

Overlooked underpass at Gulistan

MANISHA GANGOPADHYAY

Even after three years of the construction of the Gulistan underpass more people are choosing to weave through traffic at the busy intersection rather than use the underpass made for the convenience of pedestrians.

The nearly-vacant pathways along the underpass are a testament to the fact that most find it more convenient to walk the streets than take two sets of stairs and walk through a marketplace in the underpass in order to cross the streets.

In fact, the majority of people who use the over 10,000 square feet underpass, built by the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), with entrances on each of the four corners of the intersection have come there to see the shops.

Aktar Jamal Khan of DCC claims that vendors were invited to set up in the underpass in order to increase the safety along this route. Shops, he says, provide necessary lighting and ensure the presence of a critical mass of people because they attract customers.

"I'm here because my husband wanted to show me the marketplace," said a woman while passing through the underpass along with her husband and a child.

Still men and women and even with those children choose the riskier path of walking through traffic. A view from the crossing reveals why.

At the time of construction, the underpass may have seemed like a necessary

project because of heavy congestion at the site, particularly between Motijheel and Gulistan.

However, a traffic policeman believes that the removal of a nearby bus terminal after the construction of the underpass in 2001 has led to a significant drop in congestion.

Now, instead of choking up the intersection, buses stop briefly at different points along the way to drop off and pick up passengers, easing up much of the traffic.

Furthermore, unlike most crossings where pedestrians, rickshaws and vehicles cross each other's paths and fight for the right of way, at the Gulistan crossing most pedestrians walk in the same direction as traffic.

Furthermore, rickshaws and motor vehicles take different routes once they approach the intersection. Most vehicular traffic goes back and forth from Motijheel to the General Post office, while rickshaw traffic -- which must take care to avoid the General Post Office route that leads to rickshaw-prohibited areas -- goes back and forth from Motijheel to Sadarghat.

Thus the crossing gives the appearance of a smooth-flowing intersection, making it easy for pedestrians to walk.

However, this is not free from risks. The Gulistan crossing is, after all, a perilous 4-way intersection.

Contrary to its intended and apparently futile purpose, the underpass marketplace too poses a hazard to underpass

users. The approximately 8-foot wide footpaths have become storage spaces for high stacks of boxes full of heavy equipment and waste, as well as sharp objects such as large mobile antennas. If the underpass were actually used, the congestion this would cause would invariably lead to accidents.

