

Bangabazar market mess up

The tin-roofed markets were relocated from Fulbaria because of fire that gutted shops. The Dhaka City Corporation constructed two shopping malls, but traders are yet to take possession.

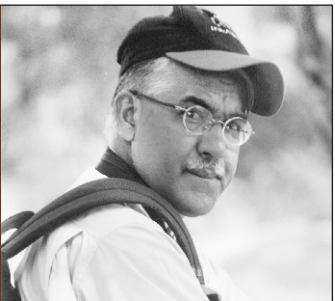


CITY CORRESPONDENT
.....
The Bikalpa Market, popularly known as Bangabazar, should not be where it is now.
Although a permanent market has been built east of the Nagar Bhaban for Bangabazar traders and named Bangabazar Super Market, it has not yet been handed to them.
Members of four small traders' associations -- Adarsha, Bangabazar, Gulistan and Mahanagari -- run the Bikalpa Market, a temporary arrangement sponsored by the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC).
The tin-roofed markets were located in Fulbaria until the early 1990s. The markets were shifted to a temporary place where the present Bangabazar stands because of fire that gutted hundreds of shops several times.
The DCC then took up a plan to construct two four-storey shopping malls -- Bangabazar Super Market

and the Sundarban Square Market -- to rehabilitate the small traders in permanent places. The cost of the two markets was to be borne by the members of the four associations.
The Gulistan and Bangabazar associations are supposed to get the possession of Bangabazar Super Market and the Adarsha and Mahanagari associations are entitled to the Sundarban Square Market.
The construction of Sunda rban Square Market began in October 1998. For about two and a half years, the DCC has not officially handed it over to the traders, although the shops were selected for distribution through a lottery.
Soon after assumption of power by the four-party alliance in 2001, a group of hooligans occupied the Sundarban Square Market. But last year, the traders took possession of the shops to clear the illegal occupation.
The DCC revenue department described the possession of the market by traders as illegal, saying the traders do not have the right to occupy the shops either.
Over the last one year, the DCC has lost huge revenues, according to highly placed sources.
Each trader was to pay Tk 1 lakh for an 80 square feet shop in three instalments. But their instalments were not completed, says the revenue department.
"As soon as they complete their instalments, we will officially hand the possession of the shops over to the traders," said a DCC official.
The Sundarban market owners have come up with an answer. "We didn't pay the instalments because the DCC raised the amount from Tk 100,000 to Tk 110,000 for no reason at all," said an owner.
The traders of Adarsha and Mahanagari markets now own both Bikalpa and Sundarban markets and want to hold on to both.
"Even if the DCC allocates the shops of Sundarban market to us and asks us to leave, we won't do that. It is ours. We filled the area with earth worth millions of taka to construct a market here," argued Abdul Latif, secretary of the Sundarban Square Market.
On November 27, 1995, property worth millions of taka was burnt in a fire at the Bikalpa market. The government provided Tk 4,000 to each owner, but that was not enough, Latif added.
Continued Latif: "We rebuilt the structure on our own. We were trying to recoup the loss, but illegal occupiers upset our plans."
"The gangsters had been there for about 26 months and we couldn't earn a single penny during the period. We paid taxes and rents to the DCC, though. If the DCC thinks it can hand the market over to anyone else, we will resist the move," he vowed.

Green is the way to go

CITY CORRESPONDENT
.....
Imagine all islands and street dividers full of sedge-grasses and the cityscape adorned with indigenous trees and flowering plants. Birds perch on branches of trees and bats hang upside down, chirping to fill the air with sounds. Every street looks green. Tired commuters take a brief break under Banyan trees.
Is it realistic for a concrete



Dr. Ali Reza Khan

jungle like Dhaka?
"Yes. It is," said Dr Mohammad Ali Reza Khan, head of zoo section, Public Parks and Horticulture Department of Dubai Municipality, who returned home to Bangladesh a few days ago.
"To retain the fast vanishing ecology of the city, we should make a plan to plant trees and shrubs on city islands," he told Star City.
"Look at Nilkhet area, you can still find bats and birds thanks to some trees left untouched," Dr Reza pointed out.
"We should take up yearlong programmes to plant trees around schools, colleges, universities, hospitals and government colonies. Tree-covered spaces are beneficial not only to humans but birds and other animals as well."
The Dhaka City Corporation and Rajuk have funds and manpower to maintain greenery in

the city. "But I can't understand where the funds go and what people do."
Tree planting is not the only solution. Most plants need proper care and nursing. A proper survey of the city areas to measure density and number of public transports and commuters is a must before taking up any plan, Dr Reza said.
The authorities will then determine plant-specific areas. "We can plant palm trees, coconut and tall woody plants along the islands. The near-extinct magpies may return for habitation."
Indigenous trees like Banyan, fig, mango and teak attract birds. Flowering trees like *rakta jaba*, *kanthali champa*, *telshur*, *bakul* and *kadam* beautify the city as well as ensure ecological balance.
"Over the years, foreign species of trees have sprouted everywhere. Planting of exotic trees should not

