

Lalbagh Fort, also known as Fort Aurangabad, completed in 1679, is a relic of Mughal architecture from one of Dhaka's most glorious periods. However, except two main gateways and portions of the battlement, little of its former glory remains.

Trouble in twilight years

A satellite boost

Tree under saw



star city

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DHAKA WEDNESDAY JUNE 18, 2003

hello dhaka

Int'l Radio Timetable

VOA, SW (m)
0730-0800: 16.87, 19.72, 25.4
2230-2300: 25.1, 31.3, 41.1 MW
190.5 (m)
Both sessions available in 97.6 MHz in FM

BBC (All sessions available in FM 100 MHz)
0630-0700: 49, 31, 25 mb
1400-1410: 25, 19, 13 mb
1930-2000: 41, 31, 25
2230-2300: 49, 41, 31 mb

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
Rajlaxmi Complex- Friday
Stadium Market- Friday
Bangabazar Market- Friday
National Museum- Thursday

Lakeside plans still on hold

Delays in utility services prevents completion of Dhanmondi lakeside development

SULTANA RAHMAN

Delay in installing gas, water and electricity to leased out commercial components of the Dhanmondi Lake, has contributed to uncertainty in management of the lake area. The income of Dhanmondi Lake development project some Tk 68 lakh out of Tk 69 lakh has already been spent for maintenance of the park. The fund has run out as the new owners of the commercial structures have refused to pay rent due to the authorities' failure to provide gas, electricity and water supply for them to start their businesses. The failure has delayed establishment of the commercial houses such as the boat club, kiosks, restaurants and swimming club. Meanwhile, Dhanmondi Lake management committee held a meeting with DCC Mayor Sadek Hossain Khoka in April when the committee promised install all amenities within end of May. The committee also claimed in the

meeting that some 80 per cent infrastructure work including utility services have already been completed. They would be ready to hand over the complete infrastructure by that time. Meanwhile Dhanmondi residents along the lake alleged that the contractor Monami International Private Ltd which had constructed a large work-shed and its offices on the site, has now become a club house for all sorts of local *mastans*, politicians, drug addicts and vagabonds. The contractor is now using the site as a work-shed for his company doing construction work elsewhere in the city. Although the managing director of Monami Int'l Pvt Ltd Md Abul Hossain Kabir denied all the allegations. "As soon as the authority pays the outstanding amount of Tk 2.22 crore, we will hand over the lake and shift our work-shed" Kabir said. The construction work on the Dhanmondi lake development project was completed nearly two years ago but DCC was not able to take over the lake premises. The cost of maintenance

came from the earnings of the park. Planning and Design Division (PND) has leased Park's infrastructure at cost Tk 69 lakh to seven contractors for five years. Moreover, contractors have to pay Tk 2.26 lakh monthly as rental cost while infrastructure includes swimming center, rental-parking area, fast food coed, boat club and others. Sources said, during the last one and a half years, the companies failed to pay Tk 38.42 lakh rental money. Moreover, during this period DCC has paid Tk 68 lakh to Western Iqbal Pima (WIP), the firm in charge of security and maintenance. The WIP was hired at a cost of four-lakh taka monthly that has become a burden for P&D. Chief executive of Dhanmondi lake management committee AZN Shafiqul Islam told the Starcity that the whole thing is now under process and the mayor is aware of it. "We shall take immediate measures to solve the problem," said he.



ALASDAIR MACDONALD

Dhanmondi residents allege that the workshed (left) erected by contractors working on the commercial development of the lake (above) is being used by local *mastans* as a clubhouse.

Khilgaon flyover over-time and over-budget



SOHEL ISLAM

Commuters of the eastern and southern areas of Dhaka have been waiting for the Khilgaon flyover to be completed, but the time to the finish of construction seems too long. "I heard that the construction work was supposed to be finished by the first quarter of this year, but the time is dragging on and on. We are facing a serious problem commuting through the construction site as there is no alternative route," said Kamal Hossain Titu, a resident of Bashabo. But the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), the agency to implement the project, blamed the delay on change in the original plan and non-cooperation of other utility service providers. Although the flyover has been named 'Khilgaon Flyover', it runs through Shahjahanpur, Malibagh, Basabo, Taltoila, Shipabagh and Kadamtoli. The flyover -- its starting point at Shahajapur -- stretches up to Khilgaon rail crossing, with two wings, one from Khilgaon rail crossing to Taltoila (close to Malibagh rail crossing) and the other from Khilgaon rail crossing to Basabo (close to Kamalapur railway station). According to the original flyover plan, based on a Rajuk layout, the width of the Khilgaon rail crossing to Malibagh stretch of Atish Dipankar Road has 100 feet. But the LGED found only 80 feet, the rest lost to encroachment, said an LGED engineer. The Rajuk plan also shows that the width of the Khilgaon to Kamalapur stretch of the same road has 80 feet. But the department found only 63 feet, said the engineer on condition of anonymity. "We requested Rajuk to clear illegal structures off the road, but it didn't do so," he said. The LGED altered the original plan and extended the length of the flyover from 1,600 metres to 2,505 metres, as the builders failed to link one end of the structure straight to another due to the

