



thecitythatwas

Bangla Jontro, Dhaka's first printing press was founded by deputy magistrate Babu Bhagoban Chandra Bose , father of scientist Jagadish Chandra Bose and believers of Brahma Shamaj at Babur Bazaar in 1859. East Bengal's first magazine "Mashik Monoronjika" was printed on this press, along with the 'Nildarpan' of Dinobondhu Mitra. The press had induced a revolution in the minds of intellectuals.

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Rajuk goes tough on outdoor ad menace

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

Rajuk has moved to knock down rooftop billboards, signboards and transmitting towers to cut vision pollution and restore beauty to the city.

In a recent notice, Rajuk declared all rooftop installations illegal and set August 30 as the deadline for homeowners to remove their structures.

"The Building Construction Law of 1953 makes such outdoor advertisements and towers illegal. They are risky as the buildings that house these structures were not designed to bear the extra load and they also destroy the beauty of surroundings," said Emdadul Islam, chief engineer with the city developer.

"We have to act tough against the homeowners who don't comply with the order," he said, adding the authorities would not allow the advertisement menace to creep back in.

Rajuk did not go unchallenged. Rafiqul Islam, president of Bangladesh Outdoor Owners Association (BOOA), questioned the rationale for the decision and said: "If such signboards are illegal under the 1953 law, how did the authorities allow us to build them for

the last 33 years?"

"We have put a lot of money into the business." He said Rajuk should have talked to his organisation and considered its views too before taking the decision.

The drive came as Dhaka City Corporation started demolishing unregistered outdoor advertisements on August 1, before its efforts tapered off in a space of five days. The DCC will meet on August 21 to follow it up.

Rajuk's decision surprised the homeowners who have just rented or leased out space to advertisers.

"We cannot just ask them to bring down the structures by August 30. We have to allow them at least three months to terminate contracts," said Golam Murtoza, owner of a high-rise in New Eskaton.

Cellphone companies have set up their signal towers on the roofs of highrises. Nagar Bhaban has leased out space to a cellphone firm to build a tower that still stands. DCC officials said they would talk to the lessees of their roof soon and ask them to bring the tower down.

Rajuk's decision caught the cellphone companies off guard. "We should have been given alternative

locations. It is not easy to relocate in a month as installations require a lot of technicalities," said an official with a cellphone company. "We have to talk to the decision makers," he said.

Rajuk officials said they would reconsider the locations of the cellphone

"If our team finds that a building can take the load our team the towers from such spots will not be brought down, and the others will have to be relocated in places that can hold the load," the chief engineer said.

The DCC received about 500 applications for registration. "We are scrutinising the applications and will limit outdoor advertisements as much as possible to bring beauty back to the city," said Abu Taleb, chief estate officer at the DCC.

BOOA complained that the DCC and Rajuk have kept their efforts opaque to favour only two ad agen-

"These two firms are new to the business and trying to grab as much space as they possibly can. The place where the DCC pulled down our billboards will be given to the new companies," a BOOA member



The DCC brings down a billboard at Sonargaon intersection.

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.

"The comments they made about me do not fall within any political grammar. We do not use such language even when we talk about Awami League leaders"



-- M Saifur Rahman **Finance and Planning Minister**

Told newsmen after three feuding lawmakers met him and apologised unconditionally for their conduct, on August 10. Source: The Daily Star

"We have met sir [M Saifur Rahman]...and admitted our mistakes. Sir is our murubbi [guardian], we are young...we can make mistakes"

> -- Ilias Ali **BNP Lawmaker, Sylhet** Told after the meeting with the finance minister, on August 10. Source: The Daily Star

"Political parties are not willing to give nominations to women candidates, as they don't want to take a risk"

> -- Motia Chowdhury Awami League leader

Told at a roundtable on 'Reforms in election system and political sphere: How equal rights for women can be reflected' organised by Anannya, a fortnightly magazine for women in the city, on August 11. Source: The Daily Star

"I have agreed to withdraw the nomination paper for greater interest of the country...Nobody will win if both of us contest the polls and it would be a defeat for BNP"

-- Kazi Sirajul Islam

BNP leader who joined the ruling party recently Told newsmen reacting on BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's dramatic move to pick Shah Mohammad Abu Zafar as the ruling alliance candidate to contest Faridpur-1 parliamentary by-election, cancelling the nomination of Kazi Sirajul Islam, on August 10. Source: The Daily Star

"There will be no journalist in Baufal. The press club will be closed down and turned into a BNP office"

> -- Shahidul Alam Talukdar **BNP Lawmaker. Barisal**

Told journalists when asked about the attack on a local journalist in Baufal by ruling party cadres, on August 9. In the incident the journalist was allegedly beaten up severely by the ruling party lawmaker. Source: Prothom Alo

