

In old days, the present Shahidullah Hall area of Dhaka University was known as "Baag-e-Musa Kha". According to Hakim Habibur Rahman, the area was a garden and was famous as garden of Muslims. It was named after Musa Kha, who was the son of Isa Kha, one of the famous Baro Bhuiyan. Musa Kha was captive when having lost a war with Subader Islam Kha. However, Subade Islam Kha was very kind to him.

## Erratic power cuts reshape lifestyle

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

"Everyone hurry up, let's start dinner. The load shedding is going to start in 20 minutes," Fatema Mannan, a resident of Rupnagar in Mirpur, called out to her family members.

"If we don't start now then we will have to dine in candlelight," she reminded her four children while arranging candles along with rice bowls and curries on the table.

Candlelight dinner is no longer a romantic notion in Dhaka city. It is now a regular custom of everyday life with load shedding situation getting worse.

Not just dining habit, erratic power cuts now dictate life in general these days, forcing the city dwellers to rearrange lifestyle accordingly.

"There is load shedding in every one hour. We are forced to change habits with its schedule. I have to think ahead about my household chores otherwise I will not be able to finish them on time," Fatema explains.

"Load shedding starts around 9:00am, so the landlord keeps the water pump running until then. I have to finish all the washing and cleaning jobs by then," she said.

"I leave some of the chores

for midnight as there is usually no power cut after 12 at night. It is not possible to finish all the work with preserved water. Besides, it helps me start early in the morning to keep up pace with the load shedding," Fatema added.

Having a bath has to be scheduled as well in the city. If anyone fails to have a shower in the morning then no-one knows when the next chance to get fresh will come as water supply is disrupted due to power cut during daytime.

A full night sleep is a dream for the city dwellers as there are occasional power cuts late at

night. Sleep disorder severely disrupting office work of people.

Cacophony of roaring generators is becoming a normal experience all around the city especially in commercial areas where noise pollution increased tremendously.

The most important source of entertainment, television, also plays hide and seek along with power cuts.

Harun-or-Rashid, a resident of Kalwalapara, Shahalibagh said, "Most of the time I don't get to watch news on television. When we have electricity at home then the cable line is off as the operators are having a load shedding at that time."

Many city dwellers are buying expensive gadgets such as IPS (instant power supply) to make life hassle-free, but it does not work as expected.

Nurul Islam, a resident of East Manipur, said, "I bought an IPS spending around Tk 16,000. Now I cannot even recharge it properly. If the power goes on and off like this the battery of the IPS will soon become weak."

Similar story goes for rechargeable lights and UPS.

Food items rot in freezers, as it often breaks down for low-voltage in many areas.

Power outage is also sending people home earlier than before.

"Now I can spend some time with the kids as stores are closed by 8:00pm," said a salesman working at a furniture shop in Panthapath.

"Earlier when I went to work in the morning I saw them sleeping and when I went back home late at night they are

again sleeping. I never saw my kids playing."

While lifestyle changes are inevitable for most city dwellers, hardship of the low-income people has increased recently. Laundrymen, workers at electronic and metal workshops, motor mechanics are the worst sufferer. Cyber cafe, computer compose, service centres, photocopy shops, small restaurants and tailors are also suffering immensely. Without electricity they are forced to remain shut most of the day.

Abbas Ali, a laundryman from Rupnagar, said, "It is impossible to work with electric irons these days. So I had to switch back to good old charcoal irons."

Most people go home by 10:00pm these days. Income of the CNG auto-rickshaw drivers and rickshaw-pullers are shrinking for lack of commuters after that.

