

Badaam Tali Ghat (Ferry Point) was founded by Nawab Shayesta Khan during his regime between 1664 and 1677. Historians think there were some Badam (pea-nut) trees which the area was named after. There was also a wooden palace near the area that belonged to Nawab himself. However, the Nawab very often lived in a tent put up in the palace premises. The tent was then known as Katra Pakurtali.

IMPLEMENTATION OF BUILDING CONSTRUCTION RULES 2006

# Delaying tactics?

DoE and CAAB are allegedly delaying formation of the One-Window Service Cell, a vital component of the new construction rules set to be effective from January 1

TAFIQUÉ ALI

With only ten days left for the Building Construction Rules 1996 to become defunct, setting up of the One-Window Service Cell (OWSC) under the 2006 laws is now uncertain due to dillydallying of the Department of Environment (DoE) and Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB).

The Urban Development Committee had earlier decided that the new Building Construction Rules 2006 would become effective from January 1. The new law prescribes creation of a single office in Rajuk with representatives from 17 major organisations to facilitate building plan approvals and other administrative works in the construction sector. Under the old rules a prospective developer had to move from office to office to obtain various clearances for construction.

While 15 organisations have already nominated their representatives for the OWSC, the DoE and CAAB have yet to nominate anyone saying that they are looking into the matter.

Secretary of the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism Shahid Alam said that they would send a representative soon but he did not elaborate on why they have taken nine months to decide to send a representative.

Chairman of Rajdhani

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Unnayan Kartripakha (Rajuk) KAM Haroon said that they might set up a 'provisional OWSC' in which representation of DoE and CAAB may come later.

"The applicant can always obtain DoE and CAAB clearances separately from their respective offices," Alam said.

DoE Director Md Shahjahan said that they have no difference with the concept of the OWSC. "But there are some formalities as per the environment related laws, which the DoE cannot perform with just one representative," Shahjahan said.

"There are some contradictions between the 2006 rules and the clause 12 of the environment conservation law and we have asked the Rajuk to look into the matter," added Shahjahan.

The Rajuk chairman, who is also member secretary of the Urban Development Committee (UDC), said that they would soon discuss how these legal complications could be removed.

"We might have to slightly

amend either the new construction rules or the environmental laws to bring in DoE's participation in the OWSC."

Prof Nazrul Islam, a member of the UDC, said they had raised the issue of making the cell functional at the second meeting of the committee on December 11.

"We will further discuss the matter in the next meeting scheduled for 24th December as the old building rules are set to be annulled by December 31," Islam said.

Some top Rajuk officials however blame a vested quarter for delaying the formation of the OWSC. "Some of the very people involved in forming the cell do not whole-heartedly want to make it functional," said a Rajuk source.

"For instance, issuance of environment clearance certificate is a source of earning at the DoE and they fear losing that illegal earning once the OSWC is in place," said the source.

Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed, a leading environmentalist and

vice-chairman of UDC, said they are hopeful that the OSWC would be formed under the caretaker government's rule.

The adviser in charge of the works ministry too expressed his hope that the cell would be formed removing whatever impediments exist, he said.

"The DoE can be bypassed in disposing the service of the cell, as there is no specific definition of high-rise building in the new building rules," said Prof Sayeed. "Floor Area Ratio (FAR) in the new rules now determines the height of a building."

Gazetted in April this year, the new building construction rules of 2006 ensure fair practice in the construction sector and making the capital city livable.

Engineer Abdul Awal, president of the Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh (Rehab) had said earlier that some quarters opposed the cell, as it would put an end to unfair gains in the process of approving the building plans.

According to the rules, One-Window Service Cell will include representatives of all 17 agencies, concerned with issuing clearances in building construction, under a single roof for quick disposal of design approvals. The Cell has to approve a development plan and construction design within 45 days after submission of the plan.

## KHOKA'S CORNER

### DEADLY MANHOLE



MIRIAM KUENZLI

For over a year residents of Free School Street in Kathalagan area have had to negotiate this deadly manhole every day. Hundreds of pedestrians, rickshaw pullers and particularly school children are exposed to great danger due to this open manhole. The danger is even greater at night when the area is dark due to the lack of proper streetlights. According to residents the Dhaka City Corporation zonal office has done nothing to cover the manhole despite repeatedly being alerted to the problem. Will our honourable mayor look into the matter?

# Migratory birds on their way... Home away from home



Chirping of migratory birds still continues to echo on the remaining city lakes and wetlands.

WAHIDA MITU

The destruction of natural habitat, poaching, pollution and disappearance of wetlands are keeping migratory birds away from the city.

With the advent of winter however some migratory birds have converged on the city's remaining wetlands like Mirpur Ceramic lake, Dhaka Zoo, Jahangir Nagar University area, Botanical garden, Ramna park, Dhaka University area and on the banks of Buriganga and Dhaleshwari river.

"Migratory birds are decreasing day by day both in terms of quantity and species," said Sajahan Sarder, president of Bangladesh Bird Watchers' Society, secretary-general of Nature Conservation Committee (NCC) and also an individual bird-watcher for the last 30 years.

Migratory birds arrive from

the frozen Himalayas, Central Asia, North Asia, East Europe and the Far East between mid-September and early November. They fly away between early March and late April.

The NCC had initially recorded 116 species of migratory birds, based on annual censuses starting from January 2002. But the current census on 48 wetlands has found only 40 species of such birds.

From the year 1991 to 1994 NCC recorded around 5,000 migratory birds in Dhaka Zoo area. But in the year 2005 the number drastically dropped to 706.

The habitat of Dhaka Zoo is more congenial than Mirpur Ceramic Lake. But number of migratory birds of Dhaka Zoo and Jahangir Nagar University area is decreasing for several reasons, said Sajahan.

