

So-called co-ops fleece members, vanish with their deposits

People of low-income group often fall victims

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

Thousands of urban poor are in the trap of a section of cooperative societies which collect high amount of service charge for loans and deprive their members of due profits.

Sources said the government has cancelled licences of around 1,800 out of about 8,500 registered cooperatives in the city in the last three months for such anomalies.

Cooperatives are allowed to collect deposits from their mem-

people especially small traders and low-paid employees in the city are the members of these cooperatives. They borrow little amount of money from the organisations to meet their emergency needs.

However, an investigation by this correspondent revealed that a large number of unauthorised cooperatives are operating in the city and both registered are unregistered cooperatives hardly comply with the rules and regulations.

Members of these organisations are deprived of their rights

fled keeping the office under lock and key. None of them got their money back.

The members lodged general diary with local police station against the cooperative's officials, but nothing happened. "I lost my hard-earned money," Aleya said.

The cooperatives lend money to the members for 100 days and collect it through daily or weekly instalments. Although they are supposed to collect a minimum amount of service charge from the loan recipients, it is alleged that the charge most the cooper-

not have any record or estimation about the number of unregistered cooperatives in the city. But the officials admitted that there are many such organisations and they are running without any monitoring.

Members of these organisations do not get the due share of the organisation's annual profits, although they face hassle in taking loan paying high amount of service charges. Moreover, they are deprived of the right to participate in the organisational management.

These cooperatives have become popular among the lower middle class people who do not have easy access to banks or any other institutions. But they are being cheated by the unscrupulous executives of these anomalous cooperatives.

General members of most of the organisations alleged that a few people in the top management enjoy the profit and all other facilities depriving others.

The government considers cooperative movement as a suitable way of sustainable development of the poor. But the prevailing chaotic situation has turned the cooperatives sector into an exploiter instead of a service provider to the urban poor.

Nabirul Islam, a spokesman for the Dhaka District Cooperative office, said, "Though little in number, there are examples of properly maintained cooperatives in the city that pay due share of profits and interests on deposits to the members."

He mentioned about the little institutional strength of the Department of Cooperatives in maintaining the huge number of cooperative societies.

The six cooperative thanas in the city have the provision for 30 officials and employees but some of the positions often remain vacant, said Nabirul. He also said they do not have any statistics about the number of people covered by the cooperatives in the city.

He said the government has enacted the Micro Credit Regulatory Act 2006 to maintain the micro-credit operations properly. Cooperatives should be run properly because they offer employment opportunity to the lower and lower middle class people.



A section of jewellers are also involved in illegal micro-credit trade extracting high interest.

bers and disburse loans to them under the Micro-Credit Regulatory Act 2006.

These organisations are permitted to collect service charge on loans instead of interest from their members. According to rules, they must pay the members due share of annual profit and ensure their participation in running the organisations.

