Narinda in the city meant, "island given by God", according to its original pronunciation Narayandiya. The area came into being long before Mughal era. According to Azimusshan, Narinda stretched to present Bahadur Shah Park in the beginning of 17th century. He assumed there were English factories in the area in 1735. During Mughal period, canals and marshes surrounded Narinda. Narinda's washermen were famous in washing Muslin.

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Four lakh children on city streets vulnerable to abuse, exploitation

FAIZUL KHAN TANIM

Around 60 percent of more than four lakh street children in Dhaka are leading a vulnerable life as they are compelled to indulge in anti-social activities, according to studies conducted by a number of government and non-government agencies.

Drug traffickers use these children as carrier while political parties hire them for demonstrations, rallies and processions. They are often maltreated, physically abused and forced to take part in dangerous activities.

Labelled as tokai or kangali, these underprivileged children wander around the city streets, parks, bus terminals, kitchen markets and railway stations. Some of them work as porters and some as helpers of bus and tempo drivers.

However, the street children say they prefer begging, the easiest way to earn. This correspondent talked to 30 floating children, 22 of them said begging is the best option. The rest eight explained why selling candies, books or flowers are better choices.

Seven-year-old Rasul at Gulshan-1 intersection said: "Whole day income from begging can be as high as Tk 300. But you cannot make more than Tk 25 profit by selling 50 pieces of candy a day." So he thinks begging is better option.

Faruk is an orphan. When he was a baby, other beggars used to hire him from his guardians to earn more by begging. "I have become a beggar as peo-

begging is the easiest means of earning," Faruk said.

Amzad of Karwan Bazar has a different story. He sells newspapers as his poor parents cannot afford to send him to school. "I need to make contribution to my family.'

He earns Tk 120 by selling 60 newspapers a day. "Although the amount is small, it is more prestigious than begging," Amzad said.

Akbar, who also sells newspapers, said: "I used to beg before. But it was a bad experience for me. People sitting in their cars used to get very angry as I begged. Once a man slapped me and asked me to work, not to beg.

"What I am doing does not fetch enough money but still it is better," he said.

The government and nongovernment studies pointed out several categories of these floating children. Some of them just wander around the streets and some spend time doing various jobs and selling small things. They return home at night if they have a family, or spend the night on the streets.

The other categories include children who return to temporary shelters. And there are parentless children, who live 24 hours a day in the streets. These children are particularly vulnerable to abuse, crime and anti-social activities.

Most NGO activists say the city residents have a civic responsibility towards these street children and they should help them. One easy way of

ple around me told me that helping these kids is to buy home and come to the cities if candies or books from them to encourage them.

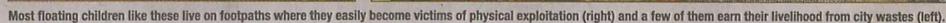
The basic reasons for these children to come down to the streets were pointed out in a study "Appropriate Resources for Improving Children's Environment (ARISE)," a collabora- nity mobilisation and awaretive initiative of the Department of Social Services under the Ministry of Social Welfare and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The reasons are extreme poverty in the rural area, con-

they lived in rural areas. Escaping from the harshness of life, these children lead an 'independent' life begging or wandering in the streets. A very few of them want to work.

Kakoli Chakravarty, communess raising specialist of ARISE, said the constraints these children face in their everyday life include hunger, no accommodation, no attention from family, unhealthy living environment and unemployment.





sequences of broken families, strains of living as a child of single parent, family breakdown due to polygamy, neglect and cruelty by stepmother and

The above factors force the children to run away from and chalk (knife).

Many of these children indulge in anti-social activities. They are trained by the drug traffickers and criminals who use them. They learn slang violence or exploitation at such as body taan (stealing watch), money taan (moneybag snatching), round (pistol)

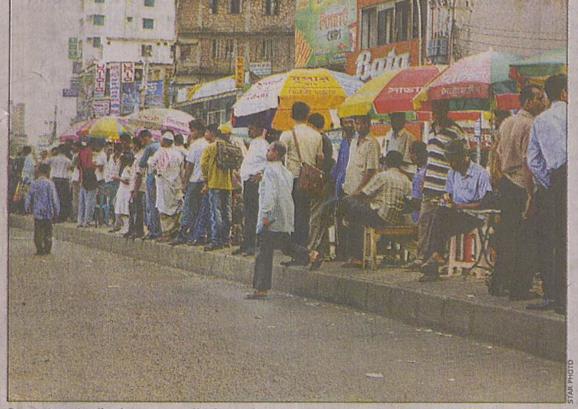
Anumber of NGOs are work- desh ing to rehabilitate these destitute children. These include Aparajeyo Bangladesh, Population Services and Training Centre (PSTC), Padakkhep Manabik Unnayan Kendra, Samaj Paribartan Kendra (SPK) and Shoishab Bangla-

