

*Dolai Khal (a canal) was strongly associated with Dhaka in the 60s. It was the Dhaka's main waterway as well as a trench. The canal divided the city in two. According to Nalini Kanta Bhattashali, first Subadar of Dhaka, Islam Khan arranged the digging of Dolai Khal. However, 'Baharistan-e-Gayebi' by Mirza Nathan Bhattashali said the present Buriganga river was known as Dolai Khal.*

## Beds on rent at DMCH

Some hospital employees involved in illegal business

IMRUL HASAN

Md. Jalal Uddin, was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) on March 18 after suffering a massive heart attack. Till March 25, he was not given a bed as he failed to pay Tk 350 the price of allocating a bed for him. "A ward boy wanted Tk 350 for a bed. As I could not afford to pay him, he said I should occupy the floor space near the store room," said a helpless Jalal Uddin. He further said he had witnessed many nurses, ward boys, other employees and some middlemen making money transactions with patients, who come every day from across the country, for a bed or mattress. A group of dishonest employees, along with middlemen, in association with some high officials of DMCH, have allegedly been into the 'bed arrangement business' for long, taking advantage of the acute shortage of beds in the hospital. They charge patients Tk 100 to Tk 400 for a bed in the general wards, Tk 500 in the paying

wards and Tk 1,000 in cabins. "As an alternative, we look for a place on the floor and sometimes even under the staircase or beside the gates," said Ruhul Amin, a patient from the general ward. Patients, who come all the way from rural areas for treatment at the DMCH, are also forced to pay the hospital employees for a place under the staircase or near the gates. The parents of Aklima, a 10-year-old patient from Mymensingh, told this correspondent that they had to pay Tk 100 to secure a place under the staircase. When asked two gate-men at gate number 1 denied the allegation, saying that they are not involved in such activities. There are always over 3,000 patients in the 1700-bed hospital said a hospital source, which leaves room for such unscrupulous activities to take place. When the matter was brought to the attention of hospital director, Brigadier General Sarker MA Matin, he said that he had asked the police to nab the culprits. "I looked into the matter and handed over to the police a list of

the suspects after I joined the hospital," he said, adding that punitive measures have been taken against these employees and middlemen. Matin also mentioned that the hospital started in 1946 with 250 beds, and the number of beds has increased to 1,700 with its expansion over the years. Sources in the administration said that on an average about 180 patients are admitted to the hospital everyday, and about 4,500 patients visit the outdoor and emergency departments, every month. Generally the number of 'resident patients' at the hospital is about 3,000, as many patients coming from far off places have no place to stay. The shortage of beds is acute in wards no 11, 12, 17, 18, 19, 22, 30 and 32 the general, Gynecology and Eclampsia wards, said a staff member of the ward. "Bed crisis in the gynecology ward is so acute that two patients have to share a single bed to the extent of two mothers with their newborns occupying the same bed," said a nurse in the Gynecology department who did



not want to be named. "The number of patients in the 12-bed Eclampsia ward is always about three times higher than the number of beds," said a

doctor of the ward. A high official of the hospital said that shortage of beds could have been minimised if the 500-bed DMCH-2 project was imple-

mented, which has been shelved by the present government.

## DMP yet to finalise payment mode on vehicle requisition claims

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) is yet to reformulate the requisition ordinance and fix the mode of payment for requisitioned vehicles and clear other ambiguities that are depriving vehicle owners in getting compensation for their vehicles. Section 103 ka of DMP ordinance 1976 empowers the metropolitan police authorities to requisition vehicles of any kind for a maximum period of seven days to meet the demand of different government and other emergency service providers including the police department itself. Since the promulgation of the ordinance, DMP has requisitioned more than 20 lakh vehicles to date. According to the sub-clause of the same article, DMP have bindings to pay compensation to the owners of the requisitioned vehicles, but have not done so in the last 30 years. Rough statistics show that DMP owes more than Tk 100 crore as compensation of requisitioned vehicles to different private, government organisations and owners of the vehicles.



Though the ordinance does not say anything about the rate of compensation, the DMP on its own has set the rate at Tk 500 a day for a vehicle. Taking advantage of such ambiguity in the ordinance, DMP considers only owners of heavy vehicles like buses, mini buses, and trucks, eligible for

compensation, depriving owners of private cars, minibuses, human haulers and other small vehicles in getting any compensation. More than half the vehicles DMP requisitions are such small and medium ones. "This is my business, I have to payback individual loan installments from the earnings

of each vehicle. If the police uses any of my vehicles for seven to 10 days, I cannot repay the month's installment," said Rafiquiddin, owner of two human haulers. "The government has not given a concrete decision on the current dues nor has it allotted any budget yet for req-

uisition payment," said S M Mizanur Rahman, commissioner, DMP. "If we get allotment we will definitely pay," he added. In an interview with the Daily Star last August the commissioner had said that the government would reformulate the ordinance clearing all the ambiguities but no progress has been made yet. "Now we are working on these rules and are hopeful in finding a better solution on this issue," the commissioner told the Star City, last week. High Court had ordered the DMP on June 12, 2005 to bring changes to article 103 (ka) of the DMP ordinance of 1976 and its sub-clause to make the ordinance more lucid. Although vehicle owners have been asking for requisition payment since 1991, DMP officials who deal with the matter said they did not have any record on the matter prior to 2001. Frustrated transport businessmen filed a case against the DMP last year through their association Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Samity (BSPS). "DMP owes more than Tk. 18 crore from 1991 to date but has

