

Medians going private



City's medians would be leased out for 'beautification' and putting advertisement hoarding.

Unable to maintain properly, the DCC is now leasing out the medians and road dividers to private hands. The lease holder would be responsible for their 'beautification' in exchange for 'renting spaces' for advertising hoarding. It is however not clear how frequently the boards would be placed

SOHEL ISLAM

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) is planning to hand over medians and roundabouts of the important streets to private operators for better maintenance and beautification.

"All existing advertisement hoarding and neon signs you see on the medians and roadside islands are totally unlawful as the companies never took any permission from us. We would like to get rid of the illegal occupants and hand over the spaces to the private operators," said Executive Engineer of the DCC Ashiqur Rahman.

Rahman also criticised the DCC's yearly tree plantation programme. "Every year the DCC spends Tk one crore on tree plantation. Trees on the median is a wrong idea and creates obstruction for drivers of vehicles. I haven't seen this anywhere in the world. Instead of trees, bushes will be planted in future."

Rahman feels privatisation will also be financially beneficial. "Once we give them to the private organisations, the DCC can save at least Tk six crore which is spent on the maintenance every year."

The DCC has invited tenders from the interested parties in a bid to allocate 13 important medians and roundabouts of the city in February this year. The private enterprises have submitted as

many as 78 proposed designs. But law is proving a hindrance for smooth implementation of the process.

"A lawsuit from an illegal occupant is now disturbing the process. Our legal department has assured us that the case will be cleared within a short time as the complainants didn't have any legal ground for displaying their advertisements on the medians and roundabouts," said Rahman.

The Executive Engineer informed that a committee made up of president of Institute of Engineers (IEB), the Institute of Architects (IAB) and the Local Government of Engineering Department (LGED) will approve the designs and oversee their implementation.

The committee will shortly select 13 strategic spots. It will also ensure modern landscaping of every median and island. In addition, smooth driving will be ensured.

"After the contracts have been awarded, the work has to be finished within 15 days," said Rahman.

The private operators will run the medians and islands for five years. During that period, if any firm fails to maintain and improve the medians according to the contractual agreement, the security money of the defaulters will be forfeited.

Life spawns around city bins

SYED TASHFIN

Walking around the empty streets from as early as five in the morning, in search of empty bottles, cans, papers and so on, is a daily job for this group of people. Since picking up such items is common with them, they are at times, placed in the same group as "Tokais". These groups include individuals between the ages of nine and 57 and most of them are doing the same work for years on.

"I have been in this profession from age six, when I first came to Dhaka," said Abdullah, a 29 year old 'collector'. Abdullah has been living on the streets of the city since childhood after his father's death and his mother's second

marriage. He has to walk around at least 20 miles daily and also scavenge up to eight dustbins in search of the discarded bottles, cans and pieces and scraps of paper. His job ends by one in the afternoon and like most other collectors, he sells everything he collects to "the shops" at a price of Tk 3 per kilogram.

These shops are located at almost every major area, like Bijoy nagar, Mogh bazar, Malibagh, Motijheel and Arambagh. Abdullah has a maximum daily income of Tk 80.

But in the case of people like Shamsu, a 42-year-old collector who has to support a family of three members, surviving with Tk 80 makes life a whole lot difficult.

"On some days, we do not even get to have dinner," said

Shamsu, who is now suffering from Hepatitis and is unable to afford medical treatment.

Amongst these collectors, there are even some, who have passed HSC or SSC successfully. Due to lack of job opportunities some of these bright students have taken to the recycling job.

"This is a very dangerous occupation and we are doing it so that we can at least survive," said Shamsu.

"I just pray that the government can come up with some more jobs for people like us, whose lives are exposed to hazards every single day," said Shamsu.



Every day thousands in the city earn a living recycling solid wastes.

WASA bill collection scheme gathers rust

CITY CORRESPONDENT

A plan to lease out the billing system and bill collection by Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) stalled because of a conflict between insiders over the leasing policy.

Collection of revenues and the billing system, if carried out under lease, would be more profitable for WASA, said sources.

