

Footbridges occupied by vendors, beggars

SYED TASHFIN CHOWDHURY

ally higher than that charged for the spots on the footpath.

"Some of the oldest and most influential hawkers operate on the over bridges. The 'linemen' prefer these hawkers as they are ready to pay more money than us," said Sumon, a rubber band vendor, at Gawsia Market.

He pointed out that the rate per spot on the over bridge is higher, as hawkers operating there earn more than those operating on the footpaths and other locations. The extortionists also charge toll from the beggars.

"Some of the notorious hoodlums with political influence control the linemen and hawkers of the New Market overbridge," he said.

The situation is even worse at the Farm Gate over bridge. The hawkers almost fill up the main walkway the bridge and beggars occupy the stairs. A section of sex workers also wait for customers at the base of the over bridge after dark.

"I have to take risk of crossing the busy Farm Gate road along with my wife and children in the evening, as I do not want

them to be exposed to such an unpleasant environment," said a resident of Nakhalpara. Sex workers also operate in and around the over bridges at Banani, Farm Gate Police Box and Moghbazar. The over bridges located in other places have become safe haven for drug peddlers, muggers and pickpockets.

"Two or three cases of mugging or pickpocket regularly occur near the Science Laboratory over bridge," said Faisal Ahmed, a salesman of a store on Elephant Road.

He, however, said the incidents of mugging have decreased recently following frequent police raids and patrol of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab).

But even then pedestrians are not using this over bridge.

"It is the responsibility of the citizens to use the over bridge," said a traffic sergeant on duty at the Science Laboratory intersection. He said the muggers do not like to operate in crowded places and so they prefer this over bridge.

When asked, Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) officials

blamed the police for the present condition of the over bridges. "Our responsibility ends as soon as an over bridge is constructed and opened to public," said a senior official of DCC.

The hawkers and beggars of the New Market over bridge has recently been evicted. But shop owners in the area dubbed it as eyewash. They said the hawkers and beggars will return soon after inauguration of a market by a VVIP in the area.

The duty officer at New Market Police Station denied the allegations. He said, "This was done at the directive from higher authorities in order to keep the over bridge clean and free for the movement of pedestrians."

SM Mizanur Rahman, commissioner, DMP, said: "We are constantly trying to improve the situation on these over bridges by increasing police patrol and frequent raids."



A hawker sits with his ware by the over bridge at Farmgate, while two boys (beggars) hang around.

BRITISH-BANGLADESH FUSION FOOD FESTIVAL 2005

Chefs par excellence: Eastern touch in western food

IMRUL HASAN

The skills, achievements and creativity of Bangladeshi chefs will be highlighted once again with the inauguration of the 2nd British Bangladesh Fusion Food Festival at the Dhaka Sheraton Hotel today.

These Bangladeshi chefs have excelled in fusing local foods to the likes of British taste buds and the appreciation they receive from the British speaks for their achievements.

"The festival is to focus on the success of Bangladeshi

chefs in winning the appreciation of the British people and the gradual inclusion of our dishes in the British cuisine," said Syed Belal Ahmed, the director of the fusion food festival.

Four-reputed British-Bangla chefs - Mortuz Ali Nazrul, Oli Khan, Mohin Bakth and Johur Ali were selected from a competition among 30, who will serve 25 of their exclusive and delicious food items at the festival.

"The festival will enhance ties between Bangladesh and Britain," said Trevor Macdonald, the general manager of Dhaka Sheraton.

"There are around 12,000 Bangladeshi restaurants in the UK. Visitors to the show will know how successfully Bangladeshi chefs run the food business in Britain," said Syed Nahas Pasha, the editor in chief of 'Curry Life'--

a bi-monthly magazine.

"The festival will focus on the relatively new Bangladeshi fusion foods," said the festival director.

The Dhaka Sheraton Hotel together with Curry Life organised the festival and is sponsored by Unilever, RC Cola, Air India, Bangla Premium Beer, Rajah Spices, KKB Financial Services and First Solutions.

The festival will be inaugurated today but will open to the public tomorrow and continue till August 30 from 7:00 to 10:00 pm at the Sheraton's Bithika Restaurant.

Yaba, the new danger pill

Youngsters getting attracted because of cheap price

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

Use of yaba, a drug of the morphine group, has seen an alarming rise in recent times. With the reduction of its price and easy availability, young people are getting drawn to it.

"When it first arrived in the market in 1999, each pill had cost Tk 1500. Now it is available at Tk 300 so we prefer it more," said Sayeed, a regular user of yaba.

He also informed that nowadays yaba was available at almost every part of the city. "Initially it was available at only two or three specific spots in Gulshan and Baridhara. Now one can even get it delivered at home by ordering over the phone," added Sayeed.

Yaba is believed to have

entered Bangladesh from Myanmar and Thailand and the number of addicts is increasing day by day.

"A number of phenylidyl and brown sugar addicts are now getting used to yaba as it gives a flying sensation and is much better in taste," said a yaba dealer.

Yaba is a red pill with chocolate flavour and is inhaled in the same way brown sugar is taken from foil paper. The users claim it energises them.

Although most of the addicts are between the ages of 18 and 30, yaba is also popular among older people as it supposedly enhances sexual desire and performance, claimed sellers of the drug.

Dealers say that women have been one of the major customers of Yaba from the very

beginning.

A student of a private university said she first tasted the drug with her boyfriend who was also an addict.

"He first told me that it tasted like chocolate and was very smooth. We took it together to enjoy our physical relation and got addicted to it since," said the girl.

Doctor and drug specialists caution that yaba is extremely harmful for liver as it completely destroys appetite.

"It also creates pressure on the heart and people with weak hearts are always facing the threat of a cardiac arrest if they take it regularly," said Prof. Dr. S A M Golam Kibria, chairman, Department of Urology at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University.

Meanwhile, the Department

of Narcotics Control apparently can do nothing to stop the spread of yaba.

"The main problem in apprehending the sellers of yaba. They are very alert and never sell the drug to unknown people. We have recently arrested a number of sellers and we are hopeful they will provide us with information to trace the root," said Hafizur Rahman, deputy director of the department.

Police officials said that they struggle to arrest yaba dealers as they carry a very small amount of the drug with them which they can hide easily.

"It is very difficult to catch them with routine checks. A seller can hide five to ten pills easily inside the wallet or an inner pocket," said a police official.



The mobile court raided 'Dhaka Bakery', a popular bread producer in Sukrabad in the city last week. When the workers of the bread factory sensed the approach of the mobile court, they locked the factory up and fled. The notice on the door read: 'the bakery is closed and will be rented out,' but the magistrate directed the police to break open the lock. On entering they found grossly unhygienic conditions of the bakery floor. The court also found some material that could be animal fat that is been used in the making of bread.



SK ENAMUL HAQ