

Authorities sleep over illegal parking

Suffering of city dwellers mount

TAWFIQUE ALI

While the city dwellers suffer every day from illegal car parking on main roads and footpaths, the authorities concerned play the role of mere onlookers.

Public thoroughfares particularly in the city's Gulshan, Kemal Ataturk Avenue, Mohakhali commercial area and Dhamondi are choked with illegal parking denying free movement of vehicles and pedestrians.

These roads and footpaths are not only occupied by illegally parked cars, but also with construction materials kept by builders. Most of the roadside commercial and other establishments have no or inadequate parking facilities.

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) and Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakka (Rajuk) are supposed to look into this problem but they failed to check it," said Sajed Khan, a university teacher and resident of Dhamondi.

President of Centre for Urban Studies (CUS) Prof Nazrul Islam said it is the duty of DCC to keep the footpaths free from obstruction. DMP has to ensure smooth traffic movement and Rajuk must punish builders who do not arrange parking facilities.

"But none of them can discharge their responsibility because of corruption," Islam said.

Even owners of renowned shopping malls and chain super

stores in these posh areas allow illegal car parking in front of their establishments.

These commercial establishments have constructed buildings without keeping parking provisions violating approved design. But later many of them managed to get permission from the DCC to park vehicles in a single file (line) on the road.

"We make sure that adequate car parking provision is there in the design of a proposed building before we approve a plan," said an authorised officer of Rajuk.

"Errant building owners rent out parking space for commercial purposes," he said. "These people are so influential that they even override the government, law and rules and Rajuk cannot take any action against them. Sometimes such illegal practices are carried out in connivance with the Rajuk as well."

Rajuk Chairman KAM Harun could not be contacted despite repeated attempts to have his comments on the allegation.

"This is just not understandable how the government remains permissive to such a blatant violation by illegal occupiers of footpath and roads in disregard of civic rights to move freely in the streets," said a Gulshan resident Shifat Nasreen.

Traffic congestion due to illegal parking on the roads and footpaths in front of various commercial set-ups along the Gulshan Avenue stretching from Shooting Club to Gulshan north commercial area is a daily phenomenon.

Part of the thoroughfares and



Most city commercial buildings lack parking facility.

footpaths around the 14-storey Landmark building, the

12-storey Gulshan Tower and other tall buildings in the Gulshan north commercial area near circle-2 remain occupied in a manner as if the spaces are designated for parking.

The picture is even worse at two intersections of Gulshan with

all the commercial establishments using the public space as their parking lot. Road no-17 and other areas in Kemal Ataturk Avenue appear to be parking lot of commercial establishments.

Many high-rise buildings and towers housing scores of private universities, restaurants, residential hotels and commercial establish-

ments are located on the avenue.

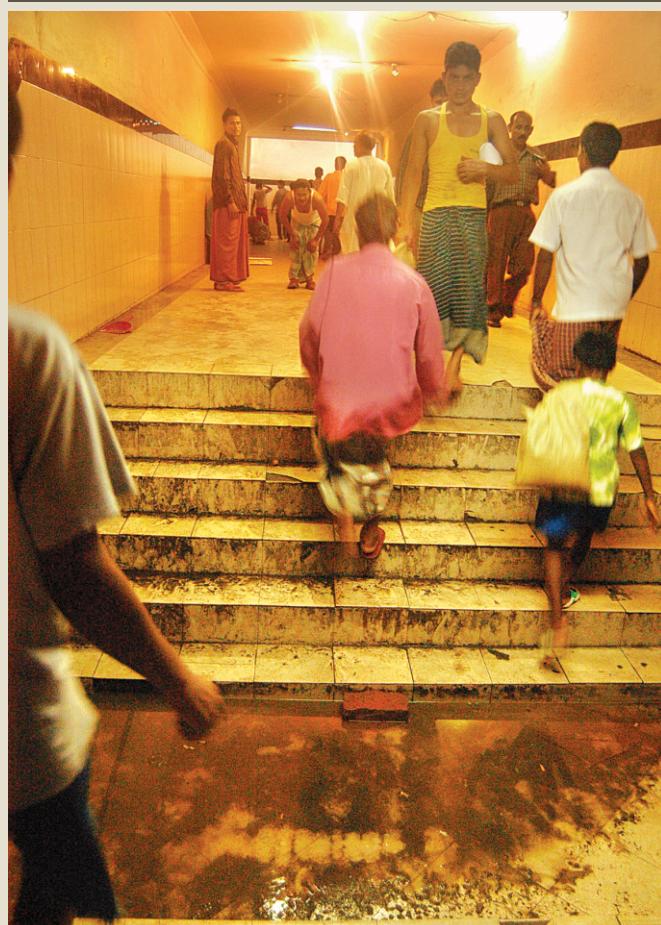
Chief Executive Officer of DCC M Saifuddin Ahmed said as per decision of the Good Governance and Development Committee of the Prime Minister's Office, the DMP has to keep city streets and footpaths free of illegal occupancy.

