



star city

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thecitythatwas

The word 'Paltan' originated from the word for cantonment. The area covering Purana Paltan, Naya Paltan, Topkhana and Fulbaria rail-line was part of the British East India Company cantonment, until 1840. Following this, the cantonment was shifted to Ramna, Begunbari and later to Lalbagh.



ALASDAIR MACDONALD

Harmful chemicals are being used to ripen fruit and keep it fresh-looking.

Chemical Worries

The use of harmful chemicals in fresh food is worrying the public.

All ripe fruits produce ethylene oxide naturally. But the artificially-made chemical that is used to dodge the immature stage is very harm-

SULTANA RAHMAN

Bazlur Rahman, a resident of Elephant Road, recently bought two kilograms of ripe mangos from New Market for Tk 270. The shopkeeper had lured him saying the bright yellow looking mangos were from Rajshahi, the best place in the country for quality mangos. But when Rahman returned home, he was shocked. The mangos were too sour to eat. The flavor of the mangos was also quite strange. "I have read in the newspapers that they use chemicals in fruits, but I couldn't believe I would become a victim," said Rahman. 'Madhumas,' the month of sweet fruits, is back again. But so are the unscrupulous traders trying to make a cheap variety of unripe fruits look ripe, juicy and of high quality in order to sell them at exorbitant prices. The fruits of *madhumas* include mangos, jackfruit, lychees, watermelon, pineapple, papaya

and banana, which are now to be found in the city's markets and bazars. But it is widely alleged these days that the fruits are artificially ripened using harmful chemicals. In addition, unscrupulous traders try to attract and deceive customers by using toxic colors. Vegetables and fish are also subject to various adulteration processes. To ripen fruit artificially, a chemical named ethylene oxide is widely used. After using ethylene, green fruits automatically enter a ripened stage due to a bio-chemical reaction. On the outside the fruits look attractive. "All ripe fruits produce ethylene oxide naturally. But the artificially-made chemical that is used to dodge the immature stage is very harmful. The additional levels of ethylene causes cancer," said Dr MZH Bhuiyan, Director of the Institute of Food Science and Technology (IFST). Meanwhile, the Ministry for Industry has requested the Bangladesh Standards Testing Institute (BSTI) to investigate the problem. However, senior officials of BSTI said, "We are allowed to inspect only processed and pack-

aged food products. Fruits and vegetables are not listed by us as authorized items." "The Department of Agriculture should take the responsibility because the suspected items are agricultural products," they suggested. But the use of chemicals is not restricted to agricultural products such as fruits and vegetables. It has also been alleged that some dishonest traders tarnish fish using formaline, a chemical that keeps the fish fresh-looking. Formalin is usually used in morgues to keep dead bodies from rotting. Dr. Bhuyan told Starcity, "Formalin is a kind of poison. High doses of it can cause death. If some traders are using formalin with fish, then the poison will act slowly in the human body, a process called 'slow-poisoning.'" Dr. Bhuyan warned that regular consumption of food contaminated with chemicals can cause severe diseases in the long term. Legislation must be implemented to stop the adulteration of food with harmful chemicals, he added.