A large number of low-income

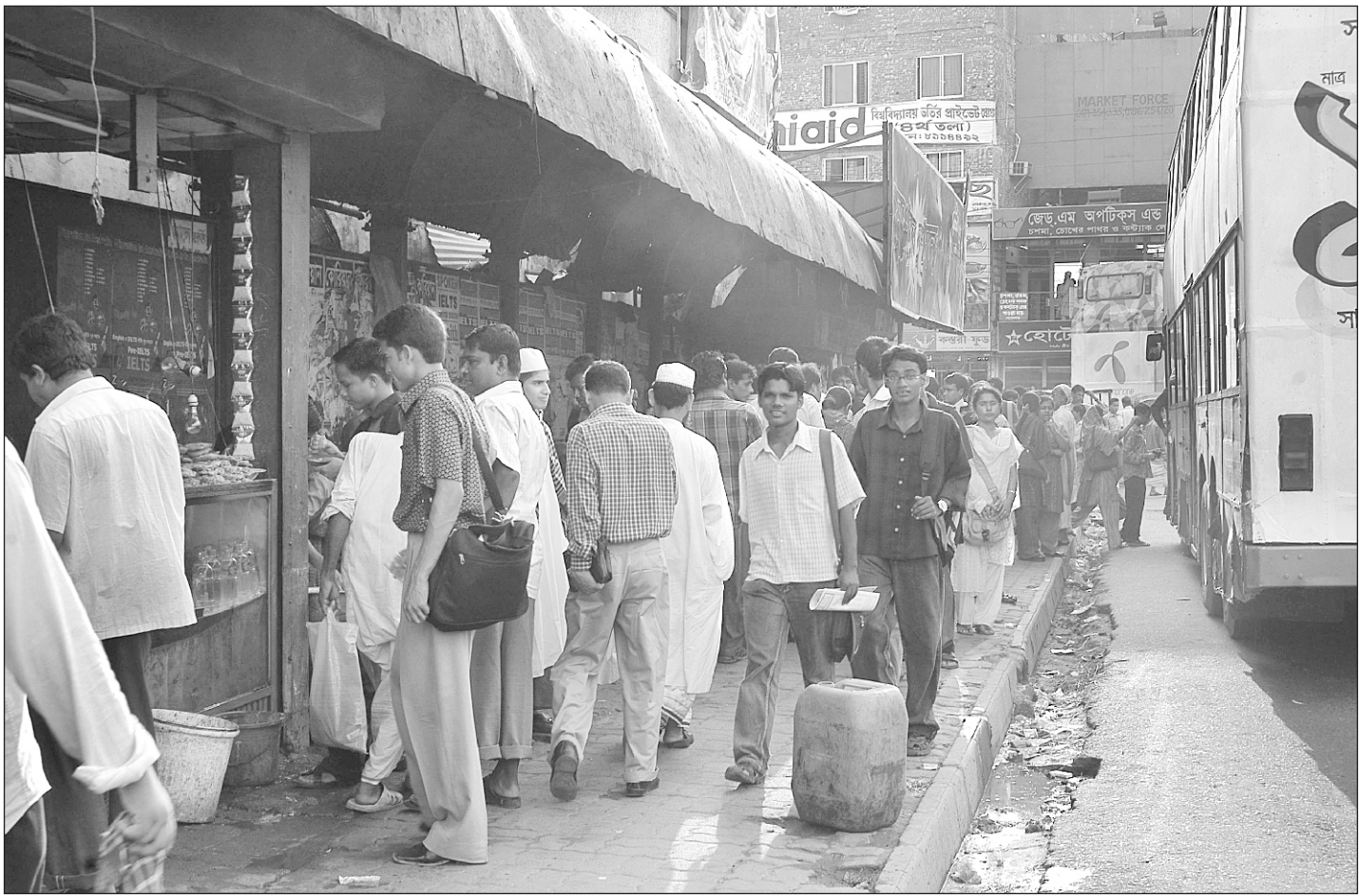
due to the government's little monitoring over their activities. Some of the cooperatives even vanish after collecting deposits from the poor members.

Aleya, a small tea stall owner from Pallabi, had deposited Tk 2,600 at Bhorer Alo, a cooperative at Pallabi Block C. A few months later when she along with other members went to receive loan from the organisation, she found all the executives

atives collect is equivalent to 25 percent annual interest of the loan.

According to the Dhaka District Cooperative Office, the licences of 1,800 registered cooperatives in six cooperative thanas in Dhaka Metropolitan Area were cancelled for violating rules and regulations after the interim government assumed office.

The cooperative office does



A bus bay in the Farmgate area.

Bus bays rarely keep the rowdy drivers at bay

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Bus bays or designated lanes for buses to pick up or drop off passengers could help reduce frequent accidents as well as traffic congestion in the capital significantly, said experts.

Even with sufficient bus bays, the situation will not improve unless the unruly bus drivers are forced to use the bus bays in a disciplined way and prevented from racing with other buses, the experts added.

A common scene on Dhaka streets is that bus drivers, showing sheer disregard to other road users as well as to public safety, are competing with each other to get to the bus stop or blocking the other bus by parking diagonally anywhere they please while picking up or dropping off passengers. The evident result of this rowdy practice of the bus drivers is traffic congestion on a long stretch of the road behind them.

A large number of commuters in the city are falling victim to the bus drivers' reckless driving practices as the racing buses during altercations with each other bump into the other bus deliberately.

"It happened so quick. I just heard the noise of shattering glass and tried to cover my face with my hands, but it was too late to save my face from the flying little glass pieces of the shattered windowpane [of the bus]," said a profusely bleeding Azizul Islam, a passenger of a bus that hit another bus at Shewrapara bus stop.

As the accident took place when this correspondent was also at the spot, he rushed to the scene to find out how it happened.

Azizul Islam, an elderly primary school teacher from

Nilphamari, told the correspondent that three Farmgate-bound buses were blocking the road by parking haphazardly near the bus stop, leaving only a narrow space on the road.

He was in a window seat inside a fourth bus that hit the bus in front of it as it was attempting to force through the narrow space, Aziz added.

After the accident, no one -- neither the bus drivers nor the traffic police -- had the time to come to the rescue of the injured, regretted Aziz.

