



thecitythatwas

The British government established two farmhouses in Bengal for the development of agriculture. One of the farms was established in Farmgate in Dhaka for agriculture and livestock research. The area was known as 'farm area' at that time. Farmgate is named after the gate of the farmhouse.

e-mail: starcity@thedailystar.net

DCC to bring down unauthorised billboards

TAWFIQUE ALI
Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has decided to bring down all unauthorised billboards in the city if the owners do not remove those by the end of this month. "We have decided to knock down all the unauthorised billboards if the ad firms fail to remove them by June 30," said DCC's Chief Estate Officer Md Abu Taleb. "We will blacklist those firms that will disregard the deadline."
Two people were killed on June 16 after three to four billboards collapsed on Dhaka CNG and Fuel Filling Company on the Pragati Sarani during a storm.

Taleb. DCC estimated that there are some 700 unauthorised billboards, but the actual number would be several thousand. Such billboards allegedly erected with weak structure turn out to be a serious threat to the people's safe movement as it was evident during the storm on June 16 night. More than 10,000 unauthorised billboards, hoardings and other advertisement signs allegedly built with weak structure not only spoil the beauty of the cityscape, but they also turn out to be extremely risky as it has been it also according to sources. Many of them are placed dangerously atop tall buildings, along and overhead major roads and in residential areas posing risk to motorists and pedestrians alike. Honourary President of the Centre for Urban Studies (CUS) Prof Nazrul Islam said signboards should be installed in such a way that they do not mar beauty and greenery of cityscape and obstruct motorists' vision. Two people were killed on June 16 after three to four billboards collapsed on Dhaka CNG and Fuel Filling Company on the Pragati Sarani during a storm. "It seems DCC's existing rules are flouted in granting approval to billboards," said Islam, also a teacher of Geography and

Environment Science at Dhaka University. Gigantic billboards set up on Dhaka University campus have spoilt its sanctity as an educational institution, Prof Islam said. When asked, DCC Secretary Alamgir Hossain Khan, who is chairman of DCC's advertisement site allotment committee, claimed that DCC officials do not indulge in underhand dealings with any quarter to allow them to install unauthorised hoardings. "We approve installation of billboards as per DCC guidelines only after a company obtains clearance from traffic department and DCC's beautification department," he said. According to DCC rules, height of a mega sign must not exceed the height of a foot-over bridge and there should be a gap of at least two kilometres between two overhead mega signs. Such structures must not be built on major roads. Different companies have installed gigantic billboards on 16-storey Faridpur Mansion at Kakrail intersection though Rajuk has served notice for faulty construction of the building. But the DCC authorities are silent on the matter. About safety rules, Abu Taleb said zonal executive engineer of DCC is designated to oversee

installation of a billboard in their respective zones to ensure safety. The DCC guidelines on outdoor advertisements allow no overhead billboards or hoardings in front of hospitals, government offices, educational institutions, mosques, temples, churches, museums and historical sites. Shahbagh, Bangla Motor, Karwan Bazar, Farmgate, Mirpur Road, Mohakhali, Gulshan, Kuril Biswa Road, Dhaka University campus and other major roads and intersections are flooded with different types of advertisement boards and signs. Good governance and development committee of the Prime Minister's Office entrusted the CUS to carry out a survey on unauthorised billboards a couple of months ago. As per the committee decision, CUS submitted a Tk 5 to 6 lakh budget to DCC in March for the study on billboards but the DCC has not yet made any response in this regard, said the CUS Secretary Nurul Islam Najem. Asked what measures the DCC has taken to check the aggression of unauthorised and risky installation of billboards, Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka said, "The problem will be resolved once the Dhaka Master Plan is implemented." Announcing DCC's budget for



