

People and Places

Megacity Dhaka : What Life Beholds

DHAKA, residence of presumably eight million plus people is going to stand at twenty-first position among all the cities in the world by the year 2000. This would-be status has solely been determined on the basis of its population, that is, its land area limit has not been a factor for

"the city is a place for multiplying happy chances and making most of the opportunities." Throughout the globe more people will live in the urban area than the rural part by the year 2000. Surely, Bangladesh does not have as many cities to contain all the migrating rural folks. Nevertheless, Dhaka al-

ways contains a fare share of them up to its brim.

In Dhaka, the fastest urban growth are in those areas that are poorest and least prepared. Suburban areas of Jatrabari, Bashabo, Badda etc. where they lack proper sanitation facilities.

It is difficult to point out exactly when men first started to congregate in large numbers within the limits of this city. But indeed, Dhaka is a historic city. However, the influx of people from all over the country originated soon after the independence of Bangladesh. And as time progresses the trend continues rendering it to a megacity status.

A thinking man must agree with the fact that the more attractive a city becomes the more it will attract overwhelming number of immigrants. In comparison to the chaotic thoroughfares of Dhaka, the sprawling countryside may project a picture of peace and serenity. However, the most wretched city slums offer better access to paying jobs, more varied diets, better education and better health care than most of the rural communities.

The late social critic Lewis Mumford once remarked that

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playground for kids, schools, hospitals and so forth. Most neighbourhoods of inner city like Maghbazar, Monipurpara, Khilgaon etc. lack playground, park and community centres where people can interact with

semi-literates. And the people here are not necessarily healthy. Perhaps, it is fitting to mention at this point that, if patients require surgical or medical intervention at the government hospitals, they have to

have identical programmes at some particular localities, while none has any at others.

Though the City Corporation is doing its best to deal with the garbage generated by eight million plus people, the city is not exactly litter free. After a moderate drizzle or even after a mild storm the city looks exception-

remote places. Its gas and electricity is produced elsewhere in the country and the fuel is imported from abroad. However, Dhaka is (unfortunately) the hot bed of the country's troubled political arena.

On the other hand, Dhaka remains the cradle of creativity and ambition for the country's



Rickshaws jamming the traffic

— Star photo

the illiterates and the semi-literates have many. Thus, the rickshaw pullers Abdur Rahman and their working cousins and their jobless cousins constitute the multitudes.

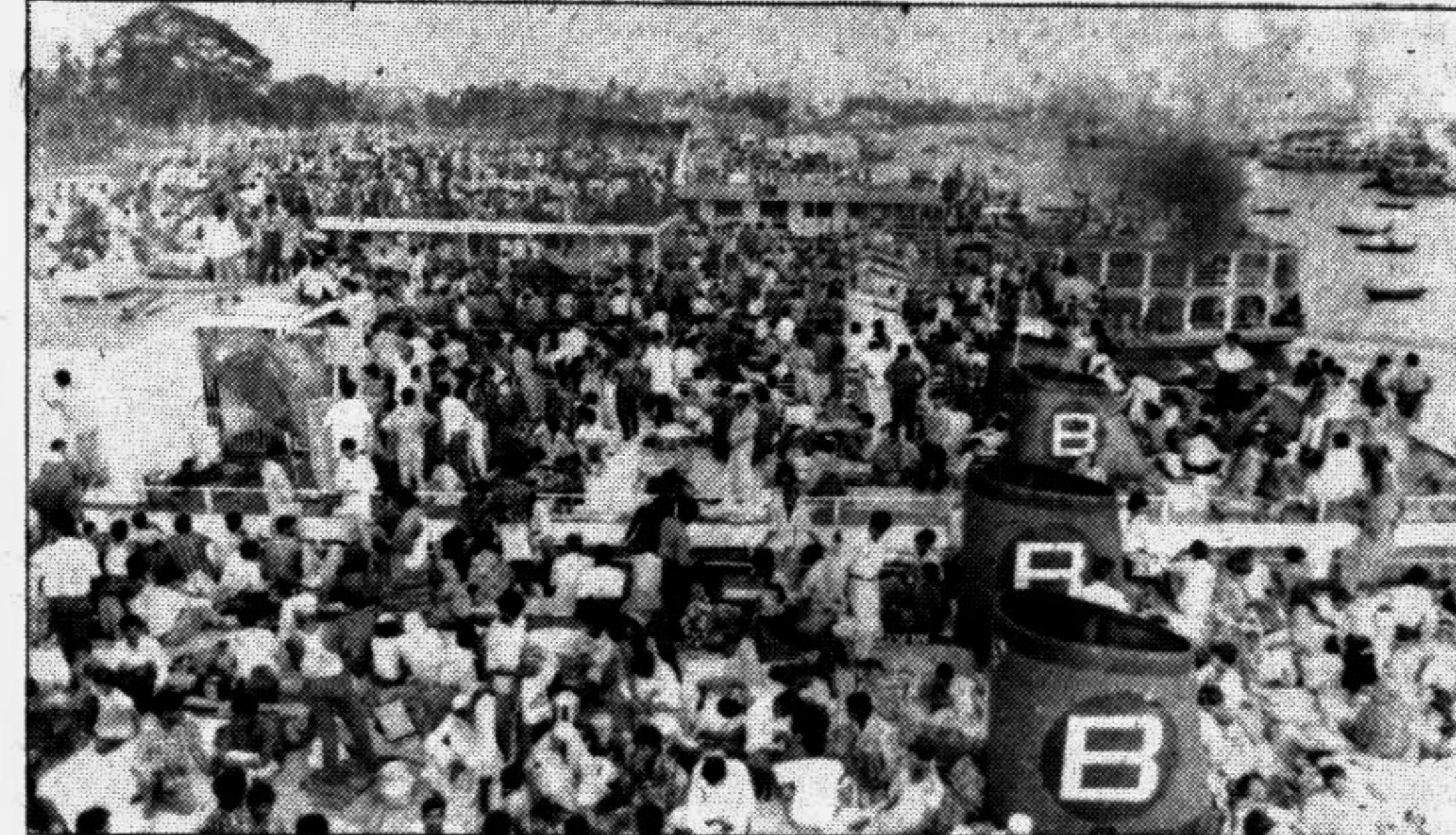
The price of a city's greatness is an uneasy balance between vitality and chaos, health and disease, enterprise and corruption, art and inequity. Comes a time, this delicate balance threatens to tip, and when it does, cities can spiral into an anarchy that defies all attempts at reversal. History issues grim warning about future of a city. One must remember in this regard, since the beginning of civilization the rise and fall of great cities has been part of its cycle since humans first began to congregate in large numbers some 6000 years ago. Many a city has risen to greatness only to collapse because of epidemics, warfare, ecological calamities, shifts in trade and social disorder. As for our beloved Dhaka city, the present trend suggests that the combination of crowding, poor sanitation at the shantytowns and the suburban areas along with its implications elsewhere, noise and pollution can eventually become intolerable.