As soon as the forth bus hit the

As far as disciplining the bus drivers is concerned, it is not a very easy task for the police "to line up the buses properly in a crowded bus stop with such a small number of force," he explained.

Bus bays could be one of the solutions to the problem, but there is no bus bay at this bus stop on Rokeya Sarani, he said.

Bus bays at bus stops can help ease traffic movement if buses are forced to wait in the designated lanes during picking up or dropping off passengers. Besides, the passengers will also

Farmgate area, those are not long enough considering the huge number of buses going through the bus stops every minute. Since all the buses cannot fit inside those bus bays at a time, the police always have to keep them moving, Rahman added.

The city needs more bus bays and those have to be longer. Besides, a scientific route design for public buses needs to be enforced to solve the problem, he advised.

Only five or six bus bays were constructed by RHD at major traffic points in the city in 2004-05 fiscal year under a Tk 20 crore project of Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP). Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) implemented the project. The project also included widening, beautification and lighting the city roads.

Beautification of the city streets under the same project is still going on, but no more bus bay is under construction at the moment.

When asked why more bus bays were not constructed, the DCC engineering department chief said DCC constructed a bus bay wherever it could find a suitable space for it. Most important traffic points in the city, however, do not have sufficient room for constructing a bus bay, he added.

Sources at the DCC and DUTP, however, blamed haphazard and slow implementation of the Tk 1200 crore DUTP project that was supposed to be implemented within five years.

As only 16 per cent work of the project was completed after two and a half years, the authorities slashed the fund of the project to Tk 800 crore. And due to the fund constraint, the bus bays have been discarded from the project, added the sources.

Milk sellers milk consumers

FROM PAGE 21 the company's milk van-pullers and retailers from exploiting the consumers," Muhi said.

He called upon all, in the event of price manipulation, to call over telephone no-8811828-29, 8050240, 01713034358 and 01711566006 for any complaint.

Milk Vita supplies 1.5 lakh litres of liquid milk daily at pres-

ent, he said. The target is to double the supply in Ramadan as demand goes up during the month. Normally, the demand for liquid milk ranges from 1.8 lakh to 2 lakh litres.

According to sources, the price manipulation continues to occur as punitive measures against the unscrupulous van drivers and retailers are inadequate and ineffective.

In case a retailer overprices the product, the company can stop supply. In case a van driver charges higher price, a retailer can hold him on the spot and inform the authorities.

As per the company's provision, if a van driver is proved to have overpriced products, the shopkeeper will get back the extra money deducting from the pay of the next supply.

The Milk Vita authorities increased the price of liquid milk by at least 20 percent in the last 15 months. On July 3, 2006, the price was increased to Tk 36 per litre.

BMPFUL is the central union of a total of 345 primary Milk Producer's Co-operative Societies and has a membership of about 40,000 milk-producing farmers.

Advertising, Bank & market timing

AD AGENCIES

Macomm
Dhaka. Ph: 9110351, 01715014988. Fax: 9110351.
Email: info@macommdbd.com

Benchmark Ltd
Ph: 8813648, 8812415
Fax: 9889917
Email: info@benchmark-bd.com

Frontline Communications Ltd
Suit 9/C, Azad Centre, 55 Purana Paltan, Dhaka.
Ph: 9564137, 9567611, 9557597. Fax: 9555184.
Email: frontline@dhaka.net

Adcomm Ltd
9896600, 9887665

Asiatic Marketing Communication Ltd
8892768, 9893303
8892768, 9893303

Bitopi Advertising
8053418

Grey Advertising Bangladesh Ltd
8811541, 8827862, 9881689
Fax: 8811541

Interface Communications
9362624, 8351148, Fax: 8314306

Interspeed Advertising
8810675, 9891859

Mattrra
8317456, 9331057, Fax: 9330556

Media Comm Ltd
8861521 (9 lines)

Unitrend Ltd
9124380-4

A Positive Advertising Ltd
8856598-9, 8837751-2

Quantum Maket Research BD Ltd
Ph: 9862162
Email: info@qmrbd.com
www.quantumresearch.in

ART & CULTURAL CENTERS

Alliance Francaise De Dhaka
26, Mirpur Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka, Tel: 8611557
Fax: 8616462, Email: infoafd@afdacca.com

Bangla Academy
Dhaka University Area, Dhaka, Tel: 8619577, 8619583, Fax: 8612352, Email: bacademy@citechco.net

Bangladesh Shishu Academy
Old High Court Road (Opp. Carzon Hall), Dhaka-1000, Tel: 9550317, 9564128