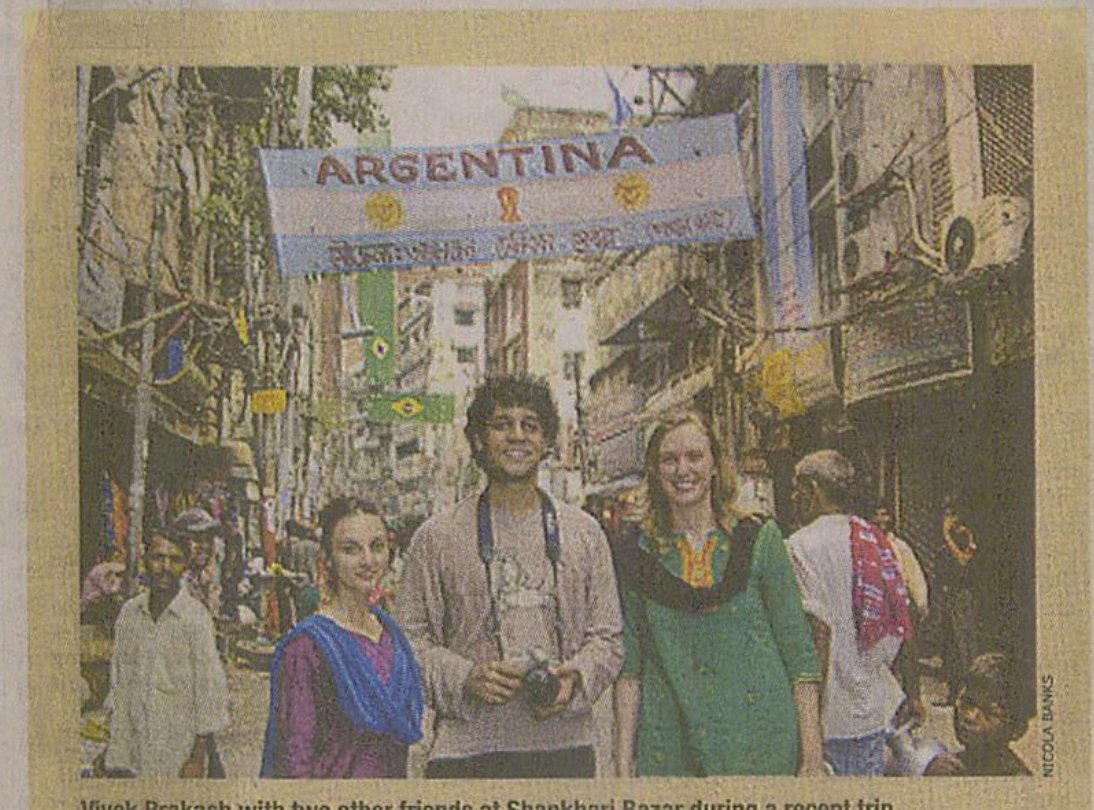
Billboards that collapsed on a filling station on Pragati Sarani during a storm on June 16 and killed two people have not been removed yet.

FY2006-07, he said DCC has earned nearly Tk 2 crore from advertisement sector in FY2005-06. The next fiscal year's target is Tk 6 crore. All authorised billboards lost legality on July 19, 2003, as the DCC stopped renewing contracts

with the advertising agencies following a court case. Outdoor Advertising Owners Association (OAOA), an organisation of 19 advertising agencies, had filed the case with the High Court over DCC move to raise rent of billboard from Tk 30 to Tk

150 per square foot. It resumed taking application for contract renewal in May 2005. Appellate Division of the Supreme Court issued a stay order on November 17, 2003 preventing the DCC from demolishing billboards for three months. The

court extended the injunction for six months on January 12, 2004. The stay extended once again until December 24, 2004. As the case could not stand any longer, the DCC went on demolition drive once again during January to March 2005.



Vivek Prakash with two other friends at Shankhari Bazar during a recent trip.

Enjoying the hustle bustle of Shankhari Bazar

NICOLA BANKS and VIVEK PRAKASH
Emerging through the archway out of the bright sunshine and into the shaded thin streets of Shankhari Bazar, we were immediately greeted by a canopy of bright flags. World Cup Fever has hit the crowded streets of Shankhari Bazar too! Walking up the street, one can see, as reflected throughout the whole of Bangladesh, fans divided firmly into two camps, Brazil and Argentina, with more flags than ever possibly imaginable showing the huge amounts of support. The buzzing atmosphere of the people in the streets also reflected the excitement all around. Many amused passers-by and staunch supporters asking us from which country we were from, but unfortunately, with one British (and not a single England flag in sight!), one Indian and three Canadians on our day trip, none of us had arrived from the favoured countries! Having lived and worked in Dhaka for varying lengths of time, but averaging about four months apiece, this was our first trip to the area. Named in the Lonely Planet, a guidebook purchased by the majority of bideshis before departing to Bangladesh, as one of the

most interesting streets in Dhaka city, our eager anticipation was met by the streets' mystical beauty. The numerous flags did not hide the wonderful old buildings; examples of beautiful ancient architecture that cannot be disguised by centuries of age, and quite unlike any other area of Dhaka we had so far seen. Walking up the crowded streets, carefully dodging rickshaws and pedestrians, we were fascinated to watch the whole world at work -- Hindu artisans carving the traditional 'shankha' bracelets so intricately out of conch shells, others negotiating deals for their wares, and in the midst of it all, a man walks with a giant basket atop his head, seemingly undisturbed by the jostling crowd. Dhaka is one of the most vibrant cities of the world and the speed with which it is changing is incredible. At Shankhari Bazar, we had the opportunity to appreciate a lively neighbourhood that reflects its past while simultaneously adapting to contemporary needs. It is not a museum piece examining Bangladesh's history; rather, it allows visitors to briefly experience the hustle and bustle of daily life from the perspective of an ordinary person. It is perhaps one of the most fascinating tourist attractions in Dhaka.