BEMP's plan to save the city

SYED TASHFIN CHOWDHURY

To protect the environment of the city, Bangladesh Environmental Management Project (BEMP), which is made up of experts on the field, has formulated a draft that recommends 45 solutions to some 62 environment related The BEMP submitted the

draft to the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) recently. "The most serious problem is

the stressful condition of rivers and canals around the city from which other hazards stem," said Syed M. Igbal Ali, team leader, technical services. The BEMP pointed out diminishing supply of drinking water, unplanned sewage disposal, river pollution through extensive use of soap, detergents and solvents, and loss of aesthetic appeal in that regard. Deterrents like land reclamation and encroachment, upstream erosion and sedimentation, dredging, sand-mining, industrial waste dumping, filling up of wetlands were also cited in

The BEMP said that some of the recommended steps should



Black smoke emitted from this vehicle pollutes the entire area.

be implemented within the next year or two while the rest could be done over a course of five to

"We are calling the solutions which should be implemented between two to three years as 'quick hits' which would project the government's initiative and commitment," said a member of BEMP. Some quick hits include

turning the wetland near Norai Khal into a treatment plant for the waste-filled water of Tejgaon industrial area, settlement of ponds and reed beds for selected textile industry clusters, transferring the Saidabad intake from Sarulia to Meghna and the elimination of import duties (33.5%) on efflu-

ent treatment plants.

In addition, some other aspects that require immediate implementation are an appropriate environment-friendly design of facilities for tanneries in Savar, clearly defined encroachment rules and strict enforcement, securing river buffer zones and determination of optimal canal routes in Dhaka for linkage and rehabilitation.

worsen due to the absence of proper long-term visions of various statutory bodies like Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), Rajdhani Unnayan Kartikpakkha (Rajuk), Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (DWASA) and others," said Ali. Ali pointed out that these

"Most of these problems only

agencies while trying to solve the short-term problems, actually generate new ones in the long run. Most of the time their activities generate a conflict of interest resulting in wastage of valuable resources, time and money. The draft has also formulated a proposed institutional structure under which these implementing agencies would be answerable to a proposed steering committee under the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) for any project that they are about to undertake. The committee will also consist of representatives from the Ministry of Environment and Forest who would provide assistance and manage vital information and provide strategic environmental friendly plans for the projects.

Besides, provisions for public feedback has been kept. "City dwellers can actually question the various projects Environment Public Review and Advisory Council. This will consist of respected citizens like newspaper editors, independent technical and professional people and political leaders," said Ali. The council will be responsi-

through the Dhaka

ble also for providing information to the public on the projects and their environmental aspects and simultaneously. accumulate plans and reviews from stakeholders and various groups which may be affected due to the implementation of certain projects. The implementation of the entire programme would

require US\$ eight billion over a period of 20 years. "Even though, this indicative

budget may sound expensive, the cost incurred by the city through the cited problems will be over US\$ 51.1 billion by 2025," said Ali.

BEMP is planning to organise another workshop shortly where it will discuss the prospects of the draft with potential stakeholders and steering committee members.



WRC at JU: Giving wildlife its life back

EMRAN HOSSAIN EMON

It will make you feel as if you are walking along a forest where animals are too shy to cross your way and are peeping from their hideouts. If you keep travelling the narrow muddy path beside Botanical Garden on the Jahangirnagar University (JU) campus, it will lead you to the Wildlife Rescue Centre

Established on October 17 last year on five acres of land on the southern part of the campus, the WRC is a safe sanctuary for various types of critically endangered wildlife species of the country. It began its journey with the objective of helping the threatened wildlife to survive and breed naturally and normally. It is also working on wildlife conservation, breeding, genetics and habitat.

M.Sc, M.Phil and Ph.D students of the Department of Zoology are using the site as a field laboratory. To provide the animals with natural atmosphere, around 500 fruit and 150 flower trees have been planted at the centre.

The WRC, the lone establishment of its kind in the country, has already sheltered three endangered species of mammals, fifty

species of birds, ten species of reptiles and four species of amphibians and the students have already started their research on them. The WRC also includes an aviary which is 15 feet high and 30 feet in length. It houses endangered species of birds like the otter,

hilly moyna', titir and local rabbits. Dr Moostafa Feeroz, chairman of zoology department of JU and associate professors Dr Sajeda Begum, Dr Mofijul Kabir and a lecturer of the department Ali Reza had established the centre with their own initiative and without any financial or technical help from the university authorities or the Government.

Although our country is small in size, it is blessed with a great variety of wildlife and is historically a very important transitional zone for animal migration from South Asia

to Southeast Asia. The number of forests in our country is declining by the day with the ever-increasing rate of population, it has seriously affected the habitat of wildlife, forcing them out of forests and into an insecure and vulnerable environment. The WRC is working with a goal to protect the wildlife from a traumatised existence and give it back its normal habitat.