British Council
5, Fuller Road, Dhaka
Tel: 8618905-7, 8618867-8
Fax: 8613375
Email: dhaka.enquiries@bd.britishcouncil.org

German Cultural Centre
House 10, Road 9, Dhanmondi, Dhaka
Tel: 9126525, 9126526, Fax: 8110712

Indian Cultural Center
H-25, Road-96, Gulshan-2, Dhaka-1212
Tel: 8850141, Fax: 8850142

Nazrul Institute

House 330B, Road 28 (Old), Dhanmondi, Dhaka
Tel: 9114500, Fax: 9118051, Email: nazruln@citecho.net

Russian Cultural Centre
House-510, Road-7, Dhanmondi, Dhaka, Tel: 9118531
Tel: 8113026, Email: ros.cult@accessitel.net

Shilpakala Academy
Segunbagicha, Dhaka-1000
Tel: 9561709, 9562801-4

Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts
House 275/F, Road 27, Dhanmondi, Dhaka
Tel: 8123115
Email: bf@bdonline.com

Cezanne Art Gallery
UAE Moitri Complex, Kemal Ataturk Avenue, Banani Dhaka
Tel: 8826578, Email: cezanne@bangla.net

Drik Gallery
House 58, Road 15A(New), Dhanmondi, Dhaka
Tel: 9120125, Fax: 9115044, Email: office@drik.net

Gallery Chittrak
House-21, Road-4, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka
Tel: 8620345, Email: chittrak@agni.com

National Art Gallery
Segunbagicha, Dhaka-1000
Tel: 9562801-4

Shilpa Rag
House 15, Road 16, Dhanmondi, Dhaka, Tel: 8117085
Fax: 8117085, Email: shilparg@vasdigital.com

Shilpangan
House-25, Road-5, Dhanmondi, Dhaka, Tel: 8614246

Tivoli Art Gallery
F/33, DCC Super Market (1st Floor) Gulshan-2 (North), Dhaka, Tel: 9895903

BANKS

Agrani Bank
9566153-54, 956616069, 9566074-75

Bangladesh Bank
7126101-20, Fax: 9566212

BRAC Bank Ltd
8824051-4, Fax: 8813543

Citibank NA
9550060, Fax: 9562236

Dutch Bangla Bank Ltd
9568537-39
Fax: 9561889

Eastern Bank Ltd
9558390-1, Fax: 9562364

First Security Bank Limited
9562878, PABX: 9560229, Fax: 9561637

Grameen Bank
8011138, Fax: 8013559

Habit Bank Ltd
9555092, 9563043-5, Fax: 9561784

Islami Bank (Bangladesh) Ltd
95542402, 9563040, 9560099, Fax: 9564532

IFIC Bank Ltd
9563020, 9562060, Fax: 9562015

Jamuna Bank Ltd
9555141, 9570912-16, Fax: 9565762

Janata Bank
9560000, 9560027-30, Fax: 9564644

Mercantile Bank Limited
9559333, 9560329
Fax: 9561213

National Bank Ltd
9563081-5, Fax: 9563953

NCC Bank
9561902-4
Fax: 9566290

Premier Bank Ltd
8015276, 8811417

MARKET CLOSED

Prime Bank Ltd
9567265, 9556282
Fax: 9567230

Shahjalal Bank Ltd
9570812, 9567435, Fax: 9557413

South East Bank
9550081, 9551411, Fax: 9550093

Standard Chartered Bank Ltd
9550181, Fax: 9562332

Sonali Bank
9550426-34
Fax: 9561410

The City Bank Limited
9565925, Fax: 9562347

The Trust Bank Ltd
9871095, 9871074, 9888068, Fax: 4071094

Uttara Bank Ltd
9561438, 9551162-3, Fax: 8613529

United Commercial Bank Ltd
9561580, Fax: 88-02-9560587

Gulshan 1, 2 markets-Friday
Elephant Road-Friday
Bishal Center-Friday
Baitul Mukarram Market-Friday
Polwell Market-Friday
BCS Computer City-Friday
Isha Khan Shopping Complex-Friday.
Rajlaxmi Complex-Friday
Stadium Market-Friday
Bangabazar Market-Friday
National Museum-Thursday
Ahsan Manzil-Thursday
New Market-Tuesday
Gausia Market-Tuesday
Mouchak Market-Sunday
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
Eastern Plaza-Sunday
Farmview Super Market-Sunday
Muktijuddha Jadughar-Sunday
Dhaka Zoo-Sunday
Shishu Jadughar-Sunday