"People's attitude toward the

migratory birds is not pleasant. Human trap and crowding are main reasons behind the reduction of migratory birds in Dhaka Zoo," said Sajahan.

The zoo authority admitted a drop in the number of migratory birds in zoo in the last few years. They said urbanisation near the zoo area has driven the birds away. Fearing that the migratory birds could spread bird flu, a section of zoo officials also prevented the birds from settling on the lake.

"To save zoo inmates from flu, we discourage migratory birds to visit this place and clean hyacinth from the lake, because it attracts the birds," said Kazi Fazlul Haque, curator of Dhaka Zoo.

Migratory birds are of two types; aquatic and non-aquatic. The aquatic birds usually come from the Himalayas, Central Asia, North Asia, East Europe and the Far East. Different

types of ducks including marsh duck and diving duck are seen in the city for the last 15 years.

Among the non aquatic (bush, leaf and forest birds) birds red breasted fly catcher, grey headed fly catcher, dusky warbler, babbler, flower pecker, shrike are seen in the city.

According to bird specialists, botanical garden is the best place for non-aquatic warbler and babbler. Other than these a large number of resident birds live in well-wooded area. Well-wooded jungle birds from other districts of Bangladesh migrate to several spots in the city.

Resident birds migrate to several places at daytime to take shelter and for security as during this season they do not feel safe in their nests for human trap. As these birds are weed eaters, they search for food in nearby areas at night, said the bird experts.

**M Laurent Jalicious, deputy director, Alliance Francaise, who has been living in Dhaka for the last one year, shared his feelings with Durdana Ghias of Star City**

When I came to Dacca (the French of Dhaka, not the old name of the city) just a year ago it was a nice morning. My assistant picked me up from the airport. The first thing that struck me was thousands of rickshaws. There were plenty of them. It seemed like chaos. But if you look at it closely you will be pleasantly surprised to find an innate harmony. Even in the chaos the rickshaw-pullers are masterly in driving the little chariot, which is amazing. There is hardly any narrow alley in the city, which they are not able to negotiate and when you go through the alleys in a rickshaw it is like a swirl around you.

Before I came here I was told that the country had pollution and traffic. But beside that Bangladesh has an identity as a part of the subcontinent. Officially I deal with the cultural side so I am interested about the cultural side of the country. Bangladesh graphic arts, like painting and sculpture, are very renowned in the world of arts. I, while living in Paris, came to know about the graphic arts of Bangladesh long before I came here. Bangladeshis are very adept at works of graphic expression. Even I like the advertising logos made by the ad firms. This is also a part of Bangladesh art.

Besides, I came to know about two great persons Rabindranath Tagore and Dr Muhammad Yunus. I was expecting to see the fruit of micro-credit and small business here. I did not have the opportunity to visit the whole country. But I went to a village in Srimongol. Wherever I go, I try to drop into a roadside teashop or a small shop at a bus stand. I like these small enterprises.

I observed the fact that Bangladesh people are very fond of arts. We have two art galleries in Alliance. Whenever I go downstairs anytime in a day I find at least some visitors. There are many art galleries in the city visited by hundreds of people everyday. There is no better

evidence other than that. You are asking me why Bangladeshis are such art lovers? Well... I think I should ask you this question!

In 2007, there will be a big cultural fair in a museum in Paris named 'Shônar Bangla'. The museum is 'Guimet', one of the most famous museums in Paris. The fair will focus only on the graphic arts of Bangladesh.

What memory of the city to take back... a souvenir. I have just made a small rickshaw for my three-year old son, which I will take back with me. My colleague introduced me with a rickshaw maker, Hakim Mistri, in Hajaribagh of the old town. For three weeks I discussed with him how to make the mini rickshaw. I have a video clip where Hakim is saying to the French people about the good sides of a rickshaw; that it is non-polluting, environment friendly and very social.

The mini rickshaw has all the features of a real rickshaw. When we took it from old town a short person was found to drive it to my place while I followed it in a real big rickshaw. When we are traveling it became a spectacle. Everybody on the road was amused to see a small man driving a mini rickshaw and me in a big rickshaw. They were shouting 'pagol pagol'; meaning we were probably mad!

Yes, I would like to bring my family to Dacca but I did not do it because my son is going through a learning phase. If I bring him here he will have to study either in English or in Bangla. But I want him to learn French first. If he were a baby or grown up I would have brought him here.

Did I meet Zidane? I knew this was coming! Yes I did. But I am not a football fan. I have no idea about cricket also. I cannot say what is going on in the game. My favourite sport is fencing, a traditional European game. In Bangladesh I like to see the game kabadi, which is a traditional game of this country. But I find it less played in the city.

Dacca is twice the size of Paris in terms of population. I will describe the city challenging for both inhabitants and authorities. It is a challenge to build proper infrastructure like telephone and public transport.

The city has inherited a heritage from its past; preserving that heritage is also a challenge. I saw ancient doors with traditional designs and buildings with architectural skills and craftsmanship of that time. These are the testimony of this city's past. Dacca should not lose it.

The city has a cyclic nature. If you see it at 10 at night it is quiet; then if you see it at 10 in the morning it is bustling with children going to school, fish vendors shouting with a 'bucket' on their heads. Sometimes I buy fish from them. But the thing I like most is mango. In the season of mango I take it in my lunch and dinner most of the time. I have a plan to go to a mango festival in a district

town next year. About the style of the people of Dacca I can say that as far as I know they are intellectually curious. Whenever I attended a dinner at somebody's home or went to some place I was always plying with questions about French writers, directors and their careers. Even if I go somewhere new I know that I will never get bored.



Jalicious finds an innate harmony in the chaotic flock of rickshaws.