



According to a local legend, there were graves of four fakirs (religious preachers) in the area of Fakirapool. A pool (small bridge) suddenly emerged over them one night and the place was named after it. However, historians believe there were graves and a small bridge was built on it afterwards that evolved the name of Fakirapool.

## Turag for the grabbing



The Turag at Shinnirtak, Mirpur under the grip of encroachers.

MORSHED ALI KHAN

Like other rivers around the city, the Turag is constantly under the greedy eyes of encroachers. Despite attempts to recover the river, the Turag's channel, shore and foreshore at various points, on its twelve-kilometer stretch has been filled up and occupied. The most glaring encroachment of the Turag is at Shinnirtak, on the northern side of the Mirpur Shah Ali Mazar near the pontoon of the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority.

Nearly an acre of the channel was filled up to set up a landing facility for traders of sand, soil and bricks. It is at the densely populated Mirpur and Tongi areas that the Turag is most infringed.

With the receding waters the river has narrowed down significantly as it winds its way towards Ashuliya and Tongi to join the Balu. The dry season also brings in one of the worst possible pollution in the river water around the city as it gets stagnant with no water flowing in from the river Jamuna in the upstream. The only movements in the river waters of Turag, Buriganga and Balu during dry season come from the high and low tides generated from the downstream.

To revive the rivers around the city the Water Development Board (WDB) is now preparing a Tk 610 crore project called Augmentation of Buriganga Flow by Restoring Silted up Links with Jamuna. The Institute of Water Modeling (IWM), a private research center has also completed a study involving four augmentation routes. According to sources in the WDB the IWM has identified route-3 as feasible for the project. The route-3 envisages dredging Dhaleshwari off-take with Jamuna and direct the Jamuna water through the rivers Pungli, Bangshi, Turag and Buriganga. The official source

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

## 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.

*"The only duty of the advisers is to help the election commission but they do not seem willing at all to do this"*

-- MA Aziz

Former Prime Minister

Told a big rally to mark 'National revolution and solidarity day' in front of BNP central office at Nayapattan in the city, on Tuesday. Source: The Daily Star

*"Newspapers may write anything, I did not write that in papers"*

-- MA Aziz

Chief election commissioner (CEC)

Told reporters when his attention was drawn to the advisers' request for his resignation published in the newspapers, on Monday. Source: The Daily Star

*"Is it a question at all?"*

-- Khuda Bokhs

Newly appointed Inspector General of Police (IGP)

Told reporters at the police headquarters when asked what steps he has taken as IGP to prove that he is a neutral person after questions rose on his political inclination, on Sunday. Source: The Daily Star

*"I cannot hear anyone else today because of a problem with the sound system"*

-- HM Ershad

Chairman, Jatiya Party (Ershad)

Said while hurriedly closing a meeting where party some party leaders said it is not possible for the party to contest the election on its own, on Friday. Source: The Daily Star

*"Hilton's [a US-based hotel] presence in Bangladesh will enhance our country's image in the world"*

-- Nazmul Huda

Former communication minister

Wrote in a note on the Millennium Holdings' application giving Tk4.16cr railway land under a nominal licence fee to build a five star hotel without any tender process, on Friday. Source: The Daily Star

*"The idea of neutrality is not a good one. We should rather think about how to make the election process neutral"*

-- Justice Abdur Rouf

Former CEC

Said at a roundtable organised by Transparency International Bangladesh at Brac Centre Inn in the city, on Wednesday. Source: The Daily Star

*"Be a little patient"*

-- AFM Solaiman Chowdhury

Secretary, Establishment ministry

Told reporters when asked how long it will take to make changes in the administration, on Sunday. Source: The Daily Star

Compiled by: Durdana Ghias

## Take a breath, ride a rickshaw

Environment friendly three wheelers dominated city streets during siege yesterday

TAWFIQUE ALI

It was literally rickshaws that took over the Dhaka streets and dominated all the thoroughfares as the lone means of transport during yesterday's Dhaka blockade programme enforced by the 14-party alliance.

Contrary to the prevailing tense political situation, the streets of the capital put on a rather sportive look with thousands of rickshaws plying all around.

The ban making many roads off-limits to rickshaws disappeared yesterday with countless three-wheelers pulled by toiling poor men keeping the city dwellers mobile.

The rickshawpullers were seen happy to use the VIP roads including the one in front of the Prime Minister's Office and the Airport Road, along the stretch from Karwan Bazar to Shahbagh intersection, and all around the Bangladesh Secretariat.

All the rickshaws, licensed or not, plied in a festive mood taking advantage of no restriction and free roads with all other modes of public and private transportation staying off.

"I have earned so far Tk 260," said Monju, a rickshawpuller, at Bijoyagar at 1:30pm.

Pasha, who usually pulls rickshaw in Jatrabari area, said in front of Bangladesh Bank at around 1:45pm that he earned 170.

"Many rickshaws entered the city from suburbs as there is no check or restrictions today," said Pasha. "It is really enjoyable to pull rickshaws in such free streets."

"But I don't want such a situation to prolong, as it will be damaging for the people," Pasha said fearing further political confrontation.

Tens of thousands of the commuters were seen moving on foot from place to place apart from taking rickshaws.

