

# Ugly overhead ad arches galore



Hundreds of illegal overhead arches have destroyed aesthetic value of our city.

## DCC asks offenders to remove all arches by end January

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has asked all the business firms to remove their illegally set up overhead signboards on city roads by January 31 or face fine and criminal charges, DCC sources said.

Hundreds of business houses, educational institutions, hospitals, clinics and pathological laboratories, real estate companies, and even some government organisations have violated the municipal laws to dig up roads and pavements to install overhead steel arches to advertise their company.

As the overhead signboards have made roads narrow and risky in the city, the DCC will start a drive to remove those from February 1.

This correspondent in a trip through Rokeya Sarani, Mirur Road, Mazar Road and Satmasjid Road and Airport Road found that overhead signboards exist in most of the connecting points of the roads specially where the roads are connected with the arterial roads near residential areas.

Many points were seen with three or four signboards set up on different pillars. Besides, there is an ugly competition for showing face among those signboards with one signboard covering other's face.

Standing with long iron pillars at the connecting points of the roads, the overhead signboards have narrowed the roads by 5 to 10 feet. It was found that small roadside shops too occupied some road spaces maintaining a line with the long iron pillars.

Being unmarked on the road, these iron pillars are also causing accidents.

During storm or even in gusty wind, these signboards often fall on the roads and block movement of vehicles. Sometimes passers-by are injured.

Moinul Haque, a resident at Dhanmondi said, "These signboards are hiding the sky from out view and creating risks for the

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people."

In the trip it was found that the biggest portion of these signboards in the city are of different types of educational institutions, followed some others set up by real estate companies and medical institutions.

Violating the rules and regulations of the city corporation, both the government and private institutions set up these illegal signboards.

Nazrul Institute, a state-run cultural organisation, set up three big overhead signboards on road 27, road 28 and Mirpur Road in Dhanmondi. DCC authorities said the institute does not have any permission for setting up

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Extension work of the five star hotel continues on the

## STORM WATER RETENTION POINT

# Sonargaon Hotel does the damage

The five-star hotel continues its unauthorised extension work on the Begunbari Canal area, the largest storm water retention spot in the city

TAWFIQUE ALI

While the caretaker government is carrying out all-out eviction drives against illegal establishments, a number of influential quarters carry on their unauthorised development and construction work in full swing.

An unauthorised expansion project of Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel is being implemented on the southeast corner of the hotel's main building.

Amazingly, blatantly defying the building construction laws and showing disregard to the future of the city, the authorities of the 100 per cent government owned five-star hotel continue the construction work encroaching on Begunbari canal in the

capital without any land use clearance or a plan approved by Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakhya (Rajuk), according to Rajuk officials.

The low-lying areas along the Begunbari and Hatirheel canal are an integral part of monsoon and flood water retention facilities for the heart of the city, according to experts and environmentalists. The canal is clearly earmarked as a rainwater catchment area in the Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (DMDP).

The DMDP clearly indicates that densely populated areas like Maghbazar, Tejgaon, part of Gulshan, Badda and Rampura along the canal will face severe adverse consequences if the catchments areas of Begunbari

and Hatirheel canals are earth-filled, said Prof. Nazrul Islam, honorary chairman of Centre for Urban Studies. If these canals are destroyed, the Maghbazar area in particular will be severely affected by water logging after even a light rainfall.

Chief Town Planner Jahurul Hoque of Rajuk said when his attention was drawn on the issue, "I will try to raise the issue at Rajuk board meeting."

Authorised officer of Rajuk Muzaffar Uddin said authorities of Sonargaon Hotel did not obtain any permission for the building construction. "We will take measures to serve a final notice to them in this regard by Sunday."

Such permissions are mandatory by the Building

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## Eidgah Mosque committee's rejoinder and our reply

The president of Dhanmondi Eidgah mosque committee Makbul Ahmed in a rejoinder to The Daily Star on a report headlined "Mosque committee steals age-old trees, grabs land" published on January 24, 2007 states: "Under a future plan the mosque committee has chopped down the trees to build a park. This action was taken to enhance the beauty of the ancient mosque and to protect the artefact. The trees made the area bushy. As a result antisocial activities were taking place there."

The rejoinder also said that the correspondent did not talk with the president of the mosque committee or with anybody concerned.

### Our reply

This correspondent has talked to the general secretary of the mosque committee Atikul Habib and also the vice president Abul Khaer Bablu regarding the illegal felling of the age-old trees. Atik said they would convert the disputed land

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into a parking lot for the mosque.

However, on June 11, 2006 Ministry of Housing and Public Works permitted the mosque committee to use 2.2 bighas of its land on the eastern side of the Eidgah under strict conditions. One of the conditions included that for any type of development on the site the mosque committee must obtain prior permission from relevant authorities.

