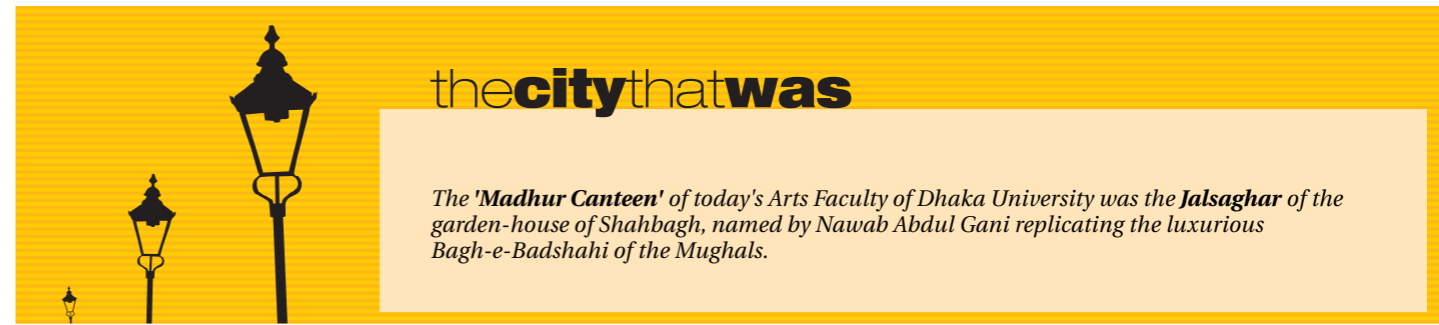


# star city

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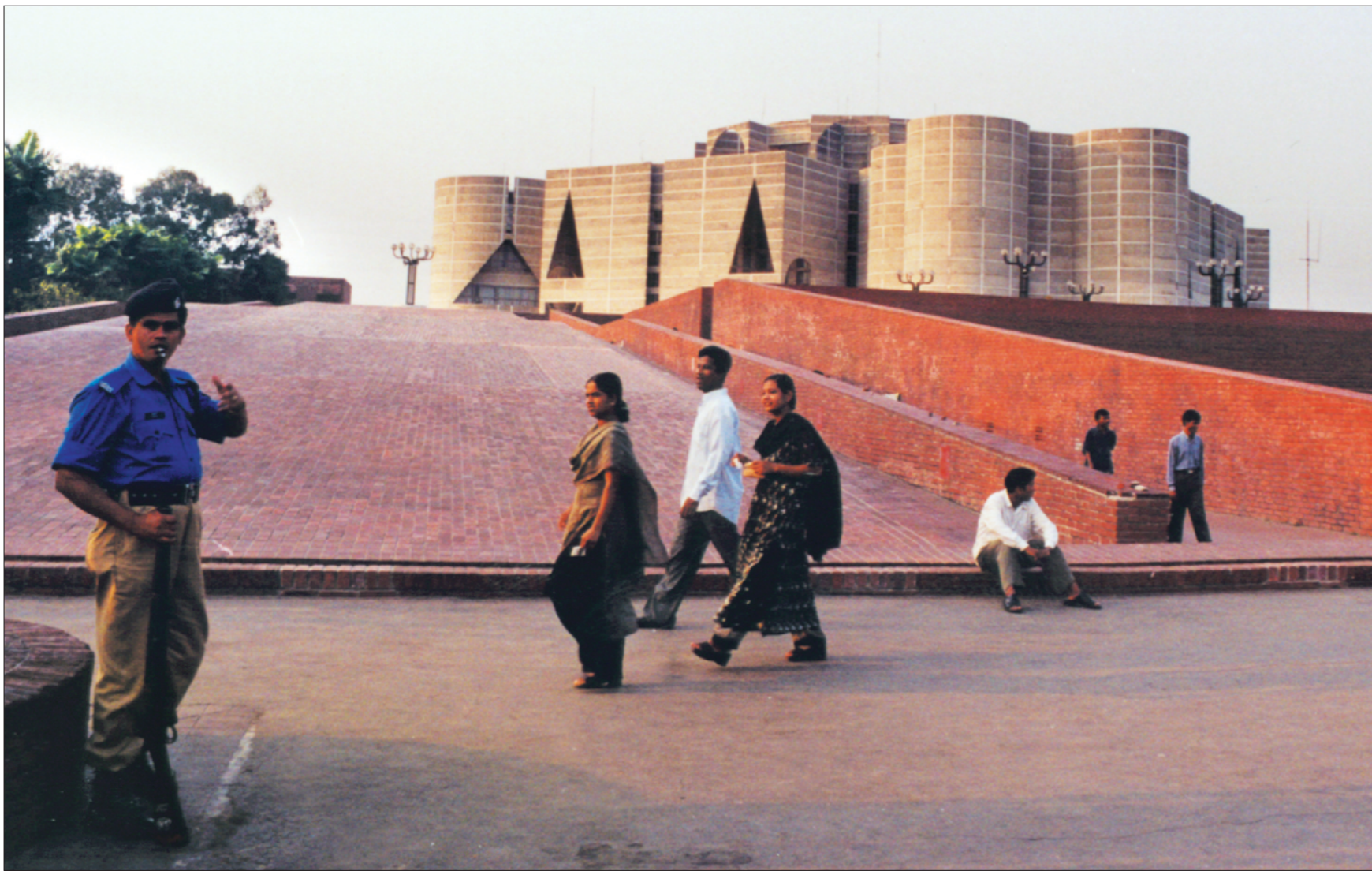
DHAKA WEDNESDAY APRIL 9, 2003



