

During the period of the Mughal rule, the first name of Dhaka elites was 'Mir'. Perhaps one of them, as many believed, possessed a large area of land in the city whereby the name Mirpur was derived. Among the many Durgahs (shrines) at that time, the one at Mirpur was most visited. Many buildings were also constructed around the shrine.

## Bus operators violate route permits

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

Violation of route permits by city bus operators is causing sufferings to the commuters and increasing their travel cost and time.

Political influence forcing unauthorised use of routes, poor traffic management and other irregularities have taken the situation out of control for the authorities concerned, sources said.

The Regional Transport Committee (RTC) issues route permits for the commercial vehicles operating in Dhaka metropolitan area. According to the RTC route chart, 82 routes are currently in operation in the city.

The chart says as many as 3,136 buses and minibuses are operating on these routes with valid route permits. Each route has a certain ceiling of the number of buses and minibuses to be run on that route.

According to the chart, the authorities have exceeded the ceiling of route permits in seven routes while no permit has been issued for 16 routes.

Headed by the DMP commissioner, the RTC comprises representatives from the DMP, Dhaka Transport Coordination Board, BRTA, Bangladesh Bus Truck Owners Association and the civil



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society.

Tofazzal Hossain, a minibus owner, told Star City that the politically influenced bus owners run their buses on the profitable routes without valid permission and if any owner protests against it, they have to face a lot of pressure, even sometimes they have to stop business.

He said traffic police have underhand dealings with the politically influenced owners in operating their buses on their desired routes.

Abdul Kalam, another minibus owner, blamed the RTC for providing undue advantage to the influential owners.

Citing an example of

Duaripara-Kamalapur route, he said no bus owner gets permit for this route except for Karnaphuli Bus Service, which is owned by a highly influential, politically-backed person.

According to the permit, the buses on this route should start from Duaripara for Kamalapur via

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Kalyanpur, Asad Gate, Science Lab, New Market, Nilkhet, Katabon, Shahbagh, Press Club, Dainik Bangla and Motijheel. But the Karnaphuli buses are operated via Mirpur-10, Bijoy Sarani, Farmgate, Shahbagh, Press club and Motijheel.

Kalam said such violation of route deprives the Karnaphuli

passengers of travelling to New Market or Katabon directly while it also reduces income of the other bus services operating between Mirpur-10 and Sayedabad.

DMP Commissioner SM Mizanur Rahman who heads RTC said: "RTC would take action if there is any complaint against the owners violating route permit but I have not received a single complaint so far."

He said the DMP traffic wing is regularly checking route permits of the buses and minibuses and taking action if any violation is found.

The RTC chairman emphasised conducting more studies to design routes scientifically and fix the ceiling of transports for the routes.

"The RTC has already sent a proposal to the communications ministry for conducting a study on designing routes and fixing their ceilings scientifically," Mizanur Rahman said.

He however said there is no political influence in fixing routes for the buses and issuing route permits.

GM Siraj, president of Bangladesh Bus Truck Owners Association, blamed poor traffic management for the irregularities in city routes.

He alleged that Bangladesh

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### 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 are definitely satisfied with the present activities of the Election Commission in updating the voter list"

-- MK Anwar

Agriculture Minister

Told reporters after a sudden meeting the Chief Election Commissioner, on Wednesday.

Source: The Daily Star

"Yours (journalists) and ours is not the same information"



-- MA Aziz  
Chief Election Commissioner (CEC)

Told reporters that the voter list updating by visiting door to door has been in full swing since Friday, but information gathered from the field does not support the claim, on Sunday.

Source: The Daily Star

"I got fever after arriving in London"

-- Delwar Hossain Saidee

MP, Jamaat-e-Islami

Told reporters why he left London cutting early while sources in London said he had to flee, in the face of attacks by the British media, on Wednesday.

Source: The Daily Star



"I didn't demand anything for myself but the people want me as the president"

-- HM Ershad

Chairman, Jatiya Party

Told reporters replying to a query about his conditions to join the ruling four party alliance before the next general elections, on Friday.

Source: The Daily Star

"Isn't it better that the visitors now do not have to pay so much money to others?"

-- Brigadier General Zakir Hossain

Incumbent Inspector General Prisons

Told reporters replying to a query about his conditions to join the ruling four party alliance before the next general elections, on Monday.

Source: The Daily Star

"I never agreed that Bangladesh is the most corrupt country. Maybe, there are corrupt officials, but how can an entire country be corrupt?"

