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# TSC sees less culture

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

Cultural activities at the Teacher Student Centre (TSC) of Dhaka University (DU) is coming to a halt as the authorities have imposed some controversial restrictions by formulating a new set of rules.

The TSC used to be the heart of different socio-cultural programmes including dance, drama, songs, poetry recitals etc. before the restrictions came onto effect. Nowadays, that lively buzz around the place is no longer felt.

The changes in the traditional TSC philosophy started happening soon after the BNP-Jamaat alliance came to power.

The first victims of the new regulations were around 50 progressive cultural organisations, who were told to vacate the TSC by the DU authorities.

As soon as these organisations were thrown out, a new breed of so-called 'cultural activists' backed by the government occupied their place.

However, the activities of the newcomers have so far remained limited to programmes such as 'keeping the campus litter-free and controlling mosquito' and seminars on the threat from the aedes mosquito. And they have not managed to conduct a single cultural function till date.

Now, the ousted organisations that have had their roots inside the campus, are facing extinction. Activities of most of these groups have stopped as the DU campus was their launching stage. Meantime, some 28 thousand students of the University and thousands of other people who visit the DU, are being deprived of live performance of the highest cultural order.

The out of favour cultural activists allege that the Jamaat sympathisers have targeted the TSC as it is the focal point of freedom and democracy of the present generation.

They also said that some radical DU officials were trying to isolate those who fight for the spirit of our Liberation War and preach progressive ideology, by occupying the TSC.

"Activities of Sammilito Sangskritik Jote inside the campus is under constant vigilance by the fundamentalist forces," said a member of the organisation requesting anonymity.

With renowned organisations like the Udichi, Sammilito Sangskritik Jote, Dhaka Theatre, Dhaka Padatik, Padatik Nattya Sangsad, Lokonattya Dal etc. banished from the TSC, after they were labelled 'outsiders' by the authorities, their offices are now reportedly the hot-bed of political activities of the student wings of the ruling coalition.

BNP's student front Jatiyatabadi Chatra Dal (JCD)'s organisation 'Comol' has occupied a large room of the TSC for cultural purposes but the room is mainly used for politics according to sources.

A teacher of the mass communication and journalism who preferred not to be named, said that the University authorities were violating the democratic rights of the students and teachers by politicising the place of

free thoughts. "That demonstrates their fundamentalist mindset. We just want the return of the past glory of TSC, as this the common expectation of the students and teachers," he said.

TSC Director Mohammad Alamgir Hossain however defended the changes.

"The atmosphere of the TSC had deteriorated so much that we had to take some measures. Outsiders were involved in all sorts of unwanted activities using the TSC. That's why the DU syndicate had to take the decision to restrict use of the centre," said Hossain.

Hossain refuted the complaints that there were no cultural activities at the TSC.

"It's not true, it's only the propaganda of those outsiders. Besides, we have plans to construct a multi-storied building at the TSC where there will be rehearsal rooms, a movie house, seminar rooms, games rooms etc."

# A jog in the park

BISHAWJIT DAS

Amidst the claustrophobic old Dhaka life, the Bahadur Shah Park provides the only clean-air refuge.

Originally called the *Antagharer Maidan*, it was named after Queen Victoria during the British rule and is still more popularly known as Victoria Park.

It is located at the very heart of the old part of the city and people, irrespective of age and gender, from Shankhari Bazar, Sutrapur, Patla Khan, Laxmi Bazar, Bangla Bazar, Shyam Bazar etc always throng this park.

Historically, the park is infamous for the hanging of fifty Bengali soldiers by the British from its legendary palm trees. Only two palm trees remain today.

This oval shaped park has an area of around 7500 square metres. There's a fountain in the centre of the park with a iron-grill boundary. There is also a platform with marble stairs.

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), which owns the park, has installed a television set at and you'll find viewers from day to night.

With little or no space for physical exercises around, for many, the park is a blessing.

"I come here everyday and take a half-an-hour walk to burn the extra calories in my body," says Kashaf.

Noor Uddin, 75, knows every inch of the park like the back of his hand as his family have been living in old Dhaka for generations. According to him, the park is gradually losing its charm.

"Twenty years ago, there were less trees but the environment

was better. About five or six years ago, there were many lamps inside the park and it was generally more clean. It seems as if all the lamps have suddenly vanished. It's also getting dirtier by the day," said the elderly statesman.

