



Resumption of beautification work at Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises has been termed 'unnecessary'.

Costly beautification raises question

TAWFIQUE ALI

Public Works Department (PWD) has resumed the "unnecessary maintenance work" on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises in the name of beautification.

The so-called beautification of the sprawling green lawn to the southeast of Sangsad Bhaban is now going on though top PWD officials had abandoned the work terming it "waste of money" following press reports around two months back.

Now, to justify the resumption of the work, some PWD officials claim that the work is to replace the existing grass with new ones, some say it is to make the ground fertile with alluvial soil while others say it is to level-dress the ground.

PWD Chief Engineer ASM Monjurul Islam had earlier said, "Waste of money is not acceptable in the name of unnecessary lawn development work...There is no such scheme of lawn beautification or development."

Islam, who had stopped the work as it was initiated without his knowledge, now says, "We intend to plant new grass weeding out existing long grass. We

will put a two-inch layer of alluvial soil on the ground to make it fertile."

When asked why it is necessary to plant new grass spending a lot of money, the chief engineer said, "Chief arboury culture officer knows everything."

But Chief Arboury Culture Officer Fazlur Rahman Bhuiyan said, "I don't know. The PWD chief engineer can say what is the necessity of the work."

Arboury Culture Department works under the PWD.

Department of Architecture however says there is no necessity of planting new grass where grass is already there. "Plantation of new grass is required in case grass does not grow," said ASM Ismail, deputy chief architect of the department.

The ground has been in present condition for the past twenty years and none has made any complaint about the grass now being uprooted, he said.

Ismail however quoted architect Nishat Khondaker, who is involved with the work from the department, as saying that there are pits on the ground that need levelling.

Usually, the Parliament Secretariat recommends any

maintenance or development work in and around the Sangsad Bhaban. "We have not placed any proposal for the said work," said Mostafa Kamal, administrative officer of the secretariat.

When asked, the PWD chief engineer said, "We have initiated the work on our own."

Regarding the fund for the work, the chief engineer said, "It is a scheme involving Tk 23 to 24 lakh. We will get the money from the maintenance and repair fund. We will also ask for a block allocation from the ministry."

But the chief arboury culture officer said, "It is a Tk 48 lakh work. We will get the fund from the housing and public works ministry."

An executive engineer of PWD requesting anonymity said, "The entire project is waste of public money with massive irregularities."

Executive Engineer of PWD's Division-1 Mohsin Mian had unilaterally initiated the work without any knowledge of the PWD chief engineer, chief architect of the Department of Architecture and the chief arboury culture officer.

PWD had floated tender, without involving Arboury

Culture Department for the work, but later the Arboury Culture Department was assigned to carry out the work.

The Arboury Culture Department, in consultation with the Department of Architecture, executes decorative and ornamental plantation work with flowerbeds, designs and trees.

This correspondent on last Thursday found labourers engaged in uprooting the existing grass and planting new grass with the ground being ploughed with tractor.

No additional alluvial soil was in sight, though the PWD chief engineer argued that the work was necessary for adding alluvial soil to the ground. Asked, the chief engineer said, "I will enquire why the soil is not being put."

The sprawling green lawns on the Sangsad Bhaban's south and north complexes constitute much of the aesthetic beauty of the majestic building designed by world famous architect Louis I. Kahn on an area of 200 acres of land.

The Bhaban was inaugurated on January 28, 1982 as a world heritage of architectural splendour and a national symbol of Bangladesh.

DHAKA TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

Increase in population, vehicles causing setback on the roads

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

The infrastructure development of Dhaka's transportation system has failed to match up with the rising growth of inhabitants and vehicle population.

Hazardous and partial implementation of projects and poor coordination between the implementing authorities are ruining much of the success of the infrastructure development projects, leaving the city with a chaotic transportation system, wastage of money and increasing people's suffering.

Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB) in the first quarter of this year

Transport Authority (BRTA) documentations.

A DTCB top official told Star City that as the road network had not extended too far, the project went limp with the growth of inhabitants and vehicle population. He said: "The growth has been so strong that nearly all improvements disappeared under it in the saturated city traffic."

A high official of the communications ministry said the roads in the metropolitan area were constructed by various organisations, but constructions and designs were not planned in line with traffic engineering.

"Haphazard plans or projects and their implementa-

tion Project (STP) for improving the transportation system of Dhaka city, and the planners have also said that the metropolis will certainly face dire consequences if prevailing situation continues.

The STP project after several surveys states that at present at least one-lakh vehicles are plying on the streets and at least 2.5 lakh people are using the arteries during peak hours.

