

Satrasta back to its old self

Late mayor Annisul's stellar work going to waste as trucks return to the thoroughfare

HELEMUL ALAM

With trees and shrubs on the median strip thinning out and trucks parking vehicles on both sides of the road, Tejgaon-Satrasta is once again returning to its old self -- a troublesome thoroughfare for traffic.

Five years ago, late mayor of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Annisul Huq turned the choked and almost unusable road into a functional one by removing an illegal truck stand, constructing wide pavements and planting trees on the median.

For decades, the illegal truck stand had occupied Satrasta (seven-way intersection) where trucks, pickups and covered vans would block both sides of the road. There was hardly any walkway.

In face of strong opposition from influential transport leaders, no one dared to remove the illegal stand. But things changed for the better after Annisul removed the stand despite coming under huge pressure.

The renovated Tejgaon-Satrasta road soon become an embodiment of the late mayor's tireless efforts to ease the city's unbearable traffic congestion.

But the road, named after Annisul Huq after his death in 2017, is now facing the same problem of traffic congestion due to absence of any visible action from authorities concerned for a sustainable parking solution that the late mayor had pledged.

"The road became useable again because of the initiative of mayor Annisul. But covered-vans and trucks now start occupying the road again from evening," said Md Ali Noyon, a trader at Farmgate.

During recent visits, this correspondent saw a lot of the shrubbery on the median strip of the 18-metre wide road has disappeared.

A part of the footpath at the northern side has been damaged while construction materials of an adjacent multi-storied building is being kept on the walkway.

Locals and some rickshaw-pullers said the number of trucks parked on the road increases at night.

During multiple visits at night,



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON, PRABIR DAS



Trucks, covered vans and pickups park in multiple rows on the Satrasta at night. During the day, the road is clear but adjacent roads become parking spots for heavy vehicles. The photos were taken recently.

this newspaper saw over 50 trucks and covered-vans parked on both sides of the road.

Mohammad Atik, a covered van driver of Nababganj Transport Agency, said they keep their vehicles on the road for convenience.

He said if they keep their trucks at the terminal then they have to wait till around 9am to leave the area due to other vehicles.

Not only that, all the three connecting roads -- the one in front of BG press staff quarter, behind central food depot and the one connecting Satrasta near the rail crossing to the northern side -- are also occupied by trucks.

The road behind the Land Record and Survey Department was also occupied with around hundred trucks and covered-vans. Some were kept there for repairing works.

"We cannot move around smoothly as the road in front of our quarter remains occupied by these vehicles round the clock," said Solaiman, a resident of Land Record and Survey Staff Quarter.

He said there was a plan to shift all the trucks but that did not happen due to lack of proper initiatives after the death of Annisul Huq.

The road is choked with randomly parked trucks and

covered vans even during the day, said locals.

Iqbal Habib, joint secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, said when the Satrasta at Tejgaon was recovered, it was done conditionally.

Annisul made a commitment that he will create a parking place in a planned way at some places beside the rail line and on land of railway and the central food depot, said Habib, also an architect.

But after the mayor's death, everyone seemed to have forgotten that, he said.

Habib said as the government has constructed warehouses at

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THREE HOSPITALS' REFUSAL TO TREAT TWIN NEWBORNS

HC seeks opinion of four amici curiae

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday sought expert opinions from four amici curiae (friends of court) on the alleged refusal of three hospitals in Dhaka to provide treatment to newborn twin babies and their death on November 2, and on the explanations given by the hospitals on the issue.

The amici curiae are Supreme Court lawyers ZI Khan Panna, Manzill Murshid and Dr Shahdeen Malik, and the chief pediatric specialist of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The HC bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice Ahmed Sohail asked for their expert opinions on this issue before this court on January 18 next year.

The bench passed the order after lawyers concerned of three hospitals -- Bangladesh Islami Bank Hospital, Dhaka Shishu Hospital and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) -- submitted their explanations to the court about their roles regarding treatment of the newborn twin babies.

Deputy Attorney General AKM Amin Uddin Manik, who went through the explanations submitted to the HC on behalf of the three hospitals, told The Daily Star that Director of Dhaka Shishu Hospital Dr Syed Shafi Ahmed, Deputy Director Dr Prabir Kumar Sarker and peon Md Shamsul Haque have made contradictory statements in their explanations.

On November 2, the HC bench in a suo moto (voluntary) move sought explanations from authorities concerned of the three hospitals about the death of newborn twins, as the babies were refused treatment there, after Abdul Kalam Azad, father of the babies, brought the bodies of the babies to the court premises and placed the issue before the bench for necessary order.

