

# Greedy eyes close in on open spaces

The housing department wants to construct flats for government officials only at the expense of a playground

**CITY CORRESPONDENT**  
Every inch of open space and playgrounds around the Asad Gate New Colony are under the grasp of the builders.

The housing department under the Ministry of Housing and Public Works will build 500 flats to sell to government officials and employees.

The construction of the flats was however shelved after the High Court recently stayed it. A big pile of earth is now lying in the middle of the playground.

The western side of the ground has been dug and there are only a few yards left on the eastern side, where the local boys play.

"Our playground has been shrunk. We are really angry at the digging and piling of earth on the ground. Earlier, a good number of teams would have played here simultaneously."

"Now the situation has drastically

changed. We ourselves have to accommodate three or four teams in such a small place," says Saad, a class VI student of Dhanmondi Boys' High School.

Barring the playground, the open spaces around the flats have been filled out with a number of newly constructed flats. With 22 flats built in 1999, the colony has become a concrete jungle.

Way back in 1962, military ruler Ayub Khan built the Asad Gate New Colony for the refugees. After independence, the flats were allotted to the government employees, journalists, businessmen and others, who did not have any land or house within the periphery of four kilometres of the Secretariat Building, were eligible for the apartments for rent.

"I was born and brought up here. In my childhood, I along with my friends used to play in front of my flat because the elder brothers of the colony would keep the main play-

ground occupied.

"Once I grew up I started playing at the main playground. But as things stand now, the children of the colony would no longer be able to play at either of the spaces very soon. You know... the government has planned to erect apartments in every open space," regrets Biplob, a 32-year-old resident of the colony.

The Asad Gate New Colony playground has been a good breeding ground for a number of popular cricket players of the country like Gazi Ashraf Lipu, Halim Shah, Swapan and others. "If the playground is shrunk and replaced with flats then it will not only hinder the sporting activities of the locality, but also have an adverse impact on the ecological balance of the city," says Sohel, an inhabitant of the colony.

"Another frustrating aspect is that there was a Shaheed Minar here. Prior to 1999, many programmes of Ekushey February took place on its

premises. In 1999, the Shaheed Minar was dismantled and a flat was built on it. Over the past four years, no programme has been organised," said an elderly resident of the colony.

Bacchu, a contractor of the housing department who is building three flats there, is now using the open space in front of a flat as his bus depot. The contractor has even erected a few thatched rooms which house the bus mechanics.

"Once the secretary of the colony's housing welfare association asked Bacchu not to use the space as bus stand. A few days later, some muscle men appeared and threatened the secretary. Then only two buses were retained. After the threat, this place has become the home for 17 buses," said a resident on condition of anonymity.



The dug-out playground is a tell-tale sign of neglect to need for recreation.

## SIDEWALK DELICACIES

# In for sugary treat

**CITY CORRESPONDENT**  
Summer is surely felt here with the sun blazing down. People are scurrying around, thirsty and sweating under scorching heat.

A succulent treat may be an antidote to heat-induced thirst. Maybe, a wayside delicacy is enough to help you regain your lost energy. It is a glass of sugarcane juice, a sugary treat, found in every nook and cranny of the capital. Not always in a sumptuous surrounding, but *akher roshwallah* or sugarcane juice sellers

"I am almost addicted to it," said Mohammad Ibrahim, a minibus conductor. A glass of juice revitalises his sagging energy after long hours of labour. "We cannot afford to have fresh juice in air-conditioned cosy restaurants," said Zakiruddin, a rickshawpuller.

are found mostly at bus stops, marketplaces, school gates or in any place where people congregate.

"I have been selling sugarcane juice here for 18 to 20 years," said Moniruddin at the bus stop in

section No. 10 of Mirpur. "I saw my brother-in-law doing the business and was inspired by that. I worked as a porter before," he added.

Moniruddin buys sugarcane from a market in section No. 1 of Mirpur. He makes a profit of Tk 100 to 150 a day from the sales. "I sell the juice in glasses of two sizes. One is for Tk 3 and the other for Tk 5," he said.

"It may seem easy for you, but moving the handle of a manual juicer extractor is tough," said Yasin, another seller in Agargaon. While pulling sugarcane stems from his machine, Yasin said he plans to buy a motor-run extractor. It will cost him around Tk 35,000, while a manual extractor about Tk 10,000.

