Center-Friday Baitul Mukarram Market-Friday 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 Muktijudha Jadugar-Sunday Dhaka Zoo-Sunday Shishu Jadugar-Sunday	Yellow Cab Navana 9558065 Salida 9344477, 0171620881 Cosmo 9112959 and 8127191 Cab One 7113282-3 Nihon 8624741-2 Orion 9347277 Anudip 8125285 and 8127611 Capital 9352847 Union 8130485 Kool 0171826731 Black Cab Cab Ex 9358401 Cabline 8321162 JBS Cab 019364575 Sojan 018126036 Anudip - 8125285 and 8127611 Cab One 7113282-3 Palki 0171052500 Cab I 7113282 Jatri 0171540074 Nipun 9572277 R-Cab 8914782 Star Cab 9571919 Shihab 018202477 & 018228675 KGN 8620011	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	
TRAIN TIMING						
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