the city that was

The 'Madhur Canteen' of today's Arts Faculty of Dhaka University was the Jalsaghar of the garden-house of Shahbagh, named by Nawab Abdul Gani replicating the luxurious Bagh-e-Badshahi of the Mughals.

# Bribe or be harassed



The Sangsad Bhaban, not safe any more for visitors.

## Police prey on innocent couples at the Sangsad Bhaban for money

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Thinking of visiting the monumental Sangsad Bhaban area with your wife, sister, cousin or friend, then get ready to face a danger lurking around you.

The 60 police personnel stationed at the Sangsad Bhaban for security or a mobile team from the Tejgaon Police Station may challenge, intimidate, harass and even assault before arresting you along with your companion.

They may give you an easy option -- bribe your way out or face the police wrath. Your crime may remain unknown to you, but the offensive policemen know exactly how to grind you from the police station to the court of justice.

Police harassment on innocent couples is rampant in the Sangsad Bhaban area. Vendors and employees of the local office of the Public Works Department (PWD) said every day policemen from the Sangsad Bhaban barrack swoop on the visiting couples.

The visitors complained of mugging and thefts of vehicles in the area, admitted on-duty policemen. Hundreds of city dwellers visit the

open space every day when the parliament is not in session.

Police action has not however deterred streetwalkers from strolling the bushes of the lush green lawns. With darkness creeping up on the lawns, sex workers and their clients get busy. Policemen home in on other preys, ignoring clandestine activities, for obvious reasons. The sex workers who use the premises for privacy of their clients pay the police regular "fees".

"Arresting innocent couples is a good business for police. Young men and women of a good family background do anything to avoid harassment," says Aminul Islam, a PWD employee.

"There are more than 100 mobile fast food shops in the area...each pays the police for doing business," he said.

Sex workers poured in all open spaces of the city following the closure of brothels in Narayanganj and Dhaka, locals said. But the police usually do not target them because they (police) know these girls are too poor to pay. Instead, the law enforcers look for lovers, officials at the Sangsad Bhaban said.

Last Wednesday, frenzied police-

men armed with cricket stumps from the barrack swooped on a couple sitting in the open at around 8.00pm. The policemen not only assaulted the couple but also beat up a passerby when he protested.

The couple and the passerby, who was with his wife and child, were dragged into the barrack and beaten. Tejgaon police said it was a "bad mistake". "We have recommended punishment of six policemen," said a top official of the police station. He said the entire batch was "closed" following the incident.

Abdur Rashid, police inspector and in-charge of the 60 police personnel at the Sangsad Bhaban, said he and his men did not have anything to do with the Sangsad Bhaban courtyard. "We maintain security inside the parliament building not outside," Rashid said.

"I can't tell you anything about Wednesday's incident...I have just joined here with my men," he said.

The security of the entire Sangsad Bhaban and its premises is in the hands of the Sergeant at Arms, Navy Captain M Farouk who could not be contacted for comments despite repeated attempts.

## New hot treats

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Spring is kissing the summer tears and the merging of fruits and vegetables in city markets bears testimony to this seasonal change.

Since most vegetables and fruits are just about making their presence felt in the markets, the supply is rather low but the price can be real hot!

The new fruits that have arrived in city are juicy watermelons, the famous *jaldugi* pineapple and rhyme-famed *atafol*. The vegetables that are smiling green are *pui shak*, *dheki shaketc*.

"Whatever seasonal fruit or vegetable comes first in the city, they sell like anything," jubilantly says a vendor at Karwan Bazaar. "It brings bliss for both the sellers and the buyers."