"We have written to the DMP many times in this regard but there has been no significant result," Ahmed said.

Asked whether DCC has authority to allow car parking on

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KHOKA'S CORNER



Dirty water from overhead sewerage seeps through the concrete ceiling of the Karwan Bazar pedestrian underpass. Although workers were seen yesterday trying to wipe the floor. But they said too much water was constantly pouring down from the leaks.

Duping or educating ?

Students protest mismanagement of a city educational institute

DURDANA GHIAS

The academic future of over 30 interior designing course students of Exterior-Interiors (P) Ltd (EX-IN) is at stake as the organisation refuses to keep the promises made during counselling and admission.

Students of several batches who demanded access to library, computer facilities, syllabus, qualified teachers and learning materials were recently expelled by the administrators, who run the Dhanmondi-based facility from Kolkata.

According to former and current students, teachers and former employees, the students often fall victims to EX-IN's gross mismanagement and end up paying exorbitant and hidden fees.

Students alleged that EX-IN illegally expelled the students threatening them with announcement of the expulsion in the media. The students accused EX-IN of luring youngsters through "impressive brochures and promises" to pay a fee of up to Tk 88,000 each for the one-year course.

In the brochure EX-IN uses an address in San Diego, USA, as its branch office and promises "credit transfer" for successful students. Since 1995 not a single student

from Dhaka received any credit transfer to USA. Once the students enrol and pay the entire fees, cleverly guarded hidden fees start popping up, students alleged.

When contacted, Golam Mostafa Mortaza, EX-IN's center head in Dhaka, declined to comment and asked this correspondent to contact their office in Kolkata by email. When emailed on September 6, the Kolkata office denied the allegations, and re-directed this correspondent to the Dhaka office. The Kolkata office also provided a list of former successful students with their telephone numbers.

Arifur Rahman Arif, who EX-IN claimed to have excelled and received a gold medal, is presently a colour consultant at a paints company. He accused EX-IN of using his name for propaganda.

EX-IN has no fulltime teachers, no resources, no reference books. They make false promises about credit transfers to USA. There is no specific syllabus. Students have no contact with high officials or policymakers. They (EX-IN) lack transparency and once you pay up you are completely alone," Arif said.

"They have no US connections; credits are not transferable and all this is a trick to lure unsuspecting youth," he added.

There are also allegations about EX-IN's examination system. Question papers for final examination come from Kolkata, which the students find having no relevance with what they had been taught. On average four out of 10 students are able to pass.

In response to queries from Star City, EX-IN's Programme Manager in Kolkata Partha Pratim Chakraborty in his email said that the syllabus and number of students are the 'company secrets'. He claimed that EX-IN has provided jobs to 'at least 1000 students'. "Nowhere the students of EX-

IN are given computers, internet or library facilities. It is not our fault if someone assumes that we provide these facilities," Chakraborty said. "It is impossible for an organisation to run for more than ten years with allegations of duping," he added.

According to sources in the ministry of education, hundreds of centres, offering various courses, have mushroomed in the city without any approval or monitoring by the ministry. A ministerial source said that a proposal to regulate such centres is now under consideration.

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