"I am almost addicted to it," said Mohammad Ibrahim, a minibus conductor. A glass of juice revitalises his sagging energy after long hours of labour. "We cannot afford to have fresh juice in air-conditioned cosy restaurants," said Zakiruddin, a rickshawpuller. "This is what our pocket permits," he said. Although the people of low-

income bracket dominate the list of customers for juice sellers, people from other social strata also relish it. "I prefer having sugarcane juice instead of carbonated drinks like Coke or Pepsi," said Muntakim Anwar, a BUET student. "This is good for health," he added. "Moreover, it doesn't contain any preservatives unlike canned juices," noted Nawreen Anwar, a college student.

Tahmid Shahid, a student of Independent University of Bangladesh, said he was introduced to sugarcane juice when he had jaundice. A jaundice patient needs a lot of glucose and sugarcane juice is very helpful, he said.

However, some instantly discard the idea of having juice from *akher roshwallah*. "I never had sugarcane juice from roadside sellers. I think it's unhygienic," said Alamgir Akber, who works at a private organisation. "They (sellers) may mix water with juice... the glasses in which they serve and the extractor they use for crushing sugarcane stems are not clean," he added.

Sultana Shirin, a house wife, said she cannot even think of having juice made and served uncovered, with all the dust and germs within it.

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

# Homely hangout for slum kids

They learn lessons, laze out and listen to music at the centre beyond the reach of traffickers and stalkers. They get back home safe.

**CITY CORRESPONDENT**

A buzzing sound comes out of a day-care centre, tucked away down a backstreet in Zafraabad in Dhaka. Chirping children learn lessons, sitting on a mat. Some only gaze at their teacher, seemingly unmindful of what is going on around.

Shomi, a four-year-old girl, comes to the centre every day with her mother. It is home to 35 slum children, run by the Organisation for Mothers and Infants (OMI), a non-governmental organisation (NGO).

The centre is thought to be a safeguard for children against trafficking and for adolescent girls

against sexual exploitation. Shomi's mother Saleha Begum, who breaks bricks at Rayer Bazar, drops her child at the centre at eight in the morning on her way to work.

She gets back home with her daughter at 5.00pm. "The centre helps me concentrate on my work. I can work without anxiety," said Saleha.

Last year, two girls were trafficked from the slum she lives in. The incident led Saleha to opt for the centre.

Slum girls, aged between one and five, are eligible for admission. The charge is not beyond their capacity - only Tk 5 a day for each. Services

are worth every penny too. Trained attendants provide them with breakfast and lunch. In the morning, the children learn lessons from teachers. They take a nap for an hour or so - after lunch, of course. In the afternoon, they play games and listen to music.

"Last year, we have bought a cassette player for the girls not to make them feel bored," said Gulshan Ara Chowdhury, OMI executive director.

The centre has another section where adolescent girls, aged between 10 and 18, are given AFLE short for adolescent family life education.

Besides, the tailoring session is an added facility. The adolescents are trained in cutting, sewing and block printing. Magazines and books have also been subscribed to for them.

The centre did not do so smoothly all the time. A two-year contract with a German donor ended a year back. "I am trying to raise funds now, highlighting the benefits of the project," said Gulshan Ara.

In 2001-2002, the centre supplied balanced and nutritious food and had adequate manpower to take care of them.



STAR PHOTO

## crisis telephone numbers

### COURIER SERVICES

**International**  
Air Borne Express- 9561371, 9561372, 9550724  
Air Couriers Int'l (BD) Ltd.- 8815970  
Aramex International Courier- 9558003, 9559582, 9565075  
Airspeed Express- 9563494  
Asian Courier Services Ltd.- 8313543  
Baishakhi Courier Service- 9558606  
Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114  
Bangladesh Courier Service- 9563989  
Bengal Express- 9560642, 9552666  
Bangladesh Int'l Courier- 953636  
Continental Service Ltd.- 9552948, 9558425  
DHL Worldwide Express- 9881703-7, 9886305-9, 9882057  
Enem Express- 9330699

Fedex Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114  
Modhuban Courier Service- 9550884  
Overseas Courier Service- 9352431, 8321169  
Pacific Courier- 9568446  
Reliance Express Service- 9558515, 7110249  
Sky International service- 9660442  
Skynet world Wide Express- 9558062, 9560258, 7114787, 7113184  
TNT Express- 9566662, 9558239, 8618155  
Union Courier Service- 9341722  
United Parcel Service Air alliance Ltd.- 8826429, 8810223

