

# Cops push pedestrians back on walkways, ignore encroachers

Kausar Islam Ayon

The entire area has become a sea of people and thousands have gathered on their way back home. Most of them are trying to walk on the main roads to avoid the harassment meted out by hawkers and also to escape the crowding on pavements.

Half of the footpath's width from Ananda Cinema Hall to Tejgaon College has already been eaten up by vendors but the traffic police is continuously pushing the pedestrians back on what is left of the walkway while ignoring the presence of the nagging encroachers. This is the common picture of Farmgate on any working day afternoon.

The scenario has forced people to step onto the roads laden with vehicles and thus putting their lives at risk. This also creates traffic jams.

"If the police gave as much effort in evicting the hawkers, they would not have been working all day long to drive the pedestrians out of the roads," said a frustrated passer-by.

"People always face nuisance at Farmgate especially women who are often subjected to physical harassment by a section of perverts on these narrow passages," said a businessman at the Farmview Super Market.

The picture is similar in almost every intersection of the city and certain places have even become popular through the business of the illegal occupiers.

The footpaths from Balaka Cinema Hall to Bakushah Market in Nilkhel and Paltan intersection to Baitul Mukarram mosque are well known for books. Pavements on the south side of Bangladesh Bank, West of Shahbagh, Malibagh, Mouchak, Banani, Gulshan, and Kakrail have become thriving vegetables markets. The stretch opposite the National Museum at Shahbagh is famous for flowers while Gulistan, Mirpur Road and Farmgate are popular for clothes.

Seasonal fruits and vegetables are sold in pavements all over Motijheel area and the walkways around the Bangabandhu National Stadium is known for electronic goods.

Makeshift tea-stalls, cigarette shops etc. are common features on all footpaths. It has also become a custom to keep goods of shops on the adjacent footpath. Busy markets will invariably have hawker-infested surrounding pavements. All the counters of busses plying inside the city have been fixed on footpaths too.

Street vendors despite a High Court order to Dhaka City Corporation to keep them free have even become popular through the business of the illegal occupiers.

ration (DCC) and other agencies to keep them free have encroached upon 40 percent of the 220-kilometer long footpath area of the city.

The High Court on February 11, 2001, in its verdict ordered the city authorities to make the pathways free from any kind of occupation for ensuring the rights of safe and free movement of the pedestrians.

However, residents allege that the DCC and the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP)'s traffic department never sincerely tried to implement the court's order and have continuously tried to shift the blame on each other. It goes without saying that the hawkers have taken advantage of this apathy.

Allegation is there that Dhaka's footpaths are a prime source of illegal toll collection for activists of the political party that comes to power. A section of the police and DCC officials also get a chunk of the money.

Sources believe that some 1,00,000 hawkers in the city pay around Tk 45 to 50 lakh to local hooligans every day.

"Those who collect the money, share the booty with the high officials of police. Patrol police also collect tolls," said a hawker in Motijheel.

"We are illegally running our

business although we can easily pay the rent of a shop with the kind of money we give to the extortionists. All we need is a little support from the government," said a leader of hawkers.

Dhaka Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka admitted that footpath occupation had increased in recent times but promised action soon.

