

# Monument in suspended animation

Construction and ongoing maintenance of the Independence Monument in Suhrawardy Udyan has been halted after only 40 per cent of the project was completed due to government inaction

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The *Swadhinata Sthambha* in the Suhrawardy Udyan hangs in the balance because of government's non-cooperation.

Although about 40 per cent of the Independence Monument has been completed, the finished

work is now wearing down due to lack of maintenance.

The immediate past government has taken up the Tk 172 crore project in May 1999 to build the monument on 67 acres of the 99-acre park.

Concord, a builder, got the contract. Only the maintenance of the finished work is the

builder's main concern, said Chief Engineer of Concord Muzibur Rhaman. About three months ago, the government withdrew the security guards from the project site, he added.

The project included a 150-foot tall glass tower, an amphitheatre, an underground museum and artworks. A VIP block, a conference room and a

parking complex for at least five hundred cars were also included in the plan.

Four years ago, the then prime minister inaugurated an 'eternal flame' as part of the project. A long mural painting was to be built on the eastern side of the monument to record the history of the independence of Bangladesh.

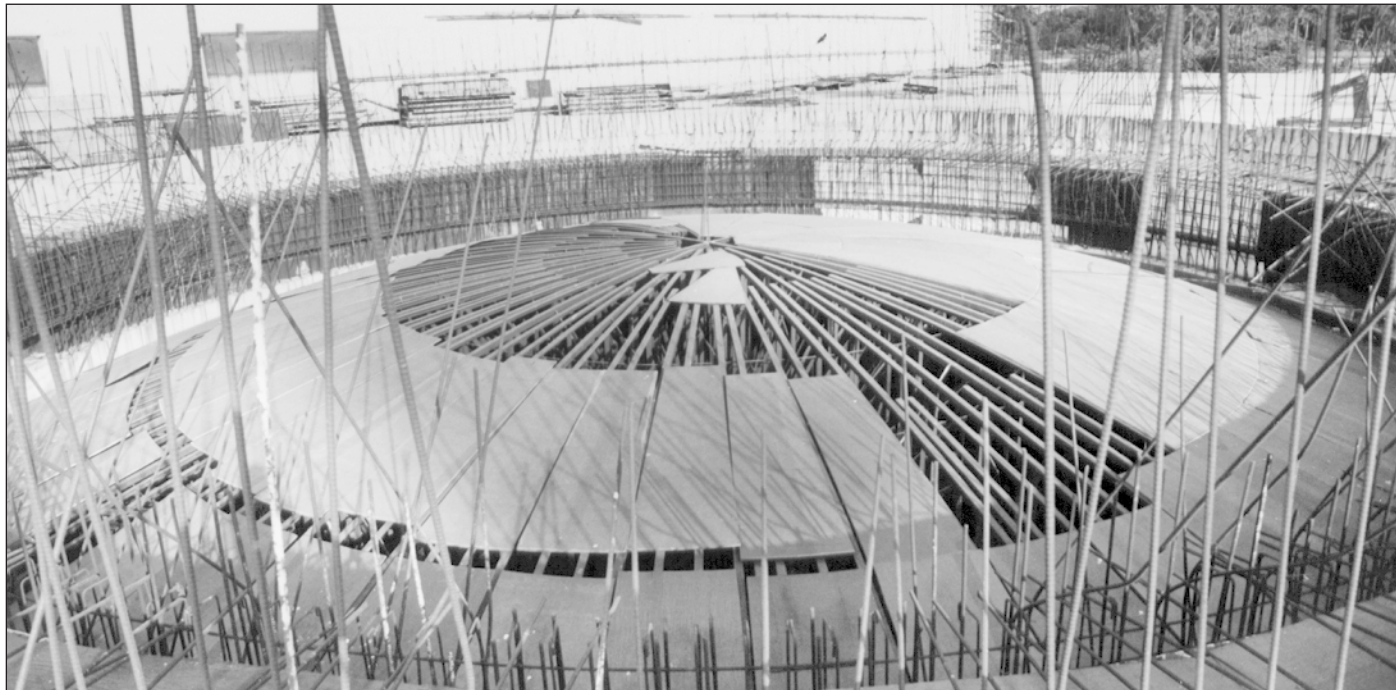
A service centre was supposed to be built as well. Also, the plan includes a fountain to be built close to the mural. Morning walkers and joggers had good news that the plan included a five-kilometre tiled walkway.

