



A chouki or security outpost during the Moghul period in Karwan Bazar was set up where people were security checked before entering the city. There was a caravanseraai near the chouki. The word Caravanseraai was later distorted to Karwan Bazar.

KARMAJIBI MOHILA HOSTEL

Air of neglect all over

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

Labonya was fetching boiled water from the kitchen of her hostel. Suddenly she tripped and fell. And hot water splashed all over her body.

With serious burns, she was taken to the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where she received treatment for nearly three weeks.

Labonya, a boarder of Karmajibi Mohila (working women) Hostel at Nilkhet, has now recovered and joined her workplace. But the situation is unchanged at the hostel.

The hostel authorities

The boarders have many other complaints -- low quality food served at the dining hall, dirty environment, and harsh behaviour of some matrons and class-four employees

do not provide pure drinking water for its boarders, forcing them to carry hot water from the ground-floor kitchen to the upper floors of the 10-storey hostel.

"It is very easy to arrange drinking water for the boarders by setting up filters at every floor. But the authorities do not pay heed and ignore the 'citizen charter' of the hostel that reads the hostel authori-

ties will supply pure drinking water," said Labonya.

The boarders have many other complaints -- low quality food served at the dining hall, dirty environment, and harsh behaviour of some matrons and class-four employees.

The hostel staffs do not clean bathrooms and toilets regularly. No one cares if the water taps are out of order. For months the

basins remain unusable, alleged the boarders.

"Often we have to cook inside the rooms using kerosene stoves because the food that they served is of low quality," said Nila, another boarder.

Most of the boarders said they will not hesitate to pay more for better food.

Water crisis becomes severe in the summer that forces the boarders to store water in buckets in front of the bathroom where long

queues are seen every morning.

The hostel building has two lifts, but one is out of order.

"The government hostel is considered a comparatively safer residence for working women, but getting a seat in this hostel is quite difficult," said another boarder.

It is alleged that many students are staying at the hostel posing as working women. Using false appointment letters and through lobbying they managed seats there.

"You will see around 40 percent of the boarders are students. The authorities know it very well but they would not take action," said a boarder seeking anonymity.

According to rules, a student can stay at the hostel for maximum 4 years, but many of the boarders have been staying there for about 6/7 years.

Asked about the shortage of seats, Director General of the Directorate of Women Affairs Ekram Ahmed said they are now



Two boarders carrying boiled drinking water to upstairs using lift at the hostel.



From left, a room of the hostel, a makeshift kitchen of the boarders fed-up with low standard food of the canteen and the condition of the bathroom.

considering 400 applications.

"We have already sent notice to the boarders who are students and who have been staying at the hostel for more than five years," he said.

Asked about the student boarders, Ekram said it is not possible to go

to the offices of every applicant to verify whether they are really working woman.

Superintendent of the hostel Umme Mahmuda Khanam said some 60 women are staying at the hostel for more than five years.

On the issue of pure

drinking water, the hostel super said tube-wells would be set up on the hostel premises 'soon' to ensure supply of safe drinking water.

There are two other working women's hostel in the city -- at Khilgaon and at Mirpur -- where more than 750 women are staying.



city 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.

"I have 22 other cases against me. Nothing happened to me."

-- **Abdur Rahman Bodi**
Awami League lawmaker

Told a reporter regarding filing a case against him for beating up an election official at Teknaf, on Friday. Source: Prothom Alo

"I had a two-hour class but I curtailed it by one hour to join the ceremony."

-- **A teacher**

Social Science Faculty, DU

Told a reporter as over 200 DU teachers rushed to congratulate the new pro-VC and treasurer with flowers and bouquets, on Saturday. Source: The Daily Star

"It was ten days before Eid. He left home at around 4pm without uttering a word. Then in the evening he called me from Nayapara to say he was going to Malaysia."

