



The Portuguese were the first among Europeans to step into Dhaka lured by its wealth aiming at only doing business. They set up many Khuthi (structures) here. However, it was the British who stayed in Dhaka for long. There was no relation between the Portuguese in Dhaka and those in Arakan and Swandip. Those in Dhaka came during Shayesta Khan's regime and set up homes at Sripur.

Rain brings downpour of suffering on commuters

TAWFIQUE ALI

Heavy downpour on the first workday of the week yesterday brought untold distress to the general city commuters, but an occasion of windfall for public transporters.

For millions of commuters, who are dependent on the city's public transport system, rainy days bring misery and suffering in the form of the habitual defiance of the unruly drivers of taxicabs, CNG-run three-wheelers and rickshaws.

As usual, during the heavy rainfall yesterday the drivers insolently demanded 100 percent more than the usual fare for a destination, putting passengers in a predicament.

Commuters, stranded in flocks at every passenger shed, shop and under sun sheds of different buildings, got inevitably drenched on the way to their respective destinations.

The incessant rain of the last couple of days assumed torrential volume on Saturday night and continued through rush hour of the next morning.



Hundreds of stranded commuters yesterday wait for a transport home at different bus stations.



For Kashipin Khan, getting to school in time to take her first class was quite an ordeal.

Invariably, all the CNG-run auto rickshaw drivers demanded Tk70, double the usual fare, to take her from Gulshan-2 to Bashundhara point of Pragati Sarani.

"But when I finally got one, I had to pay Tk15, double the usual fare," Nasrin said.

Md. Jahangir Hossain had to walk all the way from Katasur to his driving job in Lalmaia D-block,

as there was no rickshaw available on the waterlogged streets.

After a lengthy wait, one CNG-run auto-rickshaw agreed to take this correspondent from Gulshan-

1 to Karwan Bazar, but demanded Tk60 instead of the regular metered fare of around Tk32.

The metre of the three-wheeler (no-Dhaka Metro 12-9808) was

also out of order.

The driver of the three-wheeler, Abdur Rob, said that he

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"This is a helpless situation every time it rains," she said.

A resident of Indira Road, Shamila Nasrin waited long to avail a rickshaw to go to Karwan Bazar.

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Urban poverty robs Sumon of his childhood

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

Trading the classroom and playground for the grim interior of a metal scrap shop, ten-year old Sumon now toils from dawn to dusk to bear family burdens.

At his tender age, he runs a business of scrap metals and plastic with his immediate elder brother, aged thirteen, to help repay family loans.

Sumon, his parents and his two brothers share a low cost single room at road no 26 of Rupnagar residential area under Mirpur. He and his brother get up as early as dawn and go around the Rupnagar area to trade scrap things.

Trapped in poverty, driven by desperation, the youngster was forced to venture into the city's murky crime world. Sumon admitted that once, he even engaged some other children to go around and steal merchandise for him from different neighbourhoods.

"My family fell into a loan trap and lost every single penny fighting a pilfering case after I



Sumon, a ten-year old child, toils from dawn to dusk to help his family.

bought an old water pump from a scrap seller. I understood that the pump was stolen from somewhere nearby but did not care

much for buying the pump because I had not stolen it myself," he said on Thursday to this correspondent, who passed

whole day with him and his friends and family.

"My father is a rickshaw puller, and he was badly beaten up by

area residents, who handed him over to the police declaring he was a thief," Sumon said.

He said that all his family members were working hard, but for various reasons, the amount of loans were increasing regularly rather than being repaid.

His family has borrowed at least Tk 70,000 from different sources within last two years.

Rowsan Ara, mother of Sumon, said that her husband moved to Dhaka from Borguna about 9 years ago with his family.

"Hard days were fixed in our fate from the beginning in Dhaka. In course of time I got a loan from an NGO and invested in the scrap business. I also took loans from wholesale buyers of scraps. My second son started the business at the age of 9 and now Sumon is running it," she said.

Sumon's mother expressed perpetual anxiety for her son, because of the risky nature of his job. He frequently gets injured while handling metal scraps at the shop, she reported.

"Last Monday evening, when he reached home, I was horrified to see bloody bandages wrapped

around his head and arms," she said. Sumon explained that an accident had occurred at his shop while unloading a heavy scrap pack from rickshaw van. An iron rod hit the back of his head and the pack fell upon him, causing his injuries.

