

DCC plans to add 3 more parking lots soon

MIZANUR KHAN

With an aim to ease the severe traffic congestion in the capital the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has planned to increase the number of parking places by the end of this year.

The DCC proposed three more parking places; one in Banani, another in front of Gausia market on the Mirpur Road and the third in Nayabazar in the old quarters of Dhaka.

"A feasibility study on this proposal has already been done. The file is shelved at the high level office. We are waiting for the green signal," said a top official of the DCC asking not to be named.

Presently there are six parking places under the purview of the DCC. They are in Motijheel-Dilkusha, Shantinagar, New Market, Mohammadpur Krishi Market, Baitul Mukarram and Fakirapool.

"But we can accommodate only a few vehicles in these vehicle parks. The numbers of vehicles are increasing and so is the demand for more parking areas," said another official of DCC's urban planning department.

"I used to spend more than 10 minutes to find a place to park my car every morning. Because of the scarcity of parking, I leave the vehicle behind and travel to office by CNG-run autorickshaw," said

Aminul Haq, an officer of a private company in Motijheel who resides in Uttara.

A source at DCC said that although they wanted to go for more parking areas the decision could not be implemented because of objections from the traffic department.

"The DCC does not have to invest any money on the project. The lessees do all work like road marking, setting up small dustbins at the parking spots and appoint workers to collect tolls. We just identify and lease out the plots to various companies," the source said.

But DMP traffic sources are of the view that parking cannot be permitted in all places. Parking depends on the width of the road.

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) carried out a detailed survey on car parking in Motijheel-Dilkusha in 1994. Following suggestions of the study the DCC started the first parking project in Motijheel-Dilkusha in 2000.

The DCC then started operating the Shantinagar parking place in 2002, at Baitul Mukarram in 2003 and the smallest area in Fakirapool at the end of 2004 under the car-park project. Parking area in New Market was in operation before the implementation of the project.

The parking slot at Motijheel-



Cars parked along the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce building in Motijheel, one of DCC's parking areas.

Dilkusha is run by L.N Corporation while Selim Corporation controls the area at Baitul Mukarram. The one at Shantinagar is under the care of Classic Builders. The local association of businessmen looks after Krishi Market. Presently parking tolls in the New Market

area are collected by zone 5 of the DCC.

"The company to which the lease was given could not run the New Market parking area. It filed a case against DCC stating that because of digging along the Mirpur Road it could not use the slot. On the other hand, Bangla-

desh Rifles does not allow car parking at the south end of the market area," an official of the estate department said.

Sources said tolls collected from the six parking areas add only Tk 20 lakh to DCC's total annual revenue of the corporation a year.

"We earn a small sum of money from the parking project, yet continue to do it not to make a fortune but to improve the city's traffic management," said another official.

"The authorities recently installed electronic traffic signals at 59 busy intersections, opened two flyovers for the smooth flow of vehicles, and if we have more parking areas it will help commuters immensely," said an official.

"We did not have a 'parking culture' in our society. People did not want to pay to park their cars, but now the situation has changed and we have to offer better parking facilities," he added.

The planning department intends to introduce metered parking systems as an improvement to the service this year.

"We will install meters at Motijheel-Dilkusha parking place on a pilot project by the end of this year," the source said.

Meanwhile, it is alleged that a group of people collects tolls illegally for parking across the city in the name of DCC, and the DCC turns a blind eye to this activity.

When contacted, an official of the DCC on condition of anonymity said: "We can do nothing about this. The Police has to take action and people should be aware of everything happening around them."



Taxis, rickshaws become targets of miscreants

SULTANA RAHMAN

Salam, an 18-year-old rickshaw-puller, became dumbfounded one of his two passengers held a knife to his neck and demanded that he gave them whatever money he had. The two culprits vanished into the crowd after leaving him penniless near Jhigatola one after-

noon.

With just half an hour left before he had to return the rickshaw to its owner's garage, Salam was out of ideas on how he would pay up the daily rent of 40 Taka. He had earned around 120 Taka and after paying the rent, he would have bought food with the rest of the amount. But the muggers had ruined everything. Salam was in tears.

"I can pass a night without food but the owner will not give his rickshaw any more if I fail to pay the rent," said Salam.

Police sources said a number of organised gangs have been involved in hijacking taxis, CNG-run autorickshaws and rickshaws and mugging the drivers. Usually the miscreants board the vehicles in the guise of passengers and then intoxicate the driver and run away

with the taxi or rickshaw. Others strike fear by brandishing arms before ripping off the driver. Some also cheat.

Taxi driver Matlob waited for more than two hours in front of a bank at Karwan Bazar but his passenger, who had asked Matlob to wait for him, never returned. Before leaving, the passenger had taken 500 Taka from Matlob saying that he would give him back the

amount after drawing money from the bank. The fraud had been on his taxi for hours and the fare metre was flashing 1276 Taka.

