Jamidars, Neelkors and Civilians established Dhaka Bank, the city's first commercial bank in 1846. The first trustees -- Dhaka's caretaker Surgeon Lamb, Assistant H. M. Nation, Jamidar Khaza Alimullah, Commissioner John Dunber, T. Wise civil surgeon and Khaza Abdul Ghoni and Alexander Forbes, secretary who edited Dhaka's first newspaper --'Dhaka News'. The capital of the bank was estimated Tk 500,000, each share was Tk1,000.

Truckers victims of rampant extortion by cops

IMRUL HASAN

Truck drivers pay the traffic police Tk 100 to 500 in toll at different points in the city, sources in the Bangladesh Truck Drivers Union (BTDU) alleged.

"The amount of the bribe is fixed and the drivers are forced to pay it even they have all legal documents." said a union leader, requesting anonymity.

The cops check the documents including driving licence, route permit and fitness certificate and if the drivers fail to produce any paper, the amount of extortion

High officials of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police, however, denied the allegation and said they only file cases for violation of traffic rules and possessing fake docu-

Trucks carrying various goods usually enter the capital through four points -- Gabtoli, Tongi Bridge, Jatrabari and Postogola -- where the toll collection starts.

The traffic police collect the fixed amount at about 40 points in the city that include Sayedabad, Dainik Bangla intersection,

Gulistan, English Road intersection, Fulbaria, Shahbagh, Sonargaon intersection, Shyamoli, Asad Gate, Farm Gate, Kalvanpur, Airport, Bishwa Road, Maghbazar, Kakrail, Mohakhali and Bijoy

Sources said the four entry points of the capital are the most lucrative places for a traffic police and most of them want to be deployed there. They even bribe the higher officials so that they are deployed at these points.

The collected tolls are distributed among officials of different tiers -- from traffic sergeants to deputy commissioners, sources in the union said.

"The more strict is the law, the more opportunity for the police to take bribe," said Mahfuzur Rahman, vice president of Bangladesh Truck Drivers Union. Rahman has been into this profession for the last three

Sources in Bangladesh Interdistrict Truck Drivers Association (BITDA) claimed it is mandatory for them to pay the bribe when they $\,$ enter the city.

"When we bargain with them to reduce the toll amount, some po-



A truck plies along the Tejgaon link road during the day.

licemen say they have got this posting paying several lakh taka. So they have to get it back," said a truck

"Highway police are to curb around 30,000 trucks now ply

extortion, mugging and robbery but they themselves are involved in extortion," he said.

According to BTDU and BITDA

through Dhaka.

An on-duty police officer at Bishwa Road intersection denied the allegation and said: "If trucks carrying illegal goods are caught we seize them. If drivers fail to show proper documents, we take actions according to the traffic rules."

But the truck drivers say they are often harassed despite possessing valid documents.

"If I do not pay the toll, the police will file cases against me showing lame excuses that will cost more than the amount of bribe," said another truck driver who came to Karwan Bazar from Jessore carrying vegetables.

"If the police officers come to know that I have complained about it, they will increase the amount of bribe or seize my truck," he feared.

Asked, a traffic sergeant at Farm Gate requesting anonymity said: "We fine the truck drivers only for violating rules, we don't charge if they have legal documents."

SM Mizanur Rahman, the commissioner of DMP, however denied the allegation. "We file cases against vehicles if traffic rules are violated. We seize vehicles for plying without route permits," he said.

"We have never received any complaint against any police officer taking bribe from truck drivers. We will go for action if there is any specific complaint," he added.

ecity express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.



uncertainty"

"Whatever clothing they may wear, it is not difficult for Bangladeshi people to comprehend their motives and the instigators behind them"

-- Khaleda Zia Prime Minister Said referring to the culprits behind the recent bombings in her nationwide address on the 4th anniversary of the coalition government, on October 10.

Source: The Daily Star

"Absence of good governance, state patronisation of criminals and rise of militants with government knowledge and support have pushed the country into sheer

-- Sheikh Hasina Leader of the opposition and Awami League president Said in her address to the nation on the 4th anniversary of the coalition govern-

"Our day begins at midnight. We begin to cook when everyone goes to sleep after having

Told a reporter about gas crisis in her area, on October 13

"Why just me, even the high police officials, local influential people also gave money to Bangla Bhai"

Told reporters after his arrest in Rajshahi, on October 11.

"Salaries of the prime minister and the cabinet members have been raised because of price hike of essentials. But what will happen to the common people? Let's make the 14 crore people

> -- Dr Kamal Hussain President, Gono Forum Said at a public meeting at Muktangon, on October 12. Source: Bhorer Kago

"The price hike of some vegetables is just temporary. It will reduce dramatically after 15 days when winter vegetables are available in the market"

-- Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan **BNP Secretary General** Told a gathering of the government's measures to control price hike of essentials on October 15. Source: The Daily Star

Hawker-free streets before

Saarc summit



Hawkers take over the footpaths at Bangabandhu Avenue.

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

Dhaka streets will be hawker-free next month as the home ministry, Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) and Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) ahead of the 13th Saarc Summit scheduled for November 12-13.

The hawker eviction drive will begin soon after the Eid-ul-Fitr, according to a decision taken at a recent meeting of all the concerned ministries and the utility service providers.

But the DCC mayor himself is not sure about keeping the footpaths and roads free from hawkers permanently after the seven-nation sum-

"It's a matter of regular drive. If we don't keep vigil on any place after an eviction drive, hawkers come back and start business again. So we have to think about alternative ways and a permanent solution," said Sadeque Hossain Khoka, the mayor.

