



They help each other to beg.

LIVING ON DOLES

Down and out in Dhaka streets

For the city's seven to eight lakh beggars, footpaths, bus, launch and railway terminals, mazars, aroths and slums are the only places they can slump down to sleep.

CITY CORRESPONDENT

They beg by day, shoving and pushing against each other to get the attention of the passengers sitting in the cool of air-conditioned cars. If the luck is good, they might get a two-taka note. But luck is something hard to come by.

"Car passengers are more generous," said Sagir Miah, a 60-years-old beggar, at Sonargaon crossing. "We pick the most dazzling cars in the queue."

In the sweltering summer heat or in the splattering rain, they have to go through the same routine, from morning to night.

As night grows and cars trickle down, they have another thing to worry about -- where to sleep. For the city's seven to eight lakh beg-

gars, footpaths, bus, launch and railway terminals, *mazars, aroths* or wholesale points and slums are the only places they can slump down to sleep.

But then, sleep is not often that easy for them.

"We are often forced to move out from footpaths in the middle of the night by policemen. The cops need the footpaths to flirt with floating sex workers," said Amina Begum, a middle-aged beggar, who sleeps on the footpaths of Farmgate.

Hafiz, a 65 years old beggar, who lives on the main road outside the High Court *Mazar*, alleged: "I was beaten up by policemen while in my prayers just because I took time to move out before the prime minister travelled through it."

The beggars who cannot find

shelter in the *mazars* go to the wholesale markets, for instance, Karwanbazar, to sleep. But that is not free too. Each beggar has to pay the local hoodlums Tk 1 for a night's sleep. That way, the police and the hoodlums can collect as much as Tk 10,000 a night. If someone refuses to pay, the policeman's baton will strike them hard.

Some floating sex workers in Gulistan said they started with begging and ended up as sex workers.

Sometimes, the authorities crack down on begging. The beggars are rounded up and taken to *Bhabaghure Kendra* (vagabond centre) only to be released a few days later.

Rana Begum, who had once been taken to a vagabond centre, has

again come back to begging near the Supreme Court. "That place is a hell," she said curtly about her experience at the centre

Constant begging, seeking mercy from the well-off, can often be too much to take for some.

"I don't want to beg, I want to die," said Abdul Karim, a paralysed beggar who has been living this life for the last 30 years. "It is unbearable to go from one person to another and ask for money."

But some still take life a little humorously.

"I feel proud when the affluent says 'pardon me' when they don't want to part with a few takas," said Abdullah, a beggar, with a broad smile.

Bribe, break law

Non-mechanised three-wheelers are banned from the Panthapath VIP road, but with a little cash, you can break the system

FAIZUL A TANIM

Non-mechanised vehicles are banned on the Panthapath Road. But that is something written in the books. In practice, the entire stretch of the road is virtually open to rickshaws and rickshaw-vans,

only you have to bribe the traffic police there to get the right to break the law.

It is now a common scene that traffic at Sonargaon Crossing gets stuck because of rickshaw-vans plying illegally, taking goods to and from Karwan Bazar market.

The policemen have engaged street urchins to collect tolls from van pullers.

"The children are instructed by on-duty traffic police officers to collect money from rickshaw- and van-pullers. The rate ranges from Tk 4 to Tk 5 per trip," says Amjad

Alam, a street-side fruit seller.

"Although non-mechanised three-wheelers are banned on the VIP road, the police do not object to their plying as long as the toll is given. The little street kids stop the vehicles, collect money and give it to the traffic police at the end of the day," he said.

Biplob, an urchin caught in the act of taking money from a van-puller by this correspondent, said: "The policemen just pick us (the street kids) randomly and force us to collect money. Today has been my first day at toll collection. We charge Tk 3 to Tk 5 depending on the value of goods."

Sadrul, an on-duty traffic police officer, totally denied the allegations. "Everyone here seems to be after the police and are looking out for our faults. We never take bribes".

When this correspondent pointed to Biplob, the child who was caught in the act of toll collection, Sadrul said, "Ask the street boy to name the police officer and bring him to us. We will then handle the case."

Zahurul Islam, Deputy Commissioner of Traffic, North, said, "We are completely unaware of the situation. The few hours that I stay at that spot, no vans or any non-mechanised three-wheelers ply it. We will definitely look into the matter immediately."



A rickshaw-van plying along the Panthapath Road in the midst of heavy traffic.

Dhanmondi in garbage glitch

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

Residents of Dhanmondi Road No. 1, 2, 4 and 6 face serious problems in waste disposal as the areas lack garbage containers.

A few months back, some local hoodlums broke all the garbage containers and prevent residents from using the collection points.

"When my home help went to dump waste at the garbage point, some people prevented her," a resident said.

In absence of any waste disposal point, some private organisations have sprouted collecting garbage from houses. Dhan-mondi Samaj

Kalyan Parishad, a private organisation, has been providing such service to the residents of these areas since February. Locals are forced to take the service at a high price.

"We are paying Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) for garbage cleaning and again paying for the private garbage collection service," said a resident of Dhanmondi Road No. 1. "I can't pay twice for the same service."

Another resident of Dhanmondi, who is taking the private service, says private garbage collection can be an option but not a mandatory system.

But the local ward commissioner has a different explanation. He told The Daily Star that the locals demol-

ished the garbage points as they are happy with the private collection service.

"The residents, who want to keep this area clean, are now depending on private conservancy service as they collect garbage and dispose of it at a distance point," said Abul khair Bablu, Commissioner of Ward No. 49.