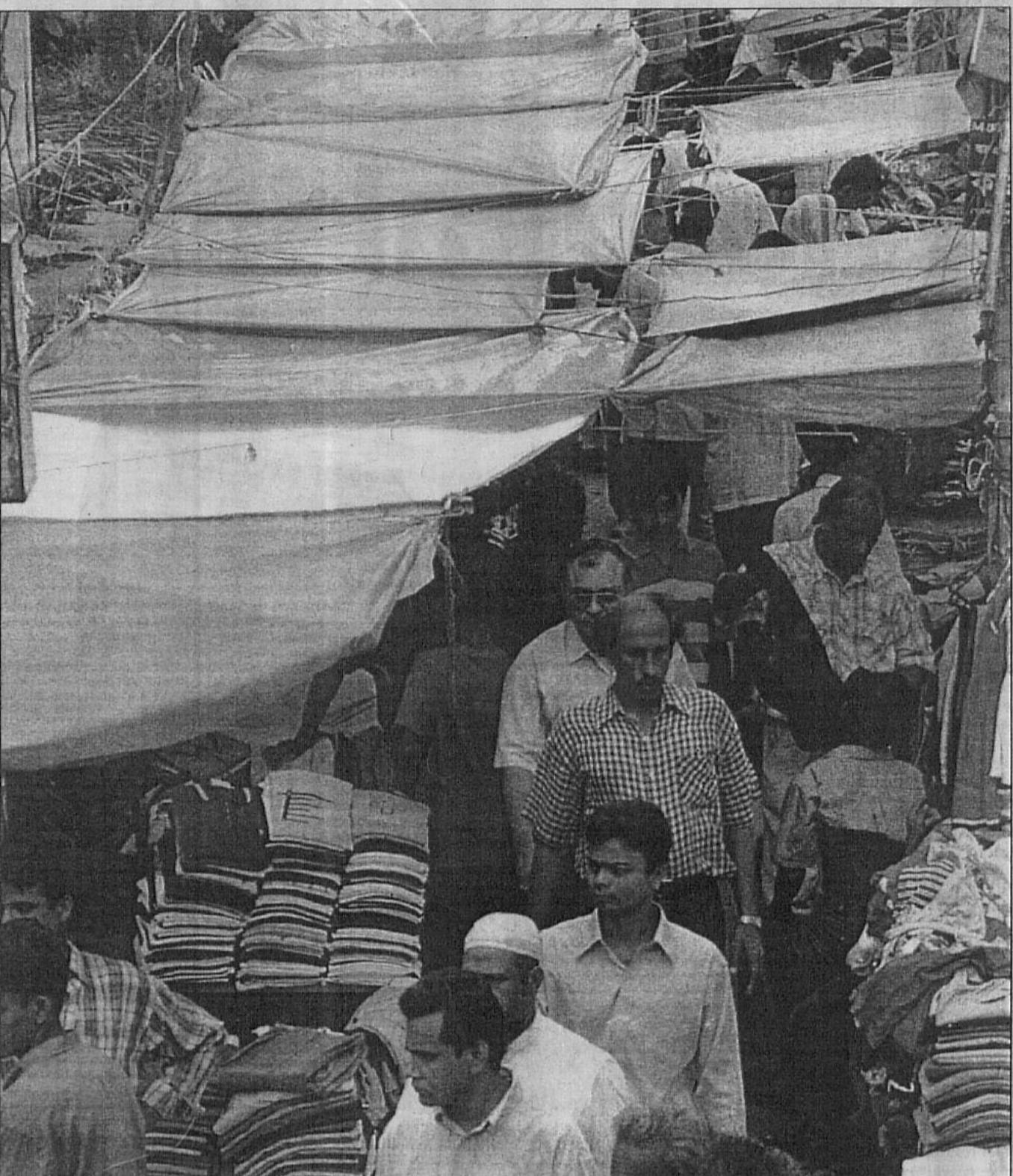
"To keep the footpaths hawker-free we need to conduct drives against them continuously. For that, we need the help of the police which we do not get regularly," said the Mayor.

He also believed that the DCC's lack of manpower for keeping constant watch over the footpaths after freeing them, is another vital reason for the illegal occupation.

Khoka informed that they were examining possibilities of employing a special force to conduct eviction drives.

Police officials meanwhile denied the claims of non-cooperation by the DCC.