The DCC earlier decided in principle to introduce 'Friday Market' to allow the hawkers to use a particular footpath on a particular day. But the plan could not be implemented.

"We are serious about this matter. We are going to start it soon," said the

About 40 percent of the 220kilometre footpaths in the city are now occupied by the vendors despite agencies to keep them hawker-free.

The High Court order came on February 11, 2001 to ensure the rights of the pedestrians to move freely and safely on Dhaka streets.

The DCC. DMP and other agencies have so far failed to comply with the High Court order. Even the ongoing drive of 35 mobile courts in the capital could do nothing to make the city footpaths free from the

"We are not getting support from the DCC. Unless they provide us with necessary information, we cannot take action against the hawkers on the streets," said Jalal Ahmed, chief metropolitan magistrate, Dhaka.

The mobile courts have 16 representatives from the DCC but none of them are from its Estate Department, sources said. "We are going to include our representatives in the mobile courts by this week," said Abu Taleb, chief estate office, DCC.

The hawkers, however, are not unhappy about the government plan to evict them before the Saarc Summit. Talking to Star City, a number of hawkers said they are ready to leave the footpaths before the summit, but for a temporary period

"Saarc Summit will be held imme diately after Eid and usually we take a long break after Eid," said Abdul Kader, a hawker at Farmgate. The government has also decided

to keep the city free from vagrants and beggars during the summit by sending them to shelter homes. According to non-government

statistics, the number of vagrants and beggars in Dhaka is more than 20,000. The six government shelter homes in the country have accommodation for only 1,900 people and all are already occupied.

"We can remove vagrants and beggars from the VIP and other important roads only. But the hawkers will be evicted from the entire city," said the city mayor.

Shumon's return from the dark world

FAIZUL KHAN TANIM

The tale is not about the boy becoming Tokai Shagor, Pichhi Hannan or any notorious characters, but a 'come back to life' determination from rough existence

Shumon, 16, from Mymensingh is one of the four lakh street children, who like many street children, left home just to escape the conflicts between his parents.

Saddled with a limp caused by the cruelty of the doctors, who treated him. Shumon seeks society's helping hand, his only hope now for a full

recovery Shumon's parents separated when he was five and re-married their individual choices. Living with his grandmother was not easy. His uncles could not accept the idea of raising an orphan and thus the tormenting started.

At eight, unable to put up with his uncles' torture he ran away to Dhaka going through the same situation, with a ray of hope for a brighter

Living on overripe bananas near the Tejgaon crossing shattered all thoughts of a better life. His life took a sharp turn when he moved to Karwan Bazar where Jahangir, a local gangster, spotted him.

Shumon was introduced to drugs, got addicted especially to 'enoctin', a tablet popularly known as Chakki. High on drugs, Shumon's job was to steal vegetables from the kitchen markets, sell them and give the money to Jahangir, for a payment of three meals a day.

He soon got involved in bigger crimes and with the intake of larger doses of drugs he was numb to any kind of torture.

One day, Shumon along with a few others like him, decided to take a day off and visit the Kamalapur Railway Station. Running alongside

the moving trains and attempting to cling on the entrances, he fell on the track and was injured... This accident took him through

an ordeal of 30 months, which began

at Dhaka Medical College Hospital

(DMCH) where a kind police officer had taken him. On being discharged, Shumon met new friends Habib and Liton, who told him to live in shelters or

'drop in centres' (DIC), where board, lodging and security is available. He moved to a renowned DIC in Karwan Bazaar, where he was once

again subjected to torture. But reality seeped into him on moving to the present DIC.

"I am getting a lot of care, free food, medical services, protection, education and entertainment in here. Suddenly I felt there is more to life than only wandering and getting in to mischief.," he said.

Sveda Samia Sultana, the person in-charge of the DIC -- Padakkhep



Shumon, whose ordeal seems over enjoys a moment with the rest of the children at the DIC.

Manobik Unnayan Kendra (PMUK) -- in Karwan Bazar related the rest of the story.

Life at this DIC was a new start for Shumon till unfortunately on July 3, he slipped and left him with a severe hip joint fracture.

ministers"

He was rushed to the orthopaedic hospital in Shyamoli where he received nothing but ill treatment

from the surgeon on duty. Shumon was left alone, unattended on the balcony for a day and later taken in on condition that the DIC officials should not request hospital high authorities for free treatment.

It is alleged that this 'group' of surgeons and nurses make a quick buck by allotting the free beds to people who can afford to pay.

The fracture was a complicated one and Shumon was operated only seven days later. The doctor attending to him present said should have been done within 24 hours.

The 'group' taunted Shumon even on the operating bed and the surgeon discharged him on July 18, forcefully after haphazardly cutting his stitches. The surgeon did not want the boy to remain in the hospital till the stitches were healed.

He was brought back to the DIC without proper treatment and gradually developed an infection and was admitted to Dustho Shastho Kendra in Mohammadpur. He was operated once again on August 13, and was there for 72 days. Shumon is now back at the DIC.

His daily medicines and food cost Tk. 400. Already Tk. 50, 000 has been He his now fighting to get back on

his feet. At times Shumon cries out loud in

pain, "I want to end my life," he said. 'I too want to live like any ordinary kid and be a worthy. Is it my fault to born into poverty?" he asked.