**National**  
Asian courier Service Ltd.- 8313543  
BAE- 9884851

Central Courier Service- 9881118  
Confidence Courier Service Ltd. 9567036  
Chisty Courier- 7110177-9, 7100842-4  
Cosmopol Services- 9552793, 9557975  
Dhaka Courier Services- 7236222  
Solphin Courier- 9558802  
Dreamland Courier Service- 9550326, 9566975  
Pioneer Courier Services- 9561727, 9569759  
Probashi Courier Services- 9346359  
Rainbow Express Parcel Services Ltd.- 8322773, 8315703  
Reliance Express Services- 9558515, 7110249  
Sundarban Courier Services- 9551984, 9556189, 9551656  
Sunrise Courier Services- 9568751

### LIBRARY & INFO

**Libraries, Cultural and Information Centers**  
Central Public Library- 8626001-4, Shishu Academy- 9564128  
Shilpakala Academy- 8614673  
Bangla Academy- 8619550  
Islamic Foundation- 9550280, 9556407  
Nazrul Institute- 9114602  
Ford Foundation- 8116133  
Alliance Francaise- 8611557  
British Council- 8618867-8, 8618905-7  
Community Development Library- 8113769, 8113604  
Goethe Institute Int'l- Dhaka- 9126525-6  
Indian Information Centre & Cultural Library- 8615096  
The Russian Cultural Centre- 9116314, 9118531, 9118314  
Drik Photo Gallery- 9120125, 8112954, 8123412

### OUTING

**Museum and Zoo**  
National Museum- 8619396-9  
Open: 10 am 5 pm, Friday 3 pm- 8 pm, Thursday closed  
Muktijuddha Jadughar- 9559091  
Open: 10:30 am 6:30 pm, Sunday Closed  
Bangabandhu Smiti Jadughar- 8110046  
Open: 10 am 5 pm, Wednesday closed  
Ahsan Manzil  
Open: 10 am 5 pm, Friday: 3 pm - 7 pm, Thursday Closed  
Shishu Jadughar- 9666466  
Open: 10 am- 6 pm, Sunday Closed  
Sonargoan Jadughar  
Open: 10 am 5 pm, Wednesday Closed  
Dhaka Zoo- 9002954, 9002020  
Open: 9am 5 pm, Sunday Closed

### TAXI CAB

**Yellow Cab**  
Comfort 881710-4  
Navana 9558065  
Salida 9344477, 0171620881  
Cosmo 9112959 and 8127191  
Cab One 7113282-3  
Nihon 8624741-2  
Orion 9347277  
Anudip 8125285 and 8127611

**Capital 9352847**  
Union 8130485  
Kool 0171826731

**Black Cab**  
Cab Ex 9358401  
Cabline 8321162  
JBS Cab 019364575  
Sajan 018126036  
Anudip -- 8125285 and 8127611

**Cab One 7113282-3**  
Palki 0171052500  
Cab I 7113282  
Jatri 0171540074  
Nipun 9572277  
R-Cab 8914782  
Star Cab 9571919  
Shihab 018202477 & 018228675  
KGN 8620011

### TRAIN TIMING

**Subarna Express**  
Leaves Dhaka at 4:00 pm

**Mahanagar Prabhati**  
Leaves Dhaka at 7:30 am

**Mahanagar Godhuli**  
Leaves Dhaka at 3:05 pm

**Turna**  
Leaves Dhaka at 11:00 pm

**Parabat Express**  
Leaves Dhaka at 6:30 am

**Joyantika Express**  
Leaves Dhaka at 12:30 pm

**Upaban Express**  
Leaves Dhaka at 9:30 pm

**Tista Express**  
Leaves Dhaka at 7:00 am

**Ekata Express**  
Leaves Dhaka at 5:00 pm

**Upakul Express**  
Leaves Dhaka at 6:00 am

**Padma Express**  
Leaves Dhaka at 9:20 pm

Reaches Chittagong at 10:15 pm  
Reaches Chittagong at 2:55 pm  
Reaches Chittagong at 9:11 pm  
Reaches Chittagong at 7:05 am  
Reaches Sylhet at 2:30 pm  
Reaches Sylhet at 9:20 pm  
Reaches Sylhet at 6:40 am  
Reaches Bahadurabad at 1:05 pm  
Reaches Bahadurabad at 11:55  
Reaches Noakhali at 1:35 pm  
Reaches Jagannath at 2:30 pm