Azad had gone to Islami Bank Hospital on a CNG-run auto-rickshaw with his pregnant wife Sayera Khatun on that day. She gave birth to the twins on her way to the hospital. Islami Bank Hospital refused to admit the babies saying they

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Fire guts 55 shanties, shops at Kalshi slum

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 55 shanties and shops were gutted in a fire that broke out at a slum in Dhaka's Kalshi early yesterday.

The fire originated around 2am at the slum in Baunia Beribandh. Twelve fire fighting units doused the blaze after four and a half hours of frantic efforts, Rasel Sikder, duty officer of Fire Service Headquarters control room, said.

The cause of the fire is under investigation, he said, adding 43 shanties and 12 shops were burnt to ashes.

On Monday night, a fire originated at Sat Tola slum in Mohakhali, burning down around 100 shanties and shops while 60 shanties were gutted in a fire at Jahuri Mahalla slum in Mohammadpur yesterday.

Tazreen fire victim dies amid calls for reparation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A former worker of Tazreen Fashions passed away yesterday morning due to her injuries. The disabled worker had been protesting in front of Jatiya Press Club.

For over two months, workers had been staging a sit-in in front of the press club, demanding proper compensation, rehabilitation and treatment for their injuries sustained during the fire at Tazreen Fashions in November 24, 2012. At least 113 were killed and 172 were injured. The workers' demands for justice and reparations have not yet been met.

Thirty-two-year-old Mosammat Sharmeen Akhter breathed her last at Nischintapur, where Tazreen was located, and where the worker resided till her demise.

She was suffering from chronic injuries caused by lung haemorrhage. On the day of the tragedy, Sharmeen was attempting to exit building after the fire alarm rang. Caught between panic-seized workers, Sharmeen fell, and was trampled as people attempted to run out of the building, said Nasima Akter, another former worker of the factory.

Sharmeen's ribs were shattered, and her lungs were punctured. This caused internal bleeding, followed by infection and lung cancer, Nasima added.

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Investigators looking into Monir's SUVs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Investigators will now scrutinise how Monir Hossain alias Golden Monir had been using SUVs registered under names of current and former lawmakers.

They will also check the process of importing such vehicles into Bangladesh. Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) seized five vehicles from Monir's car showroom "Auto Car Selection" on the capital's Pragati Sarani, during a 12-hour drive on Saturday.

Monir could not show papers for three of the seized vehicles. He and his family members were using two other SUVs registered under names of two current and former MPs, intelligence sources said.

According to law, an MP cannot transfer ownership of their duty-free vehicle within five years of purchase.

An officer closely involved with investigation told The Daily Star that they handed over keys of the five luxury vehicles to Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) yesterday.

"BRTA will first inspect how those vehicles were imported and who brought them into Bangladesh. Then National Board of Revenue will investigate the matter," he said.

BRTA sources said one SUV (Dhaka Metro Gha - 157007) is registered under Sherpur-1 MP Atiur Rahman Atik, also parliament whip.

The registration was issued on August 20, 2017, mentioning NAM Bhaban on Manik Mia Avenue as the address. On the number plate, Auto Car Selection was mentioned along with the registration number.

According to intelligence sources, the MP brought the duty-free SUV and sold it off to Monir, who then used it himself.

The Daily Star phoned Atik yesterday, but he did not receive the call. Atik earlier told reporters that he kept the car at Monir's place, as he was using a government car.

Another vehicle (Dhaka Metro Gha - 174444) was registered under former Kurigram-3 MP Akkas Ali Sarker. The registration was issued on February 10, 2019, which also mentioned Auto Car Selection.

Akkas claimed he sent the vehicle to Monir's garage for repair.

Both the vehicles were seized from the parking area of Monir's six-storey building in the capital's Merul Badda area.

Recently, Monir presented a Prado SUV

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Kwe Shwe Hla betrayed Mro people: PCP

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Chairperson of Bandarban Hill District Council (BHDC), Kwe Shwe Hla, has betrayed the Mro people by allegedly giving their jhum land in Lama upazila's Dola Para for tourism, said Parbatya Chattogram Pahari Chhatra Parishad (PCP) in a statement yesterday.

BHDC took the jhum land under the promise of facilitating the livelihoods of local people by exhibiting agricultural technology and developed farming methods there. But without any discussion with the local Mro people, the chairman leased the land to an organisation for tourism purposes, said the statement.