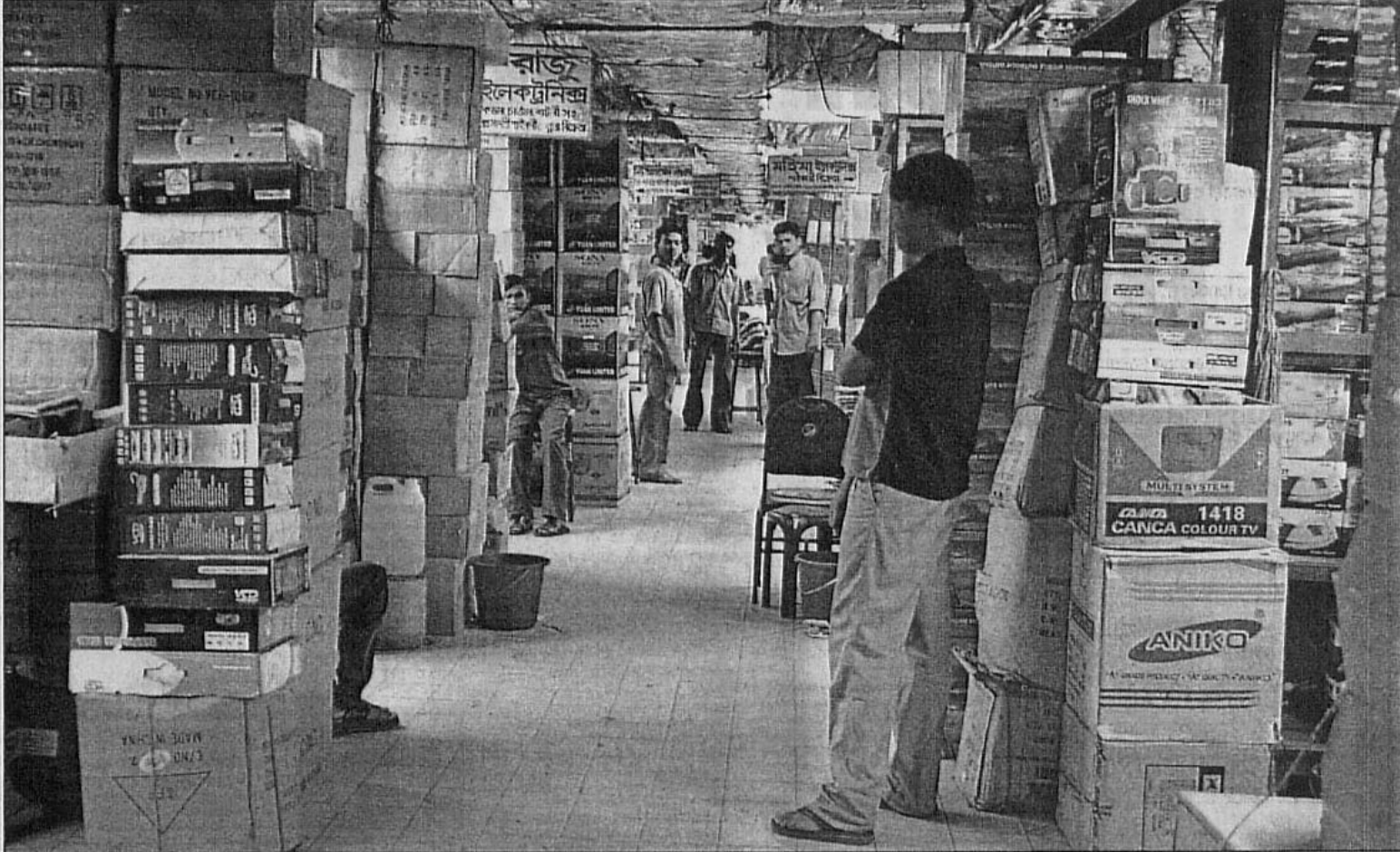
DCC has not provided a separate storage space, forcing the shop-owners to utilise the 100 square feet space. This is clearly not feasible for those shops selling large equipment such as televisions and stereo systems, as is evident by the mountains of boxes lined up in front of these particular shops.

"We have no other place to keep them," says an electronics shopkeeper.

Other potential threat includes the 8-storey under-construction brick shopping centre at the site of Gulistan Cinema near one of the underpass entrances. Like many construction sites in Dhaka, adequate protection from falling building materials is severely lacking.

As far as one can tell, the only real protection is an 8-10 feet long corrugated metal sheet sticking out from the sides of the 2nd floor, one assumes to 'catch' such objects.

Though the marketplace in the underpass has done little to encourage safety, it has helped DCC rake in revenues. Each one of the 104 shops, selling mostly electronics and mobile phone equipment, is charged a one time Tk 7 lakh, in addition to a monthly rent, which amounts to Tk 10 lakh a year.



A view of the Gulistan underpass

Shishu Park renovation delayed

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

Renovation of the Central Shishu Park may miss its proposed deadline, as the project concept paper (PCP) is still lying with the planning commission.

Sources in the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) said the project proposal has not yet reached to the Pre-Executive Committee for National Economic Council (Pre-ECNEC) and therefore had less possibility of getting approved in the coming annual development programme (ADP).

"We had a plan to complete the renovation project by 2006 once we had received the funds. However, we have not been able to

begin work even as the PCP was not approved in the 2004-2005 ADP," said a concerned official of the DCC.

When asked the reason behind the delay, the official said it was the usual scenario with government projects.

"It takes time as the government has to manage so many projects with limited funds. All the projects cannot be approved at a time."

