

Plight of poor Mostakinas

At least 90 child home helps were tortured from January to December last, ASK says quoting newspaper reports

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

The dreams of a better living dragged 10-year-old Mostakina to Dhaka that she thought would find her a home away from home. But her dreams were shattered when she was brought to work as a home help for a physician couple.

Ten months of physical and mental torture turned her life into a living hell before the police rescued her from her employer's Paribagh house on May 2.

"The madam (her employer) scratched my face or poked me with whatever she could find for my minor mistakes," Mostakina with numerous bruises on her body and raw facial wounds from hot electric iron told the police.

Mostakina is not alone to suffer physical and mental torture by employers. Social workers working in the field say most children working as full-time domestic helps face such brutality more than their adult counterparts.

According to a report prepared by the documentation unit of Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) based on news reports published in dailies, at least 90 child domestic workers were tortured from January to December last year.

ASK officials said the number could be much higher as not every case gets a chance to be reported in the media.

Among the children, most are female and belong to the age group of 13 to 18. The ASK report also said that 17 of them were killed after physical torture, while three were raped. One was killed after rape in a sign of vulnerability of domestic workers.

Most children from rural areas end up being home helps because of their poverty. But it is not always poverty but the hope of a better living that some parents in villages send their children to work.

"I thought they would treat my daughter well and keep her better than I could," said Aklima Begum who sent her daughter Saleha to work as a domestic help in Dhaka. "But they

dumped all hazardous work of a family of eight on my 10-year-old daughter," she said.

Sometimes, middlemen bring domestic helps and the parents do not have any direct communication with the employers. The lack of communication keeps the parents living in remote areas completely unaware of the fate of their children.

Some NGO workers said the government should alleviate the domestic workers' plight. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) convention-138 makes it illegal for children under 14 to be in full-time employment. "But Bangladesh has not endorsed it into legislation -- the reason the child right is violated especially in the case of child domestic workers," said Tahmina Begum, a development activist.

The development workers said the government does not have a monitoring system for the domestic helps. "Have you ever seen any Union Parishad chairman or city corporation

commissioner to care about the domestic helps in his area?" a development worker said.

But people's attitude towards domestic helps has changed over the years. "Earlier the employers did not even listen to us, let alone keeping our requests of sending their domestic helps to us," said Geeta Chakroborty working with ASK for child domestic helps.

She also said domestic helps in a few houses are kept like a family member provided with all amenities. "But these positive cases are never exposed, so others cannot learn from them," she said.

The organisation has six Dropping Centres for child domestic workers in the city that offers legal help and health and education to them. "The centres are open from morning to evening and the children can come at any time they want," she said. The centres allow children to do painting, listen to music, read books or whatever they want.

Water crisis at Mazar Road, Taltola drags on

FAIZUL A TANIM

Residents of Gabtoli Mazar road in Mirpur and Khilgaon Taltola of Malibagh face severe hardship with inadequate water supplies.

"Gabtoli Mazar residents have repeatedly complained to Wasa about this ongoing water crisis for the past two years, a problem that has not yet been looked into," said Asgar Ali Master.

"The dwellers of Boishakhi Sharak, Chaital Sharak and the entire Second Colony have been facing this water crisis and are forced to live abnormal lives. Wasa could help us by supplying water for at least two to three hours in the middle of the night," said a resident.

"It's been almost 10-12 days since I last had a bath. Even if we do get water in a wild fluke, the water is not clear and gives out a bad odour. We spend much in buying water from Wasa in tanks. Our complaints the latest in June, have fallen on deaf ears," an angry Khairuzaman said.

Jahangir Alam, owner of a roadside saloon, said: "In earlier cases, the Army supplied us with water once a week. This practice stopped when their deployment was discontinued."

"The Imam of the local mosque asked all devotees to complete ablution (Wazu) elsewhere, because of the lack of water. People coming in to pray are seen carrying bottles of water to per-

form ablutions," Alam added.

"We can live without electricity but certainly not without water. So many things depend on it -- cooking, washing and most importantly drinking. In the past few months, I have lost tenants who moved to other places because of this crisis," said Alam continued.

"Boishakhi Sharak has lost all its residents because of the disruption in water supplies and it seems that we have now been left to dry on the streets," he said.