Dr Jui of the pediatric department of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital was on her way back home in Green Road area on foot at 1:45pm. "I came to hospital by a motorbike along with my brother," she told Star City.

While educational institutions remained closed due to the blockade programme, many private and public offices saw thin attendance of the officials and employees.

Visiting the Bangladesh Secretariat at 12:45pm this correspondent found the offices mostly empty with very few officials attending their work.

"How can we retain our job if

we don't turn up at the office," said an official of the Public Information Department.

Members of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) were holding a street rally at the intersection in front of the foreign ministry.

"No legal proceedings are being held today in the Supreme Court. No judges have turned up. We are not taking part in the court work," said SCBA President Barrister Amir Ul Islam.

"But we want to drive home our demand for change of the chief election commissioner and reform of the Election Commission through peaceful demonstration," Barrister Islam said. "We don't want any confrontation."

Advocate Abdul Matin Khosru, former law minister of the Awami League government, said at the rally, "We will not let the CEC to hold the next general elections."

Some young people engaged in low-paid job in and around Dhaka city, took the blockade as an opportunity to make some quick bucks.

Md Solim who works in a garment factory in Narayanganj came to Dhaka yesterday to make some money pulling rickshaw. "I have earned Tk 170 by 11:30am," he said.

Babul, another rickshawpuller,

said that he saw all the rickshaws at one garage in Rayerbazar were out yesterday. Usually, some rickshaws are left back at the garage.

Former minister and Awami League central leader Mohammad Nasim told this corre-

spondent, "We have kept rickshaws out of the purview of the blockade programme considering that there has to be some means of transportation. People have to move from place to place."

"Rickshaw is the main transport of the middle and lower middle class

people," Nasim said, "Above all, the poor rickshawpullers too will have an opportunity to earn some money."



Rickshaws were everywhere during the 14-party siege yesterday.

## Children exploited into drug peddling

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

Drug peddlers are using children in their illegal and dangerous trade in the city as child labour is cheap and safe for the business. The innocent children are being used as drug carrier, seller and informer in different spots of drug business.

When police raid drug peddling spots the dealers escape leaving the children at the spots. It is not easy for the police to catch the children, said the drug peddlers.

Ataul Haque (not his real name), a powerful cannabis dealer who is operating his business in Mirpur, told Star City that he has three employees and among them two are children. He said he has to pay Tk 2,000 a month and two meals daily to the adult employee while the two children get Tk 700 a month each along with daily meals.

He said children are safe as seller and carrier because police do not suspect them.

Both the children work as drug

carriers for the customers who are shy at coming to the selling spots. They keep watch and inform the peddlers about customers and police.

"I'm very watchful about the police and narcotics department officials. I know them all. I can identify police even in civil dress," Enamul, one of the two children,

said. He said that three years ago Ataul had saved him from the wrath of a mob as he was caught red handed while stealing food

from a shop.

At least three cases were lodged against him by the police and narcotics control officials over the last two and a half years, he said. "I don't care about these cases because I pay regularly to the proper authority," Enamul added.

He said his employer helps him in moving the cases.

Ataul said he has been in this business since he was 16 years old. "I don't like to be in this business as I got married and my children are growing. But police and other related authorities will not allow me to shun this path. I know I will have to pay them regularly even if I get out of this illegal trade," he said.

About using children in his business, Ataul said: "They are helpful for me and I also help them. They would have become muggers or something like that and it is better for them to sell drugs instead of becoming a criminal."

The section 37 of the Children Act, 1974 provides for punish-

ment for giving intoxicating liquor or dangerous drug to children.

"Whoever in any public place, whether a building or not, gives or causes to be given in any child any intoxicating liquor or dangerous drug except upon the order of a duly qualified medical practitioner in case of sickness or other urgent cause shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year, or with fine which may extend to Taka five hundred or with both," says the law.

Aminul Islam, a child rights activist of Aparajeyo Bangladesh, told Star City that there is no parallel provision in the Narcotics Control Act 1990, so the crime of giving intoxicating liquor or dangerous drug to a child would be dealt with by the Children Act.

He said there is a problem too as the Children Act 1974 does not define what is intoxicating liquor or dangerous drug, so any prosecution under this section is extremely doubtful.



At different parts of the city traffickers are using children to peddle drugs.

STAR PHOTO

## No respite from load shedding in winter months

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

The gravest power deficiency surge in the country's history is most likely to continue even in the upcoming winter.

Although a reduction of fan and air condition use promises a shrink in electricity consumption as winter spawns its chill around the spring air, the Dhaka Electricity Supply Authority (DESA) officials reckon that load shedding would persist this winter.

"To say that load shedding would not occur during winter would be deluding," said DESA senior information officer Iqbal Hossain. "Power outages would continue, but we will try to keep it under a tolerable level," he added.

Hossain told Star City that last year saw a decrease of

around 500 megawatts (MW) of daily power usage in winter. The decrease was lower than anticipated, as the magnitude of winter was moderate and it lasted only a short period.

However, the seasonal transformation is likely to increase irrigation with more cultivation of seasonal crops, and further irrigation in pastoral regions demands an excess of around 600 MW of electricity during this period.

"We have to divert some power concentration from the city to the pastoral areas to cope with the increased demand there," said Hossain. "The provision of power to these areas balance the reduction in demand in Dhaka," he added.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22