We contacted the Chief Architect of the Department of Architecture under the Ministry of Housing and Public Works, who clearly pointed out that the area on which the mosque committee is claiming ownership is a designated public park. "We have instructed the PWD to build a public park with a grill-fence around it," Mohammad Ismail, the Chief Architect said.

The ministry has not permitted the mosque committee to use the western side of the Eidgah. The area belongs to Public Works Department (PWD). As a result the mosque committee is not the authority to chop down the trees. The PWD meanwhile lodged several written complaints to the Dhanmondi police station.

We stand by our story titled "Mosque committee steals age-old trees, grabs land" published on January 24, 2007.

## SHORTAGE OF SKILLED MANPOWER 4

# Garment factories in dire need of skilled manpower

DURDANA GHIAS

Readymade garment sector that earns more than three-fourths of the total foreign currency is suffering from an acute shortage of skilled manpower.

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturer and Exporters Association (BGMEA) sources said around 22 lakh workers are working in the garment and related factories most of which lack skilled people at managerial level.

According to BGMEA, there are

3,093 apparel manufacturers, 115 textile, knit and fabric suppliers, 368 accessories suppliers and 632 buying houses in the country. Two-thirds of the factories are located in Dhaka.

Most of the people working at managerial level do not have formal training. They only get some on-the-job training, said BGMEA sources.

Factory owners employ quality controllers and merchandisers both from locals and foreigners, but the salary of the foreigners is much higher than that of the locals due to the difference in skill level.

Foreign merchandisers get on average \$1,000 a month while only 8 percent of the local merchandisers get that amount. Thirty percent of them get \$600 to \$700 a month and the rest of them less than \$500, said sources.

Quality controllers working in foreign buying houses get over Tk 15,000 a month and those working in local buying houses get Tk 4,000 to Tk 12,000.

According to owners, in a garment factory the role of a manager is very important and he/she should have both formal education and

## LILYMA KHANOM: A HARD ROAD TO SUCCESS

Born in a modest family in the village of Panchapukur in Nilphamari district Lilyma Khanom had a dream since her childhood.

She struggled her way to Rajshahi University from where she obtained masters degree in Bangla literature in 1992 and came to Dhaka in 1993 with the dream to do something worthy.

In a span of 13 years she rose to her ranks from a quality controller to a factory owner. She is now the managing director of Paramount Knitting Ltd which exports goods worth Tk 10-12 crore a year.

"When I went to a buying house after passing masters, they refused to recruit me because I did not have any experience in readymade garments sector," said Lilyma, sitting at her office in Mirpur.

After the refusal, Lilyma received a two-month training in woven materials and got an offer from the

same buying house. She joined the company and worked as a quality controller for three years.

Then she took charge of a garment factory as a technical director where her job was to monitor total production, shipping schedule and delivery of the finished products to the buyers according to their orders.

After a year she left the job due to difference in opinion with the owner.

After leaving the job she thought of setting up a poultry farm and a washing plant. But finally she decided to set up a garment factory.

"I went to a private commercial bank for loan but they refused me, only because I'm a woman. Then my friend's elder sister Nazlee Apa, then an AGM in Janata Bank, helped me get the desired loan," she said.

"I started my factory in 2000 with 80 machines.

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Garment workers busy at a manufacturing unit.

working experiences. But most of owners while recruiting a manager prefer those who have experience in production process and quality control.

Lutfar Rahman, second vice-president of BGMEA, said the merchandising section, fashion designing, quality control, machinery management and production supervision have severe shortage of skilled manpower.

The BGMEA Institute of Fashion Technology (BIFT), the only registered institute in the country offering courses on studies of managerial level at the garment sector, is located in city's Uttara area.

BIFT offers 2-year MBA, 4-year honours, one-year diploma, 6-month certificate and 6-week short courses on different garment-related

jobs. Since its inception in 2000, a total of 13,13 students passed certificate courses and since 2004, only 23 obtained diploma certificate.

The number of seats in honours level at this institute will be increased from 120 to 275 from 2007, BIFT sources said. Forty-four students passed the honours course in 2004, 67 in 2005 and 55 in 2006.

Kazi Shamsur Rahman, assistant professor, BIFT, said there are around one thousand garment buying houses and buyers' offices in the city which also need skilled managers.

Dr Nazrul Islam, principal, BIFT, said the shortage is of two types; one is the shortage of skilled workers. The other is the shortage of mid-level managers like skilled machine operators, quality controllers, mer-

chandisers and production managers.

The readymade garment sector of Bangladesh earns around \$8 billion foreign currency per year, but the productivity of the 22 lakh workers is much lower than in Sri Lanka and China.

The reasons are lack of skill, poor management, poor working environment, poor health, low motivation and job satisfaction.

There is no study in Bangladesh on job ethics and the reasons behind the lack of motivation and job satisfaction of the garment workers, he said. But poor salary might be one of the reasons, he added.

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