Motorshow a runaway success

SOHEL ISLAM

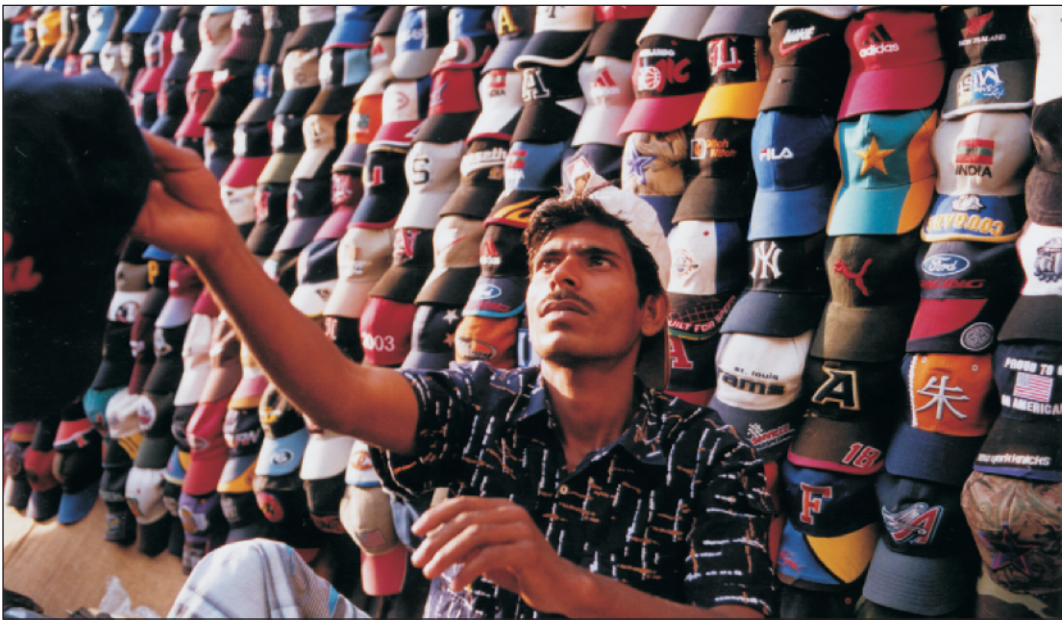
Sleek presentation, cutting edge technology, great designs and contemporary marketing strategies dominated the first-ever International Motor Show of the country, organised by the Bangladesh Automobiles Distributors Association (BADA). The show started on May 28 at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre and ended on June 1 with the slogan *Keep the Environment Clean and Friendly for Our Future Generations*. Twenty-two brand new vehicles of different international manufacturers participated in the event with 17 stalls. In addition, businesses and institutions such as banks, insurance and leasing companies, and lubricant and tyre manufacturers also showed their wares. Dhaka Metropolitan Traffic Police and the Department of

Environment (DOE) held two stalls to inform people about the air quality of Dhaka and traffic rules and safety issues of the roads. At present, car manufacturers from many parts of the world are trying to grab an increasing market of brand new cars in Bangladesh. BADA organised the international motor show to introduce different brand new vehicles to the consumers. Rangs Groups displayed their wide range of products in the exhibition. Mercedes Benz C 200 Kompressor Saloon was a not only an expensive product among the Rangs' collection but also one of the most attractive collections of the entire show. The price of the 163bph (break horse power) car was Tk 62,00,000. This right-hand four-cylinder vehicle is 1998cc and is also distinctive for its leather interior. Besides Mercedes, Rangs also has Mitsubishi from Japan and Mahindra Bolero from India

in their range of products. Except Mercedes Benz, Rangs offered a 29-inch Toshiba television with each product for free. All the participating vehicles have built-in catalytic converters, a mandatory provision in local law. Models clad in blue sarees with each vehicle make the environment of the stall very elegant. Toyota dominates the car market of the country. Living up to their reputation, Navana, the sole distributor of Toyota, has offered gifts with each of its products on display. With a 1.5-litre Corolla car a clone PC was on offer. The highest offer was a Dell PC, offered with the Crown 3000cc model. Volvo outlet was another attraction of the exhibition. A dark black 2.3 litre open hood sports car was introduced to car lovers. The Volvo has special features like GSM mobile phone, six air bags, auto flexible steering and seats as well as many

other features. The car has been fitted with a dynamic stability control to reduce the risk of skidding. The price of the car is Tk 55,00,000. Additionally, a Volvo S-40 and S-80 were two other vehicles displayed in the show. FIAT has imported Alpha Romeo along with other cars. The all-power car costs Tk 20,00,000. Sienna and Uno were the other FIAT vehicles in the show. Nitel displayed a special edition of impressive two-litre Tata Safari. Indica Dlx, an economy class car has also been introduced to their wide range of vehicles. A refrigerator was offered with each purchase. Uttara Motors presented the cheapest car of the show, the Maruti Suzuki *Alto Spin*. The 1100 cc model is priced at Tk 5,25,000. Maruti WagonR, Suzuki Liana and Maruti Esteem were other models of the show. Multimode Transport Consultants Ltd is long serving its cli-

ents of this country with Proton - a Malaysian-made car. It displayed Satria GTi, Arena Freestyle and Sportdeck, Wira and Waja. Mam Automobiles came up with Ford Taurus. Ashok Leyland, Tata, Kia Motors and Hino displayed some heavy automobiles. Kia Motors offered special price discount with each of its product. Tata gave away a Nitel Motorbike with each truck. Last but not the least a few classic old cars were also on display. A 1973 Toyota was renovated and put on display. "I urge all importers and distributors of this country not to turn it into a dumping ground for the car manufactures, because they may persuade you to take their cars from the old fleet," said Communications Minister Nazmul Huda while opening the show.



