



Workers fix an electronic signal in front of the Sheraton Hotel, one of the 59 points marked for modern traffic signals.

Gulshan traffic signal goes electronic today

AVIK SANWAR RAHMAN

in the capital.

"With the system in place, traffic movement will be monitored from a central control room," said Abdul Qaiyum, DUTP project director.

Gulshan signals were done on a priority basis to demonstrate the effectiveness of doing away with roundabouts by Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB).

"Initially, the DUTP had estimated a cost of Tk 24 crore to install the electronic traffic lights at 59 points. But Tk 10 crore could be saved by tendering job. ATS Hong Kong Limited won the contract by quoting the lowest price," Qaiyum said.

However, a DCC source told Star City that the signal installation cost has gone up by Tk 1.619 crore due to 'incompetence' of some officials. The government was forced to count the additional cost in customs duty as the

contract did not specify who would pay it.

Ultimately, the DCC had to bear the duty as ATS refused to pay. Indecision about who to pay the duty also delayed the progress of the project. Qaiyum said September has been set as the new deadline to complete the project.

"Installation of signals depends on civil engineering work at intersections. So far, work of 36 intersections has been done and these should have the electronic signal by July," added the DUTP project director.

Sources said a number of foreign engineers would maintain the system for at least three years and train DCC staff.

The DCC decided to go for the modern signalling system as the present one has not been functioning properly due to lack of maintenance.

Burkah sale in slump

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

With imported items entering the local market, most businesses saw a rise in profits but the *burkah* sale saw otherwise.

Traders in Patuatuli said that *burkah* (loose all-enveloping garb with veil worn by Muslim women) sales have seen a slump as these items are brought in from other countries toning down the demand for local products.

Customers now look for more foreign items, but bringing such items into the country is costly. The prices of these items are usually high.

"If we try to keep a large profit margin, the price of each *burkah* would be high and beyond the purchasing capacity of our customers," said Lilaqat Hossain, owner of Jhumur *Burkah* House.

He said that his profits decreased by Tk 3,000 a month. "I made profits three times as much, five years back," he added. "Our investment is high as imported garbs cost more, yet we have to cater to customer's demands, but we cannot charge very high prices," he said.

The Azmeri Market in Patuatuli has 28 shops offering a wide range of *burkahs*. Apart from the shops also sell *hijab*, scarves, advocate gowns, caps and *dopattas* (long scarf worn over the shoulders).

Saudi *Burkah* House, Kuwait *Burkah* Ghar, Iraqi *Burkah* House and Mishore (Egypt) *Burkah* Bitan have been named after Muslim countries to attract customers.

"Most customers believe the product has a link to the country if the shop is named after them," said Parvez Hossain of Jhumur *Burkah* House.

The traditional *burkah* is losing its flavour with trendy ones replacing it. Iranian, Turkish, Pakistani or Saudi *Burkahs* attract customers. Salespersons explained that the design names do not necessarily mean the item is made in that particular country.



"*Burkahs* are brought only from a few countries

like Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates," said Lilaqat Ali. He added that in most cases such items are brought into the country by 'luggage parties' -- people visiting those countries as tourists who bring about 100-150 pieces with them.

Burkah prices differ according to its material and design ranging from Tk 110-2,800. The cost of imported *burkah* is Tk 800 onwards. Georgette and *Suskin* are popular material for *burkah*.

Wearing *burkah* has become very popular in the last two years, commented some sellers.

"It may be because the newly designed *burkahs* are fashionable," said Parvez Hossain, a salesperson. "Women seem impressed having TV glimpses women in other countries wearing fashionable

burkahs," he added.

But Mahbooba Matin, a housewife had a different opinion. "I don't think that's the case. I have been wearing *burkah* since I was a young girl. Women wear them because they follow religious beliefs," she said.

Traders however feel that though more women buy for *burkah*, the business is not doing well. "Customers from the new town are rare. Traffic congestion prevents them coming to the old part of Dhaka," said another trader.

"This is why we have many wholesale buyers from other city markets. Only some retail customers from old Dhaka and Keraniganj come here to buy *burkahs*," he added.

Cashing in on funerals

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Shopping is for you, you are at the centre of attraction, but you yourself are unaware of it.

You are no more. Your choices do not matter -- they do not count unless you had expressed your choices before you died.

