

Emergencies go unheeded as city lacks 24-hour service drug stores

FAIZUL KHAN TANIM

As almost all the drug stores in the city close before midnight, the city residents find it very difficult to buy medicines in case of any emergency.

Only a few medicine stores at Shahbagh, Kalabagan and Dhaka Medical College Hospital areas remain open 24 hours a day but no shops in the other parts of the city remain open.

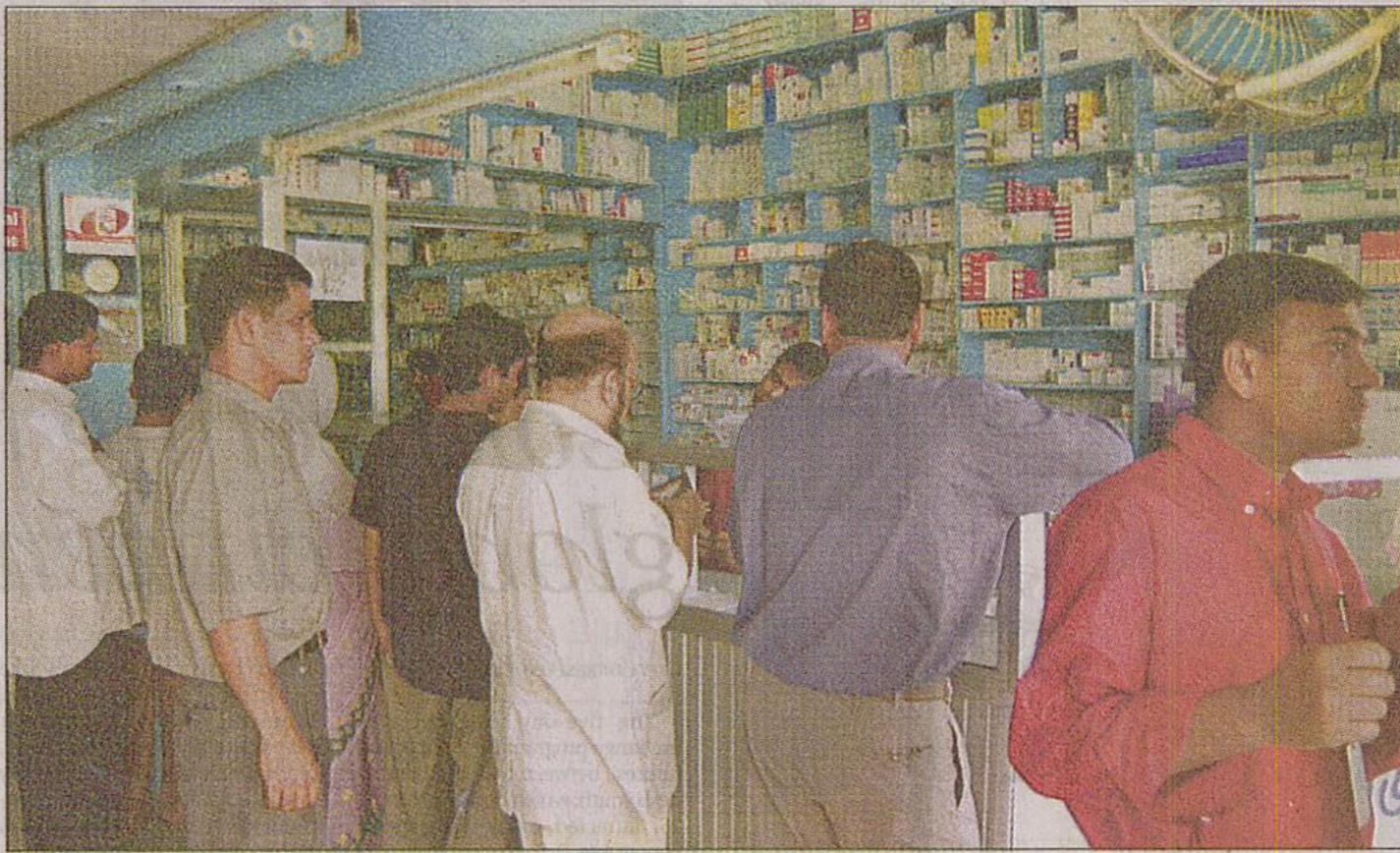
While talking to Star City, many residents of Gulshan, Banani and Bashabo said there should be a rule to keep medicine stores open round-the-clock.

Deputy Director of Drug Administration Kazi Alimuzzaman said, "There is no such rule. The owners of drug stores can keep their stores open whole night if they wish."

When asked, the owners of several medicine stores said they close their shops before or in the midnight for security reasons.

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One of the few drug stores at Kalabagan caters to customers round the clock.