But the mega-project came under scrutiny after the BNP-led four-party alliance assumed power and was suspended on February 16 this year after a meeting chaired by Housing and Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas.

The suspension order came after corruption was detected in the project, says the housing and public works ministry. The Bureau of Anti-corruption has estimated the amount of 'embezzled' money at about Tk 40 crore. Seven officials were accused.

Later, the project was transferred to the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs, says a housing and public works ministry official.

A blanket of darkness now covers the monument at night, as most lights of the park are out of order. The park became a haven for sex workers, drug peddlers, vagabonds, muggers and vendors. Even policemen do not venture into the park at night due to insecurity.



SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

## Smacking your senses

A garland of *beli* is strong enough to fill your room with fragrance on a summer evening

AVIK SANWAR RAHMAN

For centuries jasmine has been a sweet-scented gift. Because of its snow-white beauty and pleasant fragrance, it has a unique ability to bring cheer when someone is ill or downhearted. Its strong fragrance can stir people from gloom.

Monsoon staying until September is the flowering season for jasmynes in Bangladesh. *Jui*, *chameli* and *beli* belong to the jasmine family. Among them, *beli* is most desired in blistering summer.

Most *beli* flowers up for sale in Dhaka come from Narayanganj. "There is a garden of *beli* on 30 acres at Shaldi in Narayanganj," said Majnu Mia, owner of Malancha flower shop. "In summer, the demand for *beli* is higher than other flowers."

"People buy more *beli* flowers Tuesdays to Fridays thanks to weddings and other events," says Alauddin, a vendor. Flower shop owners order *beli* from the Narayanganj garden, depending on the demand.

*Beli* is used as a decorative flower. Women wear them in their hair to parties and weave garlands. Indian jasmine is a sacred flower known as 'moonlight of the grove'. Jasmynes were traditionally woven into bridal wreaths.

Hazrat Ali from Narayanganj sells *beli* flowers in Dhaka, wandering across the city to hook the attention of buyers. "Men and women love *beli* alike. Women passing by car or taxicab stop for the flower on



SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

the way. I can earn up to Tk 600 a day from sales," said Ali.

The old name *jessamine* and jasmine came from the Persian name Yasmin and the Chinese Yes-His-ming. In China, jasmine has symbolically been used for femininity, sweetness and beauty.

Its fragrance can be used to make perfume and its delicate foliage can be used for some medicines and foods.

Grown the world over, jasmynes are used to flavour tea. The oil extracted from jasmine is used in high-grade perfumes and cosmetics, such as creams, oils, soaps and shampoos.

Jasmine flowers are picked in the early morning, since they are the most fragrant at day-break. When in flower, a single plant will strongly scent an entire room or patio on a still summer's eve.

# Strike a compact bargain

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

If you are a music lover or a movie bug, then a good music or a good movie can turn a dull evening or an afternoon siesta into a lively moment for you.

These days buying audio CDs and VCDs (video CDs) is no longer an expensive proposition if you know the proper place to purchase it from.

Forget those huge stores with all their razzmatazz in posh shopping complexes of the city and opt for something else on the outskirts of Moulana Bhashani Hockey Stadium and Bangabandhu National Stadium. You can fetch a CD or VCD at half the cost you get them anywhere else.

However, before buying them you must be well aware of the fact these CDs are pirated. So, if you need to slash your expenditure you will have to overlook your conscience.

One can get an audio CD for Tk 30 here whereas it is impossible to get one from the stores at any shopping centre for less than Tk 60. A video CD would cost maximum Tk 45, which is unavailable for less than Tk 80 at any other place.

"Nothing but the lower price of the CDs drags me here," said Abu Saleh Siddiqui, a student of Dhaka College.

"When CDs became available in the city in early 90s, they would sell for Tk 750 each," noted Sujit Das, a student of Jahangirnagar University. "Buying a CD was like a dream for me then," he added. "Getting a CD for Tk 30 is almost like a dream come true," he went on saying.

Moreover, the option to change the purchased CDs allures a host of customers to the place. "You can change the CD once you buy one by paying Tk 10 only and continue changing," noted Anwar Hossain. "So, basically you are getting new CDs for Tk 10 only," he clarified. "This is like a video club," the hawker

selling CDs to him gleefully added.

"It is convenient for me to buy CDs from here not only because it is cheaper, but also because there are a wide range of collection," noted Abdul Hannan, a student of Dhaka University.