be encouraged at all," he said.
The street islands and dividers need to be prepared in a different style, said Dr Reza. "The islands can be designed with a variety of grasses, flowering trees and woody plants step by step. Which means a piece of land can be turned into a decent public place as well as an environment friendly home for birds."
Dhaka may turn into a 'city of greenery' by 'hardscape' method. "But it's disheartening to believe the city corporation did not conceive any plan," Dr Ali Reza said.
A city deserves at least five per cent 'greenscape', he said. "Hardscape is applicable to a densely populated mega-city like Dhaka."
Rajuk is instrumental in keeping the city green. But a group of opportunists rules the city planning authority, disrupting all, he said.

Check in for a cool dip

Believe it or not, at Bangsal lies a pond that offers clean water for bathers free!

CITY CORRESPONDENT
.....
It's very early in the morning. As always, Old Dhaka resident Abbas Ali steps out of the mess-house he lives in with a toothbrush clinging to his mouth and a gamchha (towel) resting on his shoulder. After a few minutes' walk he reaches his destination -- the pushkuni (pond) at Bangsal.
For Abbas, a shopkeeper's assistant, this is the only place where he can take a decent bath as there are no bathrooms at his mess. And that's the case for many others who already crowd the pond by the time Abbas arrives there.
The rectangular one-acre pond is always full with bathers. Due to acute shortage in water supply in this densely populated area, many of the local residents look to this century-old facility as their very own 'Roman bath.' Another factor that makes this place so popular is it's impressive level of maintenance.
"Before going to work, I must take a dip here everyday. Part of the reason is non-availability of water at my mess and the other is pure enjoyment. I used to swim while I was in my village. Dhaka doesn't offer any such option so this pond is unique in that sense. Bathing and swimming has become a fun thing altogether," said Abbas before breastroking towards the centre of the pond.
For non-locals like Abbas, the entry fee is Tk 1. However, permanent Bangsal residents can use it for free.
The pond has two ghats (piers) one is for temporary residents and the other for permanent ones. The ghat for the non-residents is usually busier than the one for the natives.

"At least 2,000 people use this facility everyday from dawn to dusk," said one of caretakers of the pond.
This reservoir has always been popular. Some years ago, a local elite Alhaj Bhutto donated this pond for the use of the locality. With the passage of time, more and more people have started taking advantage of its uniqueness.
With cramping of the pond with bathers reaching crisis stage, a committee comprising local people was formed in the early 90's to maintain the pond. The committee decided to raise money from the temporary residents or outsiders who wanted to use the pond. Initially, the rate was fixed at 25 paisa but now it's Tk 1.
"Our earnings get momentum when people pour in on Fridays or holidays. During winter it slumps a

bit but summer brings back brisk business," said a caretaker.
Five caretakers have been appointed to look after the pond alternatively.
"About Tk 30,000 is needed every month to maintain the pond satisfactorily. The money is usually raised from the bathers. The surplus amount is spent on community work like arranging marriages for poor girls, treatment for the underprivileged etc.," informed a committee member.
The most heartening aspect of the pond remains its cleanliness and hygienic standard. The committee has chalked out an efficient plan in this regard.
"We are quite aware and particular about its cleanliness. That's why we flush out gallons of water each night through the main sewerage drain. A deep-tubewell then pumps it up with fresh water for use the next day," said committee member Mohammad Masum.
Through its services, the pond has become a symbol for community unification also. Recently, the present inheritors of Alhaj Bhutto made an attempt to fill up the pond and erect concrete structures there. "We resisted that heinous move. We had to as we all know how important this pond is for maintaining the ecological balance of this area. Besides, Alhaj Bhutto had donated it permanently for community use," said Masum.
With unplanned urbanisation gradually swallowing every little free space or waterbody in Dhaka, the 'Pushkuni' at Bangsal continues to provide a refuge for residents like Abbas whom we can be enviously classify as the few 'lucky ones.'



The Bansal Oasis!

EKING OUT AN EXISTENCE

A lead on luck

CITY CORRESPONDENT
.....
Nur Alam sits on a wooden platform with a square shed at Gulistan. A loud speaker installed on the roof-top tries to woo the passers-by into buying lotteries.
Stimulating words along with a list of fascinating prizes for the probable winners are being announced continuously from the cassette player.
Tickets are clipped and hung all around the wooden shop. Yellow banners containing enticing statements add intensity to his business. Many potential buyers enquire about the aspects of this lottery like when the draw would be held, and if so, then if it would be deferred.
Nur Alam is well conversant with the sales procedure and prizes. He tells a prospective client, "The draw

"This business needs no hard word. All you need to do is sit on the dais throughout the day and keep your patience in dealing with the clients."

