



The place where wild elephants were tamed during the reign of East India Company became known as Peelkhana. The Zamindars too, paid a certain fee to have their animals tamed. A bigger peelkhana was situated at the southern part of the city during the Mughal regime. The place where mahouts lived came to be known as Mahuttuli.

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# Making money thru' 'dubious' lottery

Although any kind of lottery is illegal in the country, the government allows some charitable and non-profitable organisations to hold lottery every year under an amendment so that they can serve humanity by raising money from such activities... Lottery agents alleged that a syndicate is doing brisk business by selling and buying permission of lottery in the name of charity depriving those who really want to do charity



The sale of lottery tickets go on, despite speculations on its authenticity.

#### KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

Several charitable organisations that have been allowed to hold lotteries are allegedly selling these lotteries to business firms at a nominal price in the name of appointing sales agents, according to documents obtained by Star City.

This is possible, as the government does not have any monitoring over the procedure, depriving the charities themselves of profit.

Although any kind of lottery is illegal in the country, the government allows some charitable and non-profitable

organisations to hold lottery every year under an amendment so that they can serve humanity by raising money from such activities.

For example, the Bangladesh Cancer Society sold its lottery project to one Khan Enterprise for Tk 40 lakh while the National Ondhya Kalyan Samity sold its lottery to the same organisation for only Tk 15 lakh.

Khan Enterprise earned Tk 1.84 crore by selling tickets of Cancer Society lottery alone. It sold 36.8 lakh tickets but reported to the Cancer Society that only 25.68 tickets were sold.

Moreover, there are allegations of huge irregularities in the lottery operation. Unsold tickets were included in the Cancer Society lottery and one such ticket won the 5th prize, according to documents prepared by Khan Enterprise.

No one claimed the Tk 30 lakh first prize. The draw took place in January this year.

Lottery agents alleged that a syndicate is doing brisk business by selling and buying permission of lottery in the name of charity depriving those who really want to do charity.

"As there are no monitoring, officials of some charita-

ble organisations are benefiting more than the organisation itself," said an agent.

The Cancer Society would have had a turnover of at least Tk 1.19 crore from the lottery if they society itself ran the lottery.

When contacted, Prof MA Mazed, president of the Cancer Society, said: "We formed a subcommittee to run the lottery and they did everything," he said.

But the secretary of the lottery subcommittee Dr Gulam Mohiuddin Faruque admitted that they had signed a contract with Khan Enterprise at Tk 40 lakh to run

the lottery. "As we do not have enough manpower to run it, we made an agreement with Khan which shared the profits with us," he said.

When contacted, Rafiqul Islam Khan claimed to be a consultant of the Cancer Society lottery project. "No unsold tickets have won prizes. It was a sabotage - the numbers printed in newspapers were wrong," he claimed.

When asked why they did not publish a corrigendum in the newspapers, he said it was the duty of the Cancer Society.

Now it has been learnt that the same Khan Enterprise has made a Tk 35 lakh contract with Bangladesh Society of Hypertension (BSH) to run its lottery project. The lottery tickets are on sale at the moment.

"I did not buy the BSH lottery. I am the sales adviser of the lottery," said Khan.

Khan in a letter to president of BSH on February 9, 2005 wrote: "As per contract between us I request you to appoint Wing Commander (Retired) Mohiuddin Ahmed as project Director of the lottery." Later Ahmed was appointed as project director (PD).

But the officials of BSH denied the allegation.

"There is no such agreement with Khan Enterprise. We are running this lottery by ourselves," said Abdun Nur Tushar, secretary general, BSH.

"When we invited tenders to appoint agents only two organisations including Khan applied. We appointed Khan Enterprise as agent. We will appoint the other agent soon," he said.

The officials concerned in the finance ministry said they recently came to know about this matter and would take action after inquiry.

"We are in a process of conducting an inquiry and if we find anyone guilty we will immediate take action," said AKM Mahbub Alam, deputy secretary, Ministry of Finance.

Since 1993, the government has permitted 13 organisations to hold 40 lotteries.

# New lab in Dhaka for safe water

#### IMRUL HASAN

A modern water-testing laboratory has been set up in the capital with the assistance of Japanese government for examining the quality of water supplied to the city dwellers.

This laboratory will strengthen the overall water quality examination system of the country with special emphasis on arsenic analysis and promoting arsenic mitigation activities, officials of the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) said.

