

DEVELOPING DHAKA ZOO

Project proposal yet to be approved

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

Renovation and development project of the Dhaka Zoo remains in limbo as no meeting of the advisory committee to the zoo took place in two years. Project approval was expected at the committee's 14th annual meeting, scheduled on October 16, 2005 that was called off, as Abdullah Al Noman chairman of the committee, also the minister for fisheries and livestock was ill. The committee's 13th meeting had taken place in February 2004, more than two years back although meetings are supposed to take place every year. No reschedule the meeting has been made in last six months and the concerned officials do not know when it would take place. "We are trying to get a new date for the meeting and hope it would be in the next month," said Dr NC Banik, deputy curator of the Zoo. When contacted the minister Abdullah Al Noman told the Star City that he would look into the matter on priority basis. Three years back the zoo

authority had placed project proposal with a budget of Tk. 19 crore for renovation and development of the Dhaka Zoo. Whether the project will fall under the development budget or revenue budget is still undecided. Sources said the finance ministry wants this project under the revenue budget and the fisheries ministry has opposed it throwing the project into uncertainty. "If the project falls under the revenue budget, it will take long time to get funds due to the lengthy procedure. So we are trying to keep it in the development budget," said an official of the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock. The renovation and development project includes building of a sanctuary for a few zoo inmates, collecting species like zebra, kangaroo, giraffe, ape, dolphin and many types of birds. Zoo officials said they need money to get rid of some spare animals and to import new ones. The zoo now houses 18 lions, 12 tigers, 150 deer, three hippopotamus, 20 pythons and some other extra species. The zoo authority claimed that they have already contacted



Despite lack of development, Dhaka Zoo remains an attractive place for visitors.

zoos in Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and South Africa and have placed an exchange offer with them.

"Exchange will involve a big amount of money for transporting the animals and we are waiting for the project to be approved,"

said the deputy curator. He also said that they have many single species in their collection and need mates.

The development and renovation project also include setting up of a monorail around the zoo, development of the children's park and lake within, renovation and expansion of the zoo museum, an aquarium and improvement of the overall condition in the zoo. "The monorail would attract more visitors that will definitely increase our income. The park for children would be an added facility," Banik said. The project also includes the establishment of some quality food and souvenir shops for visitors. One of the officials of the fisheries ministry said implementation of this project would make the zoo more profitable. There is a plan to increase the entry fee from Tk. 10 to Tk 15 and fixing the entry fee for foreigners at Tk. 200 after the project is implemented. The yearly expenditure of Dhaka Zoo is around Tk 2.5 crore while they earn only Tk 2.75 crore a year.

city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.

"We [Bangladesh] are India-locked, while India's north-east is Bangladesh-locked. But at no point of time we should consider our geographic locations as a liability, rather it's an asset if we can transcend this to mutual economic benefits"

-- M Morshed Khan
Foreign Minister
Told The Daily Star in an exclusive interview on Friday, prior to the prime minister's visit to India beginning today.
Source: The Daily Star

"Doctors are yet to release him. We thought he would be released by Thursday but he was not"

-- Commander Masuq Hassan Ahmed
Director, Rab Legal and Media Wing
Told The Daily Star regarding the interrogation of Bangla Bhai, on Friday.
Source: The Daily Star

"If the law had been enacted, the families of killed and injured workers would get much higher compensations"

-- Serajuddin
Chief Factory Inspector
Said about factory owners getting off the hook while the government has been sitting on a draft new labour law providing higher compensation, on Friday.
Source: The Daily Star

"I want to cry out as loud as possible, I can't bear the pain and humiliation. I now wait for justice"

-- Shahin Sultana Shanta
Victim of police brutality
Told reporters recounting the harrowing experience during general strike, on Wednesday.
Source: The Daily Star

"I can't just resign based on a few students' demand!"

-- Prof Feroza Begum
Principal, Eden University College
Said after general students demanded her resignation for her failure to take action against ruling party backed Chhatra Dal leaders who were allegedly taking money from students for admission and residential seats, on Wednesday.
Source: The Daily Star

"Tk eight lakh is not too much for a chief whip's office to spend"

-- Khandaker Delwar Hossain
Chief Whip
Said when journalists asked him about his lavish entertainment bills from the parliament cafeteria, last Monday.
Source: The Daily Star

Seated or standing they travel

NOVERA DEEPITA

Buses plying various routes in the city expected to carry only seated passengers are violating rules by taking in commuters above the number of available seats. The excess passengers face much inconvenience as they travel the entire distance standing. Shawly Rahman, a regular Karwan Bazar - Uttara passenger, said that she travels to Uttara standing all the way in these so-called 'sitting service buses'. "It is quite inconvenient because some of the new buses imported from China do not have a grip to hold on to and the aisle is very narrow.