Mozammel Huq, a resident of Banani road no 11, said he had to come to Kalabagan to buy emergency medicines at 1:00am when his father suddenly fell sick recently.

"I live in Banani and there is not a single medicine shop in my area that remains open after 12:00am," he told Star City.

Most of the city residents have to rush to the DMCH areas during any emergency.

"This is the scenario in normal days. Our sufferings become worst during Eid holidays when the drug stores remain closed for three days at a stretch," Mozammel added.

Most medicine shop owners in Banani and Gulshan areas said they want to keep the shops open but cannot do it due to security problem. "My shop was looted twice," said Ahmed Sharif who owns a drug shop at Gulshan-1.

"We have four employees and it is quite impossible to run the shop 24 hours a day," he said. "We cannot protect us

from extortionists and hoodlums."

However, Anwar Hossain, manager of Lazz Pharma at Panthapath said, "We are open 24 hours a day. We take help from Dhanmondi Police Station to keep the shop open."

Anwar said he has not faced any problem in doing business at night as Dhanmondi police have increased patrolling in the area to ensure security.

The residents of Basabo said all the medicine shops in the area close by 11:00pm.

Kalimuzzaman, a local businessman, said his mother died from heart attack as he could not buy medicines when she fell sick. "We took her to DMCH, but it was too late."

The owners of four drug stores at Moghbazar have worked out a solution to provide the residents with the emergency service. They keep one store open each night by rotation.

DCC seeks regular police force for eviction drives

SULTANA RAHMAN

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has sought a regular police force to conduct eviction drives to free its assets and other public property from illegal occupation.

Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka has recently sent a letter to the home ministry asking for a platoon of police perma-

nently for the DCC, sources said.

"The mayor has proposed that the platoon can be engaged in the Estate Department of the corporation on deputation," a DCC official said.

The mayor took the initiative as DCC is facing difficulty in conducting the eviction drives regularly due to lack of police

force, he said. DCC officials said the Estate Department needs a regular force to free the roads, footpaths, parks and open spaces from encroachments.

"We had planned 10 eviction drives for this month but we could conduct only three drives as we did not get police," said DCC Chief Estate Officer Abu Taleb.

When asked about the DCC complaint, Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner Mizanur Rahman blamed lack of proper coordination for the situation.

"It is not possible for us to send force every day. It needs proper coordination to ensure the presence of police on the scheduled dates for eviction," he said.

Sources said DCC failed to conduct two planned drives in Mirpur area on March 20 and 22 to free the roads and footpaths from illegal occupiers.

The DCC had informed the DMP about the drives at least one month before the dates but the DMP could not provide the force.

The DMP commissioner said they cannot send force on the

basis of a notice given one month before a drive. "If they tell us a day before the drives, it may be useful," he said.

Abu Taleb said they conduct such drives whenever the police force is available. But sometimes the drives do not work due to lack of permanent and sustainable measures.

Moreover, the DCC Estate

Department cannot function properly as almost half of the posts in the department have been lying vacant for long.

DCC officials said 39 posts out of the total 80 are now vacant. Twenty seven eviction workers work against 56 designated posts while seven surveyors work against 16 posts.

"It is tough to manage the eviction drives with this small

manpower," Abu Taleb said.

A high-level meeting at the Prime Minister's Office recently decided that DCC would conduct the eviction drives and DMP would ensure that the drives are successful.

But it is alleged that due to lack of such regular vigilance, the illegal occupants come back again soon after every eviction drive.

Illegal eateries running on police blessing?

SULTANA RAHMAN

A makeshift tea stall cum restaurant has been illegally established on encroached land of Dhanmondi Lake. Residents have alleged that the eatery is run under direct blessings of the local police.

Policemen of the Dhanmondi

Adarshya police outpost reportedly allow the restaurant to operate on occupied land near the western side of the bridge over Road 32. Electricity and water from the police outpost has been illegally supplied to the restaurant. The owner of the restaurant claimed that they serve food to the policemen of the outpost. A toilet has

been constructed alongside the restaurant which is also polluting the lake's water.

"We sell food at a low price to the police officials. A cup of tea is normally two Taka. But for the police I charge only one Taka. Not only the police, the security personnel of the lake also come here to have their daily

food," said Mintu, the owner.

The restaurant has been set up by removing the boundary fence that separates the lake's premises from the pavement.