barrier of illegal structures, the official explained. Because of the extension, Tk 11 crore has been added to the contract of Tk 39.76 crore, he said. The Dhaka Electricity Supply Authority (DESA) has been another hurdle for the LGED to carry out the construction work. "About five months back, we requested the DESA to go for underground electricity lines instead of overhead. We have also paid the money for the DESA's alteration. But they haven't paid any attention. The work is being hampered," said a high official. DESA Chairman Brigadier General AARab said, "Because of the revised estimate of the flyover project, we couldn't go for underground work. I hope we would work on the underground electricity lines very soon as we have got the revised plan." The sluice gates of WASA (Water and Sewerage Authority) at the flyover poses another problem for smooth construction. "The design of the sluice gates needs to be changed and extended immediately. In January, we sent its final estimate but they did not take our request into account," said the LGED high official. "Now the monsoon has set in. Unless the rains are over, we cannot shift the sluice gates. If the LGED had worked early we would have shipped the sluice gates before the monsoon," said Managing Director of WASA Ataur Rahman. He blamed the LGED for the delay. Another problem is the shops on the railway land. "We are trying to shift the shops and get the land back but the bureaucratic tangles are hindering our efforts," said an LGED source. "If we can recover the land we will be able to connect the flyover back to the road," added the source. "We are putting our best efforts to finish the construction by December-end," said LGED Executive Engineer Mahabubur Rahman.

Cooperative billing

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The Board of Directors of Dhaka WASA, at a meeting on Monday, agreed in principle to lease out the billing and collection of Zone-3 to the Dhaka WASA Employers Cooperative Society for six months of the new fiscal year 2003-04. Control of the operation and maintenance of this zone will however remain with the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA). Dhaka WASA now has six different zones in the city. "We are just leasing out Zone-3 experimentally to the cooperative society. If their performance is good, the lease will be extended," said a source on the board on condition of anonymity. The areas of Dhaka WASA Zone-3 include Dhanmondi, Lalmatia, Mohammadpur, Kalabagan, Elephant Road, Sukrabad and other adjacent areas. In 1997, the billing and collection of zones 4 & 5 were leased out to the cooperative society for the first time. "Since the leasing of zones 4 and 5, collection there has been very good. The average system loss of WASA is around 40 per cent. But at zones 4 & 5 we get a different picture. In the

current fiscal year, Zone-5 has performed above our expectation," added the source. Although there is a Combined Bargaining Agency (CBA) at Dhaka WASA, Jatiotabadi Employees Union (JEU), a wing of the ruling BNP, has most of the say in running the show. Mizanur Rahman, General Secretary of the JEU said, "This time we requested the board of directors not to lease out before the WASA CBA election because if the cooperative takes over the billing and collection, many people may be declared redundant." "The context was totally different when Dhaka WASA gave the billing and collection of zones 4 & 5 to the cooperative society in 1997. Then there was pressure from the World Bank for the privatisation of billing and collection. I think now there is no pressure from any quarter for leasing out," he added. "The board has unilaterally taken this decision without taking our request into account. This is unfortunate," said another leader of the Jatiotabadi Employees Union. President of Dhaka WASA Employers Cooperative Society, Aftab Ahmed said, "We haven't heard of the board's decision relating to Zone-3. If the decision can protect everyone's interest I welcome the decision of the board."

A victim forgotten

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Basir Ahmed, a 22 year-old *peon* of the Sony Enterprise bus service, contracted typhoid when he was five years old, which paralysed his left leg. But the physically challenged boy continued his education up to class five. Poverty forced him to stop his studies and soon after he began to work to support his parents. The young man never surrendered to his disability, but a terrorist's bullet finally concluded his life long struggle on Monday. When unidentified gunmen killed Palash, a Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) leader, in apparent revenge in Kallayanpur, Basir was sitting at the counter of Sony Paribahan. He fell victim to the indiscriminate shooting and died on the spot. While Palash is remembered and mourned in public and in the media, Basir's name is nowhere to be heard. But the elderly couple remembered how Basir had sacrificed so much for them, how he had looked after them as if they were children. "Basir was one of my three sons, the only one who took care of us. Now that he is gone, who will take that responsibility?" asked Basir's father, Md

Lokman Ali who is 95 years old and blind. "Why did the gunmen kill my son? What had he done? Can the Prime Minister return my child?" Zobeida Begun, 70 years old, could not stop herself from asking. She urged punishment for the killers. The shanty house, where five people live, is hardly six square feet. Basir rented it at Tk 500 a month. Shanty dwellers said that Basir was never involved in politics. In fact he hated politics and politicians. "But politics took his life in the end," Basir's neighbours said. The Sony Enterprise bus company employed him two years ago at Tk 100 per day. Four members of his family, including his parents and two daughters of his elder brother, were dependent on him. "In spite of being a physically challenged young man, Basir was used to working as hard as anyone else. It was because of his honesty and hard work that we gave him the job, not to show sympathy to a poor and physically disabled man," said Kamol Kumar Roy, manager of Sony Enterprise. His employers gave his family Tk 4000 as compensation to allow them to bury Basir. But the two elderly parents worry how they will possibly survive now, who do they have to turn to?

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The completion of the Khilgaon flyover has been delayed due to mismanagement of the project.