paid nothing," said Saiful Alam, general secretary of Dhaka Sarak Paribahan Samity (DSPS) and additional general secretary, BSPS. "We have compensation claims for buses and minibuses in our file from 2001. The amount for this period is around Tk.6.5 crore but we could not pay any," said a source in the DMP accounts section. "The number of claims is increasing everyday," he added. The government owned transport company Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) has claimed Tk. 1 crore 58 lakh for the same period. BRTC chairman Taimur Alam Khondeker said: "We want our money and DMP is bound to pay." DMP's traffic department normally requisitions 140 to 190 different vehicles daily while the number is more than 650 on hartal days. On special occasions like election duty, public examination duty, special drives and duties of police and other government activities the number exceeds 1,000, where 60 per cent of total requisition are buses, minibuses and minibuses.

*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 were compelled to begin our journey as a lawmaker by cheating in the matter of electoral expenses. We would have been in trouble had we been honest and disclosed the actual figure"*

-- A ruling-BNP lawmaker  
Told The Daily Star requesting anonymity on Friday; about the electoral expenditure. He contested the October 1, 2001 parliamentary election from a constituency outside the capital.  
Source: The Daily Star

*"When other farmers saw the rice I cultivated on half-a-bigha of land, they were impressed and began producing it collecting seeds from me. They then named it Haridhan after my name"*

-- Haripada Kapali  
A farmer of Asannagar village, Jhenaidah  
Said after receiving the 'Channel I Krishi Padak 2006' for developing a new variety of high yielding and low cost rice, on Friday.  
Source: The Daily Star

*"We will now set up a charitable clinic in our house to provide treatment for deprived people"*

-- Dr. Ainun Nahar Rita  
One of the two sisters who hit the headlines in July last year for their secluded lifestyle  
Said at their renovated house on the occasion of their full recovery from mental disorder, on Saturday.  
Source: The Daily Star

*"Bangla Bhai and his men never seemed worried about the consequences of their actions. They would move with police escort"*

-- Rebeka Sultana  
Wife of Idris Ali Khejur of Raninagar. Idris Ali was cut in four by Bangla Bhai's men  
Said at a meeting organised by Ekatturer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee in Rajshahi where 50 family members of the victims of Bangla Bhai atrocities asked the government to apologise for the 'state-sponsored jungle rule' in the northwest of the country, on Monday.  
Source: The Daily Star

*"Don't do any harm to my daughter. I can't delay her marriage. It's of no use for her to pass SSC exam. I just want a certificate saying that she is in class 10"*

-- A parent of a student of Bongshal Girls' High School  
Said while asking the principal of the school to issue a certificate required for the marriage of his daughter. Around 20 percent of female students of the schools of old Dhaka is dropping out from class 10 for marriage, on Saturday.  
Source: Prothom Alo

*"Has anyone died because of the price hike?"*

-- Barrister Moudud Ahmed  
Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister  
Said about the recent price hike of essentials at a meeting of ruling party backed Jubodol, on Friday.  
Source: Prothom Alo

## Painting the curves of his innovative mind

DURDANA GHIAS

The Shahbagh intersection is crammed with people during rush hours. City service buses, cars and human haulers ply the street blaring ear splitting horns. The traffic halts at the red signal, but no one has the time to pause for a moment to admire the innovative paintings by Md. Kamal Hossain, 24, a shola (Indian cork) artist. No matter how boisterous the surrounding is Kamal keeps painting on his shola boards with rapt attention. He concentrates on cutting the boards according to the designs and mixes colours to shade them to match his quaint imagination.

"My desire for creating designs with coloured symbols started when I was 14," said Kamal. "I am not highly educated. I can read and write Bangla and simple English which is sufficient for my work," he said. Kamal buys five pieces of 6.50x3.25 foot shola boards daily from Anandabazar where each costs Tk 70 and spends Tk 10,500 a month only on the board. He uses two kinds of colours - fluorescent powder and acrilam colour, which he gets from Gawsia market. Red, blue, yellow, green, violet, orange, pink and maroon are his favourites. He likes to paint *alpona* (design) in vivid colours. His monthly cost on colours is Tk 5,000.

After all these costs his monthly income stands at Tk 30,000. Kamal takes individual orders from clients for *gaye holid* and wedding ceremonies, and other social and official functions. He is an expert in floor and ceiling floral designs for which he charges between Tk 2,000 to 5,000. He also does stalls for *Ekushey Boimela* and other fairs. Students, teens and young adults come to his shop during *Pohela Falgun* and *Pohela Boishakh* to have their faces painted, which he mostly does free of cost. "I cannot say 'no' to people who come to my little shop on *Falgun* or *Boishakh* to have their faces painted. I feel I am a part of the

festival," he said. A silent sense of pride exuded from his quiet demeanor when the artist said how he helps his mother in village with his small entrepreneurship while many young people of his social stratum are going astray with unsocial activities. "I love painting. I like playing with colours in my imagination and then apply them on boards, making my visions a reality," said Kamal. "Earlier I worked at a shop in Katagon but there I had to tolerate the tantrums of my boss. I am more solvent and enjoy the independence of my own business." "Freedom is imperative for an artist," said the young man humbly and calmly kept on at his work.

