



# Star city

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**the city that was**

The huge cannon in Osmany Oudyan is called Bibi Marium. It was built during the Moghul period. Subedar Mir Jumla used Bibi Marium during his campaign in Assam. In 1840, Dhaka's Magistrate Walters recovered it from the northern bank of the Buriganga.



One of the nine Royal Bengal Tigers that Dhaka Zoo may be forced to sell or set free.

## Bengal Tigers face eviction by zoo

SULTANA RAHMAN

Burdened with an increasing animal population, Dhaka Zoo is planning either to sell off many of its Royal Bengal Tigers, or release them back into the wilds of the Sundarbans with the cooperation of the Forest Department.

Senior officials of the Department of Livestock and of the Forest Department held two meetings last month to formulate rules and regulations for the scheme. The move comes after successful in-house breeding of tigers and lions, which could no longer be accommodated due to the zoo's shortage of space and funds.

Dhaka Zoo currently houses 14 Royal Bengal Tigers and 21 lions, all of which were born and bred in the zoo. Among the tigresses, one named Promila is now three months pregnant. Zoo officials claim they urgently need to find homes for nine Royal Bengal tigers, 15 lions, six hippopotami and 138 deer.

The zoo's curator, Mafizur Rahman, said that all these animals are not only causing

space constraints and consequent overcrowding but also severely affecting funds for overall management. In a cage built for only two animals, the zoo authorities are forced to accommodate up to seven lions or tigers. In total, 1,935 animals and birds of 184 species are housed in Dhaka Zoo.

"We do not even have enough manpower to run the show," said Rahman. "To keep a single feline in a cage we have to spend a lot of money, so the higher authorities are now chalking out ways to dispose of the animals," he added.

The zoo authorities spend Tk 22,000 every day to feed the huge stock of carnivores. "The cost has become a burden for the management," said Rahman. "Dhaka Zoo is supposed to be a zoological showcase but instead has turned out to be a breeding centre," he added.

Sources said that failure to adopt an exchange program with other zoos in the region or outside, over the years, has put the zoo authorities in a precarious situation.

Since 1974, some 45 tigers have been born in Dhaka Zoo. Most of them were either sent to other zoos in the country or sent overseas.

### New faces

While some animals are causing overcrowding at Dhaka Zoo, visitors to the country's largest animal sanctuary will nevertheless soon have the opportunity to view 33 new animal and nine new bird species. Imported from South Africa, Bhutan and Myanmar, at a cost of nearly Tk one crore, the new additions will include cheetahs, chimpanzees, zebras, painted stork, ray parrot and golden pigeon. The authorities are importing them in pairs to ensure they do not become lonely or depressed.

S.R.

Senior officials said that they are now in a position to export or exchange tigers and lions with other zoos in the world but are unable to do so because, "in exchange programs the zoo authorities have to bear the freight charges". Moreover, the authorities are unable to provide funds for such exchange programs.

There are also tentative plans of releasing the 'surplus' tigers into the Sundarbans. But that could only be done after experts give their opinion. If the concerned departments approve the proposal, then steps would be taken to free the tigers experimentally. The rehabilitation program envisages freeing the felines into an area of the forest with close supervision.

## Dividing Dhaka between rich and poor

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The Old Airport Road, known commonly as 'VIP Road', has basically divided the city into two. With nearly half of all the city's traffic managers deployed there to control thousands of motorised vehicles every day, it is one of the busiest thoroughfares in the city. For millions of not-so-well-off city dwellers, living on the eastern and western sides of the road, the choice to commute is hopeless.

City planners attribute the problem to lack of east-west roads in the city. They said apart from Panthapath and New Elephant Road there is virtually no east-west thoroughfare. Moreover they said lack of planning among the policy makers to allocate public transport has aggravated the problem.

Between Mohakhali and Shahbagh, from 6am to 10pm, the VIP Road only allows rickshaw commuters to cross the road at Bangla Motor intersection. Then again, the wait for each crossing is so long that during any working day there are frequent altercations between rickshaw pullers and commuters on one side and the traffic con-

stantines and sergeants on the other. The traffic managers wait somewhere between 15 and 20 minutes before disrupting the 'VIPs' and letting the long queue

of a melange of vehicles cross the road -- that just for a few minutes.

The sergeants are constantly

VIP Road is one of the busiest thoroughfares in the city. For millions of not-so-well-off city dwellers living on the eastern and western sides of the road the choice to commute is hopeless.



worried about the consequence of a VIP being delayed on the road. One sergeant said that they have instructions to keep the VIP Road always moving without any traffic build-up.