Aparajeyo Bangladesh, said from the streets on minor

Wahida Banu, a director of rush to the spot. Then we try to are also providing shelter, legal get them released with the they help the street children, help of our lawyers. We bring especially who are harassed them to our shelter and give and picked up by the police them food, education, clothing and mental support," she

"When we get the news of Founder Director of SPK lies.

such arrests, our field workers advocate Eleza Rahi said they aid and job placement help for the destitute children. SPK has a number of drop-in centres (DIC), a shelter for the street children who are separated from their parents and fami-



Commuters standing in a queue suffer from rains and scorching heat, in the absence of passenger sheds.

Ticket counters yet to be constructed

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) will set up 27 passenger sheds for Bangladesh Roads Transport Corporation (BRTC) buses in the city but no recommendation has been made for private bus companies, a DCC official said.

Hundreds of commuters have been facing difficulties with lack of ticket counters and passenger sheds since March this year when the DCC evicted 500 such counters along with sheds mostly set on footpaths. After the eviction, private bus owners demand alternative options for commuters.

We submitted our proposal four months back offering financial

support to put up passenger sheds. But authorities have not yet taken any action overcome the situation," alleged Mahtab Uddin Chowdhury, joint convener of the Association of Bus Companies (ABC).

Around 1,800 buses of 36 companies had four to five ticket counters each on the 34 bus routes. At present tickets are sold under large umbrellas along the roads, while some companies sell tickets from counters in the city boarder areas like Mohammadpur, Savar and

"With the lack of counters and sheds we burn in the scorching heat and get drenched in the pouring rains," said Habib, a commuter

It is alleged that inconsistency between the DCC authorities, communications ministry and the bus owners' associations has created the sufferings for commuters after the eviction of counters without having an alternative.

"We have asked for opinions of concerned experts -- the Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB) and DCC's traffic engineering division -- to establish the passengers' shed, but did not receive any response," said Abu Taleb, chief estate officer of DCC.

"The 27 passenger sheds for BRTC bus commuters are being examined. But it is certain that no ticket counters for private bus companies will be set up as these struc-

tures harm the beauty of the city," Taleb added.

Soon after the eviction, owners of bus companies met the concerned authorities several times to remedy the situation. A committee has been formed with the communication ministry, DCC and representatives from the bus companies to find a solution. Bus companies submitted a design proposal for ticket coun-

But no decision has yet been

DCC officials said the ticket counters were evicted as they were illegally set up on footpaths, which created hazards to pedestrians and also destroyed the beauty of the

Be careful with media centres

IMRUL HASAN

Thousands of media centres have been established in the city without the approval of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC). These institutions act as links between private tutors and students.

"Media centres do not even fall into any category of trade enlisted under the DCC rule book," said a high official of the trade licence department of DCC.

"There are 265 types of business under serial 34 which makes it easier for them to obtain a trade for it. licence. But these media centres

licences in the fear that their trade and procedure of work may be investigated," he added

"I have been running this business for 11 years. There has never been any need for getting a trade licence. Moreover, the DCC itself owns the market," said Shamim, the manager of Sheba Tutor's Home at Azimpur Super Market.

Maksud Anwar, the inspector of trade licence department of Zone 5 said that people seek permits to but since media centres are not open coaching centres but not for included in that list, they fall media centres. "It is an illegal business. So we cannot issue a licence

During the beginning, media never even try to acquire trade centres were owned and run by an

In the beginning, media centres were owned and run by an educated group of people whose work procedure and customer services were efficient and ethical

services were efficient and ethical. But due to a boom in the business, more people started coming into the scene and opened up new centres with only one goal and that was to make money the easy

"I have lost around Tk 2000 that I had paid in advance along centre," said Abdul Kader, a victim of fraud.

start from the beginning of the coming month. I paid the amount which was half of the supposed Media.

educated group of people whose first month's full payment," he work procedure and customer added.

Once the money had been paid the media centre officials toyed around with Kader for two weeks. He later found out that the promised job never existed and one day he went to the media centre only to find its doors locked. The staff had also

with an additional Tk 200 in "The general public should be membership fees at a media cautious when dealing with media centres. It is advisable that they take their jobs and get paid "I was told that there was a per-fect tutor's job for me and it would receiving the salary should they pay the media centre," said Jahiruddin, the director of Buetic



A staff of a media centre at Katabon waiting for clients.