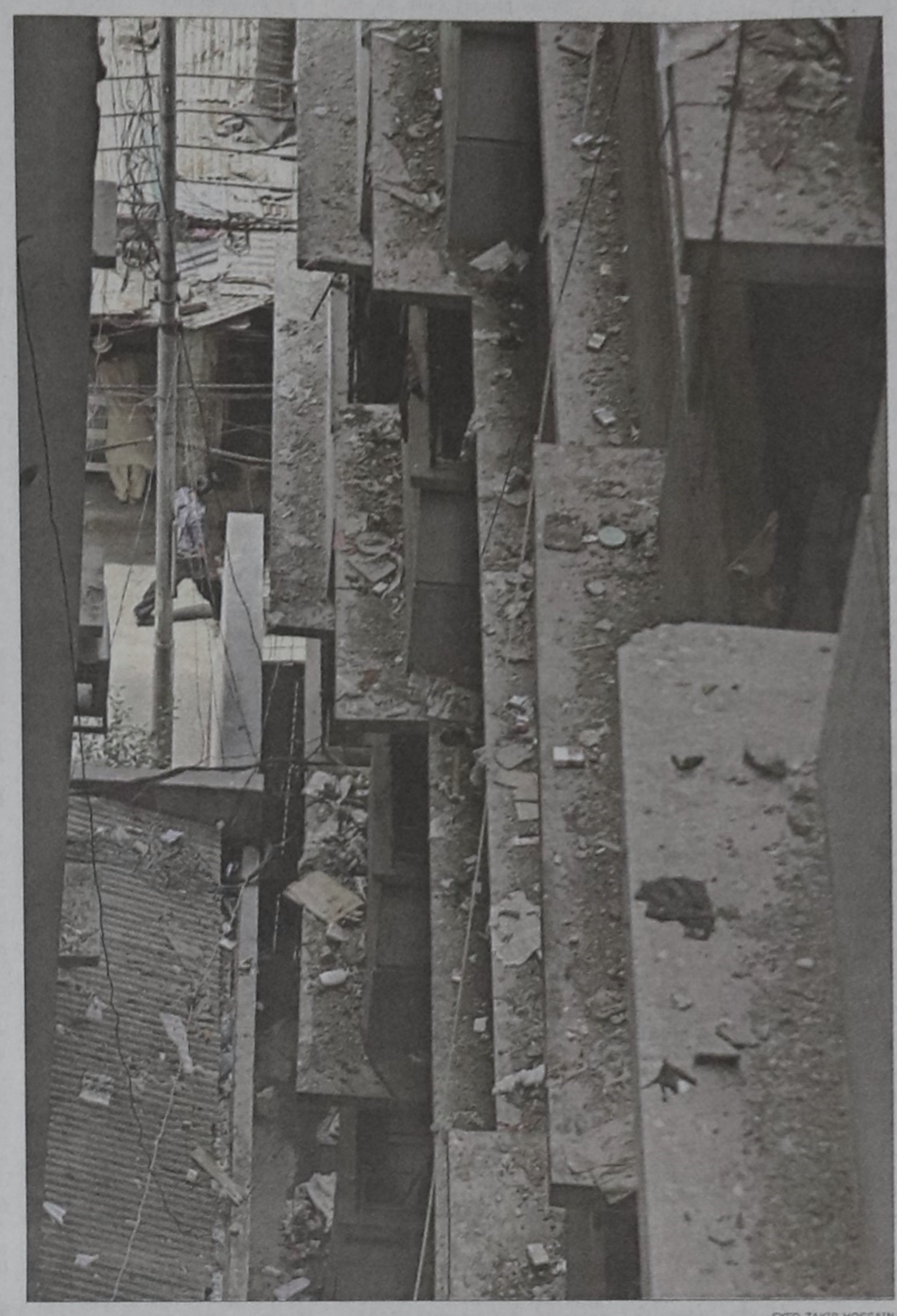
Hashem Miah, an auto-rickshaw driver from Tejgaon, said, "I work in the second shift. At least two hours of my shift is wasted every day as there are not many passengers after 10:00pm. Moreover, there are waiting hours at the refuelling station."

Due to inadequate power generation in several power plants and increasing demand load shedding situation started to worsen early this year.

According to the estimation of Load Dispatch Centre of the Power Development Board around 3,500 MW of power is generated every day. Around 950 MW of daily shortage persists in the country where as in Dhaka city the shortage is around 200 MW.



Candlelit dinners are scarcely a romantic affair for the city dwellers living with frequent load shedding these days.



A SITE NOT TOO UNFAMILIAR FOR THE DHAKA'S URBANITES!: Unplanned urbanisation has left the city with rows of apartments with scant space in between the buildings. Most apartment dwellers have this bad habit of chucking trash out of windows to be landed on the sunshades of nearby apartments.

## City streets to come under microscope

DMP to bring the whole city under the vigil of CCTV cameras

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

The city streets are about to see dramatic changes in terms of security measures soon as Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) is working on its most ambitious project to bring the whole city under the scrutiny of closed-circuit television cameras.

Under the Tk 61-crore project 32 large digital billboards will be installed at some major points of the city from which drivers and commuters will get up-to-date information on the traffic situation of nearby streets.

"We are hopeful that the whole scheme will be finished by August this year," said a top official at DMP.

The 'command control and communication system' project will provide for over 176 closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras to be placed at 59 city spots to monitor traffic movements and other activities in the streets.

The CCTV system involves a kind of broadcasting that can only be seen on specified receivers connected to the television camera.

The cameras will be used to make sure that traffic rules are being followed accordingly. Conducts of on-duty traffic officers will also be closely monitored. Appropriate actions will be taken if any officer is found engaged in illegal activities, sources said.

Details of haphazardly parked vehicles will also be jotted down so that nearby traffic sergeants can take actions against the driver. Officers on monitoring duties will keep a close eye on the streets to check crimes.

