

High-rise hazard

Why is safety on building construction sites not being implemented effectively?

SOHEL ISLAM

The never-ending construction of new high-rise buildings and various other structures is only adding to the city's increasing sense of insecurity.

While buildings are erected, little is done to address the safety of the site, construction workers and the general public.

After the deaths of two women under similar circumstances at separate construction sites last month, the safety situation has come to the fore once again.

One of the main reasons behind construction mishaps can be attributed to keeping building materials like long steel rods, sand, cement and bricks haphazardly on roads and pavements around the site. This not only obstructs the movement of people but also creates hazardous situations.

"I pass by a huge under-construction apartment on way to work," Masum Ahmed of Segun Bagicha told Star City. "I am always scared of a brick or other heavy object falling on my head."

"Unfortunately, the Bangladesh

National Building Code has remained totally unimplemented to date. But this code spells out every possible safety requirement a construction site should have," said Engineer Emdadul Islam, a member of the sub committee of Rajdhani Unnayan Katrapakkha (RAJUK) which formulated this code in 1993.

"After approving a building plan, RAJUK is supposed to monitor the subsequent construction, which they don't. That's why if there are deaths or injuries at the site, RAJUK should be held accountable," said a top official of RAJUK preferring anonymity.

Because of this apparent inaction of RAJUK, the developers and builders are taking advantage of certain loopholes in the building code.

The National Building Code does not make clear which government agency is responsible for its enforcement. When the code was enacted in 1993, it did propose that officials and experts would be required for its regulation, but ten years on that provision remains vague.

"RAJUK has no manpower to monitor such activities. If the

government requires RAJUK to supervise construction it will have to provide necessary personnel first," said a source at RAJUK.

REHAB (Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh) General Secretary Mahmudul Hasan feels that the code does not have the necessary authority to be taken seriously.

"The building code has not been passed by parliament. This could be one reason behind the builders' non-compliance."

"But the recent deaths of two innocent pedestrians due to falling iron rods used for piling should be an eye opener for the concerned authorities. I would like to mention that tri-pipe piling is a very sophisticated and technical job. If the balance of the tri-pipe is slightly deviated then it will invariably fall resulting in fatal accidents," Hasan added.

The government is reportedly preparing a guideline for private builders and developers. If that guideline sees light, 'safety in construction' could become more than just words on paper.



Safety on construction sites lacks supervision or enforcement.

Students or sardines?

Dhaka University's transport system needs a boost as 15,000 commuting students squeeze onto 23 buses

CITY CORRESPONDENT

About 15,000 non-resident students commute around the Dhaka University campus every day. But the university's 23 buses can make only 120 trips (up and down) per day; that means there is a 52 seated bus for every 290

"Very often I don't get any seat and have to go all the way home as a standing passenger," she said. According to Mitu and others, the overcrowding and heat very often causes fainting and nausea among the students.

students or one seat for every six students. Dhaka University has only 18 buses, including five teachers' minibuses and two minibuses. To face this conveyance urgency, it has hired three public buses and two double-

deckers from Bangladesh Roads and Transport Corporation (BRTC).

"In 1981 Dhaka University bought seven buses; most recently in 1998 it has bought only one bus. Most of the other buses, at least 80-85 percent of D.U buses, have come from different governments," said Mohammed Azizur Rahman, Senior Transport Manager of Dhaka University.

"The university's existing vehicles have the capacity to carry at best 6,000 students but more than 12,000 students have to be conveyed per day. At minimum, 10 extra buses are immediately needed to meet this transport crisis," he added.

Taka 160.93 lakh was allocated for transport in Dhaka University's 2002-2003 budget, while this amount was Tk 155.30 in 2001-2002. "Though there is no extra allowance or grant allocated in this current year for transport, over the last one year the price of fuel has increased on three occasions. Moreover students have also increased. In spite of our eagerness to do something to meet this crisis, shortage of money is the prime cause that we can't take any step," said Rahman.

