

Pump houses turning into crime dens

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

The pump houses of the Water Supply and Sewage Authority (WASA) in the capital have reportedly become notorious for criminal activities and are often treated by local hoodlums and miscreants as safe hideouts.

In many areas, residents have complained that criminals use these pump houses for anti-social activities and gather almost every day especially in the evening for taking drugs or for gambling. Sometimes prostitutes are also brought along.

The pump house at Azimpur is known as a popular spot for drug peddlers.

"That place is used as a store for drugs and the items are also sold from there," said a local shop-keeper.

An operator of the pump house in Narinda admitted that gambling was a regular feature there but they had no other option but to keep mum over it out of fear.

Dhaka WASA has 404 pump houses under its jurisdiction. At least 77 of these have reportedly become safe havens for criminals as they are situated in isolated locations away from the public view and surrounded by walls.

"Lower ranking officials of the WASA are responsible for the operation of these pumps and

that is why they do not have the executive power and courage to protest or complain against the criminal activities," said a WASA official.

Pump houses have been used as torture chambers also.

"A few days ago goons of a political party brought two men

hour shifts each in every pump house and they have their sleeping arrangements inside the pump. But most of the time gangsters and their accomplices occupy the beds.

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"At night criminals of the locality come here and take drugs but I can not tell them anything. Often I have to serve them even. Gangsters sometimes bring prostitutes with them and then I have to sacrifice my bed and sleep on the floor," said an operator in Mirpur.

of their rival party here and beat them up mercilessly until they became unconscious. We spent a whole day in anxiety over what to say to the police if they came to the pump," said an operator of Moghbazar Wireless Colony area.

Three operators work on eight-

Often I have to serve them even. Gangsters sometimes bring prostitutes with them and then I have to sacrifice my bed and sleep on the floor," said an operator in Mirpur.

He also informed that they do not complain to the police because of threats on their lives.

In the old quarters of the city criminals allegedly control the supply of water in connivance with operators and share the money earned from illegally selling water.

"The pump operators sell water at a higher rate than the normal price while creating an artificial crisis. They then share the money with the criminals," said a resident of Warli.

Police officials are also aware of criminals using pump houses as their dens.

"I found a number of listed criminals inside the Gudaraghat pump house in Mirpur while chasing a miscreant who had entered that pump house," said a police official.

"There is always the possibility of criminals hiding inside pump houses and that is why I always tell my men to petrol the pump houses regularly," said M Mahbubur Rahman, officer in-charge of Ramna Police Station.

Operators of pump houses said that they have complained many times to the authorities to take action but apparently the WASA high-ups have remained apathetic to the call.

"We have not received any complaints officially," claimed A N M Aktar Hossain, managing director of WASA when contacted.



A pump house at Ahmadbag which draws groups of hoodlums and miscreants to anti-social activities.

Dhaka Book Fair hopes for a change

SYED TASHFIN CHOWDHURY

The Dhaka Book fair 2005 is scheduled to start from January 1 at the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy.

The National Book Center will organise the event which will be sponsored by the Ministry for Cultural Affairs.

Last year the fair was held at the

Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Center but before that it had always been arranged at the National Parade ground.

"Due to restrictions from the defense authorities who own the ground, we could not hold the fair at its traditional venue last year and also this year," said Shafiqul Islam, deputy director of National Book Center.

The Parade Ground had become available only after the Prime Minister's office gave special permission but the organisers are thinking of Shilpakala Academy as a permanent venue from now on.

"Shilpakala Academy could be the venue this fair always needed," said Islam.

Even though the book fair was initiated in 1993, it has not gained much popularity over the last decade.

Organisers hope that Shilpakala Academy being a focal point of cultural activities might usher a new era for the book fair.

"Due to the locations of venues like the National Parade ground and the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Center, the fair could not attract

too many visitors in previous years," said the deputy director.

The theme of this year's fair is 'family library enlightens the home'.

Over 150 applications for allotment of stalls have already been received by the Book Center. Earlier this month, the deadline for the submission date for applications was extended from December 5 to December 15.

"We had to go for the date extension as did not receive more than 100 applications by the first deadline," said Islam.

Islam explained that as the fair encouraged participation of foreign publishers and organisations unlike the popular Ekushey Boi Mela, the deadline was therefore extended so that interested international houses could send their entries.

Reputed foreign organisations that have applied for stalls this year include the Iranian Cultural Center and the World Bank.

Local publishers like Agami Prokashoni, Jagriti, Ananya, Shomoy, Tarafder, Kakoli, Shuchipotro have also confirmed participation. Every stall has been allotted 64 square feet of space.

The price of tickets will be Taka two only with students getting free entry. The organisers have also planned a major advertising campaign in order to attract visitors.

"We have also fixed a 20 percent discount on Bangladeshi books at the fair this year," said Ahmed Musa, director of National Book Center.

The 15-day event would start at 3pm and end at 9pm on weekdays. On weekends and public holidays, the fair would start from 11am.

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Gulshan residents protest permission for 8-storey buildings

The step will benefit only a handful, they say

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The Gulshan Society has decried the government decision to allow eight-storey structures along Gulshan avenues and this would seriously strain the utility services.

Anwarul Alam, general secretary of the Gulshan Society, said most residents in Gulshan are against commercialisation of the residential plots and resent the decision to put a new height ceiling on eight-storeys. The decision was made to provide benefits to a handful of people along the main roads of the residential areas, he said.

Experts at the Institute of Architects, Bangladesh, said the sewerage, water and gas pipes of the area were originally designed for a population density of 30

persons an acre. But now network is overloaded with more than 300 persons living on each acre.

"If the population density increases further because of construction of eight-storey buildings the whole system will collapse," Alamsaid.

The Ministry of Housing and Public Works in a recent notification, announced that all plots between Gulshan Shooting Club and Gulshan Circle-2; Banani Kemal Ataturk Avenue and plots between Gulshan-Banani Bridge and Gulshan-Baridhara Bridge can be converted into commercial plots after the owners pay a conversion fee of Tk 8 lakh for each katha. The notification also declared that all owners of commercial plots will be allowed to build up to eight-storey structures.

useful telephone numbers

COURIER SERVICES

International
Air Borne Express- 9561371, 9561372, 9550724
Air Couriers Int'l (BD) Ltd.- 8815970
Aramex International Courier- 9558003, 9559582, 9565075
Airspeed Express- 9563494
Asian Courier Services Ltd.- 8313543
Baishakhi Courier Service- 9558606
Banmgladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114
Bangladesh Courier Service- 9563989
Bengal Express- 9560642, 9552666
Bangladesh Int'l 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-

9550884
Overseas 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
Sundarban 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- Malibagh- Farmgate- Gulshan 2	Motijheel Shaplachattr
7	Sadarghat-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 2	Sadarghat
8	Chittagong-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asad Gate-Kalyanpur-Gabtol	Chittagong Road
9	Dgma Rani mahal-Motijheel-Kalbagan-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 10, 11, 12	Demra Ranimal
10	Sadarghat-Gulistan-Kakrail-Malibagh-Rampura-Biswa Road-Tongi Bridge	Sadarghat
11	Sayedabad-Motijheel-Fakirapool-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Tongi Bridge	Sayedabad
11/A	Sayedabad-Khligoan-Malibagh-Rampura-Airport-Tongi Bridge	Sayedabad
12	Shanir Akhra-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asadgate-Mohammadpur	Shanir Akhra
13	Motijheel-Shahbagh-New Market-Jhigatola-Shangkar-Mohammadpur	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