Everyday Sumon reaches his shop by 7.30 in the morning to wait for wholesale buyers, after having arranged for some merchandise from the retail scrap sellers. He said,

"I learnt every skill of buying and selling scraps, even tricks of manipulating the measuring scale."

From sunrise to sunset, Sumon works hard with hardly any scope for leisure, except when he can play Ludo with other sellers and friends at his shop. He has time to relax only in the evening, when he roams around the whole area.

Dealing with the retail scrap sellers and wholesale buyers, as well as collecting and sorting scraps is his daily task. He also has to manage police and influ-

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"I have sowed seeds in 17 of bigha land, will I make sherbet with 6 kilograms of fertiliser?"

-- Akbar Ali Mondol

An octogenarian farmer from Fulbari village of Chuadanga

Told a reporter after waiting for fertiliser at the Shankarchandra Union Parishad Chittagong from dawn to five in the evening, on Wednesday. Source: Prothom Alo

"It's not fair... They [anti-reform activists] will destroy the unity among the party activists if they brand us conspirators."

-- Ashraf Hossain

A pro-reform leader and joint secretary general of BNP

Told reporters, refuting Khaleda Zia's provocative comments on the reform proposals, on Wednesday. Source: The Daily Star

"It seemed a wind blew towards the classroom through the open window and I felt the smell of a medicine. Suddenly tears started rolling down my cheeks, with severe headache and muscle pulling."

-- Aleya Akhter

A student of class nine, Adiabad Islamia High School and College, Narsingdi

and a victim of mass hysteria

Told a reporter at DMCH, on Sunday. Source: The Daily Star

Compiled by Durdana Ghias

PLANNED WHOLESALE MARKET IN JATRABARI

DCC move threatens thousands with livelihoods

SHEIKH SABIHA ALAM

traders started with a fish market, which gradually turned into a large wholesale market.

Chief Executive Officer Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) Mohammad Saifuddin Ahmed said: "DCC will allocate shops of the markets to the existing traders. They should not be panicked. Our aim is to disperse Karwan Bazar and organise the whole set-up."

But Jatrabari traders are now passing their days in fear of eviction. They alleged that the government has ignored their request to build the new market on the adjacent 8-acre land instead of demolishing the existing market.

"We will fight to establish our rights... We will not let the authorities demolish this market that is the only source of income for over five lakh people. We would build up strong resistance," said one of the wholesale traders at Jatrabari.

Many of the traders said the whole move to build the market at this site is apparently

compensate the thousands of traders currently running their business at Jatrabari.

The wholesalers at Jatrabari have built a chain with thousands of small traders across the country. Apart from running the largest sheep market, they sell fruits, vegetables, fish, dry fish and many other products to retailers. Some 10 to 12 small industries are also there.

"We are working in cooperation with the producers. You can get both local and imported fish here... We have constant touch with the producers as well as the retailers of hats and bazaars in different districts," said Abu Bakar Siddique of Dhaka Motsya Bazar.

Although the government has said the existing traders will get shops in the new market, most of the traders said it is virtually impossible to accommodate and



Livelihood of thousands of traders is under threat as government has decided to build a mega wholesale kitchen market on five-acre plot near Jatrabari intersection demol-

designed to facilitate a vested group who own up to eight acres of land in the adjacent area.

"Well, we hail the government move... but why have they chosen this land... as you can see vast unused government land only 500 yards away from this spot," said one of the leaders of Jatrabari Babosayee Malik Bohumukhi Samobay Samity.

Earlier on January 4, 2004, the then LGRD and cooperatives minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan suggested that the proposed wholesale market in Jatrabari should be built on the adjacent land without demolishing the existing market.

But ignoring the request of the traders, the central land allocation committee comprising the officials of the ministries of LGRD and commerce, and DCC approved the site for building the market. The land owners will get compensation and traders will get shops.

Shamim Kabir Bhuiyan, secretary of Jatrabari Babosayee Malik Bohumukhi

Somobay Samity, expressed doubt whether the small traders have the money to get shops from DCC.

"I think most of the small traders does not have the money. On the other hand how will they accommodate five lakh people in 440 shops?" he said.

Referring to the huge allocation to build the market, he said: "The government can give us the money as loan... we will make our market modernised."

On a spot visit to the market, this correspondent found the land has been separated in a strange way, carefully considering the land owned by Nazimuddin Chairman, Bengal Plastic Industries Ltd owner Morshed Alam, and Abdur Rahman -- a neighbour to the DCC mayor.

Sources said Nazimuddin Chairman has recently established some small shops over his part of land though vast area is still left without any structure.