Nur took to this occupation with the help of one of his distant relatives in 1998. Initially he did not feel secure in this roadside occupation. Soon, he observed that government or autonomous organisations are coming up with the offer of lottery every three months.
Not everything goes well with this business, though.
Eviction drives are one of the hazards. Rain and hartals are other ones. "To avoid police hassles, I have to pay them Tk 40 each day. Still, I reckon it is a brisk business," quips Nur.

"Abu Mia, my owner, pays me Tk 150 everyday regardless of the number of tickets sold," Nur says. Each ticket is priced at Tk 10.

crisis

telephone numbers

HEALTH

Hospitals

Heart
National Institute of Cardio Vascular Diseases (NICVD),
- 9130800, 9122560-59

Burn
Dhaka Medical College Hospital
Burn Unit-8626812-6

Cancer
National Cancer Institute-
80149148826561-65
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib
Medical University-8612550-4,
861455-9

Diabetes
Diabetic Research Hospital
(BIRDEM)- 9661551-5,
8616641-50

Mother & Child Care
Shishu Hospital- 9119119,
8116061-62
Azimpur Mother & Child Health
Training Institute- 8624827, 8624980

Eye
Islamia Eye Hospital-9110794,
9119315
National Eye Hospital- 8117202,
8114807

Dental
Dental College 9002035

Orthopaedics
National Orthopaedics (Pangu) Hospi-
tal- 9114075, 9112150

General
Dhaka Medical College Hospital-
8626812-6
Holy Family Hospital-
83111731-25
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib
Medical University Hospital- 8612550
-4, 8614545-9
Bangladesh Medical College & Hospi-
tal- 8115443, 9118202,
Shamarita Hospital- 9131901
Suhrawardy Hospital -- 9130800,
9122560-69
Salimullah Medical Collage
Hospital -- 7310061-4, 7319002-6

Cholera Research Hospital
(ICDDR)- 8811751-60
Infection Disease (I.D) Hospital
602429, 601835,
T.B. Hospital 608031-34,
600211-5,
Azimpur Maternity Hospital 503329.
Sromojibi Hospital 240066-69,
Monowra Hospital 8319802,
8318135

Blood Bank
Red Crescent Centre- 9116563
Sandhani (DMCH)- 8624040
Sandhani (SMCH)- 7310061,
7310061,7319022
Dhaka Medical Collage Hospital-
8626812-9

Eye Bank
Sandhani International Eye Bank-
8614040

Ambulance Service-
Fire Service & Civil Defence Ambu-
lance 9555555, 9556666-7, 9567734,
Fire Services Siddique Bazar (HQ)
9556667, Mohammadpur 9112078,
Tejgaon 605272, Khilgaon 7218329,

Lalbagh 505778, Mirpur 9001055,
Cantonment 605168, Tongi 9801070,
Palassey 509670, Demra 7400111,
Postagola 7410771, Narayanganj
9715644, Sadarghat 7119759,
Mirpur 10 Circle 9002269, 9001055,
Mirpur TVG Complex 9001189,
Narayanganj Port 9715365,
Hajiganj (N Ganj) 9715531,
Mondalpara (N. Ganj River) 9712015,
N. Gan Bander 9712095,
Dhaka EPZ (Savar) 7701444, Markajul
Al Islami 9127867, Anjuman e-
Mafidul Islam 324067, 239808,
248166, Holy Family Hospital
8311721-5.

Ambulances For Dead Body
Anzuman Mafidul Islam (Kakrail
9336611, Gandaria 7319808,
7318166,
Al-Markajul Islam 9127867, 324069.

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

LIBRARY & INFO

Libraries, Cultural and Information Centres
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

UTILITY

Electricity
Electricity Complex- PDB- 9566061-
5, 9560170-9
Electricity Complex (DESA)-
8616737-43, 8617626
DESCO- 8123138-40
Complaints (Rural Electrification
Board, Dhaka)- 8916424-8

Gas
Titas Gas Exchange (Emergency)-
9563667-8
Kawrnabazar-8112135-42
Mirpur- 8014132-3
Mohammadpur- 9117215,9113903
Mohakhali- 9884741, 9885922,
8824993
Motijheel-9667612

WASA
WASA (PABX)- 8117829-31
Mirpur- 9000519
Mohammadpur- 8120192
Fakirapool-9115343
Asad Gate-917492
Uttara- 9559142,
Segunbagicha- 7316348

Pagla- 8113900-39
Fire Services
Siddique Bazar (HQ)- 9556667
Mohammadpur- 9112078
Khilgaon- 7218329
Mirpur- 9001055
Tongi- 9801070
Demra-7400111
Postagola- 7410771
Sadarghat- 7119759
Mirpur 10 Circle- 9002269, 9001055
Mirpur TVG Complex- 9001189

DO YOU KNOW

Fire services
provide cheap,
fast and efficient
ambulance
service too?