-- **Madina Begum**

Wife of day-labourer Abdul Malek, Falangpara, Teknaf

Told a reporter as her spouse drowned in the sea while trying to reach Malaysia to give his family a better life, on Saturday. Source: The Daily Star

"You journalists are major stakeholders in the matter [Right to Information] but did they [caretaker government] discuss the ordinance with you before promulgation?"

-- **Shafique Ahmed**

Law Minister

Said at a meet-the-press programme at Dhaka Reporters Unity, on Saturday. Source: The Daily Star

Polybags still widely used, no drive

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Production, marketing and use of hazardous polythene bags continue in the city at an alarming rate despite a government ban in force.

The banned bags are sold and used openly at all kitchen markets, grocery shops, street-side hawkers' market because of lax monitoring and absence of mobile court drives.

Polythene bags can easily be purchased at any wholesale packet store of the city. At Karwan Bazar 1 kg polythene is sold at Tk 100-120 while a single polythene bag would cost Tk 1-2. After the ban was imposed six years ago, manufacturers only changed the shape, size and colour of the bag to continue the business.

Majority of the polybags found in the market are recycled from discarded polythene bags, which is thicker in texture and even more harmful to the environment.

The main production area and wholesale market of polythene bags include Lalbagh, Chwakhazar, Begumbazar, Mukimkatra, Nimtoli, Debidash Lane, Imamganj, Islambagh, Sutrapur, Shyampur, Kamrangirchar in old part of Dhaka, which cater to the retailers. A huge chunk of the production also goes to places outside the capital.

"We just give what our customers want. It is easier to use polythene than paper packets or jute bags. No one usually come to raid us," said one

fish vendor at Karwan Bazar. Like him most of the kitchen market vendors use the polybags openly.

Environmentalists say the campaign against use of polythene should be restarted before it goes back to its previous status.

Abu Naser Khan, convenor, Environment Protection Movement said, "A level of awareness was there among the general people even a few years ago. Absence of government initiative and follow-up campaign during the past few years can be noticed. Besides, the government failed to promote an alternative item of polythene."

Producers have built up an unholy syndicate together with the law enforcement agencies making it difficult to tackle, he said.

Mustafizur Rahman, the newly appointed director of Department of Environment (Dhaka Division) said fresh drive would be taken to root out polythene menace. However, the department faces a number of obstacles, which hinders its action against the illegal producers.

"Main obstacle is that most of the factories are located in old Dhaka. Conducting a raid often becomes difficult in the area because of too many nooks and crannies. Finding the factories requires more manpower", he said.

"Besides, the gadgets they use are often portable. Sensing raid the producers



Besides kitchen markets, polybags are widely used by the vendors in the city. The picture was taken from Karwan Bazar yesterday.

It was reported in the early 2000 that every day nearly 10 million polythene bags were disposed of by Dhaka residents. The discarded non-biodegradable polythene bags have wrought havoc on city sewerage, causing a serious adverse effect

can easily escape with their equipment", he added.

Polythene shopping bags were introduced in Bangladesh in 1980s, which quickly replaced the use of traditional jute bags in every households of Bangladesh.

It was reported in the early 2000 that every day nearly 10 million polythene bags were disposed of by Dhaka residents. The discarded non-biodegradable polythene bags have wrought havoc on city sewerage, causing a serious adverse effect.

On January 1, 2002, the government imposed a ban on the production, marketing and use of polythene in Dhaka city (below 100 micron thick) that was followed by a nationwide ban on April 8 of the same year.

The only exception was made for the packaging of 14 items, which include biscuit, chanachoor, bread, salt, vermicelli, medicine, flour, naphthalene, fertiliser, chocolate, milk powder etc. However, polybag produced for these items must be above 100 micron thick. The law is also lax for export-oriented polythene production.

Under the Environment Conservation Act 1995 punishment for manufacturing and marketing polythene shopping bag is 10-year rigorous imprisonment, or a maximum fine of Tk 10 lakh, or both. Only Environment Court can hand down this punishment. The fine for using polythene shopping bags for purposes other than export trade is Tk 500.