



# Star city

e-mail: starcity@thedailystar.net

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**the city that was**

Shahbagh was the nucleus of the social, cultural and political activities of Dhaka's elite from the concluding part of the 19th century to the first part of the 20th century. Besides the family functions of the Nawab of Dhaka, many sparkling programmes like welcoming or farewell parties to the dignitaries who used to visit Dhaka were held here.

# Memorial slips into ruins

MORSHED ALI KHAN

The Martyred Intellectuals' Memorial at Rayer Bazaar urgently needs protection from erosion, warns officials of the Public Works Department (PWD).

orate the sacrifice of the intellectuals killed by a defeated Pakistani occupation force and their local collaborators in 1971, needs about Tk 50 lakh on an emergency basis if it is to be saved from rapid erosion caused by rising waters. Officials concerned said that the nearby Haikkar Khal has already eroded a large chunk of the monument and the situation

may go "out of hand" if the slopes are not protected before the monsoon sets in.

"We have a project proposal of about Tk 4.5 crore lying with the Planning Commission since the tenure of the last government," said a source at the Public Works Department (PWD).

"Let's talk about the fate of the project later. Now if you want to save the monument its slopes must be protected immediately with concrete slabs," said the official source.

After the monument was inaugurated in 1999, the government decided to take up a project which envisaged setting up of a museum, service rooms, a library, a walkway, a security grill and arbours. But the project proposal was mysteriously shelved just after the new government took over, sources said.

"About five months ago, PWD officials held a meeting with the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs in which it was decided that steps should be taken to bring the monument directly under the jurisdiction of the ministry," the source said.

"So far we have not heard anything about it," he said.

About 10 men in shifts guard the monument area but local hoodlums and vandals always hang around at the site. Official sources said last week the hoodlums savagely beat up one of their night guards as he protested unsober activities on the premises. Moreover, incidents of mugging are frequent.

"We have requested the authorities to set up a small police outpost at the site of the monument but nothing has been done," the source said.



On the face of it, the Martyred Intellectuals' Memorial at Rayer Bazaar in the city looks good...



but behind it is a different story as Haikkar Khal slowly but surely eats into the base of the memorial.

## Red light on traffic signals

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

Nine traffic signals at Mirpur 'demonstration corridor' have begun malfunctioning just one year after installation.

Tk 80 lakh was spent for buying and installation of the signals, and for other necessary tasks like electronic circuiting and cable connection.

The signals were installed under a pilot project of Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP) for the road that stretches from Mirpur Technical intersection to Sonargaon Crossing touching Russell Square.

The project was undertaken as a major initiative to alleviate the

traffic tailback since almost all the traffic signals at 60 city intersections remained out of order for most of the time.

However, the malfunctioning of signals have increased the plight of the traffic police. It has now become a real battle for them to control the often defiant and ignorant drivers who had actually started showing some respect for the law when the signals were in working order.

"It helps us when drivers are alerted beforehand by the signal lights," said traffic policeman Shahidullah. "Unfortunately, the signals now are either completely out of order or constantly flickering," he added.

"Sometimes these signals get stuck on a single light. Drivers

can get confused as they may see the red or green light splashing for minutes without changing. In such cases we have to switch off the lights and turn to manual signaling," said Abiruddin, another policeman working on the same road.

Sources at the Traffic Engineering Department of Dhaka City Corporation claimed that lack of proper maintenance was the key reason behind signal lights malfunctioning.

"Often qualified people do not handle such sophisticated electronic items even though the DUTP had once arranged a training programme in this regard," said a top official at the Traffic Engineering Department on condition of anonymity.

"Moreover, frequent power outage and voltage fluctuation causes the signals to collapse. Besides, the signals at the nine intersections under the DUTP are interconnected which means that even if one is not working, the other ones also fail to function properly," he observed.



Traffic moves on through red light as police handle things manually.

**hello dhaka**

**Today's tip**  
Pay telephone bills by May 17

**Markets & museums closed**  
New Market- Tuesday  
Gausia Market- Tuesday  
Mouchak Market- Sunday  
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market- Tuesday  
Eastern Plaza- Sunday  
Farmview Super Market- Sunday  
Muktijuddha Jadughar- Sunday  
Dhaka Zoo- Sunday  
Shishu Jadughar- Sunday

**Roads to avoid**  
Mohakhali to Banani Highway  
Flyover under construction  
Khilgaon Crossing

## Traffic turns to Garden Road

For rickshaw commuters of Farmgate, Raja Bazar, Dhanmondi, Elephant Road and so on, the Garden Road is a relief from time-consuming and hazardous detours to and from Karwan Bazar.