The lab will help ensure supply of safe drinking water to the city dwellers as well as people living outside the capital, said Md Khorshed Alam, chief engineer, DPHE.

The DPHE under the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives has built the three-storey laboratory at Mohakhali under a Japan-funded project titled "Strengthening of Water Examination System."

The project also includes upgrading the facilities at two zonal laboratories in Jhenidah and Noakhali and procurement of modern equipment for those labs.

The total cost of the project is Tk 33.34 crore where the Japanese government contributed Tk 27.22 crore as grant aid through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica). Bangladesh government has contributed the rest Tk 6.12 crore.

"This laboratory is the first of

its kind in the country for assessing the quality of water being extracted by tube-wells and supplied through pipelines for drinking and other purposes," Naoyuk Yonekawa, an expert of Jica said.

Amanullah Al Mahmud, the project director, said: "The main objective of the laboratory is to ensure supply of safe drinking water free from arsenic contamination."

"This laboratory would mainly focus on analysis of the quality of drinking water and determining the exact level of arsenic in water," he added.

Besides, the central laboratory will help 11 zonal laboratories of the country in ascertaining the level of contamination in water in their respective areas.

It will also provide training support to other laboratories for human resources development, said Tusher Mohon Khan, executive engineer, Training Division, DPHE.

The project director also said: "The laboratory has the facilities of examining as many as 52 different parameters of water quality. The examination facilities include analysis of arsenic, barium, lead, copper, iron and bacteria in drinking water."

"It is expected that the water quality examination system in Bangladesh will improve significantly from an institutional aspect," said Naoyuk Yonekawa.

Major testing facilities like atomic absorption spectrophotometer for examining heavy metals and other

elements in water, TOC analyser, ion chromatograph, for chromium etc. have been procured from Japan for the laboratory.

Sources in the DPHE said that there is no such sophisticated equipment in any laboratory in the country. They were no facilities in Bangladesh to detect the presence of lead, copper, mercury etc. in water in the past.

"Even, we could not detect the presence of arsenic in groundwater due to the lack of modern equipment," said a high official of DPHE. "Now it will be easier for us to detect the presence of any hazardous chemicals in water anywhere in the country."

The government has given approval for 96 posts for the laboratory. These posts include chemists, analysers, technicians, bacteriologists and sample analogists. Jica has trained necessary manpower for running the laboratory.

The laboratory will have an Equipment Management Division. "It will be responsible for supervision, operation and maintenance of the sophisticated equipment as well as data management," the project director said.

The construction of the laboratory had begun in July 2004. It was inaugurated by LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan on April 18.



Despite restrictions on large billboards that cover the greenery of the city, the trend seems to persist.

# Waste not, want not

#### NOVRA DEEPIKA

Sufia Begum (not her real name) is a landlady in the Rayerbazar area. One of her main tasks in the morning is to switch on the pump to draw water to the tank of her building. She usually turns it off when the tank is filled.

But last Sunday she forgot to turn it off as there was a power cut and went to her relative's place and stayed overnight with her whole family. The consequence was very obvious. The top floor, which is open to sky, was flooded as the pump kept continuously drawing up water once the power resumed. The ultimate sufferers were the tenants.

This is not a rare incident. While most city dwellers are suffering from an acute water crisis this summer because of a low supply of water in areas like Old Dhaka and Dhanmondi, the thoughtlessness of landlords has made severe wastage of water a common phenomenon.

Other residents of Dhanmondi have also similar complaints. Faria Sultana, a tenant in Mohammadpur said: "We

have often noticed this nuisance in our building. There are many other callous house owners around who simply do not care about switching off the pump in time. The result is a huge wastage of water that surely contributes to the recurring crisis in water supply."

Shahed Iqbal, a resident of Katashur, said: "We can do without electricity or light, but it is impossible to live without water. The dominating landlords are reluctant to admit their faults."

When contacted, Sufia Begum was very embarrassed of what had happened and her neglect, and assured that such mistake will not occur in the future.

A former Wasa official said most ordinary people do not have the basic education that a conscious citizen should have. "There are many awareness programmes run by the Wasa and now the media should come forward in this regard," he said. "If one house wastes 10 litres of water everyday, then just calculate how much water is wasted a month from so many other houses," he said.