

Panthapath businessmen take on extortionists

FAIZUL ABEDIN TANIM

Local residents and businesspeople of both sides of Panthapath Road have decided to take their own security measures to protect themselves from extortionists and criminals after reportedly becoming frustrated with lack of cooperation from the police.

The root cause of this desperate initiative is confusion regarding where to seek help as the north and south sides of that road fall under two different police stations. In emergencies, people get into difficulty figuring out which police station they should go to. Besides, the law-enforcers also allegedly try to shift the responsibility on the other station often. But a recent rise in criminal activities in the area called for immediate resistance and the community united in combating the terrorists.

Locals said that after top listed terrorist Pichhi Hannan was killed a couple of months ago, his brother-in-law, another hoodlum planned to take control of the entire locality which had been Hannan's crime domain. Extortion, hijacking and looting of

shops by his gang became frequent.

"We had been facing this problem for the last three or four years and we have received very little help from the police. This has forced us to take law into our own hands as we had our backs against the wall. We have formed our *lathi-bashi bahini* (teams that keep vigil with sticks and whistles) to guard against extortionists", said the general secretary of the newly formed West Panthapath Business Association (Panthapath Babshaik Shamiti).

"Whenever they spot extortionists, our people blow the whistle signalling the presence of hoodlums. Then all the shops put their shutters down and shopkeepers and employees come out with sticks to attack the miscreants. Since the formation of the *lathi-bashi bahini*, things have become a lot better and are able to do business more peacefully," he added.

Business people of the area said that the criminals demanded tolls in the range of ten thousand to two lakhs Taka. For a long time they had depended on the police but when nine shops were looted on the

same night a few days ago, they felt it was time for drastic measures.

"In most cases the on-duty policemen at a particular station would decline to accept our complaint saying the scene of the crime did not fall under their jurisdiction," said Abdul Bashar a local businessman.

"It is a puzzling situation. I have two shops on either side of the road and they fall under the Tejgaon and Dhanmondi police stations and another one near the Babu Bazar Lane, which is apparently under the Mohammadpur police station," said another businessman, requesting not to be named.

When contacted, Ruhul Amin, the officer-in-charge of Tejgaon police station claimed that the residents never complained of any problems in this regard.

Duty officer of Dhanmondi police station SI Fatema said that police patrolling in that area has increased after some recent incidents.

"The local residents must be aware of which police station to consult. Since it is planned in that manner, there is no other way to get past this. In case of confusions regarding which

station they should lodge complaints with, locals are advised to contact the DCs of the two zones," said Deputy Commissioner of Police headquarters Lutfur Rahman.

"With the rise in criminal activities, many business people have left this area," said Faridul Islam Bahadur, president of the Panthapath Business Association.

"On August 21, some extortionists were caught by locals and one was beaten to death. We then formed our association to fight extortion.

"We now have regular meetings of the association in the first week of every month. All the owners of businesses are present at the meeting. We plan to install sirens with calling bells soon. A good number of guards have already been recruited to work in night shifts. We have been receiving death threats on telephone after taking the security measures and there has been some bomb attacks too. That is why we have been demanding the presence of a permanent police contingent in the locality," added Bahadur.



Congratulations seem in order as the Panthapath Businessmen's Welfare Association decided to bring law and order to the area.

Toilet construction stalled as controversy sparks

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

The construction work of a public toilet in the English Road Shishu Park has come to a halt reportedly because of a bitter ongoing dispute between two local ward commissioners and the contractor.

The toilet is an initiative of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC)'s Urban Primary Health Care Project (UPHCP). Now, its contractor is alleging that the commissioners and their supporters had forcibly demolished the constructed portion of the toilet while the commissioners of DCC's ward 22 and 23 are claiming that they had protested against the construction peacefully with the locals.

The ward commissioners and the contractor have filed separate general diaries (GDs) in this regard with the Kotwali Police Station.

