

the city that was

During the period of the Mughal rule, the first name of Dhaka elites was 'Mir'. Perhaps one of them, as many believed, possessed a large area of land in the city whereby the name Mirpur was derived. Among the many Durgahs (shrines) at that time, the one at Mirpur was most visited. Many buildings were also constructed around the shrine.

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GABTOLI TERMINAL

Leasing proves futile: Diba face losses

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

Leasing out of Gabtoli bus terminal has failed to prove fruitful as the private company that took lease of it faces financial loss.

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) leased out the terminal to Diba Enterprise in October 2003 following a condition of the World Bank, which funded the development work of three bus terminals in the city.

According to the contract, the private company would collect parking fees and other tolls, maintain the terminal ensuring passenger facilities, and pay DCC a sum of Tk 1.36 crore a year.

"We thought the terminal would yield more revenue and remain well-maintained if leased out to private company," said an official of DCC.

However, officials of Diba Enterprise said they failed to pay DCC the contract money on completion of its first year as

there was not enough collection of tolls. "We appealed to DCC to waive the amount explaining the situation," said Harun-or-Rashid, general manager of Diba Enterprise.

The officials said the collection could not reach its target because of ongoing construction and renovation work of the terminal which was scheduled to complete by June this year but extended up to March 2004.

They said only 500 buses are now able to park at the terminal due to the construction work, although the capacity is 1,450 buses. "So the collection is less," said an official adding they charge Tk 30 per bus as parking fee.

Collection from public toilets and car washing are nil as those are under construction. "We are supposed to get toll from the telephone booth which is also under construction," said Nurul Islam.



Some 127 makeshift stalls stopped their business due to the construction work that deprived the company from daily toll. The officials claimed collection decreases as some transport companies having close link with the ruling party do not pay the tolls. Khaleque Enterprise,

Hanif Enterprise, Rajanigondha Enterprise and Rozina Enterprise do not pay tolls, they alleged.

"Companies like Hanif Enterprise do not pay goods carrying toll and parking fees," said Nurul Islam. He said rest of the transport companies pay goods carrying toll that ranges from Tk 5 to Tk 20.

The general manager of Diba Enterprise said they have complained to DCC about the companies not paying tolls. "We have requested DCC to fix it or else waive our payable amount," he said.

Transport workers as well as passengers at the terminal said the overall situation, especially the law and order, improved after it was leased out to the private company. "At least the caller boys (brokers) do not drag you to their buses," said Abu Mohammed Salahuddin, a passenger.

city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.

"There is a government, so be it. People have consumed green chilli at Tk 120 a kg, let them wait and see..."



-- Sheikh Hasina
Leader of the opposition and Awami League President
Told at a press conference on December 7 returning from a 46-day long private visit to the U.S.A. and U.K.
Source: Prothom Alo

"If foreigners find a special force like Rapid Action Battalion patrolling the airport they might think that emergency situation prevails in the country"

-- Mir Mohammad Nasrullin
State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism
Told journalists on December 8, commenting on Rab deployed at Zia International Airport ahead of 13th SAARC summit in Dhaka.
Source: Prothom Alo

"Now I am looking for a bride. If I get a good one and if we have similarity in our opinions I will join the programme called by the opposition parties"

-- Kader Siddiqui
President, Krishak Samik Janata League
Told journalists on December 9 when he was asked if his party would join the 900-km long human wall organised by 14 opposition political parties including Awami League.
Source: Prothom Alo

"The advantage of the law minister is that he can lie politely and decently and also break promises"

-- Shirin Akhter
Women Rights Activists and President of Karmojibi Nari
Told at a gathering in Muktagang on December 6 on the Reserved Women Seats Election Bill 2004 passed recently in parliament.
Source: Prothom Alo



"I am not concerned about the security. We are here to play cricket and obviously we are not under any pressure"

-- Sourav Ganguly
Captain, Indian Cricket Team
Told reporters on December 8 after his team landed at the Zia International Airport.
Source: The Daily Star

Gabtoli terminal renovation to complete by March



Construction and renovation work on the Gabtoli terminal with more facilities for passengers is underway.