Mitu, a non-resident student of D.U. travels from Naraingonj. "Very often I don't get any seat and have to go all the way home as a standing passenger," she said. According to Mitu and others, the overcrowding and heat very often causes fainting and nausea among the students. When asked why she uses university transport despite the problems, she answered, "At least I feel quite secure on university buses, while women have to face more harassment on public transports."

Public is forced to go in public

CITY CORRESPONDENT

For the more than ten million inhabitants of Dhaka, public toilets are very few and far between.

There are only 29 public toilets in the city run by the Dhaka City Corporation and most of them are in an appalling condition, too dirty and unhygienic for use. Better toilets

are available at shopping malls, community centres, cinemas, schools, colleges and workplaces but they are out of bounds for the general public.

While men sometimes don't care for decency and civilised behaviour when nature calls and can be seen urinating in public places, women are the ones who suffer most from this inhumane situation. Besides, with a large number of people

living on the streets and slums, Dhaka is unbelievably ill equipped to manage the human waste as many of them use drains, manholes, water-bodies etc. as their own form of public toilet.

Gulistan is one of the city's business hubs, bustling with thousands of hawkers and floating vendors as well as pedestrians. There are only two public toilets in this area, which are unable to take the pressure of such a large volume of people.

Pedestrians, hawkers, beggars and rickshawpullers are often found answering the call of nature by the roadside as they can hardly afford to wait in long queues at the public toilets.

In the DCC's budget for the 2002-2003 fiscal year, Tk 3 crore was allocated for construction and renovation of public toilets. The DCC received Tk 94 lakh in revenue from public toilet use in 2001-2002 and has set a target of earning Tk one crore this fiscal year.

However, the corporation acknowledges the shortage of toilets for city dwellers.

"The number of public toilets is really inadequate to meet the requirements of a megacity. We have already taken initiatives to conduct a survey on possible spots for setting up new toilets," said estate officer Fazle Elahi.

"It's a very lengthy process setting up public toilets under the management of

the City Corporation. If private entrepreneurs were allowed to build toilets on DCC's land, things would have been a lot easier," he added.

Allegations abound that some of the DCC's toilets have become popular refuges for anti-social elements such as drug-peddlers and criminals. The terrible state of hygiene is another reason why no sane person enters them.

The DCC leases out each public toilet for Tk 10,000 to Tk five lakh to local businesses. But many complain that no basic services are provided at the toilets.

"There is no water inside. We have to carry water from outside to use the toilets," said Lokman, a rickshawpuller in front of the public toilet at New Market.

However, supervisors of New Market and Gulistan public toilets say that they try to ensure cleanliness and service for the users. "We clean the toilets twice a day as around 200-250 people use each toilet every day," said Montu Mia, supervisor of New Market public toilet.

The public toilets in Dhaka are a serious health hazard. The ammonia that builds up from urine in unwashed toilets can cause lung and kidney problems. Dysentery, diarrhea, typhoid and various air, water- and bacteria-borne diseases are commonly spread from these toilets.



Public toilets like this one are too far and few between for over ten million inhabitants.

Clay craft

Clay jewellery is increasing in popularity as women fear being robbed of expensive items

CITY CORRESPONDENT

They are keepsakes that can be treasured for years. They are individually crafted and their colours stay bright. They make great gifts for friends and colleagues and they cost you very little.

They are the popular clay jewellery and ornaments up for sale in handicraft shops, in markets or on the pavements.

Although clay ornaments date back hundreds of years, their urban use became popular in the '90s.

The city is home to about 100 such shops, plus the wayside stalls, as in front of Shishu Academy, New Market and Kalabagan. The roadside sellers, many of them women, collect items from Tantiabazar and Rayerbazar. Many craft their products at home or in factories.

"Our design is uncommon and attracts people, especially the young generation. Most buyers are students," said Nipa Khaled of Ideas Crafts at the Aziz Cooperative Super Market.

Samina Akter, a student of Dhaka University, said, "The products are of good quality and fashionable. I am satisfied with quality and price as well."

