

Yearning for America goes wired

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

This year round, craving for American visa runs high even after the September 11 terrorist attacks on the fabled land of opportunities, but with a difference.

The wave of diversity visa (DV)-2005 green card lottery applications has started hitting the city. The only difference is that there will be no con men standing in front of Secretariat Building or New Market, hawking application forms and screaming "America, America".

Cyber cafés took over, envisaging an increase in their business after a long slump in it -- the reason being that the diversity visa programme registration turned electronic this year.

It is like a dream, especially for the people of developing countries, to leave home for good and become permanent residents of the US. To turn their dream into reality, the US offers the DV green card lottery programme every year that grants 50,000 immigration visas, popularly known as green

cards to individuals from eligible countries. It makes them eligible to work and live in the US as part of the Diversity Visa Association.

Bangladeshis, especially the Dhakaites, respond enthusiastically whenever a diversity visa lottery is announced -- the trend that recalls Bangladeshi expatriates' flight to America through OP-1 lottery back in the late 1980s.

People crave for migrating to America just because they want a better living. "It is better to go abroad than living in Dhaka in the midst of choking pollution, traffic hazards and law and order downside," said Hafizur Rahman, working for a private company.

The website www.green-card-lottery.usa.org/dv_2005 says the Department of State announced a change in how applicants may apply to participate in the diversity visa lottery programme.

Starting this year, all registering for an opportunity to apply for a US immigrant visa under the diversity lottery will have to do so electronically. The depart-

ment will no longer accept paper entries or mail-in requests for diversity visa registration.

Even the photograph should be scanned and added with the online application.

Since most people planning for applying for US visa do not possess a computer, the cyber cafés in the city are preparing to cash in on the stream of people seeking help to apply online.

The cyber café owners without scanners have started buying them. Moreover, some of them began to hire skilled people who can deal with online visa applications for clients.

However, the cyber cafés are not going to rip off people in the name of filling the online visa forms. The charge will not exceed Tk 50, an owner claimed.

"We will charge according to the time our client uses the Internet and there will be a small fee for scanning the photograph," said Mohammed Ali Chanchal, managing director of Saffron Computers at Mohammadpur.



Cyber-cafes are expecting brisk business with introduction of online DV applications.

FOLLOW UP

DCC employees guard illegal shops

DCC employees at Syedabad built shops on footpath

BISHAWJIT DAS

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) officials seemed unable to dismantle 12 illegally built shops in front of the DCC central garage at Syedabad apparently because of threats from local hoodlums.

It is alleged that the garage employees, who own these shops and take rents, are preventing the DCC from launching any drive against the illegal occupation.

The shop owners have allegedly snatched a copy of the 'eviction notice' from a DCC peon in a bid to block the move to eject them from the illegally occupied area.

Some DCC workers took over a plot of government land at Syedabad and built 10 shops on the footpath in front of the DCC garage near the corporation's zonal office. The number of shops has increased to 12.

The garage employees claim they spend the proceeds from the shops on 'maintenance of a nearby mosque'.

The garage employees did not seek permission from the DCC zonal office for construction of the shops, said Mafzuddin Ahmed, executive engineer of zone one. "I reported it to the zonal officer on September 29, 2003," he said.

"A month earlier, we sent a notice to the DCC garage letting the employees know about the eviction drive. The shop owners signed a copy of the notice after receiving it

officially but snatched the receipt from the peon when he was coming back to the zonal office from the garage," said Ahmed.

The eviction drive is bogged down in a blame game. Hemayet Hossain, zonal officer of the DCC zone one, skips the responsibility to drive the encroachers away, although he has magistracy power. He has shifted the responsibility to higher officials of taking the final decision.

"I forwarded a note to the DCC chief estate officer who has the authority to allocate land," Hossain said. "The estate office is authorised to give permission after investigation on its own or through my office. But they did not keep me informed."

Chief Estate Officer Fazlul Zoha said he did not give permission for construction of the shops at Syedabad. He said it is the zonal officer who has to take action as he has magistracy power.

Asked whether he had obtained permission from the DCC before constructing the shops, Khandakar Milladul Islam, manager of the DCC transport division, said, "We sent an application to the mayor's office."

"We have constructed the shops to bear the expenses of the imam and other costs related to the mosque near the garage," said Milladul. "The money we get from renting the shops is not meant for any individual."

"Some 500 workers in the garage work day and night and those shops are just there to refresh them with tea and biscuits," said Abdul Karim, a DCC driver.

Safe water crisis haunts Hazaribagh residents



Hazaribagh water reservoir has allegedly not been cleaned for years.

BISHAWJIT DAS

The residents of Baddanagar at Hazaribagh are long suffering from severe water crisis due to dilapidated water pipe network in the area.

Residents alleged that the crisis worsens frequently when the water pumps for the local reservoir goes out of order. The pipe lines in Maneswar 1st lane was installed some 50 years ago and the lines are all cracked and broken at places, said the locals of the area.

