

The Race Course ground, situated on the eastern side of Shahbagh, looked like a jungle during the company rule. The jungle was cleared up for an entertainment centre for the elite Nawabs of Dhaka who owned the area. Feasts and ball dances were organised for the Sahibs and Mem Sahibs who came to watch the horse races.



Danger of 'yaba' spreads rapidly among affluent youth

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

Addiction to *yaba*, a drug containing morphine and amphetamine that harms the brain cells has increased alarmingly in the city but the authorities have no plan to save the new generation from the claws of this 'crazy drug'.

"*Yaba* gives the body artificial amphetamine sending it to hyper activity, leading to loss of sleep and eventually resulting in paranoia and hallucination. In the long run it leads an addict to mental confusion and memory loss," said Dr. Satparkash, Consultant, Prottoy Medical Clinic Ltd, a drug rehabilitation centre in the city.

"It causes rapid heart beat, increased blood pressure, and damage to the blood vessels in

the brain that could lead to a stroke. Regular use of the drug can result in inflammation of the heart lining," he added.

Doctors and drug specialists cautioned that *yaba* is extremely harmful for liver as it completely destroys appetite.

The police department, department of narcotics control (DNC) and some drug traders said that this drug now has become as popular as heroin.

Many countries have taken strict action against this drug considering its long-term effect on the addicts, but the silence of the Bangladesh government gives the drug dealers a chance to operate more freely.

"The number of *yaba* addicts has seen an alarming rise in recent times especially among the posh young generation, where the majority are girls,"

said one dealer.

Private university and college students and a group of posh people are main consumers of this drug.

Prime sale points are Gulshan, Banani, Baridhara, Dhanmondi, and many parts of old Dhaka.

Law enforcing authorities said young affluent groups have become more prone to crime in recent times because of *yaba* addiction.

In last three months, law enforcers in the city arrested more than four groups of muggers; almost all of them were wards of millionaires and more importantly *yaba* addicts.

"No matter how rich parents are, they will not give money to their children to buy drugs. Naturally they get involved in crimes to collect money for the

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Sayed (not his real name) a regular user of *yaba*, and student of a private university said

that initially *yaba* was sold at only few spots in the posh areas of the city.

"But dealers are now found all over the city. One can even have it home delivered by ordering over the phone," Sayeed said.

The drug is believed to have entered Bangladesh from Myanmar and Thailand. Most of the addicts are between 18 and

30 years of age, while women have also been major customers from the beginning.

"Phensydyll and brown sugar addicts are now getting used to *yaba* as it gives a flying sensation and tastes better," said a dealer.

Yaba, a red pill with chocolate flavour and is inhaled in the same manner as brown sugar taken from foil paper, was originally manufactured by the Nazis to help keep their troops awake for days.

A private university student said she first tasted the drug with her boyfriend who was also an addict.

"He first told me that it tasted like chocolate and was very smooth. We took it together and got addicted to it ever since," said the girl.

But the department of narcot-

ics control remains mum over the issue while doctors' fear that the country is heading for a next generation that is slowly losing its merit, and can do nothing to stop the spread of *yaba* use.

Department officials said that they are helpless as the 'big fish' are involved with the trade.

"We arrested the main dealers three to four times but could not be kept in jail because they used their connections with the influential people to get released," said an official of the department.

"If a powerful person like a minister uses his influence to free a drug dealer, what can we do," said the official.

Many officials believe that to stop the spread of *yaba*, the government must make and enforce stricter laws in regard to drug addicts, dealers and traf-

fickers.

"For example the government of Thailand has changed the law with provision of highest punishment for carrying, using, trading or manufacturing *yaba*," said Hafizur Rahman, assistant director of the department.

"On the other hand we cannot punish them due to loop holes and weak law even though we are regularly carrying out raids against them," he added.

However, he said that they have identified most of the big fish, including some of the narcotic control department officials, involved with this trade and will conduct a strong drive against them.

TAJUDDIN AHMED'S HOUSE

Family back at home after months of wandering

NOVERA DEEPIA

The family of Late Tajuddin Ahmed, the first Prime Minister (PM) of Bangladesh, has now come back to their ancestral four-storey home in Dhanmondi, after three months of living with relatives at different addresses.

This was because Rajuk had declared the building 'risky and unsafe' on April 6, 2006.