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The construction and renovation work of Gabtoli bus terminal with all facilities for passengers is likely to be completed by March next year.

"Almost 70 percent work has been finished and the rest work will be done soon," said M Iqbal Hossain, consultant engineer of Abdul Monem Limited, the company engaged in constructing the terminal.

"The construction and renovation work has been undertaken to enhance its capacity to provide better service to passengers as well as transport workers and traders," said a high official of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC).

Three main bus terminals in the city -- Gabtoli, Mohakhali and Sayedabad -- are being developed under a Tk 48 crore project funded by the World Bank.

About 65 percent work on the 24,000 square meters rigid pavement in Gabtoli terminal has already been finished to provide parking facilities for around 1,850 buses, officials concerned said.

"The pavement will need less maintenance cost as we are using reinforced concrete for construction," said Consultant Engineer M Khorshed Alam.

The new terminal building will have passenger sheds covering an area of 5,240 square meters. Almost 50 percent sheds have been constructed so far.

The terminal will have 158 ticket counters.

"At present we have a little discomfort as the construction is going on but hopefully it would be better once the work is over," said Alak Rakkhit of Jaba Paribahan, sitting inside a small makeshift ticket counter.

Two new public toilets are under construction at the terminal. The authorities have planned to demolish the old ones but the consultant engineers said they would seek permission to keep the old toilets also.

"It would be helpful for people if we renovate these toilets for their use," said Iqbal Hossain.

A police control room and a two-storeyed mosque is also being constructed at the terminal. Moreover, an electric substation will be there to provide uninterrupted supply of power.

Rayerbazar slope protection work accelerates for Dec 14

AVIK SANWAR RAHMAN

The protection work on the slope of the Rayerbazar Intellectual Martyr's Monument re-started after a three-month delay to have it completed by December 14 -- Intellectual Martyrs Day.

The work was stalled for three months due to lack of funds, and the Liberation War Affairs ministry recently assured the Public Works Department (PWD) that funds will be disbursed.

"Up to June, this year, we received Tk 30 lakhs but no more funds were disbursed after that. It was only last Thursday, Mahbubur Rahman, assistant chief of liberation war affairs ministry told us that Tk 43 lakhs will be disbursed," said Torajuddin, PWD's superintendent engineer.

The work on the slope protection literally stopped, as PWD could not pay the contractor, but with the

assurance of payments, the contractor restarted the work.

"The contractor already built concrete cement (cc) blocks worth Tk 50 lakhs, but we were able to pay only Tk 30 lakhs, because that was all the funds we had," said Fazlul Kabir, executive engineer, PWD.

"Though ministry has confirmed that the funds are in its possession, we have not yet received the monies as yet, and we fear the delay in disbursement may hamper the work in progress again," said Torajuddin.

"We could not put the cc blocks on the slope of the Buriganga because of the monsoons, and we have to complete the work within this dry season," said the PWD site engineer. The floods and incessant rains added to the deterioration of the slope.

"Soil and sand has been filled along the slope, geo textile will be placed over the soil and cc blocks will be laid depending on amount of funds

disbursed," said Torajuddin.

The concerned authorities approved the slope protection project of the Rayerbazar Martyr Monument to save it from ruin because of the Buriganga erosion.

The planning commission approved a total of Tk 1.16 crore for the Rayerbazar Martyr Monument slope protection project for the fiscal years 2004 and 2005. But the ministry was able to disburse only Tk 30 lakhs to the PWD, the department in implementing the project.

Apart from starting the work anew, the cc blocks that were already laid to protect the historical memorial are falling apart without proper maintenance.

In a desperate measure to protect the memorial from further erosion the PWD built bamboo fences around it.

