



thecitythatwas

Baitul Mukarram Mosque, situated at Purana Paltan, east of the Secretariat and north of the Stadium is the largest in the city. Three storied and designed like the Kaba Sharif, it has been built on a high platform. Beautiful costly decorations adorn the interior and the flight of stairs with a long lawn, garden and rows of fountains to the south and east

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Fresh water-logging grips city with continuous rain

Encroachments, filling up of water bodies main reasons











Clockwise: As some pedestrians wade through the logged water others stand on a median at Motijheel; raincoat clad parents help their children through the water near the Janata Bank Head Office. At Bijoy Nagar, a double-decker caught in a crevice made by the recent utility service provider's digging is supported by a bamboo. At Toyanbee Circular Road, an Ansar camp is emerged while a passer-by falls into knee high water near the Press Club.

MIZANUR KHAN

Water logging has become commonplace in the city because of reckless and unplanned urban growth and encroachment of the water bodies that have been filled up over the years, experts said. Nearly 30 canals in and around the city, according to these experts, have disappeared from the map.

Ashulia, Banashree, Aftabnagar, Meradia, Baunia, Badda, Kalyanpur, Amin Bazar, Hatirjheel and many other water catchment areas have been indiscriminately grabbed by public and private organisations and unscrupulous developers.

"Mindless filling of city canals

and other water bodies has destroyed water retention capabilities exposing the city to frequent inundation," the experts observed.

With the absence of such water bodies the 12-hour incessant rain drowned the capital in a vast pool of water, paralysing normal life yesterday. Torrential rains that began midnight Saturday continued till noon yesterday, inundating a major part of the city.

Commuters, residents and vehicles were stuck, as the rainwater could not recede because of poor sewerage systems. Massive road digging by different utility service providing agencies at many points added to their miseries.

Motijheel, Gulistan, Nawabpur, Shantinagar, Kakrail, Fakirapul, Paltan, Tejgaon, Malibagh, Gulshan, Mirpur and many other low areas went under water because of the heavy

"All development plans including the recent Dhaka Master Plan have clearly marked these areas for flood retention and the Wetland Conservation Act bars development of land on such water bodies," said a source at Rajuk, the government's city development agency. "The Wetland Conversation Act 2000 states that no one has the right to develop any wetland, flood flow zone or catchment areas," he said.

But a number of land develop-

ers more often aided by government officials and politicians have illegally occupied and filled up these areas under the very nose of the authorities.

These areas, experts said could hold a large volume of floodwater and protect many areas from waterlogging. In addition, rivers such as the Buriganga and Turag are encroached. In many parts the rivers look like narrow canals.

"Water bodies, canals and ponds, if saved, could consume nearly one third of present volume of floodwater," said an official of Flood Forecasting Centre of Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB).

"We have to stop further encroachment and recover

stolen water bodies from dishonest land grabbers to protect the city," a Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) official said. "These occupiers are very influential and politically connected," he added.

At a recent inter-ministerial meeting 26 canals were identified for urgent recovery. Rajuk, Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), Wasa and the office of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) were asked to identify the lost canals and take measures for the recovery while the Home Ministry has been asked to facilitate the initia-

To reduce residents' sufferings Wasa pulled down illegal structures on the different canals. Wasa officials claimed that until

end May, they had cleaned more than 100 km of drainage pipes. "We focused on pulling down illegal structures over canals, clean them and make sure the flow of water is smooth and included cleaning of box culverts too," said an official of Wasa drainage circle.

Wasa started the canal recovery drive on March 29 in Mirpur with the cooperation of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Rajuk, DCC and Dhaka District Administration, and claimed they have made a remarkable progress in salvaging lost

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.



"Anticipating reality, they
(Awami League) have
rushed to foreigners'
doors and are tarnishing
the country's image
through baseless propaganda against the country
as they lost people's support and failed to engage
them in anti-government

-- Khaleda Zia

Prime Minister

Said in parliament during a discussion on the proposed national budget for 2005-2006 fiscal year, on June 29.
Source: The Daily Star

"It will not be possible to protect the country from evil forces if the common people remain inactive"

-- Dr Reza Kibria

Son of slain former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria
Told the protest rally arranged under the 'Blue for Peace" programme
initiated by his mother Asma Kibria. Kibria was killed in a grisly grenade
attack in Habiganj, on June 30.
Source: The Daily Star

"I myself faced the dilemma of whether or not to go for the money whitening provision. I could not sleep at night after making the proposal in the budget speech. But when one has to govern the country he has to find a kind of compromise between ethics and