From elite to proletariat, one has to face death at one stage or the other. No-one is prepared unless s/he has been suffering with an incurable disease for long. Death is unpredictable and definitely unavoidable.

"I am buying things for my uncle's funeral. I don't know who will handle mine. No-one knows," said Monir Uddin of Lalbagh who had come to Al-Bidai Store in the Katabon market.

"Chiro Bidai Store", "Al-Bidai", "Bidai Bela", "Akheri Bidai" are some funeral parlours, waiting for a chance to serve people whenever the opportunity is given to them.

All one needs for a funeral service is available in the shops. The shopkeeper is aware of the items needed and guides the customer in buying them. Items like shroud, soap, soft towel, rose water, aroma sticks are all found under one roof.

For a corpse to be taken to a distance, a further list of items is required -- a coffin, polythene, ice and tealeaves.

The first funeral service shop in Dhaka started in 1962

at Naya Bazar in Old Dhaka. Sadik Mia, owner of Chiro Bidai Store at Katabon, pioneered the business.

"I got myself involved in this profession not just as a business but to help others," Sadik Mia said. "But now competition is very sharp. It is tough to survive. In addition, the authorities have made it more difficult by introducing taxes on this business three years ago," he added.

Most other owners of the competing shops are Sadik Mia's relatives.

The cost of funeral items cost between Tk 800-Tk 1,800. The main item is the shroud. Its cost varies from Tk 600-Tk 1,500, depending on the quality of the fabric. Shrouds made of Long Cloth are sold between Tk 500-Tk 550 and ones made of Chinese Poplin costs at least Tk 1,500. The poor usually use *markin* cloth, which could be purchased at a very low price.

"We keep a marginal profit for survival," said Anwar Hussain, manager of Chiro Bidai Store.

If a body has to be transported out of the city then a coffin is necessary. A coffin usually costs Tk 450. Some people order special coffins, which are expensive, here again depending on the wood used and would cost between Tk 2,200 to Tk 3,000 to transport a corpse.

Whatever the outcome, the dead must be buried and the business however small, must go on.



The oldest funeral parlour in the city the Chiro Bidai Store that gave rise to the many that followed.

healthouting,taxicab&train timing

HEALTH

Hospitals

Training Institute- 8624827, 8624980

Shamaria Hospital- 9131901

Suhrawardy Hospital -- 9130800, 9122560-69

Salimullah Medical Collage

Hospital -- 7310061-4, 7319002-6

Cholera Research Hospital

(ICDDR,B)- 8811751-60

Monowra Hospital 8319802, 8318135

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

Dhaka Medical College Hospital

Burn Unit-8626812-6

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University-8612550-4, 861455-9

National Cancer Institute-8014914, 8826561-65

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

Mother & Child Care

Shishu Hospital- 9119119, 8116061-62

Azimpur Mother & Child Health

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Mother & Child Care

Shishu Hospital- 9119119, 8116061-62

Azimpur Mother & Child Health

MARKET CLOSED

TAXI CAB

Yellow Cab

Navana 9558065

Salida 9344477, 0171620881

Cosmo 9112959 and 8127191

Cab One 7113282-3

Nihon 8624741-2

Orion 9347277

Anudip 8125285 and 8127611

Capital 9352847

TRAIN TIMING

Subarna Express

Mahanagar Prabhati

Mahanagar Godhuli

Turna

Parabat Express

Joyantika Express

Upabon Express

Tista Express

Ekata Express

Upakul Express

Agnibeena Express

Leaves Dhaka at 4:30 pm

Leaves Dhaka at 7:30 am

Leaves Dhaka at 3:15 pm

Leaves Dhaka at 11:00 pm

Leaves Dhaka at 6:40 am

Leaves Dhaka at 12:45 pm

Leaves Dhaka at 9:45 pm

Leaves Dhaka at 7:00 am

Leaves Dhaka at 5:00 pm

Leaves Dhaka at 8:00 pm

Leaves Dhaka at 9:20 pm

Leaves Dhaka at 10:35 pm

Leaves Chittagong at 1:55 pm

Leaves Chittagong at 10:55 pm

Leaves Chittagong at 6:40 am

Leaves Sylhet at 2:30 pm

Leaves Sylhet at 9:20 pm

Leaves Sylhet at 6:40 pm

Leaves Sylhet at 1:05 pm

Leaves Bahadurabad at 11:15