The chairman in question said at a press conference on Sunday that the land was taken following a discussion with the Mro community. "No one lived in that area and no Mro people will be affected," he claimed.

PCP said in their statement that Kwe Shwe Hla's words were contrary to the reality. In the statement PCP demanded immediate cancellation of the lease and a stop to all forms of tourism-related construction in Chimbuk area.

Though there is provision in CHT Peace Accord to discuss with regional council in carrying out all development activities and council functions, Chairman Kwe Shwe Hla didn't follow this procedure, and his actions are not in the interest of Mro people and their livelihood of jhum cultivation, said the statement.

Despite several attempts to reach Kwe Shwe Hla for a comment on PCP's statement, he could not be reached.

A school looking after its students

Birshreshtha Munshi Abdur Rouf College arranges online counselling sessions

RASHIDUL HASAN

The prolonged lockdown and transition to online schooling has had an undesired side effect -- its negative impact on students' mental health.

According to experts, the situation is quite dire and needs immediate attention from educational authorities. Fortunately for the students of Birshreshtha Munshi Abdur Rouf Public College, its authorities have come up with some measures to tackle this.

"Many of our students are going through various kinds of mental problems, all stemming from the pandemic. This is quite concerning for us, which is why we are arranging counselling and motivational sessions to help them cope with their issues," Lt Col Hafez Md Zonayed Ahmed, principal of the college, told The Daily Star.

In addition, the school is also conducting virtual sessions for the guardians, to aid them in understanding the students' predicaments, he added.

Lt Col Zonayed said he has spoken to almost all his students and their parents and found out some insights. "Many parents have informed that sometimes it is difficult to keep up with their children's moods. On the other side, students have informed me of their boredom, fatigue, and loneliness borne out of not seeing their friends for so long," he said.

"So far nine sessions have been held for both students and parents where noted psychiatrist Dr Helal Ahmed, Dr Almasur Rahman, and Brit Gen (retd) Md Baker spoke to them," Lt Col Zonayed said.

Two of these sessions were conducted separately for female students only, where noted psychiatrist Professor Mehjabin Hoque shared her views on how to deal with specifically feminine problems.

Farin Islam, a second-grader at the school, told this correspondent that staying home for months without seeing his friends has made him miserable. He said

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High Court justifies law to carry out virtual proceedings

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday justified the law that has empowered the country's courts to virtually carry out the judicial proceedings through videoconferences and other digital means.

The HC summarily rejected a writ petition that challenged the legality of the Usage of Information Communication Technology by Court Act, 2020 allowing the virtual court functions.

The HC bench of Justice Jahangir Hossain Selim and Justice Md Badiuzzaman passed the order after holding hearing on the petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer AKM Asiful Haque last month.

The HC said in the rejection order that virtual court system has been introduced in many countries including neighbouring India during the Covid-19 pandemic in order to avert infection, Deputy Attorney General Dr Md Bashir Ullah told The Daily Star.

Citing the HC observation, he said virtual court functions are not "in-camera proceedings", as lawyers, litigants and even media persons can participate in this court

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Five acres of land was reclaimed after Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority conducted a drive yesterday to remove illegal structures at Ferihat area of Narayanganj's Sadar upazila, on the bank of Dhaleshwari River. Such drives will continue, as per the High Court's directive, officials said.

PHOTO: SANAD SAHA

MEDIA STAFF SACKED DURING COVID Steps to be taken for their reinstatement

Says state minister for information

BSS, Dhaka

State Minister for Information Murad Hasan yesterday said steps will be taken to reinstate media workers who lost their jobs during the coronavirus period.

He urged media owners not to fire personnel during this difficult time, and said this issue will be discussed with media owners and concerned professional organisations, said a press release.

Murad said this while speaking at the concluding session of a programme titled 'Mass Media's Fight During Corona: Painting and Photography' organised by Broadcast Journalist Center (BJC) at the auditorium of National Museum in the capital.

Appreciating the role of journalists during the pandemic, Murad said BJC members worked to serve humanity risking their lives during the difficult days of Covid-19.

The sacrifice and dedication of journalists will be written in gold letters and will remain an example for all, Murad added.

Additional Secretary of Health Services Division Enamul Haque, DMD of Gazi Group Colam Mortuza Bappa, Shaker Ahmed, Nur Safa Julhas, Nazrul Kabir, Dr Ashraful Haque and Dr Saleh Md Tusher also addressed the programme, with president of the organisation Rahul Raha in the chair.