

thecitythatwas

Baptist missionaries came to Dhaka in 1805. William Kerry, a preacher, came to Dhaka by boat accompanied by a foreigner and three locals named Muer, Rammohan, Baiddanath and Bharat. Dilip Pandit mentioned in his "Khristiya Mandalir Itihash" (History of Christians) that when Kerry's boat came to Chhoto Katra, crowds awaited them to collect brochures of Christian literature that the preachers had to anchor 10 yards from the shore.

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Footpaths occupied by vendors

DCC even fails to free the pavement in front of Nagar Bhaban

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has failed to keep the city's pavements free, even it could not free the footpath in front of Nagar Bhaban from illegal occupa-

Some 20 to 25 traders have long been doing business on the footpath in front of Nagar Bhaban, the headquarters of DCC. They sell clothes, seasonal fruits, cigarettes, herbal medicines and many others things in their makeshift shops.

When contacted, several DCC officials declined to make any comment on the illegal occupation of the pavements in front of their office. But one official said: "We are really embarrassed. We do not know who are backing them to carry on their busi-

Although DCC regularly conducts drive to evict vendors and hawkers from city pavements, it hardly makes any attempt to drive away the traders from this footpath. The traders said they rarely face any trouble in doing business there.

A number of vendors sit close to the west gate of Nagar Bhaban which is used by the mayor but the DCC employees informed the traders about the arrival and departure of the mayor a few minutes earlier so that they can close their shops temporarily.

A DCC official said the illegal occupation of the footpaths in front of the DCC headquarters is a matter of shame for them but none of the officials could say how the vendors were continuing their business without any obstacle.

"We evicted them several times but they come back soon after every eviction drive,"

said an official of the DCC estate department. "We cannot keep footpaths free without the help of police and if they allow them to sit, we are helpless.

But the security guards of DCC said they can keep the footpath free from hawkers without the help of police, if they are instructed to do it. "We cannot drive them away without an order from our officers," said a security quard.

The vendors on the footpath said they do not face eviction or any trouble in doing business as they regularly pay toll to the police and DCC staff. "We pay them Tk 10 for each shop daily," said Mannan who sells old clothes.

While visiting the spot on Monday afternoon, the Star City correspondent found two police constables receiving the toll. One of the vendors usually collects the toll from each of the vendors and then hands over it to the cops.

When asked, the constables declined to talk and left the scene hurriedly.

The High Court on February 11, 2001 ordered the city authorities to free the pavements from any kind of occupation to facilitate the pedestrians to walk freely. But DCC and the police seem to be reluctant to comply with the order.

According to a survey conducted by an NGO, about 40 percent of the 220 kilometer footpaths in the city are now occupied by the street vendors.

The footpaths in Motijheel, Dulkusha. Gulistan, Paltan, Baitul Mukarram, GPO, New Market, Nilkhet, Malibagh, Mouchak, Topkhana Road, Sadarghat, Bangshal, Kamalapur, Mirpur Road, Sayedabad, Shahbagh, Banani, Kakrail and Farmgate are mostly occupied.

The Mayor was not available for comment on this issue.



Trinkets, clothes, locally produced cosmetics and other items that catch the eyes of passers-by are sold on the pavement along the DCC building.

The forgotten boy martyr DMCH faces scarcity of

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

Seven-year-old Rukia was playing around the structure without knowing its name. "I cannot tell you what it is. You may ask the grownups," she said.

While her ignorance is understandable, what is striking is the fact that people living in the city and near the struc-

Bank Staff Quarters in Motijheel.

It is a mausoleum, the lone emblem of the supreme sacrifice of 14-year-old Matiur Rahman, a martyr of the mass upsurge of 1969 that had started with the student unrest Mallick, was killed when police opened fire on a procession.

'In memoriam of Shaheed Matiur Rahman (Gutthu), the herald of mass upsurge of 1969, martyred on January 24, 1969, and other known and unknown martyrs of the libera-

ture in question, are either against the tyrannical rule of tion movement', reads the unaware or totally apathetic Ayub Khan. Matiur, a student stone on the mausoleum. It about the significance of the of class nine and son of a also pays homage to Md. three pillars inside the Sonali Sonali Bank employee Atahar Ismail Hossain Chowdhury Jahangir, a staff of Sonali Bank who became a martyr of the War of Independence.

