

# Tukang come a'knocking

All sorts of people ply their wares on the streets of an Indonesian city. Here's a typical day in Bandung, witnessed by Agung Guritno

**I**t's 5.00am in suburban Bandung, Indonesia. The neighbourhood security man has gone home for the night, and morning deliveries are about to begin. Many *tukang* have been up since two in the morning, bartering for stock at the markets before they start their rounds.

These early street vendors herald a daily stream of hawkers who cry, tap, knock, whistle and ring out their distinctive calls. They offer a seemingly endless range of food and serv-

ices. In our street, it all begins with the paperboy . . .

**6.00am:** "Koraaaaan!" Tukang Koran calls from his mountain bike. It's the wet season, so his *koran*, newspapers, are sheltered in saddlebags. Tukang Koran hands us our newspaper with a cheerful smile but at the grander homes, he leaves it on the doorstep.

**7.00am:** "Ja-muuuu!" Jamu Gendong sings her "-muuu" note as high as the

Tukang Sayur (above left) comes with good food and neighbourhood gossip; traditional Javanese *jamu* medicine (top) delivered to your doorstep; the *krupuk* man (above) visits twice weekly

morning sky. *Gendong* means to carry something in a sarong tied over one shoulder. In her sarong, she carries a bamboo basket containing several bottles of *jamu*, or traditional Javanese medicinal drinks.

She also brings hot water to make up the drinks, a bucket of water to wash the glasses, and a bag of instant *jamu* powders.

**7.15am:** "Sayuuuur . . . " " . . . Yur!" Tukang Sayur sounds a haunting cry, interspersed by "Yur!" in quick high leaps. In addition to seasonal vegetables and fruits, this greengrocer offers sweet delicacies, chicken and other meats for soup. He also conveys most of the neighbourhood gossip.

**7.45am:** "Dading! Odadinggg!" Tukang Odading carries his basket of *odading* on his shoulder. *Odading*, known in other cities as *cakue*, is a fast



food of fried bread, either sweet or plain, with hot chilli sauce. He has been selling since 4.00am, so now his supply is running low.

**8.00am:** "Tahuuuuu . . ." Like a ghost, Tukang Tahu's voice cries as he pulls up on his Yamaha, with his blocks of yellow tofu in a box on the back.

**8.30am:** "Krupuk!" Quick and high like a bird, we hear Tukang Krupuk's call twice a week.

He carries two types of *krupuk*, white and yellow, in two huge aluminium bins suspended either end of his *pikulan*, his bamboo pole carried across the shoulders.

**9.00am:** "Tahuuuu!" West Javanese cities take particular pride in their fine tofus, so it's no surprise that more than one Tukang Tahu visits our street.

**9.15am:** "TukTukTuk." Cuanki (named after his baso) taps a bamboo pipe with a bamboo stick. Baso Cuanki, Chinese meatball soup, costs more than other basos (meatball dishes), but is so popular that Cuanki must restock twice a day. Cuanki's portable kitchen rests on wooden platforms, suspended from wires each end of his *pikulan*.

**9.30am:** "Getuk." Ah, the sweet sound of Tukang Getuk's Javanese confectionery cart.

Through his display window, we see *lupis*, green triangles of sticky rice, *candil*, steamed jelly from tapioca meal, and *getuk*, a sticky dough of tapioca and palm sugar strands. Smothered in coconut, they are packed in a banana leaf, and eaten dipped in palm sugar syrup. *Kelepon*, small green balls of sticky rice, steamed with the palm sugar inside.

**10.00am:** "Miin-yaaaak . . ." ". . .nyak!" It's a doleful monotone, lifted by the occasional "nyak!" as though Tukang Minyak has suddenly brightened up! Our area is high in the Bandung hills, so two Tukang Minyak share the pushing of their iron barrow, heavily loaded with cooking fuel (kerosene) in 20-litre *jerigens*.

**10.30am:** "Kooran Korankorankoran." Tukang Loak (junk man) is not another newspaper seller. Pushing an iron barrow, he buys paper, as well as cartons, plastic containers and iron, by the kilo, then sells it all to

the recycling companies at the big recycling market.