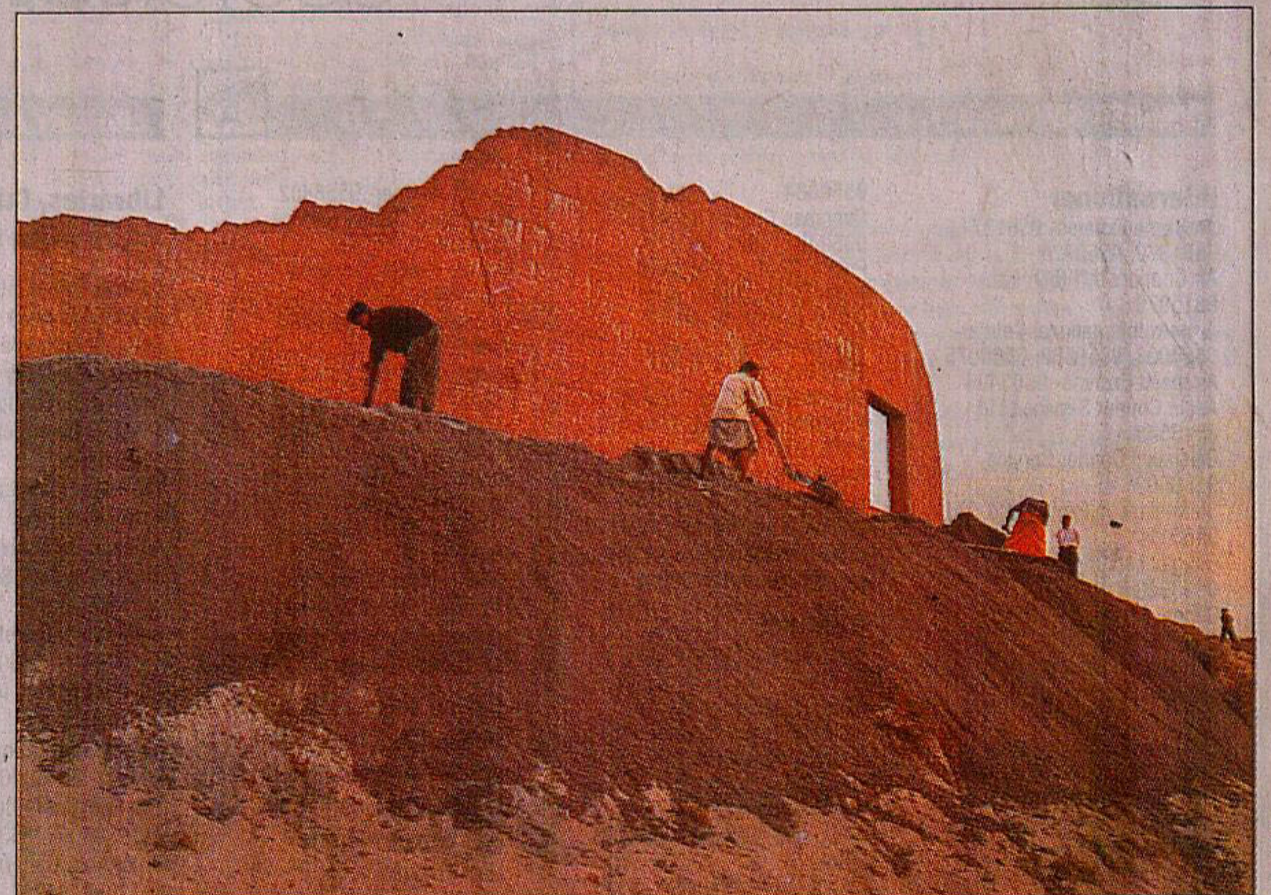
An inter-ministerial meeting on August 5 2003 decided the precise roles of the ministry and the PWD in

supervision, protection and development of the memorial. According to the decisions made the ministry will control the funds for development work and maintenance and PWD would execute their expertise on the work.

Meanwhile, PWD has also prepared Tk 4.94 crore second-phase project and will submit the proposal to the ministry soon, said a PWD source. This will include a museum, walkway, barbed-wire fence, etc.

"The project is kept under Tk 5 crore so that it could pass in pre-Ecneec," said the executive engineer. He added that that the public toilet constructed by Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) destroys the beauty and image of the monument.

"We also have provision to build toilet for visitors. We sent a letter to DCC Chief Executive Officer but did not get any response from him," said Kabir.



Work is yet to be completed on the slope of the monument, but lack of funds seems to delay its progress.

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