



thecitythatwas

In old days, the present Shahidullah Hall of Dhaka University was known as "Baag-e-Musa Kha". According to Hakim Habibur Rahman, this garden was famous for the Muslims. It was named after Musa Kha, the son of Isa Kha, one of the famous Baro Bhuiyan. Musa Kha was captive when he lost a war with Subader Islam Kha who was in turn very kind to him.

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NOISE POLLUTION

Deafening noise exposes millions to serious health hazards

The new set of rules gazetted in September to combat noise pollution does not incorporate vehicular horns as an offence

WAHIDA MITU

The noise pollution is rising to a dangerous level exposing millions in the city to serious health hazards.

The sharp rise in the number of vehicles and indiscriminate use of powerful horns are creating deafening noise day and night in the city.

Moreover thousands of construction sites, industries and unabated use of loud speakers are adding to the noise pollution, exposure to which doctors say can cause nausea, high blood pressure, cardiac arrests, insomnia and various other diseases.

The government after delays for years, has finally framed a set of rules to control noise pollution, but it surprisingly overlooked to incorporate the biggest polluter -- vehicular horns -- into the set of rules.

The rules were made under Environment Conservation Act of 1995 and gazetted on September 3, 2006, by its implementing

agency -- the Ministry of Environment and Forest

But a few shortcomings are obvious, including the control of unnecessary honking of the cars.

The unnecessary honking of cars is the biggest nuisance caused, according to some non-governmental organisations (NGO).

According to the circular, noise level suited for Dhaka is 50 decibel in the day and 40 decibel during the night for the silent zone, with hospitals and schools. For residential areas the allowable level is 55 decibel in daytime and 45 at night-time. For industrial areas the level is 60 decibel in the daytime and 50 decibel at night.

The ideal sound level in commercial areas is 70 decibel in the day and 60 at night and, in industrial areas 75 decibel during daytime and 70 dB at night.

"But continuous and unnecessary honking of cars exceed the permissible level by manifold and thus cause serious pollution," said Nazmul Karim Sabuj, member secretary of Noise Pollution

Control Committee.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), Unicef and World Bank (WB) research, among the 12-environment pollutants that causes 30 serious diseases, noise pollution is one, Sabuj added.

"Constant exposure to noise can cause different problems which includes loss of hearing, cardiac problems, sleeping disturbance, various psychological problems, gastro-intestinal-tract (GIT) upset and problems for unborn babies," said Professor Dr M Abdullah, head of ENT department and Principal of Sir Salimullah Medical College and Mitford Hospital.

But surprisingly a public awareness bulletin produced by the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) traffic department urges drivers to 'keep honking and move forward cautiously while driving.' This wrong message is regularly broadcast over the state-run Radio Traffic Channel and the private radio channels.

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Regular traffic jams and indiscriminate use of horns cause serious noise pollution in the city.

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.

"Price of essentials did not increase at all. Only journalists and newspapers witnessed the price increase but people were fine."

--Khaleda Zia
BNP chairperson and former premier
Told a press conference at Hotel Purbani, on Thursday.
Source: The Daily Star.

"I know they have to suffer a lot for this. We are also suffering"

--Shiekh Hasina
Awami League (AL) President
Told reporters on people's sufferings due to the blockade, on Monday.
Source: The Daily Star.

"I am also wondering why they left my office in such a way"

--Mahmudur Rahman
Former energy adviser
Told reporters when asked why in-service senior civil servants attending a surreptitious party hosted by him left the place secretly avoiding journalists and photographers, on Saturday. Source: The Daily Star.

"It is not a big deal who heads the institution [Election Commission]"

--Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan
Secretary General, BNP
Told a rally at Muktangan in the city, on Sunday.
Source: The Daily Star.

"What can we do when the particular person [Chief Election Commissioner MA Aziz] is not responding and his conscience is also not working"

--Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury
Power and Energy Adviser
Told reporters, on Sunday. Source: The Daily Star.

"I don't know what I would do. But I have no fascination for this job"

--Akbar Ali Khan
Finance Adviser
Told reporters expressing frustration given the advisers' limited authority to resolve the ongoing crisis, on Sunday. Source: The Daily Star.

"As long as politics exists in this country we the poor people cannot live peacefully"

--Hiron Ali
A bus conductor
Told a reporter while talking about the losses incurred during the blockade, on Tuesday. Source: The Daily Star.

"Nearly a month has gone since the caretaker government has taken over, but we see no interest of the top level people to do anything to solve some of the pressing problems of the city"

--A Rajuk official
Told a reporter seeking anonymity, on Saturday. Source: The Daily Star.

