



# Going going gone

DCC decides not to renew its contracts for advertising billboards, which expired on July 15

**SOHEL ISLAM**  
The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) started dismantling billboards on Saturday after expiry of the contracts with advertisers.  
A meeting chaired by the DCC chief executive officer on July 15 decided not to renew the contracts that expired on June 30 and to remove the billboards and outdoor advertisement signs from the DCC land.  
The decision came after the outdoor advertisement yielded much less revenues than expected in the fiscal 2002-03: the DCC earned only Tk 56 lakh, down from the projected amount of Tk 5 crore.  
Last fiscal, the DCC raised advertisement rates, which prompted 18 advertising firms to file lawsuits with the High Court (HC) last May. The rate was

raised from a flat rent of Tk 30 per square foot to Tk 100 for plain signs and Tk 150 for neon ones. The HC asked the DCC not to raise the rates and stick to the earlier ones.  
"But apart from two or three firms, no-one paid bills to the DCC after the HC order. We rented out about 2,50,000 square feet and projected our yearly earning at Tk 1.35 crore, before raising our previous advertising rate," said the DCC official.  
According to DCC outdoor advertisement rules, there should not be more than 20 billboards in a space of two kilometres on either side of a road. But the practice is quite different.  
It is alleged that the advertising firms that have got contracts from the DCC rent them again out to other advertisers at the rate ten times higher than the DCC's.

The city is given a reprieve from 'vision pollution' (above) as advertising billboards are dismantled (right) after DCC decided not to renew the contracts for billboards erected on city corporation land.

Another allegation is that armed cadres and influential political activists control the contracts.  
The splendour of Dhaka has diminished largely due to a steady crawl of outdoor advertisement. Although an instruction says no billboard or mega-sign is allowed in front of hospitals, government offices, educational institutions, mosques, temples, churches, museums and historic places, advertisers seem to prefer the restricted areas to attract more attention to their products.  
"The commanding height of billboards here and there adds to vision pollution," said Mansur, a student of Dhaka University, adding that vision pollution is as bad as noise, air and water pollution -- all taking away the pride of urban life.



# BMW drives into Dhaka

BMW surprise themselves by doubling their sales target within six months of arriving in Dhaka



The BMW X5 is the latest to arrive in Dhaka from the 'world's number 2' car brand.

**SYED TASHFIN**  
As the Bangladesh economy appears to be warming up, prominent foreign car companies are competing with each other at capturing this growing market. Mercedes Benz opened

its showroom in Dhaka last year and Volvo was soon to follow.  
Now, 'the world's number 2' car brand, BMW, has arrived in the city with its extremely impressive line up of cars. BMW has provided the dealership and has arranged a showroom for Executive Motors Limited, on

the same street as Mercedes Benz and Volvo.  
Most people in Dhaka may ponder how these companies actually hope to market their highly expensive, yet elegant cars in an economy like Bangladesh's. But the general manager of Executive Motors Ltd,

Tayabul Bahar, announced that the market is extremely eligible and ready for such expensive brands.  
"The new generation understand what a BMW car is and when it is being provided at almost the same price level as a Pajero, they would probably prefer the BMW 3 series or 5 series over the former," said Tayabul Bahar at the Tejaon showroom of BMW. "Originally, we were actually given a maximum limit of 25 cars to be sold within a period of six months, but in fact we ended up selling an impressive 42 cars."  
This impressive display of dealership, before the company's showroom had even opened, led the president of BMW to fly to Dhaka to unveil the new showroom.  
"We aim to sell 100 cars by this December, which is not really impossible since we have already sold 42 cars to our customers this year, without a showroom or even a BMW car in sight," said the general manager.  
Initially, Executive Motors Ltd would allow the customer to choose the car from their brochures and then ship the car as soon as the payment had been made.  
"The system of registration

was a little tedious previously, considering the fact that BMW is a German brand. But now, the Customs and Excise Department will be involved in the registration of the cars," said Bahar.  
It has been reported that BMW has lowered their prices for the Bangladeshi market, and that they are about to set up a plant in Thailand for the ASEAN countries. With the recently revised tax structure, Executive Motors, is going through a rough patch trying to sell their already highly priced cars with an additional 30% added to each unit.  
"At the moment, the BMW 3 series saloon cars, are priced at Tk 45,00,000 and the 5 series saloon cars, which has been the most popularly sold car in the city till now, is only Tk 60,00,000. On the other hand, the most popular BMW X5 is priced at 60,000 Euros (about Tk 40,00,000) before tax, for the Bangladeshi market," said Bahar.  
"Hopefully this trend in economic growth may lead other brands to introduce their products into the country, which would make this a competitive and much more efficient market," concluded Bahar.

