

Binat Bibi Mosque, built in pre-Mughal times is the oldest in Dhaka. An inscription states that Bakht Binat, daughter of Marhamat, built it in 1454 during Sultan Mahmud Shah I's rule. It is a square, single domed mosque with octagonal towers. It has three arched doors on the east, north and south. Pre-Mughal features include the curved cornice, battlements and the absence of a drum supporting the dome.

## Pink Palace set to look pretty again

WAHIDA MITU

Century-old Ahsan Manzil, the majestic building once known as Pink Palace, is undergoing renovation after 13 years of its opening in 1992.

After the renovation at a cost of Tk 13 crore, visitors will be able to see the building at night as floodlights will be installed under the renovation project.

The palace originally belonged to Nawab family of Dhaka was abandoned for near about 100 years before the government decided to turn it into a museum in 1985 keeping its original texture.

"In order to protect the beauty of the palace we have taken up this renovation programme," said Dr Mohammad Alamgir, deputy keeper of Ahsan Manzil.

"During this renovation programme we'll also try to complete some unfinished works which could not be done in 1992," he added.

The PWD (Public Works Department) is in charge of the renovation which is expected to end by next month.

"As 90 percent of the renovation work is completed, we are planning to end the work by the first week of October," said Md Jasimuddin, executive engineer of PWD.

"Our renovation includes

replacing of wood beams of the palace by iron beams as wood beams were seriously affected by woodworm. Besides, we repaired the damaged roof of the ground floor and the old railing of the stairs," he added.

According to Bangladesh National Museum source, Ahsan Manzil was built in mid 18th century by Zamindar Sheikh Enayetullah as a palace for recreation. Later his son sold the building to French businessmen who made it their business centre.

In 1835, Khwaza Alimullah, father of Nawab Abdul Gani bought the building and began to live there after some renovation, which affected the original structure of the building.

Later in 1872 Nawab Abdul Gani again renovated the palace and named the palace "Ahsan Manzil" after the name of his son. The cyclone on April 7, 1887 damaged the palace seriously. Then it was renovated again and a tomb was built atop the palace.

In 1985, the government took initiative to turn the palace into a museum.

After another round of renovation in 1992, it was brought under the control of Bangladesh National Museum which set up a branch of the museum at the palace.

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Ahsan Manzil, once known as Pink Palace is being renovated after 13 years of its opening to public.



Children continue to be engaged in hazardous jobs.

## Child rights still an ignored chapter

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

Child rights activists and policymakers have expressed opposing views on the state of child rights and the barriers to establishing child rights in the country.

State Minister of the Woman and Children Affairs Alamgir Kabir speaking at parliament claimed that the situation of child rights is not as bad as depicted in the media.

But, Chairman of Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum, Wahida Banu, at a press conference said there is little development in establishing child rights in the country.

Both the speeches came Thursday, a day before the beginning of the Child Rights Week.

Wahida said no significant development occurred on child trafficking, child abuse or reducing child labour. She however said child education and child health have improved.

Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum is the alliance of 235 non-government organisations, which are working to protect child rights in Bangladesh.

While replying to a question in parliament, the state minister

On the other hand, Wahida said children of the country are facing rape, murder, exploitation and trafficking regularly due to poor socio-economic condition and lack of necessary initiatives from the government and non-

is increasing due to poverty, unemployment, migration of rural people to the urban areas and illiteracy, she observed.

She said the government and non-government organisations have taken some initiatives for the welfare of children and protecting their rights, but those initiatives are inadequate.

Talking to Star City, Aleya, a street child at Karwan Bazar, said ministers cannot say about the state of street children as they never face problems of food, money or shelter.

Aleya, a rape victim, does not know much about child rights, but she said, "NGO workers are good" as they teach them and provides them with some facilities.

Aleya alleged that her stepfather had raped her several times two years ago and she left her home as her mother did not protect her husband's crime.

"Once I left the house after

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**According to statistics of Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum, 1,858 incidents of child rights violation were published in the national newspapers during January- June period of this year. Of the total, 172 incidents were of rape**

said repression on children is not as serious as depicted in the media. "This is an anti-state campaign for ruining good image of the country and some individuals and NGOs are behind this campaign."

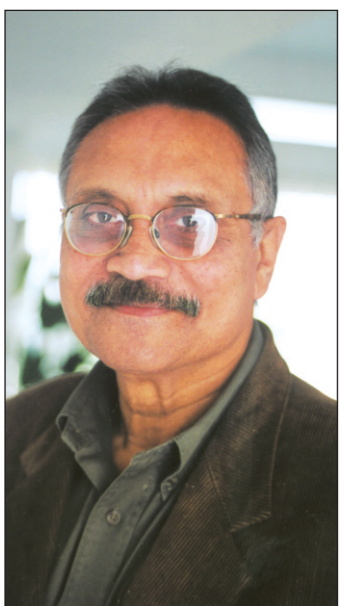
He claimed that the problem of child trafficking has almost been solved in the country.

government organisations. The children are still engaged in hazardous jobs, she pointed out.