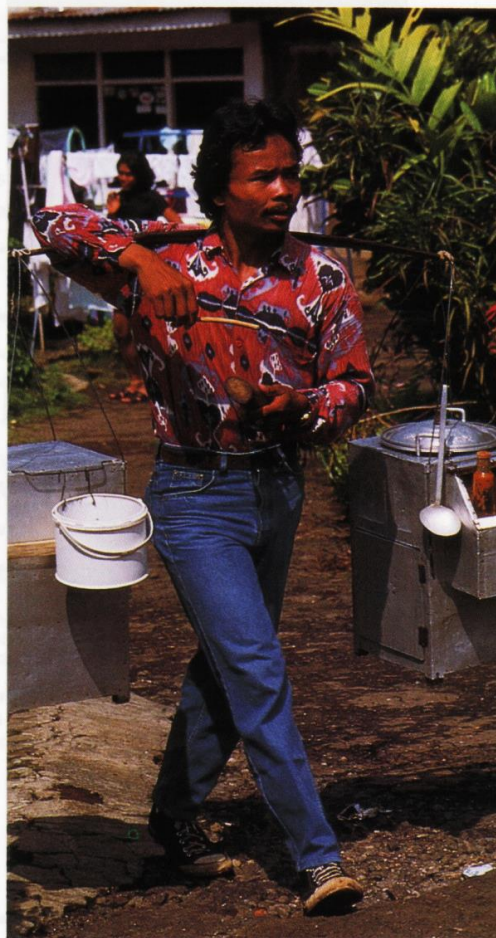
**11.00am:** "Terrroktoktok." A bamboo stick is knocked on the wooden *mie ayam* cart as it trundles along the street. The blue cart's little roof on poles shades a mobile kitchen, complete with boiling water on a burner, processed chicken, and spices, for Tukang Mie Ayam to make chicken noodle soup to order.

**11.15am:** "Pos." It's a low, crow call. The post, and the registered mail, are delivered separately by two Tukang Pos, who wear orange uniforms and helmets, and ride orange Suzuki motorcycles. Telegrams are delivered by a third Tukang Pos, dressed in a blue uniform and helmet, riding a blue Suzuki.

**11.30am:** "Gaaas Gaaas . . ." Several times a week, Tukang Gas calls from the window of his Daihatsu truck as he delivers the LPG orders.

**Midday:** "Puu. Sapuuu . . ." whistles the voice of Tukang Perabot, the

Just two of several baso tahu sellers who work in this neighbourhood







at least four times a day, as *Tukang Mie Baso* appear in our street.

From their little carts, each well stocked with a stove, pots, meatballs, and sauces, they concoct two different types of *mie baso* (noodles with meatballs).

**1.00pm–6.00pm:** “Cloclocloclocloc.” Hollow bamboo is knocked with a bamboo stick to make this familiar sound. At least six *Tukang Baso Tahu* bring this popular dish to our street each day.

**10.00am and 3.00pm:** “Bapauuu . . .” Twice a day, *Tukang Bapau*’s call rings out. *Bapau*, carried on his shoulder in an aluminium bin, are fluffy white dumplings which have been steamed in a can.

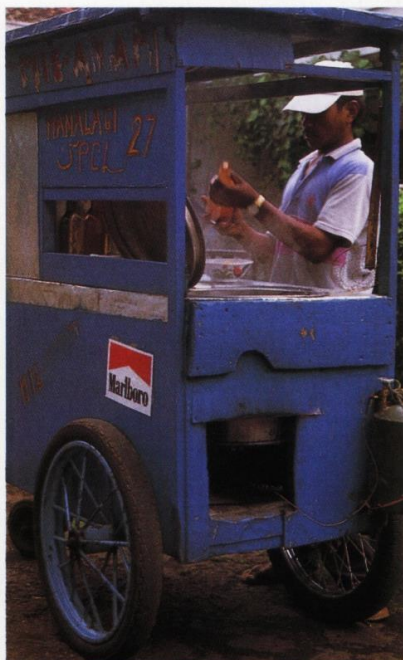
**3.30pm:** “Bugis.” A soft, female voice sells sweetmeats from the market. *Bugis* is a rice cake filled with coconut mixed with palm sugar.

**4.00pm:** “Payungpayungpayung.” Being the rainy season, the umbrella repairman, or *Tukang Payung*, is making his rounds.

**5.00pm:** “Cliningclining.” Children love this bell. Traditional Indonesian ice cream travels in a wooden cart insulated by cotton, ice and salt. Today’s flavour is coconut.