Zohra Tajuddin, Tajuddin Ahmed's wife who is living in the house with her younger daughter and son-in-law, told Star City: "We came back to the house three days ago after the Buet report that the house was now safe to move back in. If we face any problems, we will take steps accordingly."

The house, built in 1960, developed cracks in April after a

developer excavated 17 feet on the next plot for construction of a commercial building without taking proper safety measures.

The developer, Amin Mohammed Foundation Ltd (AMFL), also ignored written and verbal warnings about a possible accident from neighbours and Tanjim Ahmed, the son of the late PM.

Rajuk inspector Nazmul Haque on April 6 inspected the four-storey building on Plot no. 751 at Satmasjid Road and the excavation site on Plot no. 752.

"Rajuk will take legal action against the developer. It is quite clear that the developer has been neglectful of the safety of adjacent structures while excavating such a vast area," Nazmul had said.

However Tajuddin family sources said that Rajuk has not taken any action as yet.

Zohra Tajuddin also informed that AMFL workers have dumped 40,000 cement bags against the wall of Tajuddin's house on the southern edge in a bid to prevent it from caving in.

A part of the building on the ground floor slightly caved in three months ago. The workers were also pressing long steel beams against the pilings of the excavated ditch on the western side of the plot fearing that the structure there might also cave in.

Just after the Rajuk's declaration Smin Husain Rimi, Tajuddin Ahmed's daughter told this correspondent: "We have sent a letter to the Buet's civil engineering department and they are now doing the soil test. We will take our next step after we get their report."

Zohra Tajuddin confirmed yesterday that according to the Buet report, the house can now be safely occupied.

On the other hand Enamul Haque, Chairman, AMFL said: "We still have not received any copy of the Buet report. We will take further steps based on the report, if any damage has been done."

"We had sent a letter to the civil engineering department of Buet and they had placed very sophisticated and automated machine in the house in response to our letter," he added.

The sewerage system of the house had collapsed during this period, which was later repaired by the developers.

Zohra Tajuddin said: "Many historic events like meetings and discussions during the six point demand movement in the 60s and also during the Liberation War of 1971 took place in this house."

"Leaders like Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Mowlana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, M Mansur Ali, Kamruzzaman Khan and Syed Nazrul Islam regularly visited the house for meetings," she said. "There are many fond memories in this house that I will always cherish always. It would naturally be very painful for me to leave this house," she added.



Streets around the city were deserted yesterday afternoon as police barricaded the long stretch of the road from Tongi to Mahakhali during the opposition party's road march programme. The photo above was taken at the Mahakhali intersection while the one on the left shows Mirpur Road.



The house of Tajuddin Ahmed still under threat ...

To use or not to use

CITY CORRESPONDENT

When Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) introduced speed breakers about a year ago on both sides of Manik Mia Avenue, the road in front of Jatiya Sangsad, those using the road regularly were taken aback.

Firstly, because the speed breakers were so high that they damaged the Japan-made low level cars, and secondly they could not find any reason for speed breakers on the road which is the only longest thoroughfare in the city.

But they were stumped when they saw that traffic signals were being set up just behind the speed breakers as well.

When asked, concerned authorities had said that the speed breakers and traffic signals were put up for safe journey of the Members of Parliament (MP), to the parliament whose official residences were on the road opposite the Sangsad Bhaban.

But the irony is that MPs' cars never use the direct link road from their official residences to parliament, but take a left or right turn along Manik Mia Avenue to reach the parliament.

Apart from that, even civilians do not follow the traffic signals, which cost according to the Traffic Engineering Division Tk 11 lakh.

When asked, a high official of DCC admitted that the signals were placed there for the MPs.

Firoz Al Mujahid Khan, DC traffic south, was quite annoyed with those who do not follow the signals on the road.

"If the people don't use the signals and the vehicles rush by ignoring the signals, what can we do?" he asked.

"We file huge number of cases everyday against people who break traffic rules. But even after that, drivers do not follow the signals. Please ask them why they don't follow the signals," he said.

Meanwhile sources from the Sangsad Bhaban said that the

iron barriers on the two directions to enter the parliament from Manik Mia Avenue would

be dismantled or taken off soon

to enable the MPs to directly enter parliament from their

residences.



Car users ignoring the traffic signal at Manik Mia Avenue.