Zone-3 (Lalmatia) of WASA was to go under private contract from September 1, 2003, but court injunctions following cases filed by two parties blocked it.

Moreover, employees of WASA

zones 4 and 5, already privatised as part of a World Bank condition, are not getting their salaries because of the injunctions that came after the two cases -- one filed by the president of Dhaka WASA Cooperative Society and the other by its members.

The members of the cooperative society, representing all associations and unions of WASA, accused their President Aftab Ahmed of taking all decisions without consulting them.

They claimed Aftab signed a contract with the WASA management on the leasing-out of the billing system of zone 3 without

their consent.

"We are entitled to know and discuss anything about the leasing system, but he didn't let us know," said ABM Abdul Baten, cooperative director.

"We had a meeting on the agenda and expressed our opinions but found them missing when the meeting's minutes were brought out," he added.

The cooperative body wanted to impeach its president but failed when he filed a case that led to an injunction from court.

Aftab strongly denied the allegation and said everything was discussed at the meeting. "The contents were discussed but the

language of the minutes may differ."

He also said he took a legal action against the cooperative body by filing the case, as they went to impeach him in a move what he described as unlawful.

The 11 members of the cooperative society filed another case leading to a second injunction from court as a counter. The legal tangles between the insiders are preventing the leasing-out of WASA zone 3 to the private sector.

Garment workers struggle for a living

Story of a young garment worker forced to do an additional job for survival

CITY CORRESPONDENT

It is five in the afternoon when Jasim comes out of his office and gets back home. He changes into lungi and T-shirt and rushes to a rickshaw garage at Moghbazar. He has still a few more hours to call it a day.

After taking a rickshaw from the garage, he pedals passengers around until midnight.

Jasim works with a garment factory. He lives in a mess in Rampura and pedals his rickshaw far from the locality just in case his acquaintances and colleagues recognise him.

He started doubling up as a nighttime

rickshaw-puller a month back, as his factory was running low on work orders from abroad and his income went down.

"Earlier, we had worked overtime, as orders were plenty. Over the last one year or two, the orders were on the decline," said Jasim, who came from Bhola.

Even a year ago -- after setting aside money for food, lodging and other expenditures -- he could send Tk 1,500 to his mother who lives in their home village. He had worked day and night but did not care much because he felt honoured working in an office. "I had earned enough at the time," he said.

Jasim is not as skilled as other rickshaw-

pullers. "I didn't want to be a rickshawpuller but ended up being one of them, although for the time being. The money I earn a day is too little compared to the hard work I do. On top of it, passengers misbehave with me," Jasim despaired of his life.

He knows that the garment industry is going through a bad phase after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the US. "The fate of the garment industry is bleak and some colleagues told me our company might be closed."

Jasim has three sisters -- all continuing their study with the money he sends from Dhaka. "If my factory is closed down, my family will suffer."

Health, Market price & Library

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-8014914,
8826561-65
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
Rushmono General Hospital-
8317819
Holy Family Hospital-
8311731-25
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib
Medical University Hospital-
8612550-4, 8614545-9
Bangladesh Medical College &
Hospital- 8115443, 9118202,

Shamarita Hospital- 9131901
Suhrawardy Hospital -- 9130800,
9122560-69
Salimullah Medical College
Hospital -- 7310061-4, 7319002-6
Cholera Research Hospital
(ICDRB)- 8811751-60
Monowra Hospital 8319802, 8318135

Blood Bank

Red Crescent Centre- 9116563
Sandhani (DMCH)- 8624040
Sandhani (SMCH)- 7310061,
7310061, 7319022
Dhaka Medical College Hospital-
8626812-9

Eye Bank

Sandhani International Eye Bank-
8614040

Ambulances For

Dead Body
Anzaman Mafidul Islam (Kakrail)
9336611, Gandaria 7319808,
7318166,
Al-Markajul Islam 9127867,