It is indeed an enormous task teaching the pros and cons of the traffic system to an illiterate rickshaw puller and may be it is a further bigger task to control the number of rickshaws on the city streets. Perhaps, our system of governance does not facilitate taking drastic measures like controlling the rickshaws like the way it does not facilitate implementing compulsory birth control. Here, intellectuals generally have one or two offsprings while

thus destined, it would have surely produced someone near to that class or perhaps even better, who knows? Moreover, to focus on the degradation is to miss the deep well of pride and determination that inspire the urban poor to better their lives.

Abdur Rahman, a carefree rickshaw puller, came to this town about two years back. Now he earns about Tk 3000 a month and has five mouths to feed. He lives in the shantytown at Agargaon. While on the streets he shows some respect for the traffic signals, he never ponders to figure out the significance of indicator lights or brake lights of the passing motor vehicles.

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Crowd at Sadarghat terminal: Overloading of launches

civilization. Here poets and painters, intellectuals and professionals, that is, most of the prime citizens of the country contribute to its glory. The Elizabethan London that nurtured Shakespeare, after all, was a fetid dump cloaked in coal dust. If only Dhaka was

ultimately, the responsibility for keeping Dhaka livable rests with the government and its residents. The social scientists need to figure out soon, a suitable explanation regarding how to engage the multitudes of have-nots without having the city burdened any further about it. The city streets, pavements and most of its parks and vacant areas have been taken over by them already and the city is having it up to its neck.

Like the cumbersome bumble bee that flies in the face of aerodynamic theory, Dhaka city will have to defy gravity and invent a sustainable future for it self. Since the fate of this country is entwined with that of this city a sensible soul has no other choice to wish for regarding this whole affair.



Demolition and construction go on side by side, but not to ultimate cure. — Star photos



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Amsterdam : A City Coming to Life by Night

by Asiuzzaman

easiest way to travel through most of the interesting places of Amsterdam where one can hardly reach by foot. During the roundtrip cruise you can enjoy sights of the 17th century houses with their beautiful facades, the narrowest house, the famous western tower, the city-centre, the infamous red light district and much more. You will also visit the harbour with its big ocean liners and smaller vessels and the on-board residence which was built scores of years ago when the Dutch people

erred to be the gateway to Europe. The city is the commercial hub having headquarters of almost all the major reputed companies and Amsterdam is always ready for the tourists.

You can enjoy every moment in Amsterdam as long as you don't possess illegal drugs and weapons," said a Dutchman now residing in Bangladesh.

Dutchmen consider themselves to be too liberal. Because of such liberal attitude criminal activities are comparatively

thick of the crowd. "Don't show that you have money with you", they cautioned. In case of street robbers, they cautioned, "think about your life and health first. Try to stay in places with many others and do not act like the tourist prototype".

The Dutch people are hard-working and very dutiful. Delay by a minute is considered by them as "delay for the day". "Dutchmen never wait, they live," commented another Dutchman. They have proved themselves as a hard working nation by stopping the encroachment by sea. The Amsterdam city of an altitude about

chores. Some 15.5 million people of Amsterdam have about 11 million bicycles.

If you take a long walk across the city, you will see the whole city is arrayed in a perfect order. Most of the city buildings are constructed in ancient architectural designs which are the hallmark of the 17th and 18th century. There are only two buildings with trendy fashion following the modern architectural designs, but the Dutch people demonstrated to lodge their protest saying that such buildings would spoil the beauty of the city.

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