

#### thecitythatwas

The southern ghat (ferry point) of Buriganga river was once known as "Debi Das Ghat". It was named after Debi Das, kanungo of Nawara Mahal. He served under Dewan Shafi Ispahani. Debi Das lived in Dhaka around the 1680s.

e-mail: starcity@thedailystar.net

## Steps to stop wilful honking of horns

**Excessive noise is detrimental to schoolchildren and can** increase their heartbeat and blood pressure. Other disorders are nausea, dizziness, gastrointestinal problems, tiredness and behavioural troubles such as aggressiveness and sleep disturbance

**SOHEL ISLAM** 

The environment and forest ministry will finalise a draft on noise pollution control by December, drawn up by the Department of Environment

"The draft gives utmost importance to noise pollution cuts in cities," Environment and Forest Minister Shahjahan Siraj said of the Noise Pollution (Control) Rules, 2003 sent to the ministry for approval.

"We will call a meeting soon to scrutinise the draft before approval," the minister said, adding the enforcement of the rules will minimise the impulsive honking of horns.

The ministries of home, housing and public works, local government, religious affairs and information, the election commission and environment experts, among others, will attend the

meeting. Excessive noise is detrimental to schoolchildren and can increase their heartbeat and blood pressure. Other

disorders are nausea, dizziness, gastrointestinal problems, tiredness and behavioural troubles such as aggressiveness and sleep disturbance.

The draft has zoned the city into small areas for five noise limits: 45 decibels for silent, 50 for residential, 60 for mixed, 70 for commercial and 75 for industrial zones between 6:00am and 9:00pm.

The night-time noise limits after 9:00pm are 35 decibels for silent, 40 for residential, 50 for mixed, 60 for commercial and 70 for industrial areas.

According to the draft, a primary violator will be fined Tk 5,000 or be jailed for two months or both and the person found guilty on a second count will have to pay Tk 10,000 in fines or serve six months in prison or both.

The existing traffic rules can fine violators up to Tk 2,000 for noise pollution or jail them for up to six months each in failure to pay the fines.

The draft has blamed lack of public awareness and unplanned urbanisation for the ever-increasing noise in

the city.

The proposed rules will not be applicable to *azan*, religious and public meetings, army activities, fire brigade, election campaigns and aircraft.

"City dwellers seem to have lost a little of hearing ability," said Shafiquzzaman Khan, a sound quality and comfort researcher and associate professor at the Swedish Royal Institute of Technology

"Noise in much of the city is above the limit prescribed by the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The agency prescribed 80 decibels as a safe average for 24 hours," he added.

"The final draft after revisions, if any, will be sent to the law ministry, which will take necessary steps," said DoE Director General Omar Farque Khan.

"We have gone through the noise pollution rules in the neighbouring countries and taken into consideration the cities and towns where noise keeps increasing," he said.



A 'no horns' sign opposite Holy Family Red Crescent Hospital. This has no effect on most drivers.

## Passion for flowers blossoming

CHARLOTTE JACQUEMART

Dhaka wears the look of a city of

flowers with the arrival of winter. There are more than 400 flower shops and the numbers are continuing to grow. However, wholesale traders claim that they are

making little profit at present. "We have seen better days in the

for more than 13 years. As more oldest flower shops in Dhaka. people get into the flower business, they have to sell flowers on credit to retailers, he adds. But the wholesalers are bound to pay farmers in cash to buy the flowers.

The shop owners do not have any such complaints. "We have to employ at least five people to look

past in terms of profit," said Md Sikim, who has been involved in wholesale trading in horticulture after the shop as business is swell-ing," says Md Masud Khan of Malancha in Shahbagh, one of the

shops does not come from daily sales of flowers and flower baskets, but rather from weddings, parties or decoration of bridal cars. From one such order, a shop can make as much as Tk 50,000, claimed a

Flower shops have turnovers of approximately Tk 2500 a day, selling two variations of tuberoses as the most popular flowers, eight variations of gladiolas, up to eight variations of ordinary roses and also some other varieties.

Shahbagh is the heart of the city's flower trade. Nearly 700 farmers and wholesalers arrive here around five in the morning to participate in an auction. "Every

ing flowers, it is also being cultivated at Savar, Gazipur and Tongi. Besides, farmers in some other districts including Rangpur and Dinajpur have also started to grow flowers as they have found it a profitable venture.

