

DCC sits on plan to develop four new graveyards

SULTANA RAHMAN

The plan to develop four new graveyards in the city has been gathering dust at the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) for long as it is yet to be placed before the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecne) for approval.

The five existing graveyards, meanwhile, are rapidly being filled up with little space left for burial. The poor and middle class people find it difficult to get a space but influential people continue to build permanent graves violating rules.

The Azimpur, Jurain, Mirpur, Banani and Uttara graveyards with a total area of 100 acres accommodate 25,000 bodies a year. The graveyards where setting up of permanent graves is prohibited are supposed to be prepared for reuse every two years.

"Although there is a time-frame, we cannot maintain it. We have to prepare the burial grounds before schedule to cope with the huge demand," said a caretaker at Azimpur graveyard. "Sometimes we are compelled to prepare it within six months."

DCC sources said more than a hundred bodies are buried a day in the five graveyards. Besides, the corporation receives at least 10 applications a day for permanent grave.



The elites build permanent graves while the rest go through much difficulty locating space, as seen at the Shahjahanpur graveyard.

The oldest graveyard at Azimpur is already full while the expensive burial spaces at Banani graveyard have already been booked. The Mirpur Martyred Intellectuals Graveyard is reserved for the privileged class.

The Jurain graveyard in Old

Dhaka has been expanded to accommodate more bodies while the one in Uttara is reserved for the Uttara residents only.

Residents fear they will soon face a serious crisis of burial spaces as the DCC is yet to set up new graveyards to meet the

growing demand.

"Everyone wants to have a permanent grave for their near and dear ones with their names inscribed in tombstone," said Shamuzzaman who was requesting the DCC officials to get a permanent grave at Mirpur graveyard for his departed

mother.

"I don't care about money, I need a permanent space so that my future generation can recognise the grave of their grandmother and pray for her," he added.

The Azimpur graveyard with a space of 17.5 acres receives 30

to 35 bodies a day. The Mirpur and Jurain graveyards having a total of 75.1 acres land receive 15 to 20 bodies each. The half-acre Uttara graveyard receives 5 to 6 bodies a day.

"The number of deaths is so high that we have to destroy new graves for reuse," said a DCC social welfare department official on condition of anonymity.

The Jurain and Banani graveyards had some spaces for permanent graves only four months ago, but now it has been prohibited. The charge for a burial space too high -- Tk 25,000 at Jurain and Tk 60,000 at Banani.

"It is the responsibility of the city corporation to develop a large graveyard in the city with enough space for burial," Shamsuzzaman said.

To cope with the growing demand, the DCC had chalked out a Tk 142.06 crore plan for developing four new graveyards in the city, which got pre-Ecne approval on October 23, 2003. The proposed graveyards would have space for 130,000 graves.

Nurul Alam, social welfare officer of the DCC, said the new graveyards at Rayerbazar, Badda, Jatrabari and Ashulia would meet the demand for graves in the next 25 years. "We don't understand why the proposal is not placed for the Ecne approval."

Railway memorial being neglected

SYED TASHFIN CHOWDHURY

The under construction monument at the Kamalapur Railway Station, commemorating the employees of Bangladesh Railway became martyrs of the War of Independence, still remains incomplete.

According to residents of the area, the recent beautification project around the monument stands to jeopardize the condition of whatever exists of it.

"As it was a project undertaken by the previous government, the current government has not shown much interest in completing it," said an official of the Kamalapur Railway station.

The construction began in December 2000 before it got discontinued in May, 2001.

The official unveiling of the

monument was never held and no attempt was made to complete it during the last three years.

The walls of the monument are not plastered in many spots. Right next to the monument is a bush from where stench of urine and human excrement come out.

"This is ruining the image of the monument," said Shahedul Islam, a resident of the area. On the other side of the monument is a nursery from where rubbish and other disposable materials are indiscriminately dumped inside the monument's premises.

With the upcoming SAARC summit, the Kamalapur Railway Station is being beautified by an agency called ITCL under contract from the Roads and

Highways Department.

The footpaths and the streets along the station are being extended. According to sources, a two-meter pavement will be constructed right next to the monument.