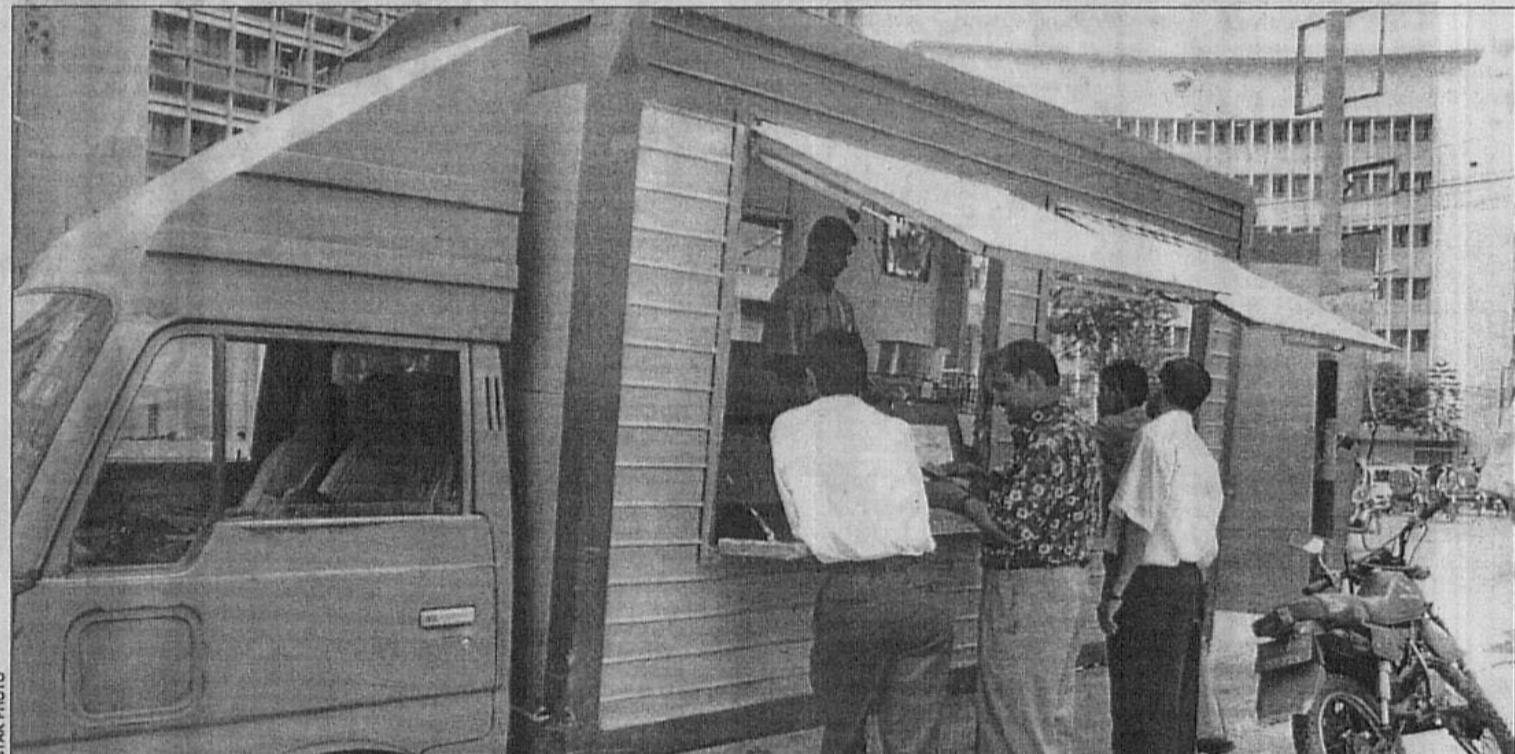
"If they (DCC) sincerely ask us to make the footpaths hawker-free, we can do it in the matter of a week. But it is they who have to decide whether they want it or not. We are always ready to help them," said a top police official.



Vendors and makeshift stalls occupy Farmgate footpath.

STAR PHOTO

# Mobile restaurants bowing out of business



STAR PHOTO

SYED TASHIFIN CHOWDHURY

Once a flourishing business, mobile outlets of restaurants in the city are facing a complete slowdown due to recurring losses.

This mobile restaurant concept had sprung up during the early nineties. Within a few months, the names 'Summer Spice', 'Hot Lips', 'Cinnamon', 'Inn Tun Khai Jan', 'Sajna', 'Chinatown' etc

became popular among city dwellers interested in having a snack bite out in the open.