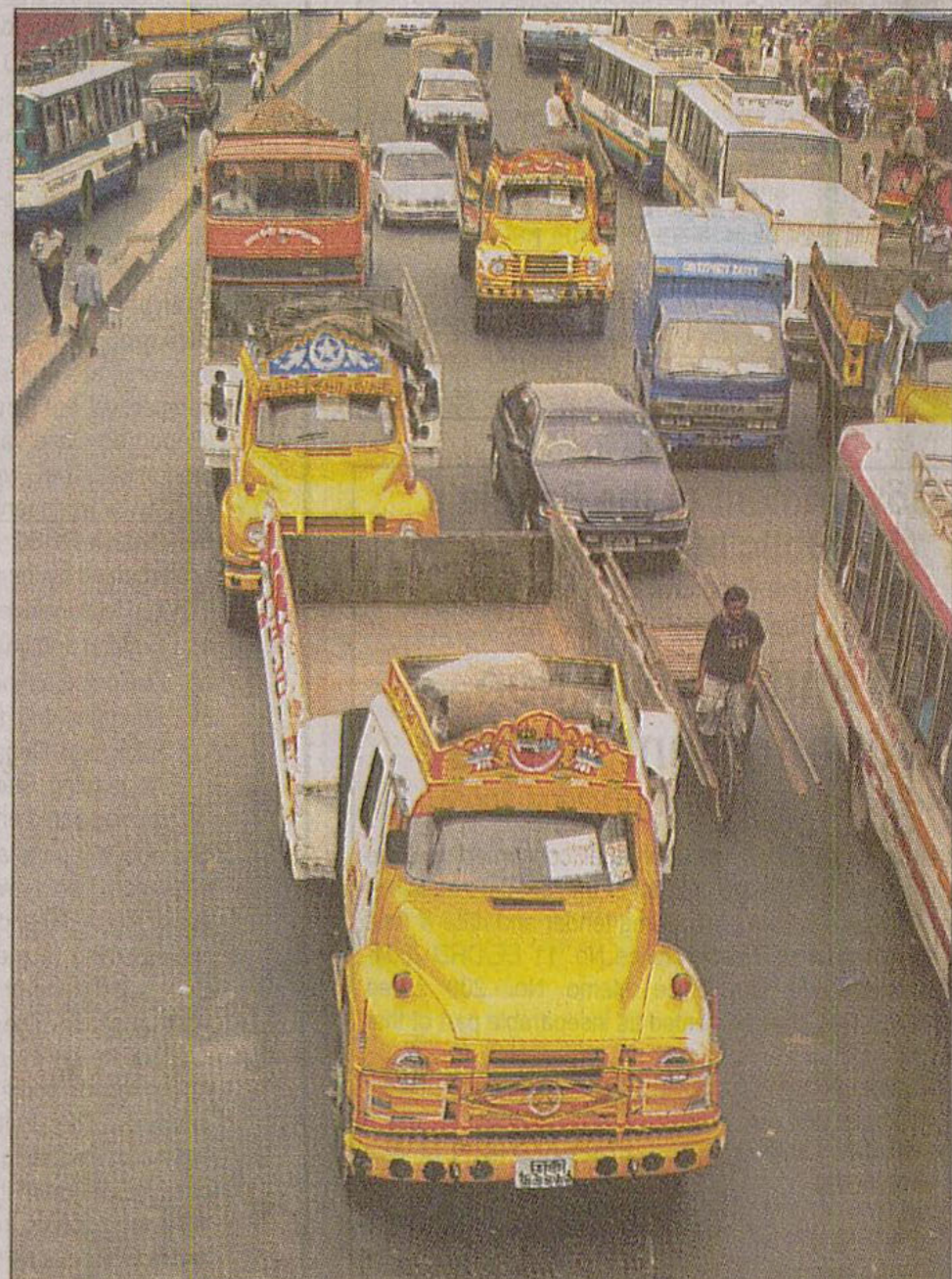
The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) had demolished part of the restaurant a few months ago to recover the lake's land from encroachment. But DCC sources claimed that the officials in the police outpost requested them not to remove the structure fully as it supplied their food. Although there is a mess with a cook who is supposed to prepare daily meals for some 50 police and Ansar men, a constable of the outpost said they have to depend on the hotel for their food as the mess cook can not provide meals for all of them.

"The place is crowded all the time. Vagabonds and local goons chat and create a nuisance there," alleged a local resident. "When police encourage and assists such illegal business on public land, where do we go to complain?" he asked.

"The lake's environment, security and sanctity of the area is deteriorating right under the nose of policemen deployed in the outpost, but they do not take any action," said another Dhanmondi resident.

The in-charge of Dhanmondi Adarshya police outpost refuted the allegations. He however admitted that they take food from the restaurant but denied that they assist the hotel owner.

WHO ABIDES BY RULES



Trucks are forbidden on city roads during the day, but our photographer did not miss the sight of a few giant-size trucks plying the streets at the Jatrahari intersection at mid-day yesterday.



An illegal eating-house on the bank of the Dhanmondi Lake.