Wahida said the media is not covering all the incidents of child repression because many victims do not inform the media about the incidents.

The number of street children

## Dhaka: Yesterday, today and tomorrow



Aly Zaker

**Star City (SC):** What is your first memory of Dhaka?

**Aly Zaker (AZ):** My first memory of Dhaka is one of Abhoy Das Lane in Wari where we came to live for a few months when my father was transferred to the city. I was a kid then. It was in 1954. There were some landmarks in that area at that time; some of which must still be there. There was Kamrunnesa Girls High School, the residential area of Tarabagh, Rankin Street with all its impressive old buildings. Begum Sufia Kamal used to live in Tarabagh that was a high point.

Dhaka then was like a district town; very few cars were seen on the roads. There were horse-drawn carriages and rickshaws. Obviously with the opportunity of our visits to Kolkata and being exposed to a sort of metropolitan life, Dhaka did not hold a lot of

attraction for us at that time. But then life was tranquil and that was very special.

**SC:** What memory of Dhaka do you cherish most?

**AZ:** Many. A visit to the one and only ice-cream shop in Dienfa building which later became Gulistan, travelling through the lanes and by-lanes in horse-drawn carriages to our grandmother's ancestral house in Badamtoli, an occasional boat-ride in the river Buriganga, the wrestling competition in Sadarghat, walking through the roads in Ramna area adorned by tall trees and dotted with red brick houses et al.

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

**AZ:** As I have said earlier that Dhaka was a very peaceful city

and there was no pollution of any sort. There were some traditional cuisines atypical of the city of Old Dhaka like *bakorkhani*, *nehari* (stew made of mutton legs) and of course the famous *tehari* that could be described as poor man's *biryani*.

**SC:** How have the changes in the city affected your life?

**AZ:** Tremendously. It is a mad city now and perhaps also most ill planned. Despite my love for this city, now that I have lived here for over 50 years, at times I feel like saying aloud, "Give me a break". Dhaka is on her way to becoming an unliveable city. When I get a chance, I scurry away from Dhaka to the villages of Bangladesh-- to be able to breathe normally, see green pastures and hear only the rustling leaves and singing birds.

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

**AZ:** The Dhaka with her golden heritage until such time that it was mutilated. I am also proud of being very closely associated with the Dhakaiyas in the old town. I think they are people with a golden heart to say the least. I am a romantic man but I do not find Dhaka romantic anymore.

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

**AZ:** Unless something drastic is done, this poor city will soon become a cauldron of human misery and suffering.

Aly Zaker, renowned actor, managing director and CEO of Asiatic Marketing Communications Limited spoke to Durdana Ghias of Star City.



Travelling through the lanes of Old Dhaka in horse-drawn carriages is one of Aly Zaker's most fond memories of Dhaka.

### 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.

*"Since a CEC [chief election commissioner] is a citizen and casts his vote to some party, attempts would be in vain to find a neutral person. Rather it is important to bring in neutrality in the election process"*

-- Justice Abdur Rouf  
Former CEC

Said at a public lecture organised by centre for policy dialogue at Brac centre in the city, on Tuesday.  
Source: The Daily Star

*"Do not export your local political strategies to the Bangladeshis in Britain"*

-- Anwar Choudhury  
British High Commissioner in Bangladesh

Said towards the politicians at a discussion programme at the British Council organised by British High Commission and Refugee and Migratory Movement Unit, on Monday.  
Source: Prothom Alo

*"I am fed up with the remarks of the donors about corruption and do not want to hear anything more from you"*

-- Saifur Rahman  
Finance Minister

Told the newly appointed Danish ambassador Einar H Jensen at his office, on Monday.  
Source: The Daily Star

*"I am totally helpless. You go wherever and however you want"*

-- A traffic sergeant at Karwan Bazar roundabout

Told a reporter when asked about the continuous traffic jam in the city. Vehicles stood still in all directions at Karwan Bazar roundabout as the city experienced a daylong traffic gridlock on the third day of Traffic Month, on Monday.  
Source: The Daily Star

*"Religious matters should not be brought into politics"*

-- Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain  
Health Minister

Told reporters criticising Leader of the Main Opposition Sheikh Hasina's speech on moon sighting, on Sunday.  
Source: The Daily Star

*"We gave up our operation as most of the dates in the market were rotten and of low quality. How much can we throw away?"*

-- Sarder Keramat Ali  
Magistrate, Mobile Court

Told reporters after the mobile court dumped 750kg rotten dates from the Badamtoli wholesale fruit market while hundreds of sacks filled with date-expired dates could not be destroyed due to lack of adequate manpower, on Tuesday. Source: The daily star

*"I do not know. The zonal executive officer knows"*

-- Saifuddin Ahmed  
Chief Executive Officer, Dhaka City Corporation

Told a reporter when asked the latest status of the development plan of Gulshan South Park which influential developers are allegedly trying to use commercially, on Tuesday.  
Source: The Daily Star