First Bangladeshi mountaineers on Frey peak

They do us proud

CITY CORRESPONDENT
Musa Ibrahim and Sajal Khaled went down in the books of history to become the first ever Bangladeshi mountaineers to reach a mountain peak. The Bangladeshi duo completed their expedition to the peak of Frey Mountain at a height of 19,125 feet from India last May. "A mountain expedition is very tough, and may be the only reason why it is so adventurous. The tastes of exploring new world and success remedies all the struggles," said Ibrahim. Both Ibrahim and Khaled said that this was the first ever successful attempt to the summit of any mountain by a Bangladeshi. Their success has now inspired them to conquer Mount Everest, the highest peak in the world, by 2010. They had been making attempts to reach the peak of a mountain since 2003 but failed due to various reasons. "We were very close to the Mera peak (21,000 feet) in Nepal in May 2005. But we had to return due to bad weather just before we almost reached the summit," said Khaled. But they did not give up hope and their determination proved fruitful when they reached the Frey Mountain peak. The Bangladeshi mountaineers underwent rigorous training under the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute in India before starting their expedition to Frey peak. After training, the 10-member team (the other eight were Indian mountaineers) started their journey to the Advance Base Camp (ABC) at 16,500 feet of Frey. "From the base camp of the Mountain we had to climb up to the ABC along a 70-degree inclined glacier while rest of the journey was more challenging," said Khaled. "On the final day we climbed 2,500 feet against severe crude weather. Drizzles and continuous snowfall made our journey highly risky. It was a complete

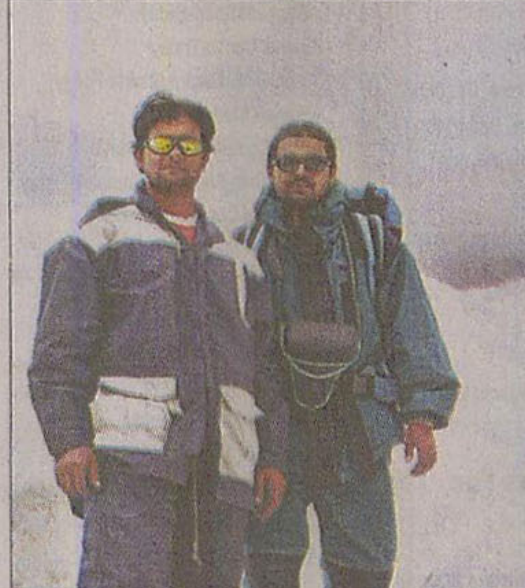
white-out situation with temperature at minus five degrees Celsius," said Ibrahim describing the final moment to the peak. Absence of sufficient air made them suffer during most of the time of climbing. When the team had only 100 feet left to reach the peak, they found they were short of fixed rope, the main support of mountaineers. "We were so upset thinking that we would have to return as losers once again," said Khaled.

The climbers decided to fetch a rope from a position immediately below them. "We were hanging by the 80 degree inclined wall of the mountain with help of only a fixed rope," said Ibrahim. They finally reached the peak at 3:30 pm on May 22 after climbing continuously for eight hours. "When we reached the peak it was so cold we could not express our joy completely. After a quick photo session, we left our desti-

nation," said the proud mountaineers. "We were on the top for only two or three minutes," they added. "The toughest part of the mountaineering was to acclimatise to the weather and other situations, which are unpredictable at most times. Another thing is both the training and climbing are costly. One has to pay \$50,000 as fees to attempt to win Mount Everest from Nepal side," said Ibrahim and Khaled. The two mountaineers, who

are members of Bangla Mountaineering and Trekking Club, are hopeful to reach the Mount Everest in 2010 and if they become successful it will be the maiden Mount Everest expedition by any Bangladeshi. "We have planned for expedition of the Ladakh Mountain (23,000 feet) in the Himachal state of India this September and we will continue with our practice to successfully reach the Everest," said Ibrahim and Khaled with determination.

"A mountain expedition is very tough, and may be the only reason why it is so adventurous. The taste of exploring new world and success remedies all the struggles"



(Above photo) Musa Ibrahim (on the left) and Sajal Khaled just before the final leg to reach the Frey peak. (Right photo) Sajal on his way to the top of the mountain.