Apart from the new flow, some common fruits are available all year round. You will find Indian *sundari*,

Pakistani *swarnadana*, Australian and Kashmiri apple, *nashpati*, *bedana*, *grapes* as the storage facility has improved in leaps and bounds.

What local produces like coconut, banana, and papaya are also available side by side and their price remains mostly stable.

"Prices of all the seasonal fruits are bit high since they've just arrived," says a seller in Uttara. "We do not sell in weight, we rather have it sold according to the size. It fetches us a better price."

Watermelons that recently landed in the city are mostly from the border town of Teknaf, Patenga and Chittagong and they are proving extremely popular despite some rather thought-provoking prices.

"I bought this big one at Tk 120," says a fruit-seller of Karwan Bazaar. The large ones, weighing around 2 kilos, are selling between Tk 90 to 150. The medium sizes are being sold at around Taka 60. Even the smaller

ones, which are quite dubious propositions as you can't be sure of their ripeness or sweetness, are selling at around Tk 20.

The *atafol* is selling at Tk 50 per kg. "The price is up as it's a new arrival," says Akbar of Town Hall Bazar. "It may come down by another Tk 10 during the mid-season."

"The *jaldugis* are just on fire, I can't even think of buying pineapple at this moment. The sellers are wanting Tk 25 to 40 for a single pineapple. It is just out of my reach," says Shakil, an office-goer.

The new *shaks Pui* and *dheki* are more reasonable. They are selling at Tk 15 per *aati* (bundle) of half kg.

There was a time when people would go near the trees, the woods and the greenery to feel the new season arriving. If you can't do that in Dhaka, then just go the kitchen markets and see the change in colours.

## Too tall for tiny rules

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Some 50 apartment blocks have sprouted in Lalmatia over the last five years in violation of a six-storey height limit.

Indiscriminate construction of apartment blocks and other structures has not only brought about a drastic change in population density but constrained utility services.

Shaptak, Lucky Apartments, Silver Crest and Shahjalal Rose are among the violators that have constructed eight- or nine-storey apartments in Lalmatia.

The city's other residential areas witness similar "silent" violations. Recently, Rajuk has detected about 80 apartments across the city, which either have false documents or violated the Rajuk construction code.

The builders almost invariably said they had obtained necessary documents from "everybody" -- the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB), Rajuk and the Department of Housing.

"Ninety per cent of building plans of Lalmatia were issued with false Rajuk approval in the previous years," says Rajuk Chairman Iqbal Uddin Chowdhury.

A group of developers is involved in procuring fabricated documents from their close connections within Rajuk, said the chairman.

"We are doing our best to nab these elements," assured the Rajuk chairman.

"The documents have signatures of Rajuk officials. When I checked the documents the signatures matched theirs, but the officials denied that," says Chowdhury.

"As there is no expert in Rajuk to

probe, I sent the documents to the anti-corruption bureau for investigation about 20 days back. I will take action after getting the reports," said Chowdhury.

Rajuk also tried to get the building plans back from the builders who have allegedly violated the building code. "Whenever we asked some developers to produce building plans, they showed us copies of general diaries filed with local police stations, saying they have lost the papers," said the chairman.

Despite repeated attempts, Shaptak officials could not be reached for comments.

But Managing Director of Lucky Apartment Shahabuddin Ahmed said he took permission from the housing department.

"I think it has nothing to do with Rajuk. It is bound to give permission once the housing department and others approve our plans and other documents," says Ahmed.

The involvement of the CAAB in the building sector comes whenever a builder wants to build a structure above six storeys and the plot on which the building would be made is on the air traffic route. But CAAB officials said that while approving plans for high-rises they only check whether they fall within the purview of air traffic movement.

"If the buildings are far way from the air traffic, we approve it," said Deputy Director of Air Traffic Movement Sheikh Abul Bashar.

City planners feel that there is no proper coordination among Rajuk, the CAAB and the housing department in approving any plan.



Above the height of law...multistoried apartments sprout in Lalmatia

**hello dhaka**

**Markets & museums closed**

- Gulshan 1, 2 markets- Friday
- Elephant Road- Friday
- Bishal Center- Friday
- Neelkhet Hawkers Market- Friday
- Baitul Mukarram Market- Friday
- Gulistan Hawkers Market- Friday
- Polwell Market- Friday
- BCS Computer City- Friday
- Isha Khan Shopping Comp.- Friday
- Rajlaxmi Complex- Friday
- Stadium Market- Friday
- Bangabazar Market- Friday
- National Museum- Thursday
- Ahsan Manzil- Thursday
- Sonargaon Jadughar- Wednesday