AVIK SANWAR RAHMAN

As rickshaws are banned from plying the Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, commuters face a daily struggle to reach their destinations in and around Karwan Bazar.

That is why the Garden Road of Kazi Para, which connects the Avenue with Green Road, has become a popular short-cut for city dwellers who are able to take a rickshaw up to the foot-steps of the Karwan Bazar overpass.

So for residents of Farmgate, Raja Bazar, Monipuripara, Shukrabad, Sobhanbag, Kathal Bagan, Dhanmondi, Elephant Road etc, the Garden Road is a relief from time consuming and hazardous detours to and from Karwan Bazar.

Selina Hossain of Shukrabad works in a private company

located at Karwan Bazar. When the Panthapath became off-limits to rickshaws, she opted for Garden Road as the most convenient way to office.

"I can't afford taking a CNG run three-wheeler or a taxi-cab to work. Rickshaw is my only other choice and the Garden Road gives me the opportunity to travel by it," said Selina.

With the ever-increasing importance of the tiny road, which often gets blocked if two vehicles find themselves side by side, encroachers have become active to cash in on the fame.

Some influential local people have occupied a portion of the road and have set up a vegetable and meat market there. A concrete platform has also been built on the road for the meat-vendors.

"I made this platform at the directives of the club," said a butcher as he chopped beef.

The 'club' is the political office of ruling BNP's Garden Road unit under Ward 39. There are also offices of the main opposition Awami League and Jatiya Party adjacent to the

BNP's one. It goes without saying that all those structures have been illegally erected smack inside the road.

On the other side of the club, local people have encroached



about ten feet of the road from the legal boundary of their houses.

Aminur Rahman has rented a 19 square feet space for his grocery shop of which 10 square feet is on the encroached road. He is making brisk business with the increased traffic on the road. Even if the occupied area is taken back by the government Aminur feels it won't have any adverse effect on his trade.

"I am not worried at all even if it means that my shop could be reduced to a nine sq. ft. one. The broadened road will further raise the value of the area and will bring more business for me," he predicted.

When contacted, Estate Officer of Dhaka City Corporation Samsuzzoha declined to comment on the Garden Road, as he apparently had heard nothing regarding the encroachment.

## Lost in drugs maze

For the city's thousands of drug addicts, it seems there is no way out of this deadly fixation

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Last month the city woke up to the shock news of a retired civil servant being brutally killed by his estranged son.

Abul Khayer Musa, a former Advisor of a past Caretaker Government, was stabbed to death by his deranged son Imran in his own residence at Gulshan. Imran, a drug-addict, had been pressuring his father for money apparently to buy drugs and allegedly carried out the dreadful act on being refused.

The incident just goes to reaffirm the belief that drug-

addicts are like loose cannons. You never know when, where and how they can drop their sense of proportion.

The fondness for narcotics and stimulants eventually becomes a dependence. Teenagers and youths are more prone to be lured into the mazy world of drugs for that 'Generation X' feeling they supposedly bring. On the other hand, sheer frustration, mental depression etc can also encourage drug-addiction. Either way drug-addicts are a threat to the future of a thriving population and a serious social deterrent. Unfortunately, the city is far from equipped to handle the problem that is slowly taking the

form of an epidemic.

Shaon had a bright future ahead of him. A brilliant student who secured distinction marks in both SSC and HSC examinations, Shaon got disillusioned with life after some friends introduced him to heroine at the university. Now he is a drop-out whose only activity is frequent violent outbursts at family members who feel helpless.

"We are lost for ideas to contain him. He has become an embarrassment for the whole family. He causes a tantrum in the house if he doesn't get money to buy drugs, he asks for money from neighbours, relatives and even stole from his mother's locker once. We know

he is suffering but he is also making us suffer many times more," Shaon's father said.

Shaon had been to private clinics which claim to treat drug-addicts. But as there was no rehabilitation programme, he sunk back into the same forbidden waters once he was released.

"Several attempts to make him well failed because every time he returned from one of those expensive clinics he became more addicted," His mother said.

According to the Department of Narcotics, around 20 lakh people are addicted to drugs across the country and most of them are living in Dhaka. A

majority of the addicted are young (aged between 14-35).

Over the years, some 25-30 clinics including the National Drug Detoxification Centre (NDDC) have been established in Dhaka but it is alleged that the facilities couldn't provide any rehabilitation programme or follow-up treatment.

The NDDC had reportedly followed backdated treatment practiced during the 1950s until recently. Now it is concentrating on detoxification and rehabilitation. However the fact remains that excepting a few private organisations, there are no modern facilities available for taking proper care and recuperation of the drug addicts.