-- M Saifur Rahman

Finance Minister
Told parliament in his wrap-up speech on the budget he had proposed for
2005-2006, on June 29.
Source: The Daily Star

"If a lawmaker remains absent for ten consecutive working days without your (speaker's) permission, his membership will be cancelled and he will not qualify to contest in the election for one term"

-- Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan Minister of Local Government, Rural Development and

Cooperatives
Suggested in parliament blasting the main opposition Awami League for skipping parliament proceedings, on June 29.
Source: The Daily Star

"I am anxious about my daughter as he (HM Ershad) seems to have become a bloodthirsty hound"

-- Professor Abu Bakar Siddique Father of Bidisha, the estranged wife of former military ruler

Told journalists when Bidisha was finally released from jail on bail, on June 27.

Source: The Daily Star

"I have promised myself never to go to the Minister for Liberation War Affairs"

-- Abdul Kader Siddiqui Veteran freedom fighter and lone lawmaker of Krishak Sramik

Janata League
Told parliament, on June 30.
Source: Prothom Alo

Modern police control room, CC cameras soon

SULTANA RAHMAN

Dhaka Metropolitan Police
(DMP) plans to set up a modern
control room and install a number of close circuit cameras at
several points of the city soon in
a bid to curb crime.

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To implement the project a four-member police team visited

Singapore recently to learn more about how the police system works in an advanced country. Sources said following the report submitted by the team, the authorities have moved fast. A building with modern facilities and equipment has been constructed on Phoenix Road just opposite the police head guarters.

"Once the control room is up

and running, the police personnel will be under close supervision. It will also increase the skill and ability of policemen in countering criminals as they will get necessary information and instruction within a very short time. Any negligence in duty will also be easier to spot and prompt action could be taken," said DMP commissioner SM

Mizanur Rahman.

"Criminal activities will hopefully come down after the setting up of this control room," said Rahman. Sources said that the close circuit cameras would be placed near points that have been identified as crime- prone zones. The hidden cameras will be linked to the control room.

The police control room at Shahbagh will be transferred to the modern control room.

"It has not been decided yet how many cameras will be set up. The locations have not been finalised also," said deputy commissioner of traffic police (South) Anseruddin Khan Pathan.

The government had decided to install close circuit cameras ahead of the SAARC conference which was due last November. The plan was

deferred following the postponement of the regional confer-

"There is no relation between beefing up security for SAARC summit and the present initiative of installing the close circuit cameras," said the commissioner



200 seized cars left uncared-for in city police stations

IMRUL HASAN

About 200 seized vehicles have been left uncared-for for years in city's different police stations. Most of these vehicles are now worn out as their valuable parts are either damaged or missing.

A Toyota private car has been kept at the Mirpur Police Station for the last seven years. Totally covered with bushes, the car has already lost its major part into the ground. Another 14 private cars, 11 taxicabs, four autorickshaws and 15 motorcycles have also

been kept there.

At the Ramna Police Station, a Nissan Petrol car has been kept in the open space for the last two years. Some parts of this car have been damaged but it can still be repaired. Fourteen more private cars, seven taxicabs, four buses and two microbuses are also there

Sources said some of these vehicles have been kept there for six to eight years.

This is a common scene in the city's all the police stations. The vehicles were seized by the police on various allegations including

road accidents and use of those in criminal activities. Police said they have nothing to do with these vehicles as cases are pending with courts.

"We have no right to do anything with these vehicles unless the cases are settled," a duty officer at the Dhanmondi Police Station said, asking not to be named. He said in some cases owners do not come to take the seized vehicles back.

Lalbagh police seized a tempo in 1994 on allegation that it was used by a person involved in a murder case. When contacted, he

said he was not accused in the case but he did not try to take the tempo back in fear of harassment.

Another igen has been kent at

Another jeep has been kept at the Khilgaon Police Station for about a year. Police said the vehicle was seized during an operation of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and it was used by a Judo Dal leader who was killed in "crossfire."

According to rules, police have to inform the court about seized car within 24 hours and send its registration number to every police station. If the owner does not come within six months, police can file a case in court, sources

said.

After the verdict of the court the magistrate orders the police station concerned to deliver the vehicle to its owner or to sell it in auction. But due to lengthy legal process, the police have to keep the vehicles for years without any maintenance.

When contacted, Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) SM Mizanur Rahman said, "We have no right to handle these vehicles. We act according to the court orders."

A seized car in ruins in front of the Dhanmondi Police Station.