In case of street muggings, escape-route of the culprit(s)

can be easily identified through these cameras, the sources said.

"The possibilities are nearly endless," said an official from the Media and Communication Department of DMP. "Another important benefit from the use of this technology is that we can closely monitor general trends and conducts in streets."

"We would also be able to monitor the patterns of street crimes, which will give us invaluable information on how the criminals operate," he said.

This type of 'digital communication system' has produced great results in countries like Singapore and Malaysia, he added.

A Malaysian organisation named Folec Telecommunication is helping

the DMP to set up and operate the technology. All the necessary equipments have already been brought to the police command control centre at the Police Headquarters on Abdul Gani Road.

DMP officials believe this technology will revolutionise the police job of regulating traffic movements. It will also help them cut street crimes by a big margin.

"City dwellers will feel more secure in streets with the introduction of this technology. They will benefit greatly from this new scheme," said a police spokesperson.

In a bid to regulate traffic movements, automatic traffic signals were installed at 76 points of the capital city. But

many drivers drive cars haphazardly near these signals and deliberately flout the signals. As a solution to this problem, 8 to 10 CCTV cameras will be installed at each of these traffic points.

These cameras will be monitored by six base stations, which will have direct communication with the command control room at the Police Headquarters.

"For example, if the officers at a base station can identify the possible source of a tailback, they will inform the control centre, which will direct the nearest traffic sergeant to the source of the problem so that he can deal with it," said a DMP official.

"The command centre can direct traffic sergeants to take

actions against violators of traffic laws more easily with the help of the cameras," he said.

The major spots where the cameras will be installed include Farmgate, Palton, Jatrabari, North South Road, Matsya Bhaban, Kakrail, Malibagh, Mouchak, Bangla Motor, Gulshan-1, Gulshan-2, Science Laboratory, Banani, Mohakhali, Kakali crossing, Rang Bhaban intersection, Asad Gate, Russell Square, Nilkhet, Shahbagh and High Court.

Under the scheme the traffic officers will use Terrestrial Trunked Radio (TETRA) communication system. This technology will allow its users to choose his receivers rather than making the message available to everyone using the same frequency.

A TETRA set can also be used as a regular cellular phone to make calls to cellphone or land phone numbers. The conversations will be instantly recorded.

Sources said that the necessary equipment have already been installed at the control centre. The only thing left to do is installing the CCTV cameras at the designated spots. Setting up of the six base centres are also in process.

The central control room will have three additional deputy commissioners, two assistant commissioners, and four sergeants to monitor the proceedings.

According to sources at DMP, a special team has already completed their training in Malaysia on operating the new equipment.

Almost one-third of the scheme has already been completed. Installing CCTV and base stations may need another five months or so.



Busy intersections of the city are soon to come under the scrutiny of CCTV cameras.

## Licensed rickshaw-pullers become minority

Number of rickshaws 4 times the licence holders

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has provided licence to around 79,000 rickshaw-pullers and about 10,000 rickshaw van drivers, but the number of unlicensed rickshaw-pullers continues to rise in the city due to lack of monitoring.

Sources said the actual number of rickshaw pullers in the city is about four times the number of licences issued. They are pulling rickshaws freely, making DCC's licence programme meaningless, said licensed rickshaw-puller and owners.

Most of the licensed rickshaw-pullers expressed frustrations over the pulling licence programme, saying that the DCC or law enforcers never ask them to show the licence, which they got from DCC paying a fee of Tk 30.

Hamidul Islam, a rickshaw-puller who obtained a licence, said that for collecting the licence last year, he stayed at least one and a half day in a long queue at a zonal office of the DCC with hundreds of other pullers.

For getting a pulling licence, he paid Tk 30 as licence fee and spent Tk 50 for photographs, and at least Tk 200 for meals during the stay in the queue. "I spent so much money to obtain the licence but it has become a useless paper," he said.

The rickshaw-pullers and owners alleged that DCC started the licence programme only to earn money, without specifying the policy for authorised and unauthorised rickshaws.

DCC sources said they do not conduct any drive against the unauthorised pullers considering the fact that such a drive could eliminate three-fourths of the total rickshaws from the city, creating a huge transport gap.

The demand for rickshaws in the city is increasing with the rapid growth of population.

Rickshaw pullers and garage owners said the DCC officials were well aware of the fate of the licence programme but they

implemented the programme haphazardly.

They said many people, driven by poverty, come to the city from rural areas and become rickshaw-pullers without any training. They were not given the opportunity of training even while providing them with the pulling licence.

The DCC has created scope of counterfeiting the licences by a section of unscrupulous forgers who made money by selling them to unlicensed pullers as the city corporation's licence does not have any protective features.

