

Dark streets pave haven for muggers

Installed in 2005 under a Tk 800-crore project streetlights in Malibagh, Mughda still remain off, where incidents of mugging are rampant

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

To the sufferings of thousands of commuters and locals, streetlights on a stretch of 5 kilometre-long road between Malibagh and Mughda are still not operational although the lights were installed in March 2005.

Furthermore, it is alleged that the firm responsible for installing the lights already pocketed the payment for the work before the authorities issued operational clearance for the streetlights.

Without the streetlights, this key road touching Rajarbagh, Peerjangi Mazar and Kamalapur turned dangerous for the users and a safe haven for marauders. Accidents and mugging at night are very common on this street.

The Roads and Highways Department (RHD) was scheduled to install more than 200 streetlights from Malibagh to Mughda stadium under the Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP), part of a massive development project

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of Tk 800 crore for Dhaka city.

RHD was supposed to hand over the streetlights to Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) after completing the work.

The implementation period of the DUTP project was over on March 31 in 2005, but RHD is yet to hand over the streetlights to Dhaka City Corporation (DCC).

Zafar Ahmed, superintendent engineer of DCC, confirmed to Star City that RHD did not hand over the lights to DCC. He also said, "DCC is under pressure from thousands of locals of this vast area.... without receiving the

lights, how can we light up the road?"

Before the handing over, both RHD and DCC should conduct a joint survey over the installation and relevant documents should also be handed over, Zafar recommended.

Zafar also complained that DCC wrote several letters to RHD during the last two years requesting handing over of the lights, but RHD did not bother to respond.

During this time, DCC also informed the communication ministry to expedite the process of the handing

over. The ministry, after investigating the situation, ordered RHD to hand over the streetlights to DCC as soon as possible, but RHD still did not comply.

When contacted, the RHD authorities claimed that they had already handed over the lights to DCC and the records of the handover are available at Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB).

Star City pursued this issue with DTCB and they, after checking their documents, confirmed that RHD has yet to hand over the streetlights to DCC.



Most streetlights in the city remain out of order.

A glimpse of hope for slum children



Poor children attend class at the school at Free School Street.

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

When politics takes centre stage, glimpse of hope beacons at Kathalbagan area of the city. At Free School Street, around 250 slum children find their way to education. Sultan-Safa Paathshala, a school offering free education and books to destitute children since 1980.

Sonia a class seven student of the school said that she finds her school very interesting. "Our teachers take good care of us," she said. After school hour Sonia sells flower in the Shahbag area. Her family cannot afford to send her to a regular school.

The school is an effort of late Ahmad Safa, a prominent writer. After his death friends of the writer opened up Safa Trust and took over all the responsibility of the school. In the beginning the school was opened for Katabon slum children. It soon attracted more students from other areas.

Mukta lives at Shabjibagan near Ramna Police Station. "Every day I walk my way to school. My parents are more interested than me," she said.

With nine full and part time teachers the school provides free education up to class eight and books for everyone.

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From last year the school started distributing free uniforms. There is also a free health check-up every fifteen days. There are regular parents teacher meetings and also regular house visits by teachers. Cultural programmes are held to keep the students in high spirit.

"I send my daughter to this school because it is free. With my little income I cannot provide for education," said Ainun, a domestic help in Hatirpool area. She mentioned that she is very lucky to find such a school.

The school runs its operation on donation from individuals and organisations. With no state contribution so far and shortage of money, the school committee often goes through

difficult times.

Headmaster of the school Abul Hasan said that due to space constraint they have to continue education in a very crowded condition.

"Sometimes we are forced to use the teachers room due to space constraint," Hasan said.

"This year we still could not buy books for distribution. We are reusing books from last year," he added.

"Around 62 percent of our students are girls," he added

One of the common experiences of the school is parents of the boys send them to work and girls are married off at a very early age. "During house visits we have to persuade some parents to send their

children back," the headmaster said. Parents however are more attentive these days.

"In 2005 we had 40 percent dropout rate but the rate is dropping," he added.

After students' finish class eight, the school authority helps them pursue higher education in other institutions. Md. Abbas Uddin finished his study a year ago. He is now attending SSC level education at the Open University. Abbas also works at the school after study.

The school is planning to add vocational education for the student from this year, which will include computer skill and special English language training.

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Nazrul Institute

House 330B, Road 28 (Old), Dhanmondi, Dhaka
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Shilpakala Academy
Segunbagicha, Dhaka-1000
Tel: 9561709, 9562801-4

Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts
House 275/F, Road 27, Dhanmondi, Dhaka
Tel: 8123115
Email: bf@bdonline.com

Cezanne Art Gallery
UAE Motri Complex, Kemal Ataturk Avenue, Banani Dhaka
Tel: 8826578, Email: cezanne@bangla.net

Drik Gallery

House 58, Road 15A(New), Dhanmondi, Dhaka
Tel: 9120125, Fax: 9115044, Email: office@drik.net

Gallery Chitrak
House-21, Road-4, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka
Tel: 8620345, Email: chitrak@agnl.com

National Art Gallery
Segunbagicha, Dhaka-1000
Tel: 9562801-4

Shilpa Rag
House 15, Road 16, Dhanmondi, Dhaka, Tel: 8117085
Fax: 8117085, Email: shilparag@vasdigital.com

Shilpagan
House-25, Road-5, Dhanmondi, Dhaka, Tel: 8614246

Tivoli Art Gallery
F/33, DCC Super Market (1st Floor) Gulshan-2 (North), Dhaka, Tel: 9895903

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9561580, Fax: 88-02-9560587

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Baitul Mukarram Market-Friday
Polwell Market-Friday
BCS Computer City-Friday
Isha Khan Shopping Complex-Friday.
Rajlaxmi Complex-Friday
Stadium Market-Friday
Bangabazar Market-Friday
National Museum-Thursday
Ahsan Manzil--Thursday.
New Market-Tuesday
Gausia Market-Tuesday
Mouchak Market-Sunday
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
Eastern Plaza-Sunday
Farmview Super Market-Sunday
Muktijuddha Jadughar-Sunday
Dhaka Zoo-Sunday
Shishu Jadughar-Sunday