"But that will also extend the street and bring it nearer to the monument," Shahed pointed out.

"We can not do anything with the monument until we get further instructions from higher authorities," said an official of the Bangladesh Railway.

Fences enclose the 80 feet long and 55 feet wide monument. The four steps of it consist of brick tiles. The monument holds the names of the 186 employees and officials of the Bangladesh Railway who died during the War of Independence.

Even though the names of

these individuals were collected extremely tediously, the monument is not being maintained or respected in the appropriate manner.

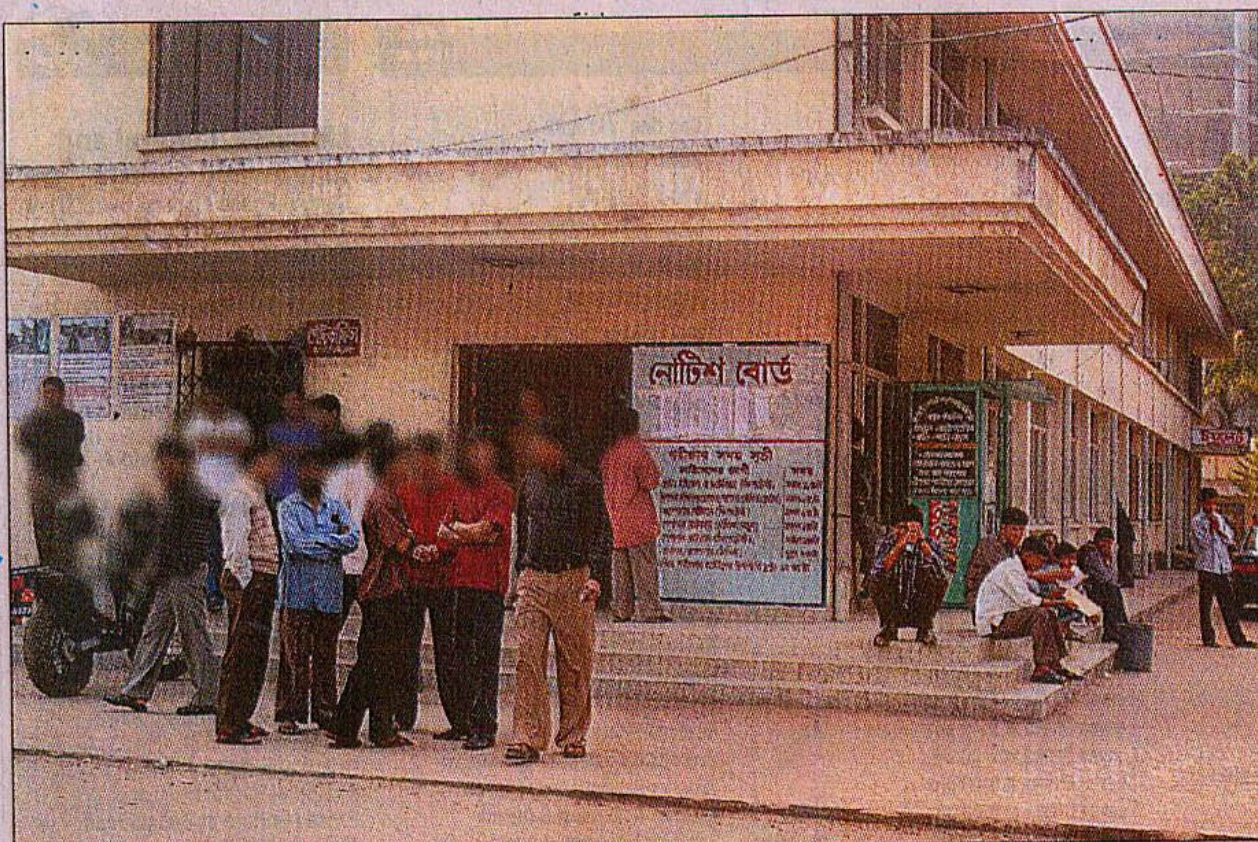
"We aim to increase maintenance standards of the memorial to the best of our ability in the near future," said Anwar Mahmood, Divisional Railway Manager, Dhaka.