"I trusted him as he looked like a gentleman. How will I know who is a mugger and who is a real passenger? They all look the same," said Matlob.

There has been a rise in such incidents in recent times.

Almost every day police stations record cases related to taxi and rickshaw hijacking. The miscreants often injure the drivers and some have been killed also.

"We often recover the hijacked vehicles but it is difficult to arrest the culprits as they commit crimes by appearing as gentlemen," said a top ranking police official.



The Dhaka Zoo with its renovation project still floating.

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

The Dhaka Zoo development project remained dormant, as the finance ministry is still undecided whether the project will be put under development budget.

Zoo officials said they could not accomplish some badly needed development works due to the delay over funding arrangements for the scheme.

Sources said the finance ministry wants to put this project under revenue budget while the fisheries ministry is opposed to it, throwing the project into uncertainty.

"If the project goes under the revenue budget, it will be difficult to get funds due to the lengthy

procedure. So we are trying to keep it in the development budget," said an official of the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock.

Two years back the zoo authorities submitted a budget of Tk 30 crore for the development project -- Tk 19 crore for Dhaka Zoo and the rest for Rangpur Zoo.

The Dhaka Zoo officials said they need money as they have to get rid of some spare animals and to import some new ones.

The zoo now houses 18 lions, 12 tigers, 150 deer, 3 hippopotamus, 20 pythons and some other species in extra. "We are nurturing these excess animals and for them we have to spend about Tk 60 lakh a year," said Dr NC Banik, deputy curator of Dhaka Zoo.

He said for collecting new animals they have contacted a few zoos in Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and South Africa to exchange animals but they need money for carrying the animals they would get in exchange.

"In exchange of lions and tigers, we will bring giraffe, chimpanzee and other animals to enrich our collection. This will save money needed for buying new animals," said the deputy curator. "On the other hand, we have many species in our collection who are singles. If we can bring their mates, they will be fertile."

"Ten years back I visited the Dhaka Zoo. At that time it was much richer than now," said Abul Kashem who came from

Jessore. "There is no giraffe, camel or baboon in this zoo which I saw during my last visit."

The officials said they need to accomplish some construction work on emergency basis.

"Due to lack of boundary wall of the southern lake, the zoo area remains insecure. Theft of fruits and fishes are taking place regularly. We need to build it soon," said Dr Banik.

He said the southern part of the zoo has already been encroached by some floating people who have built slums there. "We can evict them any time but they will come again if there is no boundary wall," said Banik.

The development scheme includes setting up of a monorail

around the zoo, development of the children's park inside it, renovation and expansion of the zoo museum and fish aquarium and improvement of the overall situation of the zoo.

"The monorail would attract more visitors that will definitely increase our income. The park for children would be an added facility," said Banik.

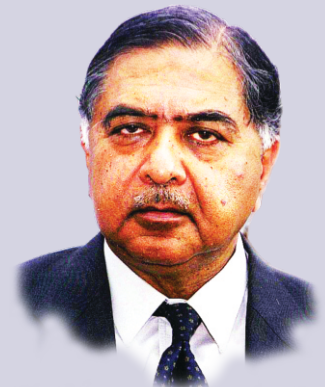
One of the officials of the fisheries ministry said implementation of this project will make the zoo more profitable.

The yearly expenditure of Dhaka Zoo is around Tk 2.5 crore while they earn about Tk 2.75 crore a year.

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.

"Almost everyone in the country has now become hostage to evil forces. Only unity among honest people can save us from the unbearable situations"



-- Dr Kamal Hossain
Convenor, Jatiya Oikya Mancha
Told a public meeting at Sheb Bazar in Rajshahi, on May 26.
Source: The Daily Star

"It is the constitutional right of the Bar to express its opinion, hold meetings or processions. Curbing this right is violation of the constitution"

-- Mahbubey Alam
President, Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA)
Told journalists at a press conference before SCBA's demonstration protesting the High Court's suo moto order that banned all types of agitation on the court premises, on May 25.
Source: Prothom Alo

"I do not know how far the government controls or influences the Election Commission secretariat. But I believe it should be independent"



-- MA Aziz
Newly appointed Chief Election Commissioner
Told journalists replying to a query on reported influence of the government on the EC secretariat on May 24.
Source: The Daily Star

"The Awami League should see its own face in the mirror. Did they discuss with the opposition when they appointed Chief Election Commissioner MA Syed"

-- Moudud Ahmed
Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister
Told reporters criticising Awami League for its adverse reaction to the appointment of the new Chief Election Commissioner, on May 24.
Source: The Daily Star

"We are rejecting the unilateral appointment of Justice MA Aziz as Chief Election Commissioner"



-- Abdul Jalil
General Secretary, Awami League
Told journalists rejecting the appointment of the new Chief Election Commissioner, on May 23.
Source: Prothom Alo

ZOO WATCH

Zoo development project in limbo