

As Dhaka's commercial dominance grew in East Bengal, the Narayanganj-Dhaka-Mymensingh State railway was opened in 1885-6. The rail line ran almost parallel to the Mughal road from Tongi through Tejgaon, Karwanbazar to Shahbagh. It then circumvented the gardens of Shahbagh and Ramna, to Phulbaria, where Dhaka Station was built, and continued south to Narayanganj.



Adopting a fair code

ALASDAIR MACDONALD

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

The life of a 10-year-old boy, abandoned as a newborn, was secure with his foster parents. But uncertainty spread as a shadow over the future of Faisal Alam of Mohammadpur after his foster father died. Next comes Akbar Hossain, a school-age boy from Mohakhali, on the list of adopted children deprived of their fathers' property mainly because of legal barriers.

The law does not entitle the children to the fortune left by their foster parents. Property can be handed down to them only when the parents make a will before their death.

A number of adopted children expressed their frustration at the non-existence of any law that can allow them to inherit the property of their foster parents. "Money matters a lot for us, but that is not everything," said Mohammed Ibrahim, a foster son of Mujibur Rahman. "I feel it to be a denial of proper identity an adopted child needs," he sighed.

At present, there is no specific law on the adoption of abandoned children or orphans in Bangladesh. The Guardian and Ward Act of 1890, now in force, allows only the guardianship of children to be transferred to the persons willing to adopt them.

Legal experts say the Muslim law discourages adoption, but the Hindu law has a more convenient act on adoption of a child. A male child inherits property whenever a Hindu adopts it. But an adopted female child is not entitled to it since a daughter does not inherit her father's property according to the Hindu law.

The law is not the only barrier to adoption. Certain social taboos and other forces stand in the way of a person willing to adopt a child. In most cases, family members of childless parents prevent them from adopting a child, largely out of aversion.

Psychological obstacles often hamstrung people from adopting a child. "People ask me whether the baby is a legitimate one when it comes to adoption," said Dr Dilruba, director of Centre for

Training and Rehabilitation of Destitute Women (CTRDW), an NGO that offers shelter to abandoned expectant women and babies. "Most prefer to adopt a baby born out of marriage, but they should understand no-one is responsible for his or her birth," she said.

The Bangladesh Abandoned Children (Special Provision) Order, 1972 was formulated as a provision to adopt or get guardianship especially of the children born out of rape during the liberation war.

Adoption was valid in the country or outside according to the order, which was repealed in 1982 following a debate whether those babies should be allowed into adoption by foreign nationals, especially the Christians.

The 1890 act is the only provision for adoption though the social structure has since changed a lot. The increasing infertility, especially among urban people, created scope for adoption, said social workers. If the present act is reformed and updated, it can ease the problem, they said.

Helping hand for watchful eyes

SULTANA RAHMAN

The immigration section of the Special Branch (SB) has identified about 20,000 fake passports, following the introduction of a scientific database system at Zia International Airport.

The SB, the intelligence section of the police, has listed the fake passports in its computer database as well as some 16,000 black listed persons who are nationally and internationally wanted criminals. "If anyone tries to use any of these passports or any listed criminal tries to enter the country, he or she will soon be arrested," say SB sources.

"The passengers at the airport are to be monitored regularly by computer. This procedure was earlier maintained manually, and therefore we failed to detect or check information quickly," sources claim. "Before the computerised system, the manual process was causing massive mistakes. Even the listed persons could easily deceive the immigration officers," they added.

SB officials are undergoing training to monitor the commuter's flow at the airport. Since May this year, the project has started to modernise the immigration service as well as to stop the use of fake passports. The overall system has integrated all information of persons who are arriving and departing the country through the airport.



Security staff at Zia International Airport have benefited from the introduction of new computerized technology.

Nearly six thousands visitors arrive and depart through Zia International Airport per day, while on average one lakh visitors pass the airport per month. Most foreigners visiting the country usually stay in Dhaka and they are obliged to inform their presence to

the SB. Around 135 SB officials are employed at Zia International Airport overseeing immigration. Out of these, fourteen of them report on arrivals and sixteen note departures.

The SB immigration section regularly sends information to

the concerned departments and ministries. On July 14, SB sent a report to the Home Ministry that 49 foreigners have remained in the country after their visas had expired over the last month.

"It is possible to report properly now only because of the

modernisation of the system, but still we have not implemented the full scheme," a senior SB official claimed. "Within the next few months all information about every passenger who will land and exit the airport will be computerised," they added.

Digging up trouble

SOHEL ISLAM

Three persons caught by a surveillance team of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) for their alleged digging of Central Road without approval were mysteriously released hours after they were handed over to police on Monday.

Dhanmondi police said the three were released, as the DCC did not file any written complaint with the police station.

They also said the DCC engineers, local Ward Commissioner Motahar Hossain Jahangir and the Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) officials reached an understanding that led to the release of Al Mamun, Mokhtar Hossain and Shahjahan.

DCC Chief Engineer Dr Golam Quadeer handed over the BTTB contractor's repre-

sentatives to Dhanmondi Police Station after they were caught on charge of unapproved road digging to install and repair cables.

Asked why the persons were released, the local ward commissioner, said, "The DCC has no right to hand any representative of the BTTB contractor to police as it does not control the dug-out part of the Central Road."

"Local residents are trying to expand the Central Road for smooth commuting and each of them has contributed a few yards of their land to road expansion. The place where the BTTB carried out the road digging belongs to a private owner. I intervened because I thought I should help them out of police custody," said Jahangir.

The ward commissioner also said, "The BTTB informed me about the road digging in a letter earlier. I don't know why

they did not let the DCC know."

On Monday morning, Golam Quadeer told Star City, "The digging of many roads, carried out by utility service providers, goes unnoticed, as a nexus between the service providers and some corrupt officials of the DCC keeps it under wraps. The secret digging tarnishes the DCC's reputation."

"Unapproved digging also deprives the DCC of huge revenues. Recently I have started monitoring the roads and found many anomalies. The Central Road digging is just one of bad instances," said Quadeer.

"I want these unscrupulous elements to be punished, which is why I handed them over to police," said Quadeer.

Despite repeated attempts after the release of the three suspects, the DCC chief engineer could not be reached for comments.



Un-coordinated digging by different governmental and private groups adds to the daily misery of commuters



In praise of Lord Krishna

AVIK SANWAR RAHMAN

Janmashtami, the eighth Lunar Day of the dark fortnight of the month of Bhadra, the birthday of Lord Krishna, was observed by the Hindu community of Dhaka yesterday.

As a part of the five-day program 'Dhakeswari Mondir' at Bakshi Bazar organized a three-day program which includes 'Gita Joggo' at the temple premises and held a jubilant rally of chanting and dancing in the name of Krishna in the city.

According to the Hindu belief

Lord Krishna is the incarnation of God in human form whose aim is to crush and annihilate worldly vices and revive eternal values. Lord Krishna has bound Himself to man to re-unite a sense of eternal happiness with His crown of creation.

"We come here every year to celebrate the incarnation of joyful God", said a devotee as she was listening to the verses of Gita at the temple.

Dhakeswari Mondir would also arrange a Padabali Kirtan at its premise at 5 pm today. Through the chanting and dancing of Kirtan the human soul aspires to reach the highest sphere of being and to unite with lord Krishna.