"There is a difference in quality between roadside items and those sold by handicraft shops in markets. The finish of the ornaments in roadside shops is not that good," she added.

The upmarket shops also sell Nepalese clay ornaments flowing into Bangladesh thanks to free market economy. Nepalese items are outmatching local ornaments with their better design and extraordinary finish. The shops selling local items are losing customers who prefer machine-crafted

items.

"Our ornaments are handmade, but Nepalese items are machine-made," said Sumon Khaled, a seller at the Aziz Super Market.

A pair of local earrings sells at Tk 10-100, a necklace at Tk 80-500, a bracelet at Tk 20-150.

Nuru Uddin, who sells ornaments in front of the Sishu Academy, says, "The item selling at Tk 150 is bought at Tk 25, plus Tk 15-20 in other costs."

Design is a problem for them. "Customers want new designs. But we cannot always come up with something new, as we have no training," said ABM Ruhul Shahnewaj, coordinator of the Jahanara Cottage Industries.



Clay jewellery has its own unique look.

market price telephone numbers & city bus route

MARKET PRICE	OUTING	COURIER SERVICES	LIBRARY & INFO	CITY BUS ROUTE																																																												
<p>Seasonal Fruits</p> <p>Mango- 45/70/kg Green Mango-20-25/kg Lichi-80/100 piece Watermelon- 30/50-60/piece Pineapple- 25-35/piece, Papaya- 25-30/piece Futi- 30-40/piece Bel- 15-20/piece Jackfruit- 150-200/piece Grapes- 120/kg Apple- 80/kg Orange- 80-90/dozen Banana-35/dozen Aata-50-55/kg Jambur-35-40/hundred</p> <p>Vegetables (Tk Per Kg)</p> <p>Tomato- 14/16 Potato- 10/14 Borboti, Beans- 18/20 Dherash, Okra-16 Jhinga- 20 Chichinga- 16 Jali Lau- 25/Piece Lau- 25/30 (Medium/Big) Patol- 16 Lemon- 5/Piece Onion- 14/18/(450 gm packet) Sajna-25 Eggplant-16(Black), 20 (White)</p> <p>Koralla- 20 Pudina Leaf- 120 Cabbage- 15 Green banana- 10 (Hali) Green papaya- 10 Lati- 16</p> <p>Salad</p> <p>Cucumber- 16 Tomato- 16 Lettuce- 2/Piece Carrot- 12 Onion Leaf- 30 Capsicum- 180</p> <p>Spices</p> <p>Green Chili- 20 Garlic- 36 Ginger- 30 Jira- 120 Dhania- 30 Daruchini- 140 Salt- 11 Soyabean- 46-49/Litre Butter oil- 210 Ghee- 280 Mustard oil- 70 Daida- 50 Tea- 120-160 Sugar- 28 Wheat- 15 Masur Dal- 42 Pulse- 20</p>	<p>Museum and Zoo</p> <p>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</p>	<p>International</p> <p>Air Borne Express- 9561371, 9561372, 9550724 Air Couriers Int'l (BD) Ltd.-8815970 Aramex International Courier- 9558003, 9559582, 9565075 Airspeed Express- 9563494 Asian Courier Services Ltd.- 8313543 Baishakhi Courier Service- 9558606 Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114 Bangladesh Courier Service- 9563989 Bengal Express- 9560642, 9552666 Bangladesh Int'l Courier- 953636 Continental Service Ltd.- 9552948, 9558425 DHL Worldwide Express- 9881703-7, 9886305-9, 9882057 Enem Express- 9330699 Fedex Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd- 9565114</p>	<p>Libraries, Cultural and Information Centers</p> <p>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- 8618667-8, 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</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Bus No.</th> <th>Route</th> <th>Starts from</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>Gulistan-Shahbagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 10, 11, 12</td> <td>Golap Shah Mazar</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>Gulistan-Shahbagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 1, 2</td> <td>Phoolbaria bus station</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>Gulistan-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Mahakhali-Airport-Azampur</td> <td>Phoolbaria bus station</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>Shyampur-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Airport-Tongi</td> <td>Shyampur</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>Sayedabad-Kamalapur-Motijheel-Airport-Joydebpur-Gazipur</td> <td>Sayedabad</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6 