DCC officials said they did not have any additional fund for arranging costly and highly secured licences or providing training to the rickshaw-pullers.

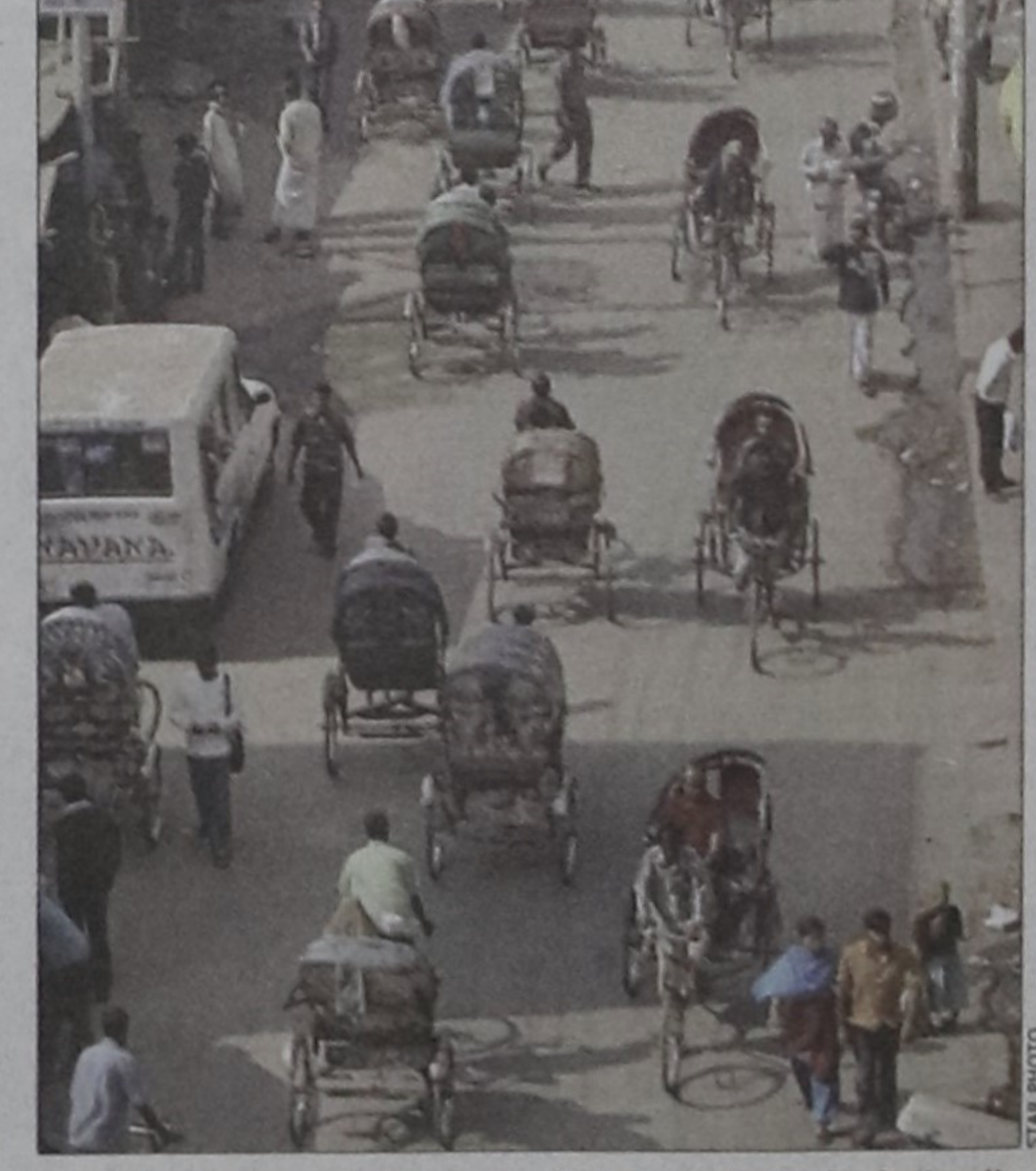
About forgery of licences, a top official of DCC admitted that

the licences do not have any security feature. "These are printed papers with DCC seal only."

Fazlur Rahman, president of Bangladesh Rickshaw Van Chalak Oikyo Parishad alleged that brokers and some officials of DCC made money from the 'licence business'. The brokers sold a huge number of fake licences to the pullers last year.

About the authenticity of the contents of the pulling licences, he said that every licence describes the blood group of its bearer, but the blood group was mentioned without testing the blood of the rickshaw-pullers.

"DCC did not checked the level of traffic sense of the licence holders, even did not provide a little traffic education to them which is essential" he added.



Number of unlicensed rickshaw pullers continues to rise in the city due to lack of monitoring.