DCC submitted the project proposal with an estimated cost of Tk 92 crore for a complete renovation of the Central Shishu Park last December. It included repairing of old worn out rides and introduction of 16 new items including a roller coaster, a water splash, a giant wheel, a ride called Viking Mars and

bumper cars.

The existing items have already exceeded their life span of 10 years and are deteriorating. There could be serious accidents if precautionary measures are not taken.

"It is impossible for any machine to run properly after ten years," the official said. "Most machines have parts that wear," he said adding that some of the rides were still operational because of strict maintenance by the DCC.

The official said that DCC could still complete the renovation by 2006 provided it received the funds from the government shortly.

"There would not be much of a hassle as the renovation would take place inside the Shishu Park's premises. It is not a huge project like a flyover," he said.

The official stressed on the need for proper advertisement as well as slight extension of the park to make it more popular.

"People should know about it more as they know about private theme parks. If the park is extended a little towards the police outpost adjacent to it then it would be situated just in front of National Museum and could attract more people," he said.

Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation built the park at Suhrawardy Udyan in 1979 and handed it over to the DCC for maintenance. The number of rides at that time was ten and in 1992 the DCC added the flying plane and flying rocket. Bangladesh Air Force presented another item called the F-6 fighter in 1997.

The country's first amusement park is accessible to all. According to the DCC, at least 5,500 visitors turn up everyday. DCC insiders said the park could earn Tk 18 crore per year after the project is completed.



Renovation of the Central Shishu Park is delayed for administrative tangles.

Local trees replace older ones after 30 years to beautify Zia Udyan

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Around 500 trees of various species have been felled after 30 years for the beautification of the graveyard of president Ziaur Rahman at Zia Udyan.

Trees including eucalyptus, shishu, acacia were uprooted from three sides of the graveyard and indigenous herbal trees and fruit bearing trees have replaced them. Experts however, said that sufficient new trees must replace the felled ones to ensure an environmentally friendly area.

Nurul Islam Nazem, associate professor, Urbanisation and Environment said trees like eucalyptus, shishu, acacia and a few others do not suit the Bangladeshi environment some of them hazardous and do not attract birds.

Public Works Department (PWD) planted the uprooted trees, which were imported, in the early 70s and the officials of PWD have now realised that the trees are not environment-friendly. The then available open space was named after president Ziaur Rahman who was buried there. The development work at a cost of

Tk 35.17 crore was taken up in 2002 to beautify the graveyard

Rokon Uddin Ahmed, project director of the Zia graveyard said that removal of these trees was included in the initial project plan.

"The axed trees were densely populated and also created hazards to the environment in absorbing maximum amount of ground water, thus reducing the fertility of the soil. Now we are replacing the with environment friendly indigenous trees which will bring beauty to the area as well," Ahmed said.



Axes work fast after 30 years on many of the old trees 'to give way for the new indigenous and environment-friendly ones' to take their place.

useful telephone numbers

COURIER SERVICES

International

Air Borne Express- 9561371, 9561372, 9550724
Air Couriers Intl (BD) Ltd.- 8815970
Aramex International Courier- 9558003, 9559582, 9565075
Airspeed Express- 9563494
Asian Courier Services Ltd.- 8313543
Baishakhi Courier Service- 9558606
Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114
Bangladesh Courier Service- 9563989
Bengal Express- 9560642, 9552666
Bangladesh Intl Courier- 953636
Continental Service Ltd.- 9552948, 9558425
DHL Worldwide Express- 9881703-7, 9886305-9, 9882057
Enem Express- 9330699
Fedex Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114
Modhuban Courier Service-

Overseas

9550884
Oversas Courier Service- 9352431, 8321169
Pacific Courier- 9568446
Reliance Express Service- 9558515, 7110249
Sky International service- 9660442
Skynet world Wide Express- 9558062, 9560258, 7114787, 7113184
TNT Express- 9566662, 9558239, 8618155
Union Courier Service- 9341722
United Parcel Service Air alliance Ltd.- 8826429, 8810223