Locals complained that they did not have water for five days at a stretch from September 12 to September 17 when the pump broke down. The pump operator at Baddanagar denied that there was any problem and said the WASA had provided water within two days of the breakdown.

The local people informed that the pipelines were made of concrete and have developed numerous cracks. Now water from sewerage and surface drains and the

tannery waste outlets is penetrating the supply water system. Therefore the residents are unable to 'trust' WASA's supply water for domestic use.

"We have been complaining about this for ages to WASA, but there is no sign of any initiative," said Shukur Salek, a local and president of Dhakabashi, an organisation to protect the environment and rights of inhabitants of old Dhaka.

Besides, the water reservoir is totally unprotected. It does not have any boundary wall to protect it from children or outsiders.

"The reservoir also has holes and cracks in it, and no one knows when it was cleaned," said Malek. "The water we drink in our house is dirty and unhygienic," he added. The operator of the reservoir denied the allegations and claimed that they cleaned the tank every month. He said they had the water tested scientifically and it was found safe.

A bitter-sweet amra tale

Poor children are busy these days at city street corners or at traffic jams to sell a vitamin enriched local fruit called

SYED TASHFIN

While moving around the city, you are bound to be approached by *amra* vendors or *amrawallahs* and often, it's very hard to resist the temptation of munching on the delightful green fruit.

Throughout Dhaka, impoverished little boys and girls have taken destiny into their own hands and for them, selling the seasonal attraction *amra* is a popular way to earn some money regardless of how meager the sum maybe.

Ten-year-old Ashrafuddin sells *amra* around Banani, Gulshan and Mohakhali. He is the second youngest among seven brothers and two sisters.

They live in a slum and even at this tender age, Ashrafuddin has been forced to join one of his elder brothers in the *amra* business, as it is quite impossible for his tea-vendor father to manage such a big family.

Brother Shahabuddin is a seasonal fruit seller and has got two year's experience of selling fruits like *amra*, guava, *kanranga* etc.

With their future looking anything but rosy, the boys have accepted that pursuing education

was a thing of fantasy.

"I have studied up to class two at a primary school and would like to continue. But there's hardly any possibility of that happening because then there would be no one to look after our fruit business," says Ashrafuddin. Shahabuddin was more fortunate as he could study up to class five, but then had to leave school.

The brothers are the only earning members of the family beside their father and together, they generate around Tk 4,500 each month, grossly inadequate to survive in Dhaka.

"At times, we have just one decent meal a day," said Ashrafuddin.

Everybody does not appreciate the boys' untiring efforts and human-vultures lurk everywhere.

"At certain areas, a policeman will pop up from nowhere and demand at least Tk five to ten as bribe. Otherwise they won't let us sit there with our fruit," revealed Ashrafuddin.

"I wish those policemen and the city-dwellers were a bit more considerate towards working children like us," added the youngster.



Vitamin enriched Amra, a locally produced fruit is sold on the city streets these days.

Healthouting, taxicab & traintiming

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-
83111731-25
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 Collage
Hospital -- 7310061-4, 7319002-6
Cholera Research Hospital
(ICDDR)- 8811751-60
Monowra Hospital 8319802, 8318135

Blood Bank

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

Eye Bank

Sandhani International Eye Bank-
8614040

Ambulances For Dead Body

Anzuman 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-Thurseday
Ahsan Manzil--Thurseday.
New Market-Tuesday
Gausia Market-Tuesday
Mouchak Market-Sunday
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
Farmview Super Market-Sunday
Muktijuddha Jadughar-Sunday
Dhaka Zoo-Sunday
Shishu Jadughar-Sunday

TAXI CAB

Yellow Cab

Navana 9558065
Salida 9344477, 0171620881
Cosmo 9112959 and 8127191
Cab One 7113282-3
Nihon 8624741-2
Orion 9347277
Anudip 8125285 and 8127611
Capital 9352847

Union

8130485

Kool 0171826731

Black Cab

Cab Ex 9358401

Cabline 8321162

JBS Cab 019364575

Sajan 018126036

Anudip -- 8125285 and 8127611

Cab One 7113282-3

TRAIN TIMING

Subarna Express

Leaves Dhaka at 4:00 pm

Mahanagar Prabhathi

Leaves Dhaka at 7:30 am

Mahanagar Godhuli

Leaves Dhaka at 3:05 pm

Turna

Leaves Dhaka at 11:00 pm

Parabat Express

Leaves Dhaka at 6:30 am

Joyantika Express

Leaves Dhaka at 12:30 pm

Upaban Express

Leaves Dhaka at 9:30 pm

Tista Express

Leaves Dhaka at 7:00 am

Ekata Express

Leaves Dhaka at 5:00 pm

Upakul Express

Leaves Dhaka at 6:00 am

Padma Express

Leaves Dhaka at 9:20 pm

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