Orchids, which had to be brought from Bangkok in the past, are also now exclusively grown on Bangladeshi soil. Some big companies are exporting orchids to

The main income of the flower shops does not come from daily sales of flowers and flower baskets, but rather from weddings, parties or decoration of bridal cars. From one such order, a shop can make as much as Tk 50,000, claimed a flower trader

one of them sell flowers worth atleast Tk 1000," informs Masud

Peak seasons are the months of November, December, January and post-winter February and April. During the holy month of Ramadan business is usually dull, but in the days leading up to Eid, prices for all flowers tend to increase. In fact, it rose by about 20

Not too long ago, flowers were mainly imported from India. Now they are grown in different areas of Bangladesh. Though Godkhali of Jessore is the pioneer area in growSaudi Arabia and South Korea. Tuberoses are being exported to

According to traders, the qualdling and cold storage facilities. Flowers now last for 3-5 days at most. But the small traders are in no position to invest the kind of money needed to for better facilientrepreneurs should come forflourish in Bangladesh.

#### Supply of flowers at the wholesale market in Shahbagh is increasing with a rise in demand for cut flowers.

per cent this Eid-ul-Fitr.

ity and longevity of flowers can be improved through proper hanties. Šo established and wealthy ward in helping horticulture to

### DCC proposes, DMP disposes

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The unavailability of sufficient police force prevented Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) from evicting illegal occupants out of seven of its plots and roads in the last two

The DCC chief estate officer wrote to Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) on October 20, requesting adequate police force to assist in demolishing the illegal structures on its land.

"October 25 was the deadline set to demolish illegal flower shops, restaurants, stationery and other outlets. As the DMP was unable to provide necessary force, we could not carry out operations by the deadline," said a DCC estate department official, seeking ano-

"We need 200 constables, but we are provided with only 10," the

official added. "Local gangsters have occupied DCC's land for long. We must carry out eviction drives. But without

adequate police force, the lives of the officials engaged in the drives are at risk," the DCC official said. DCC's two magistrates wait to do their part on schedule for evic-

tion, putting on hold other respon-On October 28, the DCC attempted to demolish buildings

on part of the 30-foot road and its pavements in ward No. 42 at Zohuri Mohollah, which were occupied by local influential peo-

Some shops have taken up almost of 20 feet of the road in front of Badsha Faisal Institute. "Our eviction date was on October 29 and once again we failed," the

The DCC also planned to oust the occupants of the illegal struc-tures at Mohammadpur Shahid Park and Town Hall Market on

The eviction drives were targeted against some shops of ward No. 5 on November 4, some in the south east corner of Dhaka Government Complex of ward No. 52 on November 8 and a few unauthorised tenants of Azimpur Super Market of ward No. 62 on November 10.

Despite repeated attempts, the deputy commissioner (DMP west) could not be contacted for com-

"We could not comply with DCC's request as large numbers of policemen were engaged in maintaining law and order during Ramadan," a DMP official said, asking not to be named.

# Free and easy days of cyber cafés go soon

**CITY CORRESPONDENT** 

The government has decided to draw up guidelines for the mushrooming cyber

There are around 300 cyber cafes in the city alone and their number is growing everyday. Taking advantage of the lack of a policy at present, anyone can start this business just obtaining a trade licence from the city corporation.

But Bangladesh Telecom Regulatory Commission (BTRC) will soon ask all cyber cafes to get registered under it and follow certain guidelines, sources in the BTRC

The Bangladesh Cyber Cafe Association sources said cafe owners invested Tk 40-50 crore in this sector in the last three years An initial capital of around Tk 10 lakh is required to open a cafe but most of the owners had not obtained any bank loans. Meanwhile the per-hour browsing charge is gradually reducing with the increase in number of cafes

One can now browse an hour for only Tk 20 whereas he had to pay Tk 120 for same just 18 months ago, a source pointed out.

BTRC sources said the commission decided to formulate the guidelines after they received frequent allegations against the cyber cafes.

Most of the cafes are run without specific plans or proper management, they said. Under the new guidelines, a cafe must start with at least six personal computers and they cannot be used inside cabins. This will prevent them from indulging in the illegal business of 'dirty films,' they

their clients are young they very rarely watch 'dirty films' in 'public places'. Most of them come to chat, e-mail, look for university addresses or employment abroad, they said. The cyber cafes had been making brisk

But cafe sources said although most of

business since November 1 by filling in Diversity Visa (DV) lottery forms for appli-

The US State Department on October 15 made submission of applications through a designated internet website mandatory.

The 'business' will continue till December 30 as hundreds of thousands in the country lack the skill or facility to visit the site and fill in forms along with scanned photographs.

The cyber cafes will become 'busy centres' for data entry after the opening of the information super highway through submarine cables in the near future, cafe own-

Welcoming the recent legalisation of voice over internet protocol (VOIP) or internet telephony, they urged the government to take effective and realistic steps to make cyber cafes more useful to the



A day at a cyber café at Shantinagar.