"Starting from Madonna's album to songs from old Bangla movies, they sell everything," he said. He also added buying CDs from the place became a hobby for him.

"I am least bothered whether these CDs are pirated or not," Rumman Ahmed showed his unwillingness to consider morality. "Whether legal or illegal, I will go for buying it if suits my pocket," he added.

However, the hawkers denied selling pirated CDs. "I don't understand what you mean by pirated," said Nuruzzaman Babu who sells CDs from morning to eleven at night. "We get these CDs from Patuati and Eastern Plaza."

"We can sell the CDs at a lower

price since we buy it cheap," Babu tried to explain. "We get them at a cheaper price because we buy a lot at wholesale rate," he went on saying.

Another hawker, Mohammed Masum, noted the big stores sell CDs at a higher price since their expenditure is more than the hawkers'. "Unlike us, they have to pay for the shop, electricity bill

and other establishment costs," he clarified.

The hawkers noted even the police do not disturb them since they sit in front of regular shops in the stadium market. "We pay a good amount of money to shop owners and they tell police that the we cell their CDs," noted Nazrul Islam.



SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

## Steering the days ahead

Women are better at driving than men and think twice before taking an unknown step to avoid accidents.

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Maybe you have seen women steering cars home or to work through busy city roads. But did you know more than 20 per cent of driving learners in the city are female?

"Women are better at driving than men because they can concentrate more and steady their nerves in difficult situation. They don't take any unknown step... they do what they know," said Mohammad Abdul Rob, director of the TTI Driving School.

"While males usually hurry for overtaking, females think twice before taking the next step. They try their best to avoid accidents. They follow traffic laws and signals, as they don't want to end up in embarrassing situation."

"I will buy a car soon. I want it bad. Driving a car is one step ahead of others," says a female student of the driving school at Green Road.

**"Women are better at driving than men because they can concentrate more and steady their nerves in difficult situation. They don't take any unknown step... they do what they know"**

Dr Zahin Farhana, a driving learner, says she has got a scholarship for higher study abroad. She is learning driving, as she has to drive herself.

Shahnaj Pervin Nipa, assistant vice-president of the Eastern

Bank Limited, is also learning driving at Macadem Driving School. "If I can drive, I don't have to depend on a chauffeur. I can easily drive to work and back home. I can go anywhere I want and make my weekends more enjoyable. I can drop my child at school. It has an added advantage."

Sometimes, truck and bus drivers try to make trouble for female drivers, blocking their way for no reason at all, said a female driver.

Most females who drive their own cars are from upper and higher-middle classes. A small number of females come from the middle class to learn driving for professional purpose. Some organisations like UNDP, Proshika and Care have female drivers.

## crisis telephone numbers, cabs & train timing

### 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) Hospital- 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 & Hospital- 8115443, 9118202, Shamari Hospital- 9131901  
Suhrawardy Hospital -- 9130800, 9122560-69  
Saifullah Medical Collage

Hospital -- 7310061-4, 7319002-6

Cholera Research Hospital (ICDDR)- 8811751-60  
Infection Disease (ID) 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 Ambulance 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 Gani) 9715531, Mondalpara (N. Ganj River) 9712015, N. Gan Bander 9712095, Dhaka EPZ (Savar) 9701444, 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.

### 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- 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?

999 is the helpline in Dhaka just in case you need to reach police

### 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

#### Black Cab

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

### TRAIN TIMING

#### Subarna Express

Leaves Dhaka at 4:00 pm

Reaches Chittagong at 10:15 pm

Leaves Dhaka at 7:30 am

Reaches Chittagong at 2:55 pm

Leaves Dhaka at 3:05 pm

Reaches Chittagong at 9-11 pm

Leaves Dhaka at 11:00 pm

Reaches Chittagong at 7:05 am

Leaves Dhaka at 6:30 am

Reaches Sylhet at 2-30 pm

Leaves Dhaka at 12:30 pm

Reaches Sylhet at 9-20 pm

Leaves Dhaka at 9-30 pm

Reaches Bahadurabad at 1-05 pm

Leaves Dhaka at 7:00 am

Reaches Bahadurabad at 11-55

Leaves Dhaka at 5:00 pm

Reaches Noakhali at 1-35 pm

Leaves Dhaka at 6:00 am

Reaches Jagannath at 2-30 pm

Leaves Dhaka at 9-20 pm