*Tukang Es* sells his ice-cream as a ball in a piece of bread, or in a cone.

**7.00pm:** “Tuuuutuuuu . . .” Steam whistles through a metal cylinder, inserted in the top of an aluminium can of boiling water, which sits on a flame on a wooden platform suspended



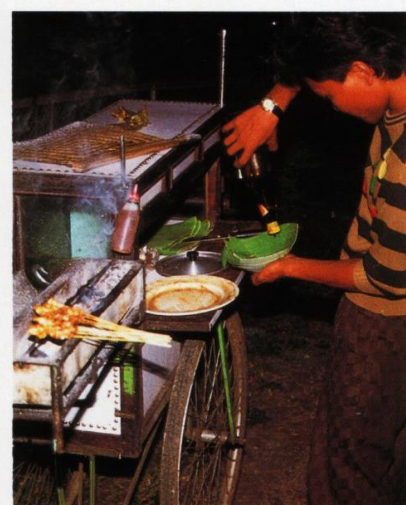
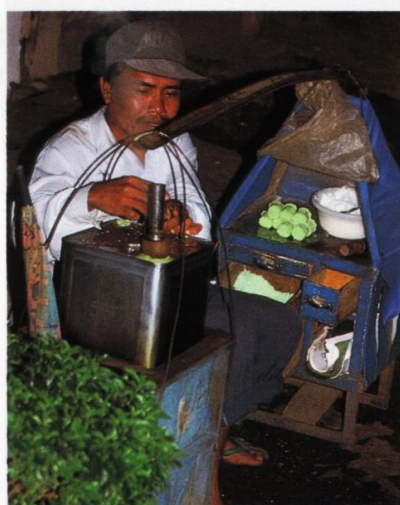
From above: *Tukang Minyak* brings cooking fuel; *mie ayam*—chicken noodle soup—is made to order; the ice cream seller; *putu* cakes are a tasty treat; *sate* comes in the evening

“Equipment Seller”. From his *pikulan* hang *sapu* or brooms, as well as a colourful variety of kitchenware.

**1.00pm:** “Manggaaaa.” Today’s fruits from *Tukang Buah*, the fruiterer, are mango and banana.

**1.30pm:** “Toktoktoktok.” A bamboo bell rings for *Baso Malang*, a meatball soup popular throughout Java. *Tukang Baso Malang* have moved from Malang, a beautiful city in East Java, to the more affluent West Java.

**11.30am–7.00pm:** “Dingdingding!” A metal spoon on a china bowl rings out





from a *pikulan*. On the other platform sits a wooden cabinet, containing drawers filled with *putu* ingredients: rice powdered with water which was boiled with pandan leaves, to make it fragrant and green, brown palm sugar, and coconut.

To make *putu*, *Tukang Putu* pushes the redried flour into a bamboo tube, which has palm sugar in the middle, then he wedges the tube over several little holes in the aluminium can to steam it. Small yet delicious cylindrical cakes of *putu* are dished up, smothered in coconut.

**8.00pm:** "Tingtang . . . tiktiktiktang." When a bell sounds in the evening, you can be sure it's *Tukang Mie Kocok*. He's selling noodle soup mixed with mung bean sprouts and chopped cow skin, which he normally carries in a *pikulan* kitchen, supported from pyramids of bamboo.

**9.00pm:** "Dingdingding." *Tukang Sekoteng* rings a spoon on the bowl in which he serves traditional drinks. Ginger tea is mixed with cubes of jelly and fried peanuts, with sweet crackers crumbled over the top.



**7.00pm–11.45pm:** "Sateeeee! Sa-aa-teeeee!" The continuous cry of *Tukang Sate* sounds unnervingly like a plaintive goat. *Sate kambing* (goat) and *sate ayam* (chicken) are cooked to order on his portable grill.

**9.00pm:** "Clangclangclang." *Mang* (Sundanese for Mr) *Ujo* is our *hansip*, or security man. When he arrives at his base, a lit cubicle on the corner, he

#### **Tukang Loak awaits thrifty customers**

hits a stick on a metal telegraph pole to signify he has started work for the night.

At 4.00am, he knocks off work, nodding to the early *tukang* as he heads home . . .



*Agung Guritno is an Indonesian contributor based in Bandung*