Sajna was the first restaurant to start this fad. Others soon followed suit.

The daily return from these mobile outlets was so impressive that more chartered catering vans had to be introduced. Sajna had over seven such vans and trucks selling food in commercial areas like Motijheel and Dilkusha during lunch hours and in the

afternoon in front of the Sangsab Bhaban, Ashulia and other recreational spots of the city.

In order to attract customers, each restaurant had their own unique menu. During lunch, there were special Chinese, Indian, and traditional local food packages whose prices ranged from Tk 80 to 120.

In the evenings a different line-up of food was presented along with desserts like ice creams, dohi bora etc. Burgers, French fries, fried chicken, chicken chow mein, soups, special dosa, masala dosa, raj kachuri, papri chat and many other mouth-watering treats were available.

The prices of most of the desserts and drinks varied from Tk 10 to 30 while snack prices ranged from Tk 25 to 150.

"Stiff competition with restaurants which offered low quality food at a cheaper rate

than ours led to a rapid loss of customers," said the manager of Sajna restaurant. The mobile catering of Sajna was shut down in 2000. It was a signal of things to come.

"Some of the other restaurants thought that with Sajna gone, they would actually be able to do more business and raised their prices. In doing so, they lost their loyal customers," said Monirul Alam, a resident of Monipuri Para.

Md. Mirajul Islam Khanoker, manager of Chinatown cited increased raw material price as the main reason for the gradual decline of the mobile food business.

"If you have a look at our menu, you will notice that we have still kept the same rate for most of our food and drinks as they had been when we first opened. We are suffering from losses with the price increase of oil, vegetables and

other cooking materials," said Khondoker.

Some other former mobile restaurant owners alleged that extortion and illegal toll collection forced them to wind up their businesses.

"Not only did we have to pay tolls to the various criminal gangs, even the law enforcers often demanded money from us," said one manager.

Now only two restaurants, China Town and Inn Tun Khai Jan have mobile outlets but business is far from satisfactory.

These restaurants operate during lunch hours at Dilkusha and Motijheel and in the evenings near the parliament area. Their staff said that they do not get a steady flow of customers and there is hardly any profit at the end of the month.

## useful telephone numbers

### COURIER SERVICES

#### International

Air Borne Express- 9561371, 9561372, 9550724  
Air Couriers Int'l (BD) Ltd.- 8815970  
Aramex International Courier- 9558003, 9559582, 9565075  
Airspeed Express- 9563494  
Asian Courier Services Ltd.- 8313543  
Baisakhi Courier Service- 9558606  
Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114  
Bangladesh Courier Service- 9563989  
Bengal Express- 9560642, 9552666  
Bangladesh Int'l 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-

#### Overseas Courier Service

9552431, 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

Bangladesh Courier Service- 9553989

Bengal Express- 9560642, 9552666

Bangladesh Int'l 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-

#### Dolphin Courier

9558802

Dreamland Courier Service- 9550326, 9566975

Pioneer Courier Services- 9561727, 9569759

Probashi Courier Services- 9346359

Rainbow Express Parcel Services Ltd- 8322773, 8315703

Reliance Express Services- 9558515, 7110249

Sundarban Courier Services- 9551984, 9556189, 9551656

Sunrise Courier Services- 9568751

World Runner Express Ltd.

9112068, Fax - 880-2-9112068

#### TIPS

Do you know according to Dhaka City Corporation, you must deposit your waste at the collection site between 4pm and 10pm

### 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

Göethe Institute Int'l- Dhaka- 9126525-6

Indian Information Centre & Cultural Library- 8615096

The Russian Cultural Centre- 9116314, 9118531, 9118314

Orik Photo Gallery- 9120125,

8112954, 8123412

### OUTING

#### 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

### 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-Mahakhal-Airport-Azampur

4 Shyampur-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Airport-Tongi

5 Sayedabad-Kamalapur-Motijheel-Airport-Joydebpur-Gazipur

6 A Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Shahbagh-Farmgate