The contractor Abdus Salam in his GD complained that the two commissioners have forced his labourers to stop the work and they also destroyed the constructed part of the project.

"I do not wish to comment on this matter. I have informed the DCC authorities about the situation. Let us see what they decide," said Salam when contacted.

The commissioners on their part said they were only lending support to a public outcry.

"The park is the only recreational facility for the children of this area. Therefore the locals have been protesting construction of the toilet as it will spoil the environment and we have supported them," said Suraiya Begum, commissioner of ward 23.

"We have sent letters to the DCC Mayor and the minister for LGRD informing them about this problem a few days ago. We have requested them to suspend construction work until they reach a decision," added Suraiya.

The two commissioners in their GD mentioned that Salam's workers had harassed them physically when they went to protest the construction.

Kotwali police confirmed that they had accepted the two GDs and said they were observing the situation.

"I was present there when the incident happened so I am well aware of it," said Amir Hossain, sub-inspector of Kotwali police station. He declined to make further comments.

Meanwhile, officials were unsure about the future of the toilet, which is one of 70 due to be constructed across the city under the UPHCP. The Asian Development Bank is funding the project.

"We received a letter from the contractor and forwarded it to the concerned authority for revision," said Nurul Islam project Director

of UPHCP.

On July 11 the Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) filed a GD against the DCC with the Motijheel police station for stopping construction of another public toilet in a park on the east of the Shilpa Bank Bhaban under the same project.

The DCC also had to cancel the construction of a toilet at Shirajuddoullah Park in old Dhaka following complaints.

The Rajuk feels that the DCC is violating the Open Space Protection and Wet Land Protection Act 2000 by constructing such toilets in parks. It is also planning to take

back a number of parks from the DCC because of the City Corporation's apparent failure to maintain their true characteristics.

Most of the 47 parks under the DCC's control are owned by Rajuk which had handed them over to the DCC in the 1980's for better maintenance.



Plastic bottles sorted and separated from a dumping ground at Jatrabari remain unattended as recycling facilities are not available in the country.



Work on this public toilet is stalled because of a dispute between local commissioners and contractor.

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**
 Diabetes Research Hospital (BIRDEM)- 9661551-5, 8616641-50
- Mother & Child Care**
 Shishu Hospital- 9119119, 8116061-62
 Azimpur 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,
 Shamariya Hospital- 9131901
 Suhrawardy Hospital - 9130800,

- 9122560-69
 Salimullah Medical Collage Hospital -- 7310061-4, 7319002-6
 Cholera Research Hospital (ICDRB)- 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-Thursday
 Ahsan Manzil--Thursday.
 New Market-Tuesday
 Gausia Market-Tuesday
 Mouchak Market-Sunday
 Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
 Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
 Eastern Plaza-Sunday
 Farmview Super Market-Sunday
 Muktiuddha 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
- Union** 8130485
 Kool 0171826731
- Black Cab**
 Cab Ex 9358401
 Cabline 8321162
 JBS Cab 019364575
 Sajan 018126036
 Anudip -- 8125285 and 8127611
 Cab One 7113282-3
- Subarna Express** Leaves Dhaka at 4:30 pm
Mahanagar Prabhathi Leaves Dhaka at 7-30 am
Mahanagar Godhuli Leaves Dhaka at 3-15 pm
Turna Leaves Dhaka at 11-00 pm
Parabat Express Leaves Dhaka at 6-40 am
Joyantika Express Leaves Dhaka at 12-45 pm
Upaban Express Leaves Dhaka at 9-45 pm
Tista Express Leaves Dhaka at 7-00 am
Ekata Express Leaves Dhaka at 5-00 pm
Upakul Express Leaves Dhaka at 8-00 pm
Agnienna Express Leaves Dhaka at 9-20 pm

TRAIN TIMING

LIBRARY & INFO

- 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
Information Resource Center, The American Center - 8813440-4, 9886395-9
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
Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) 9330081-4