Asked about his involvement in Dhanmondi Samaj Kalyan Parishad, he said he is just helping the unemployed people.

When he was told that the locals are not happy with the destruction of the garbage points, he said: "If they really want the garbage spots back, I'll reconstruct them."

Dhanmondi Road No. 6 locals said a DCC high official's relative demolished the garbage collection point on the road as it was in front of his house.

MA Kuddus, assistant conservancy officer of the DCC, said the corporation will soon reconstruct the garbage collection points in Dhanmondi.

"We have already requested the engineering section for reconstruction," he said.

"We are now collecting garbage twice a day from these areas and will continue doing so until we provide permanent garbage points," said Kuddus.



useful telephone numbers

COURIER SERVICES	LIBRARY & INFO-	OUTING	CITY BUS ROUTE
<p>International</p> <p>Air Borne Express- 9561371, 9561372, 9550724</p> <p>Air Couriers Int'l (BD) Ltd.- 8815970</p> <p>Aramex International Courier- 9558003, 9559582, 9565075</p> <p>Airspeed Express- 9563494</p> <p>Asian Courier Services Ltd.- 8313543</p> <p>Baishakhi Courier Service- 9558606</p> <p>Banmgladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114</p> <p>Bangladesh Courier Sercive- 9563989</p> <p>Bengal Express- 9560642, 9552666</p> <p>Bangladesh Int'l Courier- 953636</p> <p>Continental Service Ltd.- 9552948, 9558425</p> <p>DHL Worldwide Express- 9881703-7, 9886305-9, 9882057</p> <p>Enem Express- 9330699</p> <p>Fedex Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd- 9565114</p> <p>Modhuban Courier Service-</p>	<p>Dolphin Courier- 9558802</p> <p>Dreamland Courier Service- 9550326, 9566975</p> <p>Pioneer Courier Services- 9561727, 9569759</p> <p>Probashi Courier Services- 9346359</p> <p>Rainbow Express Parcel Services Ltd.- 8322773, 8315703</p> <p>Reliance Express Services- 9558515, 7110249</p> <p>Sundarban Courier Services- 9551984, 9556189, 9551656</p> <p>Sunrise Courier Services- 9568751</p> <p>World Runner Express Ltd. 9112068, Fax - 880-2-9112068</p> <p>TIPS</p> <p>Do you know according to Dhaka City Corporation, you must deposit your waste at the collection site between 4pm and 10pm</p>	<p>Museum and Zoo</p> <p>National Museum- 8619396-9</p> <p>Open: 10 am 5 pm, Friday 3 pm- 8 pm, Thursday closed</p> <p>Muktijuddha Jadughar- 9559091</p> <p>Open: 10:30 am 6:30 pm, Sunday Closed</p> <p>Bangabandhu Smiti Jadughar- 8110046</p> <p>Open: 10 am 5 pm, Wednesday closed</p> <p>Ahsan Manzil</p> <p>Open: 10 am 5 pm, Friday: 3 pm - 7 pm, Thursday Closed</p> <p>Shishu Jadughar- 9666466</p> <p>Open: 10 am- 6 pm, Sunday Closed</p>	<p>Bus No. Route</p> <p>1 Gulistan-Shahbagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 10, 11, 12</p> <p>2 Gulistan-Shahbagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 1, 2</p> <p>3 Gulistan-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Mahakhali-Airport-Azampur</p> <p>4 Shyampur-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Airport-Tongi</p> <p>5 Sayedabad-Kamalapur-Motijheel-Airport-Joydebpur-Gazipur</p> <p>6 A Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Gulshan 1, 2</p> <p>6 B Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 1, 2</p> <p>6 C Motijheel Shapla chattar- Malibagh- Farmgate- Gulshan 2</p> <p>7 Sadarghat-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 2</p> <p>8 Chittagong-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asad Gate-Kalyanpur-Gabtol</p> <p>9 Demra Rani mahal-Motijheel-Kalbagan-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 10, 11, 12</p> <p>10 Sadarghat-Gulistan-Kakrail-Malibagh-Rampura-Biswa Road-Tongi Bridge</p> <p>11 Sayedabad-Motijheel-Fakirapool-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Tongi Bridge</p> <p>11/A Sayedabad-Khilgoan-Malibagh-Rampura-Airport-Tongi Bridge</p> <p>12 Shanir Akhra-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asadgate-Mohammadpur</p> <p>13 Motijheel-Shahbagh-New Market-Jhigatola-Shangkar-Mohammedpur</p> <p>14 Signboard -Motijheel-Shahbagh-New Market-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 12</p> <p>15 Chittagong Road-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Mirpur 12</p> <p>24 Gulistan-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Airport-Uttara-Bipile</p> <p>Starts from</p> <p>Golap Shah Mazar</p> <p>Phoolbaria bus station</p> <p>Phoolbaria bus station</p> <p>Shyampur</p> <p>Sayedabad</p> <p>Kamalapur</p> <p>Kamalapur</p> <p>Motijheel Shaplachattar</p> <p>Sadarghat</p> <p>Chittagong Road</p> <p>Demra Ranimahall</p> <p>Sadarghat</p> <p>Sayedabad</p> <p>Syedabad</p> <p>Shanir Akhra</p> <p>Motijheel</p> <p>Signboard (Chittagong Road)</p> <p>Chittagong Road</p> <p>Gulistan</p>