ADCC employee posted at the park informed on condition of anonymity that some unscrupulous security guards sell water from the supply of the park and also lets vendors set up illegal small tea stalls and shops inside the park premises in exchange of bribe.

After dusk, the park reportedly becomes a safe-haven for drug addicts and criminals.

"Since this is the only park in the whole of old Dhaka, we who live in this area, expect the DCC to take proper care of it. Its environment should be kept fresh at all cost," said Nilu Moynitri, a regular visitor to the park.

# Love is not enough at the kazi office

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

It was a usual sedate and placid summer evening but Tania's mind was restless.

She was on the verge of the biggest moment of her life --- her marriage.

But there was no sweet tune of the 'shenai' and guests weren't scuffling to cast a glimpse of her. She didn't even have any ornaments or jewellery on her. Rather, she was sitting at the Lalmatia Kazi Office worried sick whether her future husband and some friends can actually convince the stubborn kazi (marriage councillor) of their adulthood.

"We decided to get married against the will of our parents," said Tania. "We are adults and confident enough to trust this decision," added the degree student.

But as it occurs in many such secret marriages, the kazi's office was making an issue out of their age.

The kazi's assistant Abul Hossain Chowdhury, who also happened to be his brother, was adamant that the groom was not 21, the legal age for a male to get married. Tania's beloved had presented an attested photocopy of his S.S.C. certificate to authenticate that he was turned 21 a year ago but Abul was far from convinced.

"The seal of attestation looks like a fake. You better go and bring the original copy of the S.S.C. certificate," he told the group whose patience was fast running out.

Within the next few minutes however, everything was settled amicably, although it wasn't clear whether an increased mar-

riage registration fee or a good tip made the breakthrough!

Tania's incident is not an isolated one. Young people in love, often take hurried decisions to get married without making proper arrangements first, and a number of kazis allegedly cash in on their apparent insecurity.

"They will try and create any obstacle," said Rashedul Hasan. "It could be the certificate verifying the age or the credibility of the witnesses or anything they can think of. They harass the desperate couples just to squeeze out some more money apart from the legitimate fees," added Rashedul who has faced the problem first hand.

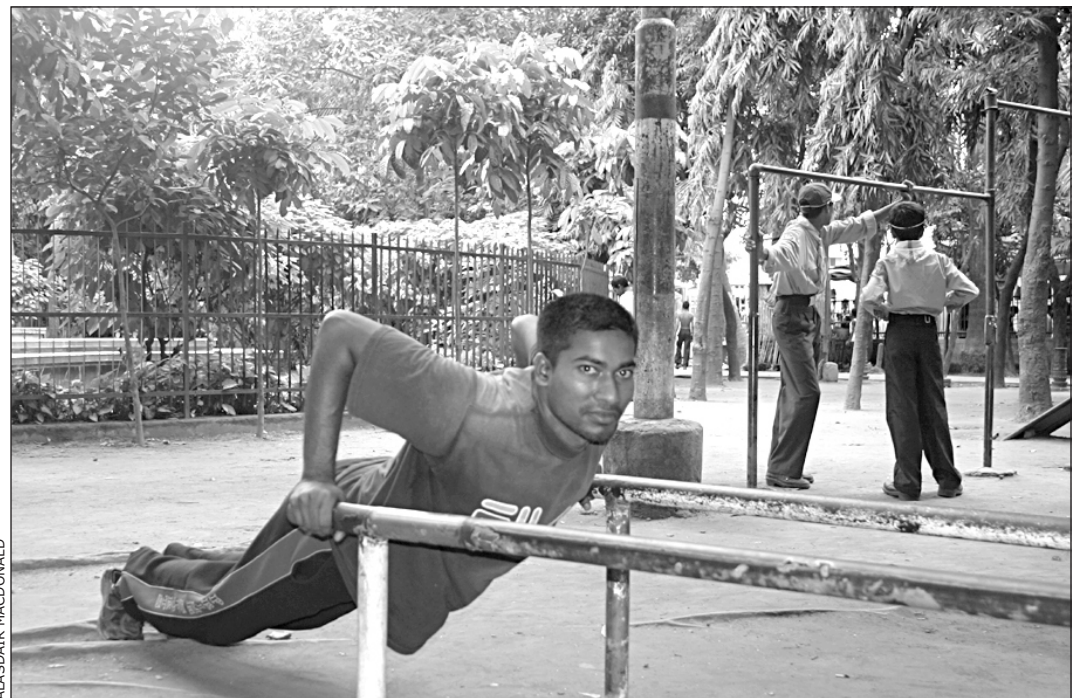
Some slum dwellers and destitute people too claimed that the kazi offices don't entertain any marriages for less than Tk 500 even if the candidates are poor.