Rafiqul Islam, deputy team leader of the STP project told Star City that in next 20 years at least three lakh vehicles would ply the main arterial roads during peak hours while the number of road users at the same time would be reach

dropped in the final report, under pressure from metropolitan agencies.

They also said that poor enforcement of traffic rules, inadequate and insufficient traffic equipments, indiscriminate parking at busy points, chaotic situation at bus terminals, piling of construction materials on roads, and non usage of footbridge and underpasses -- all these are contributing to the gridlock.

They added that insufficient road network and unorganised route arrangement, lack of parking spaces, unplanned road digging, water stagnation, shopping centres without adequate parking space, and the

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conducted a study to assess the impacts of the Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP) and revealed that Dhaka's population growth was more than 100 percent over the last decade.

The city population at the launch of DUTP was about six million and is presently over 12 million according to the report.

In the last five years, the population had grown by about 50 percent from eight to 12 million, while vehicle ownership had grown by about 64 percent between 1999 and 2004, with an overall growth of 53 percent of all four-wheel vehicles in a decade, according to Bangladesh Road

tions prompt unplanned growth of the city, resulting in a faulty transport structure," said the official.

He added that the government had taken up the Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan where transport structure for the newly urbanised areas was not emphasised as required.

"Although the government envisaged a five-year DUTP in 1997-98 involving Tk 1,200 crore, it had to cut down funds to Tk 800 crore after two and a half years because of slow implementation, with only 16 percent work completed during the period," he said.

The coordination board has now undertaken a Strategic Transport Planning

7.5 lakh.

Emphasising on the mass transit transportation system, he said: "Population, transport modes and policies and their implementation are deeply interlinked. Partial implementation or negligence of a specific component of the project could disturb all the components making them ineffective."

DTCB, DCC and Rajuk sources said that the STP, earlier in its draft, recommended the formulation of a unitary agency to achieve integration between planning the transport facilities and using lands for road development, but provision for the unitary body had been

absence of a separate transport network of different modes are also behind the faulty traffic system.

The DTCB report also said: "Regarding travel time, bus transport service appears to have deteriorated."

The bus industry had not been made efficient and as a result, the travel time has increased by 17.6 percent compared to that of 2000 resulting in loss of travel time costing over Tk 4.5 billion annually.

The report further stated: "If the loose ends to bus transport problems are omitted, the economic output of the project would mean savings of Tk 460 million a year."

A special treat for ice cream lovers



Ice cream lovers relishing the numerous flavours at Dhaka Sheraton.



CITY CORRESPONDENT

City dwellers have been presented with the country's first ever Ice Cream Festival 2006, jointly organised by Dhaka Sheraton Hotel and Igloo Ice Cream company at the hotel's Lobby Cafe.

"As we organise various festivals on different occasions, we decided to try out something innovative with the ice-cream festival," said Mahbubur Rahman, Dhaka Sheraton Hotel's Public Relations Officer (PRO).

"One can have as many different flavours of ice creams for only Tk 200," said Mahbub. "Apart from the joy of a variety of ice cream menus, each person will also get a complimentary entry ticket to Fantasy Kingdom," he added.

"Celebrities will surprise visitors with their presence every evening during the festival," he further said. The opening day was graced

by the participants of ATN Tarokader Taroka, a television talent hunt programme, which added to the glamour of the festival.

Mimi, who just sat for the HSC (Higher Secondary Certificate) examination, came to the festival with her mother, aunt and brother.

"I am very fond of ice cream, so I came with my family to eat up to my heart's content," she said.

"I have been here for an hour and already had two ice creams and I am about to go in for the third," she added.

She was looking forward to coming back the next day.

"The visitors gathered at this festival has broken the myth that only children are fond of ice cream," said Dr Najmoon while trying out a special flavour from the counter.

Ice creams are served in scoops and cones and garnished with almond, pistachio and chocolate, and finally

presented with a topping of chocolate or strawberry syrup.

Shimu, a university student was very happy with the presentation.

"The decorations delight our eyes and the delicious ice creams, our taste," she said.

Barsha, a student from Rajuk College came with her father, sister and two brothers.

"I am very fond of ice cream so this festival has made my dreams of having unlimited ice cream come true," she said.

"My brother and I tasted more than ten flavours. We will taste the rest as well," she said.

A total 20 varieties of ice cream were displayed at the festival, of which 14 are fixed flavours and six special ones. Every day there is one special flavour added.

So readers, as today is the last day of the festival, rush to the festival instead of dilly-dallying and enjoy the unlimited ice cream on offer.