Compiled by: Durdana Ghias

Burning 24 hours a day, for a month



While the entire country reels under a severe shortage of electricity, thanks to Roads and Highways Department (R&HD) dozens of lights over the Mohakhali flyover have been kept switched on 24 hours a day over the last one month, according to local residents. Although streetlights are maintained by Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) but in the case of Mohakhali flyover the DCC's Chief Executive Officer Saifuddin Ahmed said that it was the responsibility of the R&HD to maintain lights over the flyover. None at the R&HD could claim responsibility for the waste. Meanwhile millions across the country continue to suffer an unprecedented outage of power every day. This picture was taken yesterday at 2 pm by our Staff Photographer Syed Zakir Hossain.

City's poor to face greater housing problem

RIZANUZAMAN LASKAR

Dhaka City dwellers struggle to negotiate with acute housing problems as the land margin of the city continues to shrink, rendering millions of people to live in subhuman conditions in slums or as floating population.

Economists and urban experts attributed the degrading living condition to the overwhelming underprivileged population and exorbitant accommodation expenses.

According to various sources, the demand for housing in Dhaka increases by around 10 percent each year. Public and private sectors construct around 15,000-20,000 housing establishments a year to meet the staggering demand of 70,000-80,000 houses.

According to the Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh (Rehab), real estate developers construct about 5,000 to 6,000 housing units in Dhaka each year.

Although 90 percent of the establishments in the city are fostered by the private sector, urban experts alleged that the private sector developers are building houses only for the higher-income group for greater commercial profit.

While the emergence of fast-growing private sector has eased accommodation constraints for the high-income class, it is the low-income groups, slum dwellers and the lower middle class people who are the worst victims of the towering accommodating expenses.

A study reveals an estimated 2.6 million people possessing their own houses in the city creates accommodation opportunities for the rest of the population living as tenants. Around 2.24 million of these tenants live in houses allotted by employers.

However, a vast number of people belonging to the lower middle-income group face serious accommodation problems. The towering accommodation expenses render this majority people to live in establishments

that urban experts term as 'improved slums'.

While these 'improved slums' are known to offer better living conditions than the subhuman conditions of slums, most of these housing are makeshift arrangements with vulnerability to frequent sufferings from the rainwater seepage and flooding.

A research conducted by the World Bank shows a staggering 4 million underprivileged people living in an estimated 1925 slum establishments scattered throughout the city.

Another survey report, released on the UN World Habitat Day last month depicted an annual growth of around 6 percent slum dwellers in the capital city since 1991 with around 30,000-50,000 people accommodating themselves in different slums scattered around the city each year. Majority of these dwellers are living under the poverty line--earning less than Tk 4,500 per month.

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Gulshan Plot: Who is the legitimate owner?

Syndicate active to grab plots through loopholes in de-requisition process

TAWFIQUE ALI

Conflicting claims of a Rajdhani Unnyan Kartipakkha (Rajuk) plot in Gulshan has given rise to the question on its legitimate owner and Rajuk's role in it.

"Rajuk allotted a 6.13 katha-plot on the Gulshan-Banani Lake to me in 1994 at the west end of Road no-6," said Dr. Abdul Jabbar Chowdhury, a Bangladeshi expatriate in London.

"But Mosaddeq Ali's (an immediate past BNP MP) men took possession of the land on October 14 and put up a boundary wall the following day forcing my caretaker out of the premises," Chowdhury told this correspondent over the phone from London on October 14.

He said he has transferred the ownership of the land in the names of his two daughters -- Dr. Saji Shahzaya Chowdhury, a Cambridge graduate and the other Lamiya Chowdhury, a London University graduate.

ABM Masudur Rahman, Ali's personal secretary, claimed that the land had been bought from its original owners following its de-requisition.

"If Jabbar Chowdhury has any appeal, he should check with Rajuk," said Masud.

According to a gazette no-45 of 1999, the government de-requisitioned 0.66 acres of land, under the Cadastral Survey (CS) marks 367 and 379, in favour of one Azizul Haq on November 11, 1999.

The documents produced by Masud show that Azizul Haq sold his land to seven different persons on November 23 just 11 days later.

Interestingly, Mosaddeq Ali bought the land from the seven different owners and another piece from one Farida Nasir on July 23, 2006, according to land registry records.

"A well-organised syndicate of land grabbers in connivance with government officials have long been active in the business of capturing valuable land exploiting loopholes of de-requisition," said a

top official of Rajuk seeking anonymity.

The syndicate resorts to various underhand means and legal tangle to manage de-requisition and transfer of land to some

private owner, he said. "Usually, the ownership of a wetland and lake is claimed producing a so called original owner," the Rajuk official said.

Five to seven years back, large

area of lake and wetland went under grip of influential land grabbers in like manner by a law that would allow de-requisition of land acquisition.

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The controversial plot in Gulshan.