

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 pervers 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 Nilkhet 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

(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 hoodlums 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.

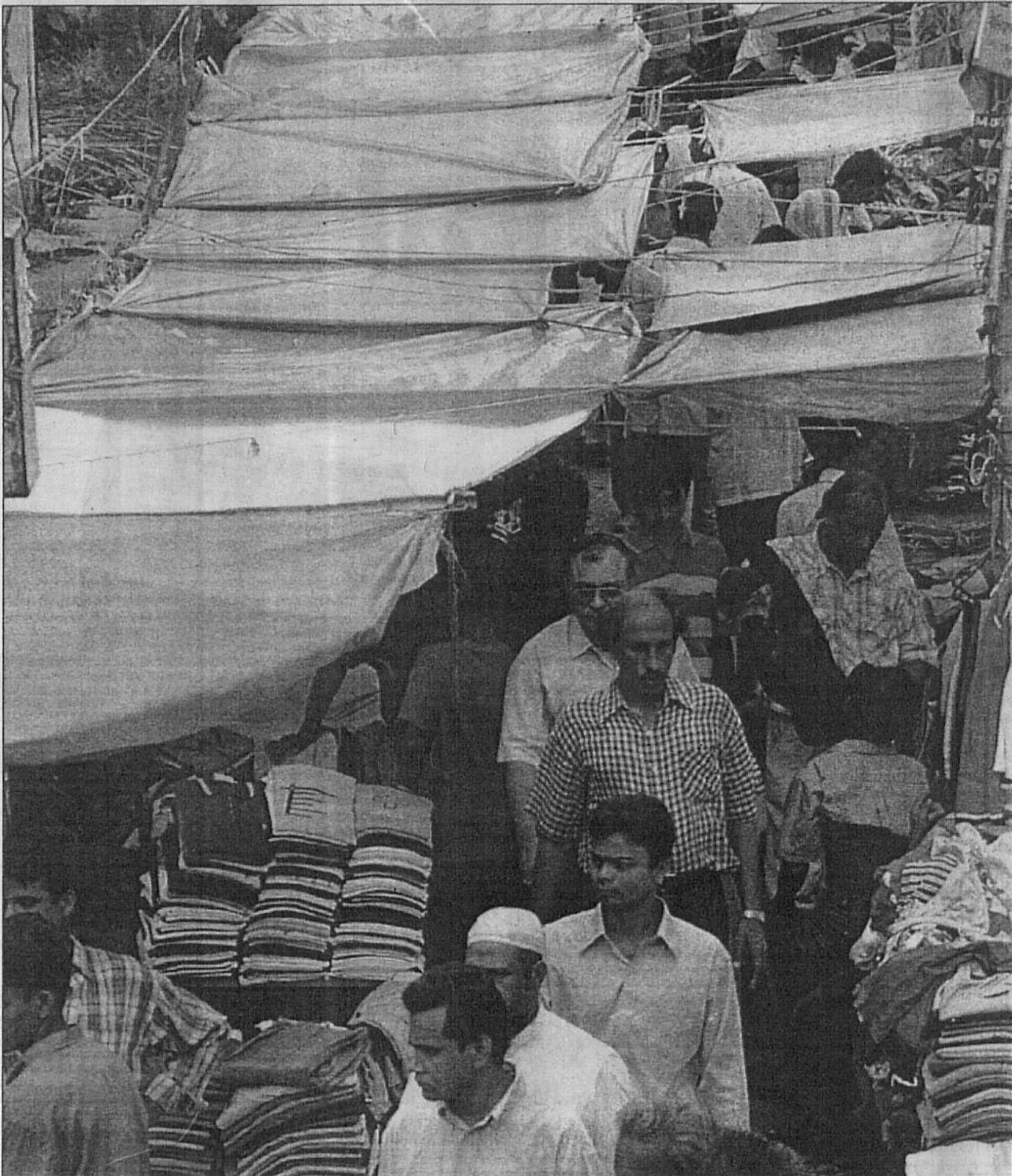
"To keep the footpaths hawker-free we need to conduct drives against them continuously. For that, we need the help of the police which we do not get regularly," said the Mayor.

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.