SHED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Hawkers demand custom-built markets to ply their wares.

Hawker Rehabilitation

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The sheer number of hawkers on the streets and footpaths certainly reflects the economic pulse of the city. The streets and footpaths of the city have become the source of business for more than one lakh hawkers many of whom have migrated from villages in search of work. The triennial convention of the Bangladesh Chinnamul Hawkers Association was held in Gulistan Mohanagar Natya Mancha on May 25, this year, to drum up support for rehabilitation of street hawkers from the footpaths and streets. They demanded purpose-built hawker markets at different areas of the city and its outskirts. The speakers at the convention recognized the hawkers' contribution to the national economy, as they are self-employed and not creating any burden on society. The Minister for Environment and Forest, Sahjahan Siraj, made a firm commitment in his speech that he would leave his ministry if any hawker was evicted from the footpath or street without rehabili-

tation. The minister also promised that he would request the Prime Minister to implement the rehabilitation process of hawkers in their respective localities. "Ministers belonging to successive governments have said the same thing over and over again but so far none of the promises saw daylight," said a hawker leader. Previously, the government acquired land and allocated markets to the hawkers but real hawkers were deliberately ignored. There are allegations that the allocation of the markets in the name of hawkers becomes a lucrative business for non-hawkers and hawker leaders. More than one lakh hawkers are selling goods to the city dwellers on the streets and footpaths of Motijheel, Newmarket, Gulistan, Shadarghat, Fakirapool, Karwan Bazar, Mirpur, Gabtoli, Mohakhali, Farmgate areas. The large number of hawkers of the thoroughfares is a lucrative source of income for the police and extortionists. Consequently, the streets and footpaths are the places where the hawkers are 'rehabilitated' instead of other places of the city. The economic condition in the rural areas drags more hawkers to the city everyday. The influx of hawkers on the city streets and footpaths will not stop until the economic pulse is beating at the same rate in both village and city.



Markets & museums closed
Gulshan 1, 2 markets- Friday
Elephant Road- Friday
Bishal Center- Friday
Baitul Mukarram Market- Friday
Polwell Market- Friday
BCS Computer City- Friday
Isha Khan Shopping Comp.- Friday
Rajjakhni Complex- Friday
Stadium Market- Friday
Bangabazar Market- Friday
National Museum- Thursday
Ahsan Manzil- Thursday

Follow-up

DTCB probes police motorcycle purchase



CITY CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Transport Co-ordination Board (DTCB) has formed a three-member investigative committee, following a report in Star City on June 1, over poor quality motorcycles used by the city's traffic sergeants. Headed by additional executive director, Ali Hasan, the committee will investigate how such poor quality motorbikes were purchased. DTCB bought 115 motorbikes last year, imported from China through a local agent. The committee will investigate the matter of how the motorbikes began breaking down less than a year

after purchase. Senior enforcement officer, Md Abdul Jalil, and project director, Ashrafur Islam, are other members of the committee, sources said. The new motorbikes were handed over to the city's Traffic Department by DTCB in May 2002, but within six months of their use, traffic sergeants found that the new bikes were falling apart. The sergeants complained of 'great trouble' with the two-wheelers on the city roads, which they often have to repair out of their own pocket. One sergeant who was stalled at the Sonargaon intersection with one of the 'smart new bikes', said that it would have been better for the authorities to provide push-bikes rather than 'such a mon-

strous problem'. Each of these motorcycles cost the exchequer Tk 2.5 lakh. The total for the 115 motorbikes was Tk 262.48 crore, purchased through a World Bank loan. Less than a year later, 34 motorbikes were lying inactive in the police workshops at Rajarbagh. Moreover, spare parts are unavailable in this country which prevents them from being repaired. Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) sources said, many parts, such as lights and siren became damaged almost immediately. Sources also claim that DTCB bought the bikes without any inspection or checking whether parts were available in the country.