Unfortunately, the memorial does not receive proper maintenance all the time as there is no permanent body to look after it, said locals. They said that even a few months ago, the Shahid Minar was in a shabby state. But it recently underwent a face-lift.

"The present CBA President of Sonali Bank initiated the renovation after taking office," said Mostafa Hossain, education secretary of Sonali Bank CBA adding beautification work on the monument could

The residents attributed the lack of maintenance to the frequent shifting of residents of the staff quarters. "At present at least 1,000 people of 128 families are living here. But the problem is that none of them are permanent residents because the bank only allows an employee a maximum of 12 years to stay in these quarters," explained Abu Musa, a former Sonali Bank employee.

As there is no committee responsible for the monument, the day of Matiur's martyrdom (January 24) is not observed regularly. "Even this year no programme was held to observe the day," said a resident of the staff quarters.

A number of adolescents however, have formed a group called the Kishore Matiur Sangha who organise different programmes to remember the brave teenager. "But its membership is also not static as members also leave the area when their parents move away," said a Sonali Bank staff.

"The Nation knows about Shaheed Asad as a martyr of the mass upsurge. They pay homage to him and Asad Gate has been named after him. But nobody knows about Shaheed Matiur who sacrificed his life at such a young age," lamented Abu Musa.

X-ray films

The free service is now provided in exchange for money

SULTANA RAHMAN

Scarcity of X-ray films at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) deprives thousands of patients from this important diagnostic service.

Taking the advantage of the film shortage, some corrupt employees in the radiology department of the hospital are doing illegal business. They are providing the service in exchange for money, though the service is free of cost at the

"Not only X-ray films, we are running short of other materials needed for various radiological and pathological tests," admitted

a senior official in the DMCH. The DMCH radiology department needs some 300 X-ray films daily. "But we received only 1,000 films in the last one and a half years," said Moshiur Rahman Khan, store in-charge of the department.

He said the hospital director has been informed about the Xray film crisis.

The radiology department staff take money from patients and their attendants for X-ray films, the patients alleged.

When asked, the officials of the Central Medical Store Depot (CMSD), which is responsible for procuring and providing Xray films for the radiology department, refused to make

The patients said the hospital staff ask them to buy X-ray films from private diagnostic centres though the DMCH is supposed to provide the service free of

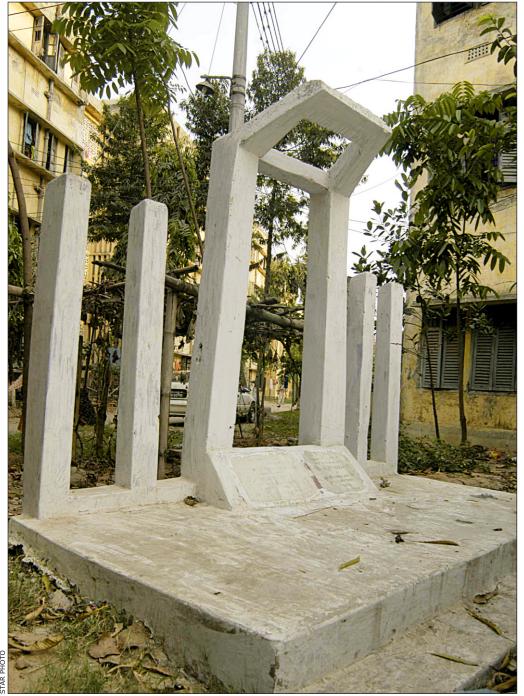
any comment on the issue.

"I needed an X-ray but employees in the X-ray depart-

ment could not give me the service and this is the second day I have come here for the test," alleged Kabir, a patient.

The patients who come to the outdoor of DMCH are mostly poor who cannot afford costly tests in private diagnostic cen-

Sources said the authorities have asked the hospital management to purchase required X-ray films from local markets. But DMCH officials said they could not buy X-ray films from local markets because the price





Patients queue in front of the DMCH radiology department, waiting for a vague opportunity to get an x'ray done.