Another type of bus has a handle so high on the roof that even men of average height cannot reach," she said. "I would never get a seat in a bus during rush hours even if I wait for five hours, so it doesn't bother me. All I want is cheap transport and to reach home safely," said Mita Chowdhury, Ramna -- Badda commuter. An HSC candidate Mamunur Rashid who travels to Dhanmondi from Uttara commented on how scary the rides along such long distances are. "Drivers desperate to reach their destinations quickly and pick as many passengers along the routes drive so fast and apply breaks frequently. It is risky to ride such buses, but we do not have any alternative," said Rashid.

A regular Karwan Bazar - Uttara passenger, said that she travels to Uttara standing all the way in these so-called 'sitting service buses'. "It is quite inconvenient because some of the new buses do not have a grip to hold on to and the aisle is very narrow," she said

According to the Bangladesh Road and Transport Authority (BRTA), around 4,200 buses and 8,000 mini buses belonging to both government and private companies ply the city along different routes.

"When I travel by bus standing, I fear pickpockets, who travel in many crowded buses. I remain alert and protect my precious belongings such as the pen-drive, MP3 player and mobile phone from such miscre-

ants," said Chandan Ahmed, a private university student. Mosarrat Ali, a driver of the city bus service that plies along the Motijheel- Dhanmondi route said that they have to accommodate as many passengers as possible. "They are all desperate to get home after a long day's work. In the beginning we discouraged passengers more than the seating capacity," he said. "But the number of passengers have increased and there aren't enough buses to accommodate them all, so we are compelled to carry them to their destinations," he added. BRTA's former director, MA Momen, said that proper laws exist, but the problem lies in

their enforcement. "Drivers and conductors are bribed to carry the overload of passengers by either their sponsors or the associations they belong to. There is no one to monitor such actions. BRTA is the authority but runs with limited power and manpower," Momen said. An official of the City Bus Company, belonging to the private sector, on condition of anonymity, said: "It has become mandatory to break rules. Neither do we have enough buses or enough services for the 12 million people of the city. We are trying our best to give good service to the commuters. Why blame us, even when the government owned bus services break the rules."



Demolition of Dhaka Gate, built in the eighties in Banani has begun as part of the road expansion plan by Dhaka Urban Transport Project to reduce traffic congestion in the city.

Making it easier for the terminally ill

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

About six months back 42-year-old Hafiza Begum's world shattered when she discovered that she had breast cancer. She had very little idea about the word malignant; she realised the devastating effects of the killer disease, and had a rude awakening to the horrible pain she would have to undergo. Chemotherapy at the Mohakhali Cancer Institute ended too soon. Her husband, who was a vegetable seller, could not bear the cost of Tk 3,000 per visit. The cancer started to spread to other parts of her body. The affected cells no longer responded to treatment. The tumour cannot be operated on and hope slowly faded. Hafiza Begum, at home in the Shekhertek slum, realised that she may not defeat the killer disease. Yet she found a ray of hope when she discovered that a

medical institute exists which could help her die in peace. She is now under the care of Afzalunnessa Foundation in Lalmatia that is providing her with Palliative care, a medical practice designed to relieve the pain of the terminally ill. Steps to initiate Palliative Care in Bangladesh starting in Dhaka is likely to see reality as a group of doctors are working together to develop the healthcare approach designed to relieve or lessen symptoms of diseases that are incurable. "Palliative care is still a very unknown topic in Bangladesh, and we want to explain the method to the general people", says Professor K. M. Ikbal, Senior Consultant, BIRDEM hospital. Prof Ikbal is the joint convener of Afzalunnessa Foundation, a voluntary organisation that has initiated primary level consultation. "When a patient's disease does not respond to curative

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treatment, doctors usually declare them as terminally ill and send them home," said Dr Nezam Uddin Ahmad, associate professor of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) and a director of the foundation. "These patients live in agony for the rest of their lives, not knowing that death is inevitable, and sometimes abandoned by family and society," he added. "Sometimes referred to as comfort or hospice care, palliative care is a comprehensive approach of keeping the dying patients comfortable through pain control and also addressing psychological, social and spiritual concern," Dr Ahmad said. Ahmad also said that Palliative care does not postpone death, but provides relief from pain and other distressing symptoms for such patients as long as he/she lives. It is all about helping an ailing person to die with