-- Hua Du

Country Director, Asian Development Bank

Said while addressing a meet-the-press programme at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium disagreeing with the Transparency International's label of Bangladesh as the most corrupt country, on Monday.

Source: The Daily Star

## Poorly paid working women forced into sex trade

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Working hard for 18 hours a day as a garment worker, 21-year-old Sultana (not her real name) has to sell her body secretly to feed her two children.

Sultana has been working as a helper at a knitting factory at Mirpur for the last three years. She draws Tk 1,800-2,000 per month including the overtime allowances.

Sultana's husband abandoned her three years ago. Now she is the only earning member of her four-member family. She has to look after her disabled father too.

She has to pay Tk 1,200 a month for her shanty. "It's impossible to arrange food for four persons at only Tk 600. So I have to look for alternative source of income," she said.

"It was a very difficult decision," said Sultana when asked how she could decide to become a sex worker. "But I found no

alternative after starving for several days."

Sultana's father, two children and neighbours do not know how she manages the family. She has to keep it secret to avoid social stigma.

Asked how long she would continue the profession, she said, "I will leave this profession as soon as I can. The problem is I have to feed my children and my father and I don't have anything to sell except my body. Can you show me an alternative?"

She is unaware of the organisations, which are working for the sex workers and until last year none had told her about the risks of HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases. "Only a year ago a doctor at Mirpur advised me to use condom."

"It's very hard to assume the number of women in sex trade in Dhaka as there is no comprehensive survey on them," said MA Hannan, co-ordinator of Aparajeyo Bangladesh, an NGO

that provides training to the children of the sex workers.

Parul Begum, president of the Ulka, an organisation working for

the welfare of sex workers, told Star City that they do not know how many women of other occupations are doing sex trade in the

city because they are doing the trade secretly.

"Most of them deny their involvement in this trade," Parul



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said. "We believe the number of residence-based sex workers is more than the street sex workers."

Terre Des Hommes, Italia conducted surveys on brothel based sex workers in 2004 and revealed that about 33 per cent of the sex workers start the trade due to poverty.

A baseline survey conducted by CARE Bangladesh about a decade ago revealed that a large number of root level women workers of different occupations have to sell their body as their wage is not sufficient enough to live decently in the society.

The 1997 study conducted on 230 street sex workers found about 33 per cent of them coming from garment sector, 42 per cent worked as domestic help while 10 per cent of them were hotel and restaurant workers.

Most of the sex workers who live with their families maintain the business locations far from

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## Dhaka: Yesterday, today and tomorrow



SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Destruction of buildings of architectural heritage in Old Dhaka upsets Mustafa Monwar

The Daily Star (TDS): What memory of Dhaka do you cherish most?

Mustafa Monwar (MM): The most memorable event about Dhaka is my involvement with the Shaheed Minar. I used to paint sitting in front of it. I feel so good whenever I go to the Shaheed Minar or pass through the area. After all, the Language Movement and February 21, 1952 are two very important events for our nation.

TDS: What is your first memory of Dhaka?

MM: What I remember most was the exciting journey I took to come to Dhaka for the first time. I came to the city with my father Poet Gulam Mustafa in the late 1950s from Faridpur. The journey was very exciting. We boarded a very big paddle steamer at Goalanda. The meals in the first class cabins were very good. I was a little boy then and thor-

my father.

TDS: What was the city like when you first came to Dhaka?

MM: It was a very beautiful city with its own identity and speciality. The traditional artefacts, the culture and heritage were distinct from any other city of the world. The characteristics of the city's natural, social and literary environment were incomparable. There was no pollution or crowd.

TDS: How have the changes in the city affected your life?

MM: I feel so upset when I see that the distinct nature of Old Dhaka has been destroyed completely for the sake of different urban facilities. A lot of unplanned development has taken place, which was not desirable.

TDS: Which part or what about Dhaka are you proud of?

MM: The Dhaka University area, especially the Ramna Park,

previously known as Ramna Race Course made by the British rulers.

TDS: What do you envisage for Dhaka in the next 20 years?

MM: There must be a long-term planning and development to make the city liveable. The roads must be made wider because of heavy traffic. Too many apartment buildings have made the environment suffocating. There is no place for children to play. There should be more open spaces for them. The transport system must be improved and underground transport system like London and Kolkata should be introduced. I want to see people living in a secured environment.

Veteran puppeteer and artist spoke Mustafa Monwar spoke to Novera Deepita of Star City.



Mustafa Monwar with his puppets.