Swapan, personal assistant to AFM Abdul Aziz, Officer incharge of Mirpur Zone 4, said that they had not heard of any such complaints.

"If complaints were made to us in

writing, we would have certainly looked into the matter," he said.

A similar situation prevails in Malibagh's Khilgaon Taltola area. Residents from a local hotel complained that Reazbagh, Moulobirtek and Notunbagh are the worst affected suburbs.

There is absolutely no water during the day.

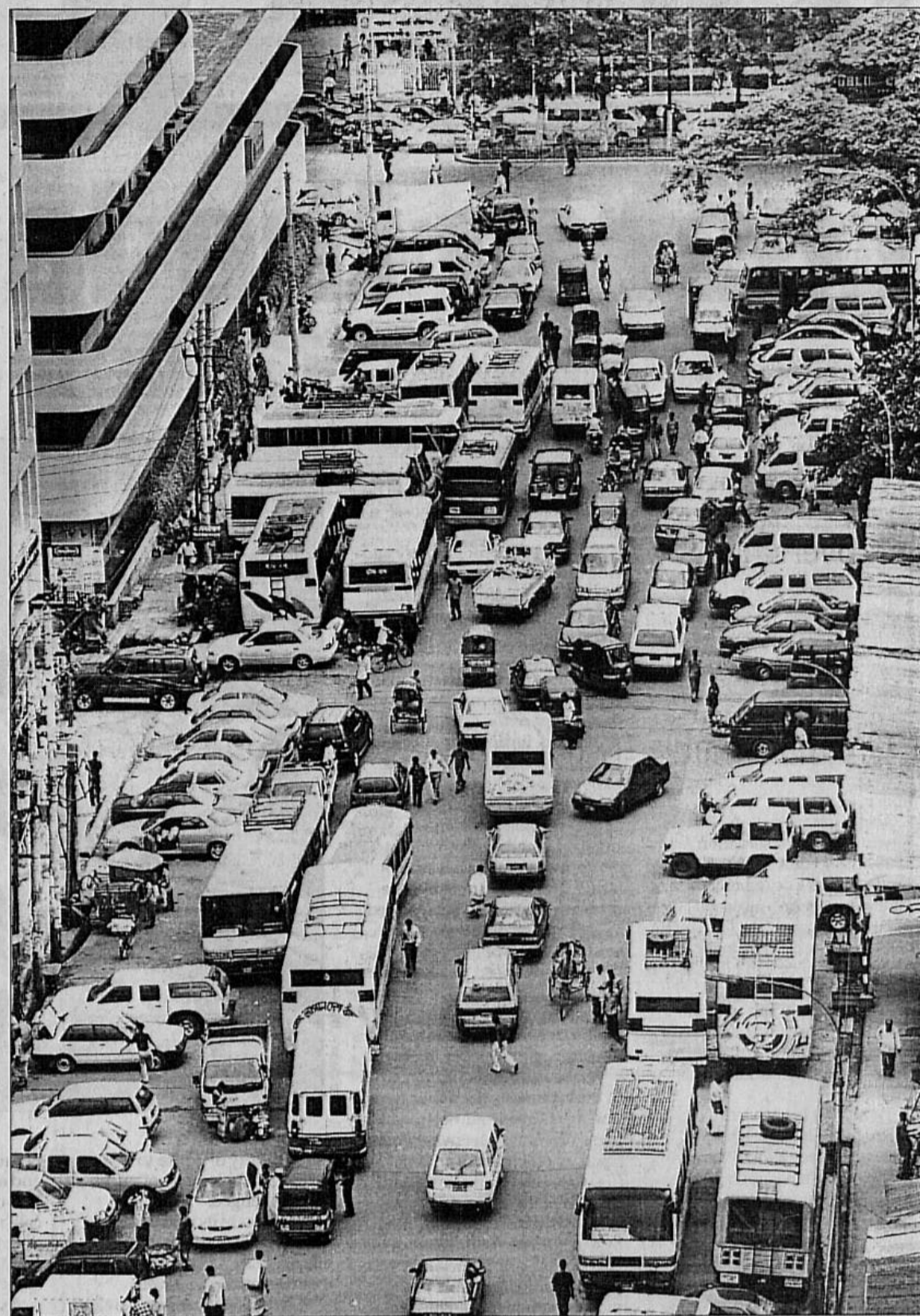
"We see the taps dripping only after midnight. Then again, the suffering prolongs as residents stay up till 5:00 am to have a fill. Those who do not have water pumps, suffer the most and those in tin sheds do not have reservoirs to support the supply and depend greatly on the supply from street taps," said Kamal Miah.

