



Motijheel in downtown was built during the Mughal period. During the time there was a big Mahal for Mirja Mohammad, which housed a large pond known as Sukku Mahal's pond. The area was later named Motijheel. A mazar called Shahjalal's mazar where fairs were organised existed. Motijheel and Dilkusha gardens were in the same place earlier. The road dividing the two places was constructed during the British rule.

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Heroin and yaba flood Dhaka

Organised gangs of drug peddlers target students of private universities and children in English medium schools; offering home delivery on request over mobile phone

WAHIDA MITU

student at a top English medium school of the city, their son, a brilliant candidate of O-level exams, got hooked on to heroin. Within a matter of six months, their child was transformed into a 'strange person', said the helpless parents.

The family was in a dilemma when our child one day confessed to being addicted to drugs and said that he was unable to appear in the exams," said the worried mother requesting not to be named. "He told us how he could get the drug by making a simple phone call," she added. Her son is now undergoing treatment at a city drug rehabilitation centre.

Asaduzzaman Jewel, coordinator of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), said the city flooded with hard drugs is not a new phenomenon. "Absence of political foresight and governance and a trend among 'drug lords' to make quick money are main reasons behind this sudden surge," he explained.

No statistics is available on the number of drug addicts in the city. However, several non-government organisations (NGO) estimate that there might be

around 3,00,000 drug addicts in the city.

Yaba, heroin and pathedrine are now available widely at such a low price in the capital that people from all walks of life -- a rickshaw puller or a rich businessman's child -- can afford it, researchers noted.

The Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) however disagrees that easy access of the lethal drugs is destroying a large section of our bright youngsters. "Who says drugs are widely available?" asked a DNC official requesting anonymity. "If it is so, then why are we here?" he added.

The official however admitted that DNC is helpless. He blamed members of the law enforcement agencies and accused them of being directly involved with drug trafficking and distribution.

"We arrested several drug lords a number of times, but could not keep them behind bars as they easily got away by using their political influence to get bail," explained the DNC official.

Police sources said most of these drugs reach the country through unprotected borders and all air, sea and land ports.



SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Common scene at numerous city points where poor addicts share a puff of heroin

Sources said the traffickers and peddlers are so organised that they are able to control drug prices at their will. For instance, recently the traffickers and peddlers raised the price of phensidyl to Tk 500 per bottle from Tk 150 and slashed the price of yaba pills from Tk 300 to 130. It was a move to popularise yaba pills to youngsters as yaba is easy to hide and transport.

In most cases, parents of the addicts suffer the most. Many families are devastated when a family member is addicted to drugs. Sometimes parents start blaming each other for their child's drug abuse as they do not know how to deal with the situation.

According to experts, there are instances when the parents' relationship drift apart and even marriages break up due to accusing each other for the addiction of their children.

"When I found out that my son is a drug addict, we felt so help-

less. We could not rebuke him and we started to blame ourselves," said a mother who came to visit her son in a drug rehab centre.

"But as days passed and I gained experience, I learned that the availability of these deadly drugs to the youngsters is the main cause for drug addiction," she added.

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.

"Being a teacher, I always discharge my responsibility impartially"

-- Iajuddin Ahmed

President and chief adviser

Said in a statement, on the eve of the two-day blockade by grand alliance, on Saturday. Source: The Daily Star

"Let us catch the thieves, resist them and beat them up"

-- Sheikh Hasina

Awami League President

Said in a meeting at her Dhamondi office urging not to cooperate in the election, on Friday. Source: Prothom Alo

"To whom will he handover the power?"

-- Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan

BNP Secretary General

Said at a press briefing at Hawa Bhaban on Awami League's demand for the resignation of President Iajuddin Ahmed from the post of chief adviser, on Wednesday. Source: The Daily Star

"If necessary each police personnel will use five batons but no untoward incident will be tolerated"

-- ABM Bazlur Rahman

Police Commissioner

Said while ordering police, on Saturday. Source: Bhoror Kagoj

TEJKUNIPARA

High voltage on rusty poles

Residents fear imminent collapse

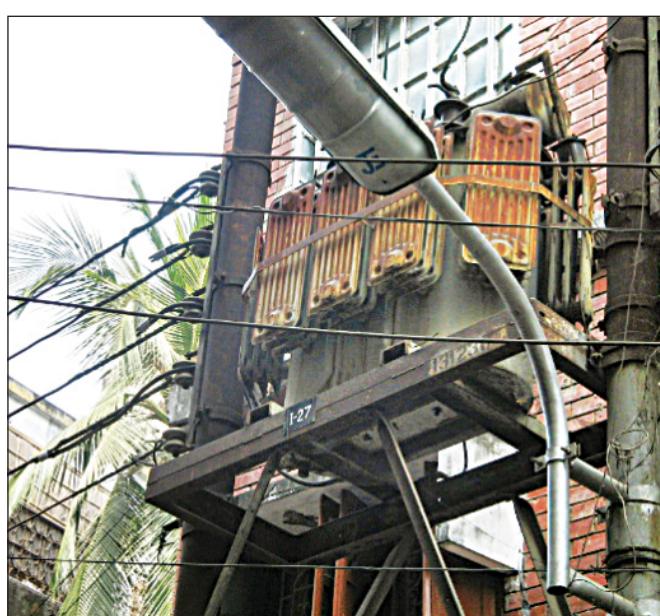
CITY CORRESPONDENT

Residents of Tejkunipara are in fear as a 200 KVA transformer of Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (Desa) may collapse anytime causing a serious accident in the residential area.

Both the pillars on which the transformer is installed are in a dilapidated condition.

Residents said they have contacted Desa several times over the last three years and informed the officials about the dangerous situation. They have submitted written application to Desa three times and the latest one was three months ago.

