

Footbridges on comeback trail

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) plans to erect 20 steel-framed overhead footbridges soon along with the Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP).

DCC will construct multi-wing 11 over-bridges with iron fences on the pavements to encourage pedestrians to take use these structures. DUTP will raise nine such bridges across the city, sources said.

"Apart from few, most of the foot over-bridges which were put up earlier have not been used," said a senior DCC official.

"We also hear that many of the overhead footbridges built earlier are not used by the passers-by. This time, this is not going to happen.

"We are trying to impel them to use the bridges. Another thing is that the bridges are being erected with the request of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP)," added the official.

Last year, DCC suspended construction of eight concrete overhead footbridges after one of the girders of the faulty footbridge at Science

Laboratory broke down on the busy road, killing one.

The beams were taken away and the contract was cancelled although the structures are still there.

DCC will build the iron footbridges on the existing concrete pillars. Three new steel bridges are being built at Kazipara Bus Stand, Sonargaon Road near BUET and

Last year, DCC suspended construction of eight concrete overhead footbridges after one of the girders of the faulty footover at Science Laboratory broke down on the busy road, killing one.

Shamibagh Mitali School.

The government is implementing this project at a cost of Tk 10.5 crore through government-owned Chittagong Dry-dock which sealed



the contract. "DCC hasn't floated any tender because it is a lengthy process and the construction takes a lot of time to complete. Chittagong Dry-dock specialises in this type of job and they can finish at the earliest. That's why we did not go to any private company," explained another DCC official.

The nine footbridges will cost DUTP Tk 9 crore, with the World Bank bearing 75 per cent of the cost and the government the rest.

These nine bridges will be put up in front of Farmgate Police Box, Mukti Sarani of Shanir Akhra, Bangla Motor, Zonaki Cinema Hall, Pragati Sarani Intersection, New Market and Bakushah Market, Banani Chairmanbari Road, Dhanmondi Boys' High School and HBFC Intersection at Uttara.

"It may take six months to finish these nine overhead footbridges," said an authoritative source.

DCC may shift these footbridges if it is found that people are not using them in their designated places.

Far from a children's park

CITY CORRESPONDENT

It was not the right time for playing as the early summer sun blazed down. The batsman makes a wild swing of the bat and the ball races towards a car workshop -- the boundary.

"Either leave the park or lose the ball," shouts a man from the workshop. The kids leave with broken hearts. But that's not to be the case. The workshop is an encroachment upon the park.

The park is situated in a triangle of

Khilji Road, Shyamali and Babar Road in Mohammadpur. For some time, the park has been occupied by car workshops and garages through an arrangement with the law enforcing agencies and local ward commissioner, sources said.

"The playing ground is shrinking day by day. Garage workers do not allow us to play in the ground. They take away the ball. No one cares about us," complains Rakib with watery eyes, Sobel and others join in.

Formerly, the Children's Park, run by Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), maintained adequate rides

for local children. Now broken debris make it dangerous for the youngsters. Still, they play with the broken parts.

Local people allege that the former park is controlled by local gangsters with the support of ward commissioner of Ward No. 45 Atiqul Islam Matin.

Two motor garages have started business in full swing. The children's park has turned into a local car park. Large bribes change hands to make sure that it stays this way. Some 100 cars and minibuses occupy the

area. Car owners pay Tk 300-Tk 400 each a month for garage facilities. Most vehicles are rental cars kept haphazardly in the playground.

The motor garages known as Monir's and Pappu's have employed some 14 workers. They say the children never feel disturbed and the garages are useful to locals, who no longer have to go any distance for the repair of their vehicles.

"Neither the government nor local authorities can guarantee the safety of children who play in the park," Khandakar Shamim Ahmed, a resident of Khilji Road, says. Last year, Shamim says, garage workers beat up a young boy and tied him up for half an hour.

The authorities should take initiatives to ensure the park is maintained as a children's playing zone, he adds.

Local sources say Rahim alias "Commander Rahim" has six guards at his disposal to police the park.

Mohammadpur Police Station told The Star City that four police constables guard the park at night. They claimed that a few local residents occasionally park their cars due to a lack of parking space elsewhere. Police denied knowledge of any illegally workshop or garage in the playground. They also said they were unaware of any privately hired guards working in the area.

The ward commissioner, Atiqul Islam Matin, denied his involvement in the encroachment of the park. He said he had written to the DCC local office about the problems many times but to no avail.



A children's park nearly lost to a garage and car workshops.

EKING OUT AN EXISTENCE

Cool conch bangles

Carving bangles from conch shells is like making statues from stone

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The proverbial *Shankher Karaat*, a double-edged saw, is no longer there in Shankharibazar in Old Dhaka or anywhere else. But that did not stop the artisans, who have been in this trade for generations, from carving conch bangles.

Artisans now use electric blades in crafting conch bangles. "Shankha (conch shell) crafting is a fourth generation profession for

ished product.

"The raw material, the conch shell, is not available in Bangladesh. We import it from Sri Lanka," says Nakuleswar.

"India does produce some shells too, but the quality isn't that good." The price for the raw conch shells ranges between Tk 19,000 and Tk 29,000 a sack, depending on size, weight and quality.

They produce two kinds of shells; *kari*, weighty and firm, and *jhanji*, softer and naturally designed.

"First, we break the tail end of the conch and get the softer part out of the shell," describes Ashish, a conch artisan. "Then we break the upper portion of the shell."

"People from some herbal medicine takes that *peta*, the dead body, to make medicine for liver diseases," explains Swapan, a conch breaker. "So, the wastes of shells are not at all a wastage. Even the dust of shell is sold Tk 2 per *tola*. People use that to remove the scars from faces."

"Then we wash the shells for several times to have a good clean," says Ashish. "The most difficult task comes next, to cut the conch in bangles shape and to make the most use of the shell without damaging the body."

"The bangles are then designed with various motifs. Designers innovate the patterns of motifs to groove on the bangles according to size, depth and density," Swapan adds.

Shankha of Shakhribazar is unique, compared to other places like Tangail, Khulna and even India. Its design, elegance, variety and craftsmanship are superb.

me," says Nakuleswar Naag.

Shankha of Shakhribazar is unique, compared to other places like Tangail, Khulna and even India. Its design, elegance, variety and craftsmanship are superb.

Shankha is the symbol of marriage for Hindus. Hindu women wear *shankha* for the welfare of their husbands, they believe. So, the shankha market sprang up some centuries ago. Modern women wear *shankha* as ornaments.

Carving bangles out of conch shells is like making a sculpture out of stones. Seven different artisans pull off their mastery to get a fin-



An artisan of Old Dhaka crafts a bangle from conch shell.

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
Suhrwardy 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,

Laibagh 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
Anjuman 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
Sonargaon 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
Kawrnbar-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- 8917492
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?