People living in Rajabazar, Farmgate, Kalabagan, Rayerbazar, Dhanmondi, Lalmatia having to cross VIP Road are left with little choice. They have either to hire a taxi or take a bus and change it several times making time consuming detours. Or they are left with the option of taking a rickshaw through the pot-holed lanes and by-lanes of Rajabazar or Kalabagan.

Traffic sergeants at different intersections said that when planning, the policy makers never take the plight of the city's poor into consideration. A police sergeant near Panthapath said that to take his five-year-old son to school everyday from Rampura to Dhanmondi and back is itself a separate job.

"My wife travels halfway by rickshaw, crosses the busy Sonargaon with the child and then starts looking for a rickshaw again, she stays in front of the school until 1.30pm and returns home in the afternoon," he said requesting not to be named.

Millions living on the eastern side at places like Malibagh, Eskaton, Khilgaon, Bashabo, Maghbazar and other places are subjected to the same plight for traveling into the western part of the city. The existing rules on the city's divider only make life difficult for the common people.

A source in the bus owners association said that the traffic police have categorically refused to allow any official bus stops on the Sonargaon road due to its VIP status. The only official bus stops on this large stretch of the VIP Road is at Farm Gate. All others are illegal for which every bus owner has to pay the police.

"Officially they will not allow us to stop but they will charge money for the unofficial stops at Karwan Bazar, Sonargaon and Bangla Motor intersections," said the source.

## Worthwhile waste



Waste Concern employees process organic refuse at their Mirpur premises.

SOHEL ISLAM

City dwellers can barely avoid the acrid smells of garbage while commuting through the streets, lanes and by-lanes.

Filth and household wastes always litter the roads, making the air intense with bad odour. Waste pickers popularly known as *tokais*, dogs and crows aggravate the problems manifold owing to indiscipline handling. You may have been facing the predicament for many years, but no sustainable solution is yet to be followed.

Dhaka city now generates at least 4,000 metric tons municipal solid wastes every day. The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), the only responsible government organisation for waste management of the city, can collect only 50 per cent of the waste and dump at Matuail and other different unofficial sites.

The rest of garbage remains on roadsides, open drains, and

low-lying areas, thus contributing to the deteriorating quality of the city's physical environment.

Out of the 4,000 metric tons, 70 to 80 per cent wastes are organic. The rest of it is mainly inorganic material that is collected by about one lakh people from an informal sector, including *tokais*.

In 1995, Waste Concern, a non-government organisation came up with an idea to convert the organic part of the waste into compost which is ultimately used to produce environment friendly fertiliser. The encouraging aspect of its project is that the way organic waste is handled does not create any smell or nuisance within the community. Over the year, Waste Concern has expanded its project to four more areas in the city -- Dholpur, Baily Road, Kalyanpur and Green Road.

Although they have started a pilot project supported by international and public agencies at Mirpur this venture has not flourished significantly.

Elaborating on this issue, Executive Director of Waste Concern Maqsood Sinha said, "The sector is not flourishing owing to three main reasons. The space for the project is a big factor. A project like this needs at least 0.4 bigha of land to operate smoothly. As we all know, the land has become very expensive in Dhaka. So no private entrepreneurs come forward to invest a huge sum of money in it."

"It needs massive effort to employ adequate manpower for a project like this. The initiative entails house-to-house waste collection, decentralised composting of the collected waste using aerobic method and marketing of compost and recyclable. The necessary part is to be involved in partnership with government agencies, civil society and other non-government organisations. This is another obstacle," said Maqsood Sinha.

"This business is a not traditional one. In order to get return from a project it involves a lot of

labour. That's why people do not venture into this business," added he.

"There is a market demand of 15,000 tonnes of compost per year. But we can only produce 300 tons a year. We supply compost to three companies and they enrich it as required by the farmers. With the Dhaka's waste, we can produce at least 5,000 tonnes of compost each year. It is an area in which the private entrepreneurs or NGOs can take the advantage of," said Maqsood Sinha.

Recently, the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives of Government of Bangladesh with support from UNICEF, has started replication of the decentralised composting projects integrated with door-to-door solid waste collection programme in 14 cities and towns Bangladesh last year. Waste Concern has been directly involved in assisting these replicated projects.

hello dhaka

Markets & museums closed  
Gulshan 1, 2 markets- Friday  
Elephant Road- Friday  
Bishal Center- Friday  
Baitul Mukarram Market- Friday  
Poiwell Market- Friday  
BCS Computer City- Friday  
Isha Khan Shopping Comp.- Friday  
Rajlaxmi Complex- Friday  
Stadium Market- Friday  
Bangabazar Market- Friday  
National Museum- Thursday  
Ahsan Manzil- Thursday  
Sonargaon Jadughar- Wednesday