"We are passing days in great anxiety as the transformer may collapse anytime causing accident," said Mohammad Rafiqul Haq Chowdhury, a local resident.


 STAR PHOTO
Rust has eroded the electrical poles (left) supporting a heavy transformer at Tejkunipara (right).


"But the Desa officials are indifferent to the matter and have not yet taken any measures."

When contacted, Habibur Rahman, executive engineer, Tejgaon zone of Desa, said, "I have recently taken charge of this zone. I'm not aware of it."

However, Habibur assured

that he will look into the matter and solve the problem soon. When asked why no action was taken in three years, he replied: "May be it was not necessary to relocate and renovate the transformer then."

Star City correspondent also contacted Mesbaur

Rahman, the former executive engineer (distribution) of Tejgaon zone who left the charge in December and is now working as assistant chief engineer in Desa. He said: "Due to lack of fund we could not relocate the transformer. In the current fiscal year we have sanctioned money for this."

Traffic police 'disappear' after 10 pm

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

Dhaka's traffic control mechanism goes practically non-functional after 10 at night when the traffic department of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police withdraws its officials from their duty stations leaving the drivers in total freedom.

According to the traffic department, duty hours of the traffic police end at 10:00pm and then the traffic mechanism solely relies on the traffic signals.

"The traffic police officers work in three different quarters each day; the first quarter starts at 6:00am and the last one ends at 10:00pm," said captain Mahbub, public relations officer of DMP. "Occasionally, the duty hours may stretch up to midnight, especially when the traffic conditions are really intense," added Mahbub.

With the absence of any traffic policing, the late night traffic are left in disarray in the city's main thoroughfares with hundreds of bulky trucks and other heavy commercial transports relent-

lessly racing with each other. "They (lorry and bus drivers) seem to be liberated from any traffic regulations and drive as if the streets belong to them," said Sadeque Hossain, a traffic sergeant.

Most of these heavy vehicles are inter-district lorries and night coaches transporting goods and passengers to and from the capital. Fleets of lorries can also be seen carrying construction materials across the metropolis.

To make matters worse, hundreds of rickshaws peddle their way across the main roads.

Long queues are seen on almost all the major city thoroughfares in Mirpur Road, VIP Road, Panthapath, Gabtoli, Shyamoli, Moghbazar, Rampura, Mohakhali, Shahbagh, Mouchak and other points after nightfall with countless heavy vehicles lining up.

"I face serious traffic congestion every night at Manik Mia Avenue intersection, Russell Square, Dhanmondi road 27 and on the Mirpur Road between 10:30pm and 11:00pm on my

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-- Ruhul Alam Chowdhury

Food Adviser

Told reporters at his office, on Thursday.

Source: The Daily Star

"It is not a big problem, I think"

-- Abdur Rashid Sarkar

Election Commission Secretary

Told reporters when asked about the flaws in the voters list, on Thursday.

Source: The Daily Star

"The country is definitely facing an approaching Tsunami"

-- MA Zahir

Constitution expert

Told reporters, on Wednesday. Source: The Daily Star

"It is true that we have no permission for such enclosed spaces but we don't do any harm to anybody by doing so"

-- Md Abul Khair Bablu

Ward Commissioner, Dhanmondi and member of the advisory committee for the Dhanmondi Lake

Told a reporter when asked about unauthorised encircled patches of land within the lake area in his name, on Saturday. Source: The Daily Star

Compiled by: Durdana Ghias

Housing companies launch sales on false claim

TAWFIQUE ALI

A number of private housing companies claim that they obtained government approval for their projects while the authorities say they have not yet approved them.

Basundhara Housing (Baridhara) of East West Properties Limited; Banasree, Aftab Nagar, Pallabi, Mahanagar, Mayakunja and Mayakanan projects of Eastern Housing (Islam Group) and Swarnali Abasan project of Swadeshi Properties have not been approved yet but the developers are running advertisements in newspapers and televisions claiming they are approved by the government.

"The claim is an illegal practice

aimed at duping the gullible people into buying plots and flats of the unapproved housing projects," said a top official of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakka (Rajuk) requesting anonymity.

The national committee on approval of private housing projects, under the Private Housing Projects Land Development Rules of 2004, decided that those projects would be approved provided the developers comply with a number of preconditions.

The preconditions include obtaining clearance from the Department of Environment, geological survey from the Department of Geology and clearance from Dhaka Transport Coordination Board and Bangladesh Water Development Board, among other agencies.

The authorities also set pre-condition that the said project developers have to comply with the Wetland Protection Act of 2000 and exclude the river, canal, wetlands, retention ponds and flood flow zones earmarked in the Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (DMDP) from their project areas.

They have to submit layout plan with all the required clearances. Rajuk will forward the layout to the national committee. If satisfied, committee will approve the project with the signature of all the members.

The projects may obtain approval if the developers submit their layout plan in compliance with the particular preconditions, Private Housing Projects Land Development Rules of 2004 and other related laws.

Chairman of Rajuk KAM Haroon said, "Running advertisements claiming that the projects are approved is just illegal."

The national committee has agreed to approve those projects only if the developers comply with the preconditions set by the rules, he said.

"As per the committee decision, the aspiring developers have to submit detailed layout plan of each of the proposed housing projects to the Rajuk, which will not forward a layout plan to the committee for approval until it is submitted in compliance with the rules," said the Rajuk chairman.

Rajuk has filed a number of cases with the police against illegal housing projects and it is the law enforcement agencies that have to take action, Haroon

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 STAR PHOTO
Rab yesterday mounted 25 checkpoints in the city checking mainly CNG-run scooters and their occupants physically. The heavily armed men and female members of the RAB also stopped and physically searched passengers traveling on buses and black taxicabs. The picture was taken at the Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue near Karwan Bazar.