Star city

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thecitythatwas

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 Sukaku 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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SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Rajuk filled thousands of acres of low-lying land around the city's eastern periphery to create a modern town called Purbachal. So far Rajuk has not been able to accomplish one fourth of the 6,000-acre project. Since 2003 the organisation has so far realised more than Tk 900 crore from the public but failed to hand over a single plot to the beneficiaries. The picture shows an aerial view of the project.

Toxic wastes threaten groundwater

Untreated toxic wastes dumped indiscriminately into rivers, low-lying areas might seriously contaminate city's ground water

WAHIDA MITU

Dhaka city's groundwater risks being seriously contaminated by massive amounts of untreated toxic waste from tanneries, hospitals, pharmaceuticals, chemical and dyeing factories, experts warned.

"The way low-lying areas, rivers and land around the city are being polluted, groundwater could become toxic," said Prof M Mozammel Hoque, an expert of Buet's Institute of Water & Flood Management.

The experts said the risk of untreated toxic waste disposal from pharmaceutical factories and hospitals are increasing at an alarming rate and polluting the land surface.

"The toxic waste discharged on the land seeps through the ground and eventually reaches the groundwater," explained Prof Hoque.

Groundwater levels are decreasing due to over exploitation and the water of nearby polluted rivers on the city's periphery are gradually entering into the water table.

The rapid fall of groundwater level due to over extraction causes problems like water scarcity, contamination from polluted low-lying areas and rivers, increase in the cost of water lifting and the risk of land subsidence.

Rapid urbanisation has increased the demand of water day by day forcing the water supply authorities to lift huge amount of groundwater. Studies show the level of groundwater in the city is falling at a rate of up to 2 metres every year.

During the dry season the level of groundwater falls but in the rainy season the rain balances the level. But due to concrete pavements rainwater cannot reach underground.

"Our study shows that the level of groundwater in Motijheel in 2000 was 30 metres. If the groundwater falls in such a rate, you will need to go down to 92 metres in 2020 to find it. In Gulshan the level was 22 metres in 2000 and it would be 70 metres in 2020," said Prof Hoque.

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The tangle of warranty

Free warranties tagged with various products in the showrooms ensure nothing but specific repair service only. Consumers have to pay for the parts that are required to repair the item

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

Warranties on consumer goods remain a delusion for thousands of consumers who are allured into the web of deception woven by the retailers.

Consumers purchase various goods without being aware of the exact terms and conditions inscribed on the warranty offers.

Free warranties fancily tagged along with numerous ranges of products successfully build consumer confidence and entice them into buying the goods. However, before completing the sale, most sellers leave the buyers in complete darkness about the complicated and deceiving strings attached with the warranty.

"Its a common misconception among general people that a warranty would cover all kinds of accidental damage to their purchased product, which is not entirely true," said Manab Kanti Dey, deputy service manager of Rangs Electronics Ltd.

According to Dey, warranties usually cover failure of the product due to poor workmanship only when the product is used as per the instruction manual, but negligence by the product user to use it in a way that it was not designed to work would not be covered by the warranty.

"You can't expect a free replacement if you damage an appliance by dropping it on the floor or burn a power adapter by plugging it in flawed electric outlets," said Dey.

In commercial or consumer transactions, a warranty is an obligation legally pronounced by the seller that specific services such as repair or remedy would be provided at no additional cost to the buyer in the event the designated product or article fails to meet the assured guarantee.

The warranty document explains how long the warranty would remain in effect and specify the repairs that will be performed at no extra charge.

Warranties are commonly issued for automobiles, electronic appliances and numerous other products. In some cases, manufacturers offer extended warranties for several years beyond the original warranty period for an extra charge.

However, different warranty policies offered by different retailers have somewhat turned the definition of warranty very confusing to most consumers as different individuals also hold different perceptions about warranty.

Ahsan, a resident of Uttara, bought a CD player with a tag of 6-month warranty from a retailer at Dhanmondi. A couple of weeks into the purchase, the CD player stopped functioning and was taken back to the retailer for repair. As it turned out later, the laser reader of the player was damaged and Ahsan had to pay for the replacement.