"The main pump of Taltola area has been out-of-order for the past year. But even when it was in proper working order, we still did not get any water as the supply was diverted to other areas and sold at high prices. As we complained to the local authorities, they asked us to get permission from the higher echelons to get a proper supply of water," said Hamdu Kabir, a resident of the Malibagh area.

Abdul Latif, Assistant Pump Operator (APO), denied all the allegations. "The water level has gone down drastically. The layers below standard level are causes of inadequate water supply. It would take another two months to get the pump in working order," he said.

Denying the allegations of the local residents, Wasa's zone 6 Executive Engineer, Abdul Mujib said: "The area needs more tube-wells to be set up. All our pipelines are networked and it is quite impossible to divert supplies to other areas."

He asked the residents to make an official written complaint including the correct holding numbers.



SYED ZAIR HOSSAIN

Plan multistoried parking lot for Karwan Bazar

CITY CORRESPONDENT

With the city's commercial hubs like Motijheel and Dilkusha looking towards multistoried parking facilities to address the acute space constraint for keeping vehicles, people in Karwan Bazar feel it is about time something similar is planned for the area.

The Rajdhani Unnayan Katrapakkha (Rajuk) and the Dhaka City Corporation have come up with proposals to construct three multistoried parking lots in Motijheel. The DCC has decided to construct a multi-storey commercial-cum-parking establishment on the park in front of the Shilpa Bank's head office in Motijheel.

The traffic problem of this area is so acute that the authorities did not have any other option but to turn the little patch of open space into a parking area.

Meanwhile, a few months ago Rajuk also decided to build two such high-rise parking lots one in front of Pubali Bank's head office in

Motijheel and the other behind the Purbani Hotel at Dilkusha.

Karwan Bazar over the years has become one of the most important commercial localities in Dhaka. It is home to a number of leading business houses, utility agencies, one of the largest wholesale markets, some of the top most national dailies and satellite channels and three international standard hotels. Although commercialisation has spread very rapidly here, parking provisions have remained neglected.

Most of the high-rise buildings in the area do not have adequate parking facilities on site. Naturally, drivers are forced to park on the streets and even pavements during peak office hours, which invariably results in serious traffic congestion.

The area is expanding vertically and the number of vehicles entering and passing through is rising every day. That's why a multistoried parking lot is an absolute necessity in Karwan Bazar believe many.