The kazis for their part deny such allegations. "The minimum government charge for registering a marriage is Tk 50 and the highest is Tk 4,000," informed Mohammed Anwarullah, kazi of Lalmatia Kazi Office.

"We charge Tk 50 if the *demohor* (a traditional Islamic pre-marital divorce settlement for the woman) ranges from Tk 1 to Tk 999. We add 1 (one) per cent of the *demohor* to our fees when it exceeds Tk 999," he explained.

Anwarullah also noted that they have to check the age certificates thoroughly to ensure law is not breached.

"They eloping youngsters do not understand the gravity of marriage. It is not a fun thing. It's a responsibility of a lifetime. We can not risk marrying underage couples which is illegal," the kazi said.



With little or no space for physical exercises around the city, for many the park is a blessing.

## FOLLOW UP

# Police motorbikes investigated

SULTANA RAHMAN

The Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB) investigation committee, which was formed following a Star City report on June 1, has detected 'certain defects' in police motorbikes, and recommended not to release the two per cent deposit money of the company that issued the warranty against the motor bikes.

In its report submitted on July 3, the committee also observed that Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) has not yet registered the motorbikes, which is essential as per the Motor Vehicle Ordinance 1983.

The DTCB bought the 115 police motorbikes in May last year from China through a local agent.

Following the Star City report on the poor quality of the motorbikes, a three-member investigative committee was formed in June. Headed by DTCB additional executive director Ali Hasan the committee was formed to investigate how such poor quality motorbikes were purchased and why the bikes were

breaking down within less than a year. Senior enforcement officer Md Abdul Jalil and project director Ashrafur Islam were the other two members of the committee, which after a month long investigation submitted its report to the concerned authorities.

The report pointed out the defects of the motorcycles, adding they 'may be the result of poor maintenance' by police sergeants. But the police sergeants who have been using the motorcycles had made regular complaints that the bikes did not work properly because of 'extremely fragile sub-standard parts' which are not available in Bangladesh.

The report also says the Rajarbagh Police Central Motor Workshop has not utilised the agreement of a one-year warranty period to repair the motorcycles. They suggested that DMP request the Ministry of Finance for the necessary budget allocation for registration and regular maintenance of the 115 motorcycles which were bought last year at a cost of about Tk2.64 crore.

Correction: In our previous report, the cost of the motorcycles were inadvertently reported as Tk264 crore. We regret the error.



The investigation committee has found, among other things, that the police motorcycles have been on the road without registration since May last year.

## crisistelephone numbers

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Shishu Academy- 9564128  
Shilpakala Academy- 8614673  
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Nazrul Institute- 9114602  
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British Council- 8618867-8, 8618905-7  
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### HEALTH

#### Hospitals

##### Heart

National Institute of Cardio Vascular Diseases (NICVD), - 9130800, 9122560-59

##### Burn

Dhaka Medical College Hospital  
Burn Unit-8626812-6

##### Cancer

National Cancer Institute-8014914, 8826561-65  
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University-8612550-4, 861455-9

##### Diabetes

Diabetic Research Hospital (BIRDEM)- 9661551-5, 8616641-50

##### Mother & Child Care

Shishu Hospital- 9119119, 8116061-62

Azimpur Mother & Child Health Training Institute- 8624827, 8624980

##### Eye

Islamia Eye Hospital-9110794, 9119315  
National Eye Hospital- 8117202, 8114807

##### Dental

Dental College- 9002035

##### Orthopaedics

National Orthopaedics (Pangu) Hospital- 9114075, 9112150

##### General

Dhaka Medical College Hospital- 8626812-6  
Holy Family Hospital- 83111731-25  
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital- 8612550-4, 8614545-9  
Bangladesh Medical College & Hospital- 9115443, 9118202,

Shamarita Hospital- 9131901  
Suhrawardy Hospital -- 9130800, 9122560-69  
Salimullah Medical Collage Hospital -- 7310061-4, 7319002-6  
Cholera Research Hospital (ICDRB)- 8811751-60  
Monowra Hospital 8319802, 8318135

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Sandhani (DMCH)- 8624040  
Sandhani (SMCH)- 7310061, 7310061.7319022  
Dhaka Medical Collage Hospital- 8626812-9

##### Eye Bank

Sandhani International Eye Bank- 8614040

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