"When I bought it, they told me that I didn't have to pay any service charge but instead, I had to pay for the replacement part and a service charge as the laser reader was not included in the warranty," said a frustrated Ahsan. "They should've

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SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Started in 1966, the Biswa Ijtema has become the second largest congregation for the Muslim umma after hajj, where an estimated 3.5 million people from home and abroad converge for divine blessing. Hundreds of thousands of people also join the Ijtema using the waterways. Picture shows hundreds of boats carry pilgrims in the Ijtema venue. The congregation started on February 2 and ended on February 4 with Akheri Munajat (concluding prayer) seeking forgiveness and blessings for mankind and the Islamic world.

Misuse of car park space

Many shopping malls with parking facilities are unduly charging customers for parking, a facility they are legally bound to provide

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

Shopping mall owners in the city are violating existing parking space rules by charging for its usage, a facility they are supposed to provide for their customers for free.

On the other hand, parking spaces in many commercial buildings are being leased out to private companies for other purposes.

With increasing number of vehicles plying the city streets, more and more road space is being occupied by parked vehicles. There is a gradual reduction of road space for the movement of traffic. Vehicles are forced to move through narrower road.

Very few secured parking areas are available in the city's shopping malls.

"According to the Building Construction Act, shopping malls or other commercial buildings must have adequate space for parking," said KAM Haroon, chairman, Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk).

"Only the DCC can charge fees, but for the parking on streets only," he added.

The Building Construction Act made it mandatory for builders to keep parking space. The law specifies that 'parking space to be provided within the property and is in proportion to the total floor area of the buildings within the property.'

"If the law specifies that there should be a parking space then shopping malls cannot charge for parking. Technically they are violating existing rules," said ASM Emdadud Dastagir, a magistrate of the Rajuk.

Shopping mall owners are charging car owners for the maintenance of the parking space.

"We have an underground parking space facility for 1,000 cars. We use a powerful exhaust fan to clear the fumes emitted by these cars. Our parking charge is Tk 10 per car. It is the maintenance cost of the exhaust fan," said Latiful Hossain, resident director, Bashundhara city shopping mall. "The charge also covers the security."

STAR PHOTO

Bashundhara City complex charges Tk 10 for each car to park in its basement facility.

The Building Construction Act made it mandatory for builders to keep parking space. The law specifies that 'parking space to be provided within the property and is in proportion to the total floor area of the buildings within the property

But Dastagir said: "They cannot collect fees from customers for maintenance. I don't see why the customers should bear the maintenance cost. The law clearly states that building owners are responsible for the maintenance of their parking space."

Some building owners are using their parking space for different purposes or leasing out the space to private companies, Dastagir said citing example of the recent eviction of Meena Bazar. On January 21, Rajuk vacated the ground floor of the Dhanmondi branch of Meena Bazar, a chain supermarket, for violating building design.

According to the original design, the owner of Meena Bazar had an approval for the multi-storey building on Satmasjid Road with its ground floor and basement to be used for car parking. But the Meena Bazar authorities violated the rule by setting up the supermarket on the ground floor and using the basement as the store.

According to the Rajuk-approved design, basement and ground floor are supposed to be parking spaces. "LabAid and Agora in Dhanmondi also violated the same rule by renting parking space or using it for different purposes," Dastagir mentioned.

LabAid in Dhanmondi road-3 has a 100-bed cardiac hospital, a 250-bed general hospital and a diagnostic and consultation centre. They are using the designated parking space as lab for the diagnostic centre.

Rifles Square leased out the parking space on a yearly basis for Tk 21 lakh. Its operation is now run by private owner who charges Tk 10 per car.

Shop and Save, Almas Super Market and PQS are also using a part of the parking space as part of the market.

Rajuk identified 50 buildings in the city's Dhanmondi area, which violated parking space rules. The buildings include hospitals, clinics, supermarkets, fast food shops, and diagnostic centres. Because of this, customers are forced to park on the street, which causes severe traffic jam in the area.