A</td> <td>Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Gulistan 1, 2</td> <td>Kamalapur</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6 B</td> <td>Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 1, 2</td> <td>Kamalapur</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6 C</td> <td>Motijheel Shapla chattr- Malibagh- Farmgate- Gulshan 2</td> <td>Motijheel Shaplachattr</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7</td> <td>Sadarghat-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 2</td> <td>Sadarghat</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8</td> <td>Chittagong-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asad Gate-Kalyanpur-Gabteoli</td> <td>Chittagong Road</td> </tr> <tr> <td>9</td> <td>Demra Rani mahal-Motijheel-Kalbagan-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 10, 11, 12</td> <td>Demra Ranimahal</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10</td> <td>Sadarghat-Gulistan-Kakrail-Mailbagh-Rampura-Biwa Road-Tongi Bridge</td> <td>Sadarghat</td> </tr> <tr> <td>11</td> <td>Sayedabad-Motijheel-Fakirapool-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Tongi Bridge</td> <td>Sayedabad</td> </tr> <tr> <td>11/A</td> <td>Sayedabad-Khligoan-Mailbagh-Rampura-Airport-Tongi Bridge</td> <td>Sayedabad</td> </tr> <tr> <td>12</td> <td>Shanir Akhra-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asadgate-Mohammadpur</td> <td>Shanir Akhra</td> </tr> <tr> <td>13</td> <td>Motijheel-Shahbagh-New Market-Jhigatola-Shangkar-Mohammedpur</td> <td>Motijheel</td> </tr> <tr> <td>14</td> <td>Signboard -Motijheel-Shahbagh-New Market-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 12</td> <td>Signboard (Chittagong Road)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>15</td> <td>Chittagong Road-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Mirpur 12</td> <td>Chittagong Road</td> </tr> <tr> <td>24</td> <td>Gulistan-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Airport-Uttara-Bipile</td> <td>Gulistan</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Bus No.	Route	Starts from	1	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 10, 11, 12	Golap Shah Mazar	2	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 1, 2	Phoolbaria bus station	3	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Mahakhali-Airport-Azampur	Phoolbaria bus station	4	Shyampur-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Airport-Tongi	Shyampur	5	Sayedabad-Kamalapur-Motijheel-Airport-Joydebpur-Gazipur	Sayedabad	6 A	Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Gulistan 1, 2	Kamalapur	6 B	Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 1, 2	Kamalapur	6 C	Motijheel Shapla chattr- Malibagh- Farmgate- Gulshan 2	Motijheel Shaplachattr	7	Sadarghat-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 2	Sadarghat	8	Chittagong-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asad Gate-Kalyanpur-Gabteoli	Chittagong Road	9	Demra Rani mahal-Motijheel-Kalbagan-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 10, 11, 12	Demra Ranimahal	10	Sadarghat-Gulistan-Kakrail-Mailbagh-Rampura-Biwa Road-Tongi Bridge	Sadarghat	11	Sayedabad-Motijheel-Fakirapool-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Tongi Bridge	Sayedabad	11/A	Sayedabad-Khligoan-Mailbagh-Rampura-Airport-Tongi Bridge	Sayedabad	12	Shanir Akhra-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asadgate-Mohammadpur	Shanir Akhra	13	Motijheel-Shahbagh-New Market-Jhigatola-Shangkar-Mohammedpur	Motijheel	14	Signboard -Motijheel-Shahbagh-New Market-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 12	Signboard (Chittagong Road)	15	Chittagong Road-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Mirpur 12	Chittagong Road	24	Gulistan-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Airport-Uttara-Bipile	Gulistan
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TIPS

Do not use mobile phones while you