National

Asian courier Service Ltd.- 8313543
BAE- 9884851
Central Courier Service- 9881118
Confidence Courier Service Ltd.- 9567036
Chisty Courier- 7110177-9,
Cosmopol Services- 9552793, 9557975
Dhaka Courier Services- 7236222

Dolphin Courier- 9558802
Dreamland Courier Service- 9550326, 9566975
Pioneer Courier Services- 9561727, 9569759
Probashi Courier Services- 9346359
Rainbow Express Parcel Services Ltd.- 8322773, 8315703
Reliance Express Services- 9558515, 7110249
Sundaban Courier Services- 9551984, 9556189, 9551656
Sunrise Courier Services- 9568751
World Runner Express Ltd.- 9112068, Fax - 880-2-9112068

TIPS

Do you know according to Dhaka City Corporation, you must deposit your waste at the collection site between 4pm and 10pm

LIBRARY & INFO-

Libraries, Cultural and Information Centers

Central Public Library- 8626001-4,
Shishu Academy- 9564128
Shilpakala Academy- 8614673
Bangla Academy- 8619550
Islamic Foundation- 9550280, 955640
The American Centre (IRC)- 8813440-4, 9886395
The Nazrul Institute- 9114602
Ford Foundation- 8116133
Alliance Francaise- 8611557
British Council- 8618867-8, 8618905-7
Community Development Library- 8113769, 8113604
Goethe Institute Int'l- Dhaka- 9126525-6
Indian Information Centre & Cultural Library- 8615096
The Russian Cultural Centre- 9116314, 9118531, 9118314
Drik Photo Gallery- 9120125, 8112954, 8123412

OUTING

Museum and Zoo

National Museum- 8619396-9
Open: 10 am 5 pm, Friday 3 pm- 8 pm, Thursday closed
Muktijuddha Jadughar- 9559091
Open: 10:30 am 6:30 pm, Sunday Closed
Bangabandhu Smiti Jadughar- 8110046
Open: 10 am 5 pm, Wednesday closed
Ahsan Manzil
Open: 10 am 5 pm, Friday: 3 pm - 7 pm, Thursday Closed
Shishu Jadughar- 9666466
Open: 10 am- 6 pm, Sunday Closed

CITY BUS ROUTE

Bus No.	Route	Starts from
1	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 10, 11, 12	Golap Shah Mazar
2	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 1, 2	Phoolbaria bus station
3	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Mahakhali-Airport-Azampur	Phoolbaria bus station
4	Shyampur-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Airport-Tongi	Shyampur
5	Sayedabad-Kamalapur-Motijheel-Airport-Joydebpur-Gazipur	Sayedabad
6 A	Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Gulshan 1, 2	Kamalapur
6 B	Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 1, 2	Kamalapur
6 C	Motijheel Shapla chattr- Mailbagh- Farmgate- Gulshan 2	Motijheel Shaplachattr
7	Sadarghat-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 2	Sadarghat
8	Chittagong-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asad Gate-Kalyanpur-Gabtoi	Chittagong Road
9	Demra Rani mahal-Motijheel-Kalbagan-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 10, 11, 12	Demra Ranimahal
10	Sadarghat-Gulistan-Kakrail-Mailbagh-Rampura-Biswa Road-Tongi Bridge	Sadarghat
11	Sayedabad-Motijheel-Fakirapool-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Tongi Bridge	Sayedabad
11/A	Sayedabad-Khilgoan-Mailbagh-Rampura-Airport-Tongi Bridge	Sayedabad
12	Shanir Akhra-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asadgate-Mohammadpur	Shanir Akhra
13	Motijheel-Shahbagh-New Market-Jhigatola-Shangkar-Mohammedpur	Motijheel
14	Signboard -Motijheel-Shahbagh-New Market-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 12	Signboard (Chittagong Road)
15	Chittagong Road-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Mirpur 12	Chittagong Road
24	Gulistan-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Airport-Uttara-Bipile	Gulistan