According to other sources, the Mukti Juddha Command Council (MCC), a body within Bangladesh Railway, came up with the idea of the memorial and most officials of the railway think the council is responsible for the maintenance of the monument.

But the limited and inefficient manpower of the MCC only adds to the neglect suffered by the monument.



SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN



Brokers await clients at the BRTA entrance.

BRTA fails to stop forgery of driving licences

FAIZUL KHAN TANIM and CHRISTINE WANNER

Even though Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) has taken steps to stop the forgery of driving licences, fake documents are easily available in the city.

Hundreds of people are driving with such licences. Moreover, there is an allegation that a section of dishonest BRTA officials grant licences to unskilled persons.

The BRTA has replaced paper licences by plastic cards with security codes and hologram amid strong opposition from the drivers who prefer to keep the paper licences.

This was six years ago. And

still now people say 90 percent of the driving licences are fake, an allegation BRTA officials always deny.

"This not realistic," SM Abdul Bari from BRTA says.

According to BRTA, there are 6 lakh driving licences and 8 lakh vehicles. Officials say the fake licences will be eliminated within the next two years.

However, both BRTA officials and drivers admitted the fact that the number of counterfeit licences continues to rise as most drivers who attend the driving tests are illiterate and they fail to study the rules of driving.

These drivers however manage licences by bribing

the licensing authorities.

Abdul Kalam, a CNG autorickshaw driver, says, "There are three types of tests - written, viva and the field test. Failing in any of these, we are given the opportunity to resit."

"But it is even easier to obtain a licence by paying a certain amount of money to the officer concerned. That is what we have practised so far," he added.

Both the drivers and the middlemen say that forged plastic card and paper licences are available. As getting a licence after passing BRTA tests in Dhaka is a bit difficult, some people prefer to go to other districts to obtain licence.

Driver Haider from

Mohakhali says, "If we can't obtain licences from Dhaka, we go to Manikganj or elsewhere to get an original licence without sitting for tests. One has to pay around Tk 5,000 for obtaining such a licence."

The BRTA officials however declined to make comments on these allegations.

On a question about the driving ordinance being outdated, Shahidul Azam, motor vehicle inspector of BRTA, said the ordinance of 1983 needs major update as soon as possible.

"Over the years the traffic system and rules have changed a lot and it is high time for the government to

take urgent steps to formulate a new road safety strategy," he added.

Leading taxicab companies allege that the BRTA driving test system is not reliable as most drivers fail to properly drive a car. But the BRTA denied such allegation.

Kazi Fahadur Rahman, a resident in Gulshan said: "My performance in the tests was quite good, yet I failed. Then I had to sit for the second time and some people in the BRTA asked me to bribe the officials in order to secure a passing grade."

"Spending Tk 5,000 is much easier to receive an original licence when there is practically no value of such driving tests," he concluded.

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.

"Biman lacks efficiency. If it does not operate commercially, it will be very hard to keep it afloat. This is a business, so if they cannot run it like business should be run, they should close it down"



-- M Saifur Rahman

Finance and Planning Minister

Told journalists after a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on January 5.

Source: The Daily Star

"Sheikh Hasina has been given 16 times more security than she deserves as leader of the opposition."

-- Abdul Manna Bhuiyan

Secretary General of BNP

Told a press conference after the countrywide hartal commenting on the security measures for the leader of the opposition, on January 8.

Source: Prothom Alo



"It seems the people who are running the country are deaf and blind"

-- Dr Kamal Hossain

Chairman, Jatiyo Oikto Mancha

Told a press conference commenting on country's present political situation, on January 2.

Source: Prothom Alo

"It is not possible for the police to stop the sale of phensidyl because everyone takes the drug"

-- Mainur Rahman Chowdhury

Police Super, Barisal

Told at meeting on the law and order situation in Barisal, on January 6.

Source: Bhorer Kagoj

"I don't want to see Shudha Sadan as the second government of the country"



-- Sajeeb Wazed Joy

Ex-patriate son of opposition leader

and Awami League president

Sheikh Hasina

Told journalists at Zia International Airport before leaving Dhaka for the United States after a two-week visit to Bangladesh, on January 7.

Source: Prothom Alo