MARKET CLOSED

Gulshan 1, 2 markets-Friday
Elephant Road-Friday
Bishal Center-Friday
Baitual Mukarram Market-Friday
Polwell Market-Friday
BCS Computer City-Friday
Isha Khan Shopping Complex-Friday.
Rajlaxmi Complex-Friday
Stadium Market-Friday
Bangabazar Market-Friday
National Museum-Thursday
Ahsan Manzil--Thursday.
New Market-Tuesday
Gausia Market-Tuesday
Mouchak Market-Sunday
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
Eastern Plaza-Sunday
Farmview Super Market-Sunday
Muktijuddha Jadughar-Sunday
Dhaka Zoo-Sunday
Shishu Jadughar-Sunday

MARKET PRICE

Rice (Tk. Per Kg)
Miniket- 20-22
Pajam- 18-50-19-50
Najirshail- 21-22
Kalijira- 33-34 (Polao)
Chinigura- 35-36 (Polao)
Dal (Tk. Per Kg)
Masur Dal- 42-44
Masur (Imported)- 38-40
Mug Dal- 42-44
Mug (Imported)- 38-40
Motor Dal- 36-38
Motor (Imported)- 20-21
Oil (Tk. Per Litre)
Mustard- 65-70
Soyabean- 42-43
Palm- 35-36
Coconut (Imported)- 100-160
Veg. Ghee- 42-44
Ghee- 300-320
Spices (Tk. Per Kg.)
Onion (local)- 20-22
Onion (Imported)- 17-18
Garlic- 32-34
Garlic (Imported)- 24-28
Ginger- 26-28
Ginger (Imported)- 35-38
Turmeric- 65-70
Turmeric (Imported)- 62-65
Dried (Red) Chili- 80-85
Green Chili- 35-40
Coriander (Dhania)- 30-32

Kalijira- 8-10 (100 gm)
Cumin (Jira)- 14-16 (100 gm)
Cinnamon- 14-16 (100 gm)
Almond- 60-70 (100 gm)
Aniseed - 40-50 (100 gm)
Black Pepper- 20-24
Vegetables (Tk Per Kg)
Potato- 13-14
Eggplant- 12-14
Green Papsya- 8-10
Pumpkin (Misti Kumra)- 7-8
Patal- 10-12
Karalla- 16-18
Borboti, (Beans)- 14-16
Dheroshi, (Okra)- 12-14
Kakrol- 10-12
Kachumukhi- 10-12
Kachuriati- 10-12
Cucumber- 10-12
Chichinga- 10-12
Jhinga- 12-14
Lal shak- 10-12
Pui Shak- 8-10
Green Banana- 6-8 (Per Hali)
Jali Lau- 10-12/Piece
PaniKachu- 8-10
Fish (Tk. Per Kg)
Rui (Local, Big)- 170-180
Rui (Imported, Small Size)- 90-100
Katal (Local, Medium Size)- 140-150
Katal (Local, Small Size)- 90-100
Katal (Imported, Medium)- 100-110

Hilsha (Big)- 140-150
Hilsha (Small)- 80-90
Pangash (Big)- 100-160
Pangash (Small)- 60-65
Shing- 280-300
Prawn (Big)- 180-200
Prawn (Small)- 110-120
Silvercarp- 50-60
Meat & Egg (Per Kg)
Beef- 85-90
Mutton- 140-150
Chicken- 75 (Poultry)
Egg- 15-16 (Duck, Farm), 15-16 (Local Chicken)
Fruits (Tk. Per Kg)
Green Coconut- 8-10 (Per Piece)
Pineapple- 10-12 (Per Piece)
Coconut- 10-14 (Per Piece)
Guava- 8-10 (Per Hali)
Banana- 6-8 (Per Hali)
Lemon- 4-5 (Per Hali)
Mango- 40-55 (Differs species)
Apple- 80-90
Others (Tk. Per Kg)
Sugar- 34-35
Brown Sugar- 26-28
Salt- 10-11 (Packet)
Tea- 120-130
Gold- 8500 (11.66 grams)
Silver- 250 (11.66 grams)

Sources: Agricultural Marketing Department

LIBRARY & INFO

Libraries, Cultural and Information Centers

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- 8618867-8,
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