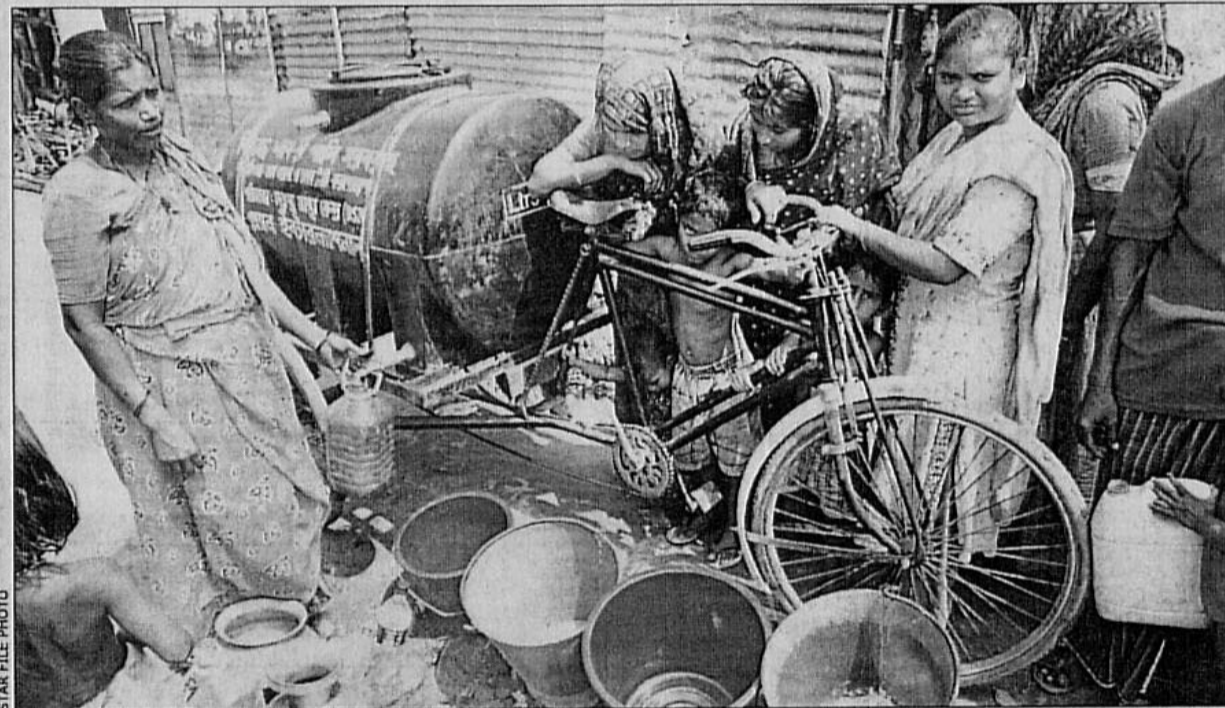
"We do not have enough parking

space for the huge number of cars that come to our office each day. We will definitely welcome a commercial parking facility in this area. Apart from an end to gobbling up of road space, it will also provide security to the vehicles," said chief advisor of satellite channel ATN Bangla Saiful Bari.

The Karwan Bazar kitchen market is frequented by hundreds of Dhaka dwellers everyday. But those who come here with cars share the common complaint.

"We have to keep our cars at a distance as there is hardly any parking space. So whenever I come at Karwan Bazar, I ensure that my driver is with the vehicle. Car-thieves are very much active in this area," said Russell Rahman a regular customer at the kitchen market.

To compound the problem, people often show utter disdain for the law and park their vehicles haphazardly. Local business people allege that the law-enforcers are slack in monitoring the parking situation.



STAR FILE PHOTO

healthouting, taxicab & train timing

HEALTH

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
Azampur Mother & Child Health

Training Institute- 8624827, 8624980

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 Collage 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 Collage 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,

MARKET CLOSED

Gulshan 1, 2 markets-Friday
Elephant Road-Friday
Bishal Center-Friday
Baitual 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
Eastern Plaza-Sunday
Farmview Super Market-Sunday
Muktijuddha Jadughar-Sunday
Dhaka Zoo-Sunday
Shishu Jadughar-Sunday

TAXI CAB

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

TRAIN TIMING

Subarna Express
Mahanagar Prabhali
Mahanagar Godhuli
Turna
Parabat Express
Joyantika Express
Upaban Express
Tista Express
Ekala Express
Upakul Express
Agnibeena Express

Leaves Dhaka at 4:30 pm
Leaves Dhaka at 7:30 am
Leaves Dhaka at 3-15 pm
Leaves Dhaka at 11-00 pm
Leaves Dhaka at 6-40 am
Leaves Dhaka at 12-45 pm
Leaves Dhaka at 9-45 pm
Leaves Dhaka at 7-00 am
Leaves Dhaka at 5-00 pm
Leaves Dhaka at 8-00 pm
Leaves Dhaka at 9-20 pm

Union 8130485
Kool 0171826731
Black Cab
Cab Ex 9358401
Cabline 8321162
JBS Cab 019364457
Sajan 018126036
Anudip -- 8125285 and 8127611

Reaches Chittagong at 10:35 pm
Reaches Chittagong at 1-55 pm
Reaches Chittagong at 10-55 pm
Reaches Chittagong at 6-40 am
Reaches Sylhet at 2-30 pm
Reaches Sylhet at 9-20 pm
Reaches Sylhet at 6-40 am
Reaches Bahadurabad at 1-05 pm
Reaches Bahadurabad at 11-15
Reaches Noakhali at 5-00 am
Reaches Jagannath at 2-30 pm

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
Information Resource Center, The American Center- 8813440-4, 9886995-9
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