# Traffic help centres for police and public

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) is likely to build 18 traffic help centres at important crossings in the city, said sources.  
The DMP came up with the proposal at a meeting on July 7 at the Prime Minister's Office, with Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Kamal Uddin Siddiqui in the chair.  
"Primarily, these centres are for traffic constables and sergeants who work eight hours a day on the streets, enduring the scorching sun or driving rain. They barely have any place to take shelter when rain comes, let alone having any room to take rest in," said DC Traffic (North) Anwaruddin Khan Pathan.  
"Being humans, they need to use wash rooms or a place to take rest when they are tired. At present, we cannot provide them with such facility. That's why we proposed the traffic help centres," said Anwaruddin.  
"After deployment of traffic policewomen at busy intersections in the city, the necessity of such centres is felt intense. If we fail to build help centres for them, we may have to withdraw them from duty out in the open," he said.  
The help centres will provide some service to commuters and drivers as well. The service to drivers

and commuters includes first aid, toolboxes and safe drinking water.  
"Quite often, cars and other vehicles stop in the middle of the road when they get flats and it creates traffic snarls. If such incidents happen close to the help centres, we will provide them with toolboxes to help them out," said Anwaruddin.  
Multinational companies like British American Tobacco, Standard Chartered Bank and Mobile have already expressed willingness

to sponsor buildings for such service.  
The proposed centres, each 18 by 12 feet, will be built on the unused land of the Dhaka City Corporation and Roads and Highways Department. An architect has already designed the structure.  
Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka is known to have agreed to provide the land for the centres.



An architect's view of the proposed traffic help centres

## TELESCOPE



### Barisal

The 159km Dhaka-Barisal river-route is virtually a 'death trap' due to the very poor signalling system, particularly at night, say launch owners, captains and navigators. Major waterways lack buoys and signals lights, while many vessels also ply the routes without adequate lights. "We depend on Allah while plying the route," said one captain of a BIWTC vessel.

In order to encourage daytime travel on river routes, the MV Sela offered free trips on its newly introduced Dhaka-Barisal-Dhaka route this week, from Monday to Thursday. BIWTC (Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation) had hoped the scheme would encourage private launches to offer similar services, but the BIWTC steamer, with a capacity of 400, attracted only 62 passengers on its first free trip.

### Khulna

Police recovered the body of a young girl last week from the offices of local NGO Dip Shikha, at Sher-e-Bangla Road. Saraswati Howladar's body was found hanging from the ceiling of a room where she lived with co-workers at the NGO, which she had joined only last month as a field worker. Police are unsure whether the case is a suicide or a homicide, but neighbours suspect she was raped and killed.

A huge joint-forces operation was launched in the southwestern region of the country on Saturday, in a manhunt for 160 top criminals on Khulna division's police list. The 11,000 strong force, comprising police, BDR and the coast guard among others, began their operation by shutting down the mobile phone network to weaken communication links between criminals.

### Rajshahi

A human chain was formed in front of Rajshahi University (RU) Central Library, last Saturday, to protest against maltreatment and negligence by RU Medical Centre doctors. The university unit of Students Against Violence demanded a judicial enquiry into the death of student Bulbul following treatment at the medical centre.

### Rangpur

A new type of brutal crime has set the people of Pirganj in a panic. Unidentified attackers have severed the legs of two people and escaped with the severed limbs. Last Wednesday an unknown gang attacked Golam Mostafa, 35, severed his left leg and ran away with it. Witnesses saw the incident from a distance but did not dare interfere. Three days earlier, attackers caught Chakla, 30, severed his left leg also and fled with it in a bag. Police have been unable to make any arrests, and do not know if the same gang is involved in both cases.