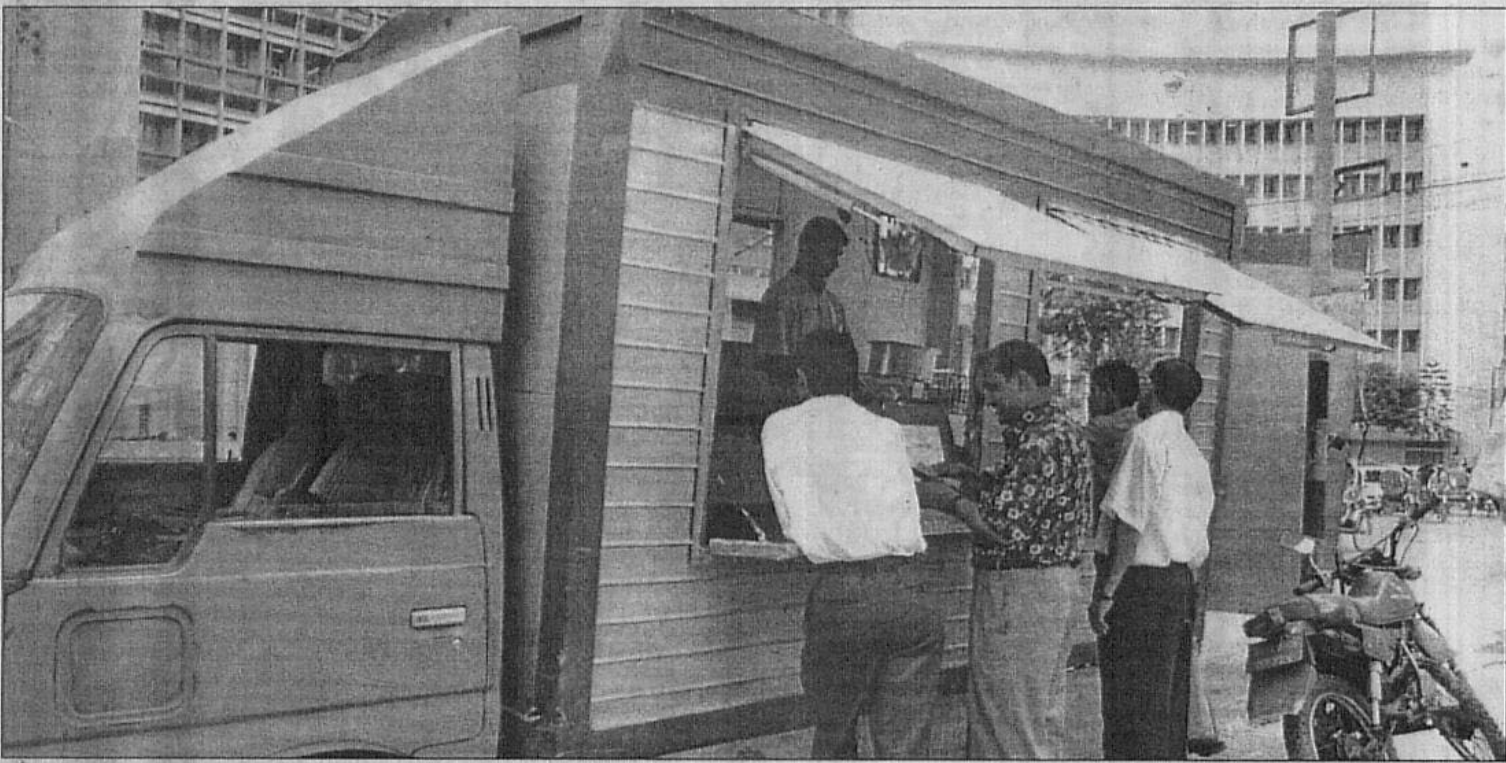
Police officials meanwhile denied the claims of non-cooperation by the DCC.

"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.

Mobile restaurants bowing out of business



SYED TASHFIN CHOWDHURY

Once a flourishing business, mobile outlets of restaurants in the city are facing a complete shutdown 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 Sangsad 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 *chowmein*, 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 Khondoker, 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 Intl (BD) Ltd.- 8815970
 Aramex International Courier- 9558003, 9559582, 9565075
 Airspeed Express- 9563494
 Asian Courier Services Ltd.- 8313543
 Baishakhi Courier Service- 9558606
 Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114
 Bangladesh Courier Service- 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
 Cosmopol Services- 9552793, 9557975
 Dhaka Courier Services- 7236222

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 Francalse- 8611557
British Council- 8618867-8, 8618905-7
Community Development Library- 8113769, 8173604
Gdethe 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

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 - 6pm, Sunday Closed

CITY BUS ROUTE

Bus No.	Route	Starts from
1	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 10, 11, 12	Golap Shah Mazar
2	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 1, 2	Phoolbaria bus station
3	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Mahakhali-Airport-Azampur	Phoolbaria bus station
4	Shyampur-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Airport-Tongi	Shyampur
5	Sayedabad-Kamalapur-Motijheel-Airport-Joydebpur-Gazipur	Sayedabad
6 A	Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Gulshan 1, 2	Kamalapur
6 B	Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 1, 2	Kamalapur
6 C	Motijheel Shapla chattr- Malibagh- Farmgate- Gulshan 2	Motijheel Shaplachattr
7	Sadarghat-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 2	Sadarghat
8	Chittagong-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asad Gate-Kalyanpur-Gabtolli	Chittagong Road
9	Demra Rani mahal-Motijheel-Kalbagan-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 10, 11, 12	Demra Ranimahall
10	Sadarghat-Gulistan-Kakrail-Malibagh-Rampura-Biswa Road-Tongi Bridge	Sadarghat
11	Sayedabad-Motijheel-Fakirapool-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Tongi Bridge	Sayedabad
11/A	Sayedabad-Khilgoan-Malibagh-Rampura-Airport-Tongi Bridge	Syedabad
12	Shanir Akhra-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asadgate-Mohammadpur	Shanir Akhra
13	Motijheel-Shahbagh-New Market-Jhigatola-Shangkar-Mohammadpur	Motijheel
14	Signboard - Motijheel-Shahbagh-New Market-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 12	Signboard (Chittagong Road)
15	Chittagong Road-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Mirpur 12	Chittagong Road
24	Gulistan-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Airport-Uttara-Bipile	Gulistan