

# Zoo offers deer at cut price

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SOHEL ISLAM  
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Mirpur Zoo authorities are planning to on reduce the price of deer as sales dipped to the lowest last year.

"We will be putting forward a proposal to the Fisheries and Livestock Ministry to reduce the price of a deer from Tk 24,000 to 15,000 as Rajshahi zoo is selling deer at a lower price. We are now burdened with the increasing population of deer. Last year we could not sell a single," said a zoo source, requesting anonymity.

Dhaka Zoo deer is priced at Tk 24,000 while Rajshahi is selling below Tk 10,000.

"Due to the marked price difference between the two zoos, we do not have sales. We are struggling to feed almost 50 surplus deer in hand," the source said.

"Mirpur Zoo now has 155 deer,

but 20 would be adequate for visitors. If we can sell them we will be able to save a lot of money spent on food," the source said.

It is learnt that the zoo authorities will put forward their proposal at the meeting, which is likely to be held on January 11 with the ministry.

"Besides the annual budget of Tk 1.15 crore for food, we have to spend additional Tk 30 lakh feeding the surplus animals. Due to this, we have to carry over the deficit to the next year's budget," the source said.

The zoo authorities are also struggling with the excess number of other species. Eleven lions, five tigers, two bears, six hippopotamuses and many varieties of birds contribute the excess numbers.

The monkey population is also increasing. "We have no monkey sales, and are facing a problem with the animals," the source

lamented.

Mirpur Zoo has been trying to donate some of its surplus inmates to some private and government parks but red tape has dashed its effort in the last five months.

"In fact, the entire matter has been with the ministry for the approval. Now the ministry will decide whether they will donate to them or not. After approval, we will be able to donate the animals," continued the source.

In August the zoo authorities decided to send a pair of lions to the Cox's Bazar Safari, a pair of tigers to Khulna Baganbilash and one tiger to the Chittagong District Council.

It is also learnt that the January 11 meeting might decide upon Tk 28 crore-project proposal for infrastructure development of Mirpur Zoo -- submitted a year ago.



Mirpur Zoo is now burdened with increasing deer population.

# DCC defers off-limits plan

CITY CORRESPONDENT  
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The banning of non-motorised (NMT) vehicles from two important thoroughfares of the city from January 1 has been delayed again.

Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB) at a meeting on December 3 had

decided to withdraw rickshaws on roads stretching from Russell Square to Azimpur via New Market and Science Laboratory crossing to the National Press Club through Shahbagh intersection from the first day of 2004.

However, Dhaka mayor Sadeq Hossain Khoka at a recent meeting withheld the plan saying the step might affect the common people if they aren't properly

made aware of the decision in advance. The mayor also reportedly instructed the DTCB not to make those roads off-limit until the last week of February.

In June last year, the World Bank (WB) suggested the DTCB to free two roads of NMTs to ease the city's perennial traffic jam under its Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP). It was then decided that the roads running

from Russel Square to Azimpur and from Science Laboratory Crossing to National Press Club would be closed to NMTs from November 1 and December 1 in phases.

The DUTP plan to make six more routes NMT free by 2005. The stretch from Mirpur circle 10 intersection to Farmgate via Rokeya Sarani, Baridhara to Mouchak via Pragati Sarani, Bangla Motor to Mouchak via New Eskaton and Technical crossing (Mirpur Road) to Mirpur 2 intersection is expected to be banned to non-mechanised transports by the end of 2004.

The Azimpur to Syedabad route via Tikatuli and Purana Paltan to Sadarghat via North South Road will be made NMT free before 2006.

The DTCB on December 3 reached a three-month agreement with the Bangladesh Transport Forum (BTF), an NGO, for carrying out a 'public awareness campaign' through distribution of leaflets and dialogues with commuters, drivers of the public transports and the rickshaw-pullers. The campaign is being carried out at a cost of about Tk 58 lakh.

But it has been alleged that the BTF is not conducting the campaign properly, as the public is apparently not aware of it.

"We are also not satisfied with the BTF's activities since most people do not know about the campaign. Instead of informing various organisations and important individuals, they should actually try and reach out to the

common people especially the ones who regularly commute on rickshaws," said DTCB's additional executive Mohammad Mottakim.

Chairman of the BTF A K M Kamaluddin Chowdhury on the other hand refuted the complaints claiming that they have already held two meetings with people from different quarters about the NMT ban.

"Now we are carrying out a survey on Dhanmondi Road No-2 and we will distribute 10,000 leaflets soon. If we are permitted then we'll start using posters for our campaign," Chowdhury said.

Rickshaw-pullers and rickshaw owners' associations have been protesting the decision to ban NMTs from city roads without arranging alternative means of livelihood for them. These organisations have called a dawn to dusk rickshaw strike on January 11.

"We have tried to meet the communications minister and the mayor but failed. We are now very frustrated and are determined to resist any move by the government to ban rickshaws from the streets," said president of Rickshaw-Van Labours Union Ali Akbar.

Roughly six lakh illegal rickshaws are believed to be plying the streets of the capital while Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) estimates show only 87,000 registered rickshaws. These three wheelers are considered one of the chief reasons behind Dhaka's notorious traffic congestion.

# Privatisation of mosquito control uncertain

CITY CORRESPONDENT  
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Dhaka City Corporation's (DCC) attempt to privatise its mosquito control programme has been thrown into uncertainty as two interested companies which participated in the bidding are considering withdrawal of the security money.

The DCC invited the tender on April 15 this year with a mind to hand over the mosquito controlling responsibility to private operators. But very little progress has been made towards execution of the decision since.

Clarity Ecotech, a joint venture of Bangladesh and USA, Diligent Services Limited (a joint venture of Bangladesh and India) and Safeway Pest Control (a consortium of three Bangladeshi companies) took part in the bidding.

"About two months ago, I tried to withdraw my security deposit of Tk 20 lakh but. I refrained from it when DCC's Chief Health Officer Colonel Azizul Haq assured me that he would look into the matter soon," proprietor of Clarity Ecotech Sufi Iqbal said.

"Haq is in New Delhi now. After he returns, I will watch the development for a few days. If I find that the DCC is not sincere in its commitment, I will withdraw my money at the earliest. But If there is any positive initiative, I

might decide to wait for another month or two," said Iqbal.

"It's been six months and still the DCC hasn't selected a bid. The security money has been lying with them over this period. We are really frustrated," said owner of Safeway Pest Control Dr Monjur Ahmad Chowdhury.

"We may ask the DCC to refund our money within a few days," added Chowdhury.

The other company Diligent could not be reached for their comments.

Dhaka Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka said that the interested companies knew that it would take some time before a decision as vital as this could be taken. "They participated in the bidding fully aware of it," said Khoka.

"Earlier, we had handed the responsibilities of waste disposal management of Gulshan to three private operators. I have learnt that the performance of one of those private operators is very poor. That's why I would prefer to take a very cautious approach about the privatisation of the mosquito programme," explained the Mayor.

"I won't take this important decision myself. I will place the evaluation committee's report to the board of directors. They will then decide whether we will privatise mosquito control or not," said Khoka.



Rickshaws swarm a city street.

## A DAY IN WINTER



Winter chills all but it cannot freeze life. Life goes on braving all odds. An old man does not skip his duty, the poor try to keep themselves warm for some time and some enjoy date juice or street-side winter cakes. For life is nothing but life.

