

## Wastes recycled at deadly risk

Experts warn of epidemic if the trend continues

SOHEL ISLAM

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Despite warnings from national and international bodies, most hospitals, clinics and diagnostic centres continue to dump their wastes in the open, exposing people to serious health hazards.

Hospital wastes like throwaway syringes, saline bags, slides, bottles and gauze are also dumped in the water-bodies of the city including Dhanmondi lake.

"Indiscriminate disposal of wastes can spread diseases like AIDS," cautioned Monzurul Hannan Khan, director of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) of Bangladesh.

The diseases can spread epidemically, if the trend to recycle used materials continues in this manner, the IUCN

director said.

"We requested the health and environment ministries to cancel the licences of hospitals, clinics and diagnostic centres that are not properly disposing of wastes," said Khan.

"We found that there was no waste disposal policy. The allegation is that the persons who are responsible for disposal of wastes sell it to some traders instead of burning it," he said.

"We have repeatedly requested the ministries to take urgent steps to prevent indiscriminate disposal of highly toxic clinical wastes, but to no avail," said Khan.

Environment and Forest Minister Shahjahan Siraj said, "We formed a committee at a meeting last month to prepare a guideline for waste disposal by the clinics, hospitals and diagnostic centres."

Street children collect hospital wastes from dustbins and sell it mostly to the traders in Siddique Bazar and Zinzira.

"We have a project at Ashulia where we burn wastes," said Customer Service Manager of Lab Aid Masumul Haque.

Sources said no-one manages wastes properly and the hospitals and clinics dump it in dustbins.

The traders of Siddique Bazar send used syringes to Zinzira where they wash them with Buriganga water and pack them in polythene to make them fit for resale.

A trader at Siddique Bazar said the chemists working in upazilas and districts purchase a sack of syringes at Tk 150. "Many chemists opt for these cheaper, recycled items as the new items are expensive," he said.



ALASDAIR MACDONALD

Workers at a roadside bin separate syringes, blood bags and other clinical waste.

### FOLLOW UP



SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

A see-through fence at the Foreign Ministry office allows everyone to have a glimpse at the garden and the building.

## A laudable move

Foreign Ministry replaces high wall with a see-through fence

SULTANA RAHMAN

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In a laudable move to increase city's aesthetic beauty, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has replaced a high concrete wall with a see-through fence to offer passers by a chance to view the century old Foreign Office.

The move comes following a Daily Star report that criticised different authorities for enacting high concrete walls and putting up large advertisement hoarding around historically important buildings, green areas and the river Buriganga and depriving the city dwellers of a chance to view something soothing to the eyes.

A senior official of the Foreign Ministry said that the high wall around the ministry looked like a "prison" from outside. "For the sake of the people we decided to demolish the high concrete wall," said the official of the ministry preferring anonymity.

Unfortunately, just opposite the foreign office, one of the city's most beautiful structures, the Chameli (Chammari) House has been hidden behind a recently built high concrete wall and two large DCC hoarding.

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The century old foreign ministry building has a historical and architectural value. It was built after the division of Bengal (Bango Bhango) by the British rulers in 1905. It was then known as 'Dhaka divisional commissioner's office, Foreign Ministry sources said.

"People had no access to

this historically important building from outside, there is a beautiful garden too, now everything would be visible to the passersby at Topkhana road as they see High Court building on the other side of the road," the official added.

Architect ASM Ismail, assistant chief architect of the Department of Architecture said

that for a healthy urban landscape it is extremely important that public places or structures are kept visible to the public.

"Historic buildings like the foreign office create the image of the city and this wall was in no way applicable to the city's landscape," he added.

Unfortunately, just opposite the foreign office, one of the city's most beautiful structures, the Chameli (Chammari) House has been hidden behind a recently built high concrete wall and two large DCC hoarding. The magnificent Chameli House was obscured from public view by the high wall because CIRDP officials thought that the wall had to be built for 'security reason'. The DCC officials allowed the billboards as a section of its own officials control the lucrative advertising spaces around the city and sell them at their own will.

## New medians worsen traffic chaos

Widening of some medians has not only narrowed down the thoroughfares but also increased suffering of the city commuters. The scheme has seriously affected some streets in the old part of the city

AVIK SANWAR RAHMAN

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Widening of medians for beautification and traffic management of the city has rather increased traffic congestion at different parts of the city.

Sources said that DCC was deliberately widening medians so that they could lease them out to advertisers at the cost of public suffering. One official source said he could not understand why the median on narrow Sadarghat Road in front of the Courtkachari.

With the commuters of old Dhaka, traffic problems have worsened due to the recent construction of the medians at Nayabazar intersection.

Despite criticism from commuters and Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), Dhaka Transport Co-ordination Board (DTCB) and Roads and Highways have started widening the old medians at Nayabazar intersection towards all directions, instantly narrowing down the existing

roads, which are notorious for regular congestion.

"The old medians would be dismantled to reconstruct 150 feet long new medians from all sides of Nayabazar intersection," said an Executive Engineer of Roads and Highways.

The Engineer also said that the medians of the old town would be constructed according to a design, which has been applied to other parts of the city.

Businessmen and commuters of the old town said it was beyond their comprehension why the same design would be followed in areas already so congested with narrow roads.

"We have measured the roads and the construction of the medians would not effect the flow of traffic at the Nayabazar intersection. It will increase the flow in that area as the scope of overtaking would be reduced," said the Engineer.

"We heard that government has taken a measure to plant trees on the medians for improving environment of the city," said a

local shop owner situated at the corner of Nayabazar intersection. "We certainly need trees in the city, but we also need more space for carriage way as the traffic keeps increasing in old town everyday," he added.

The medians reconstructed on the North South Road, in old town, did not divide the road equally. On one side of the median the road became narrow, on the other wider side, the potholes of the dismantled median are causing suffering to the commuters, complained the locals.

"We have surveyed the flow of traffic for both ways of the road. The traffic is not the same for both the ways. The medians had been constructed according to the flow of traffic of the ways," said the Engineer.

DTCB officials are however hopeful of the design of the medians and its officials said that the inhabitants of the city would appreciate it after the job is done.



SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

A wide median built recently has narrowed down the Courtkachari Road near Sadarghat.