

A GREEN SCANDAL



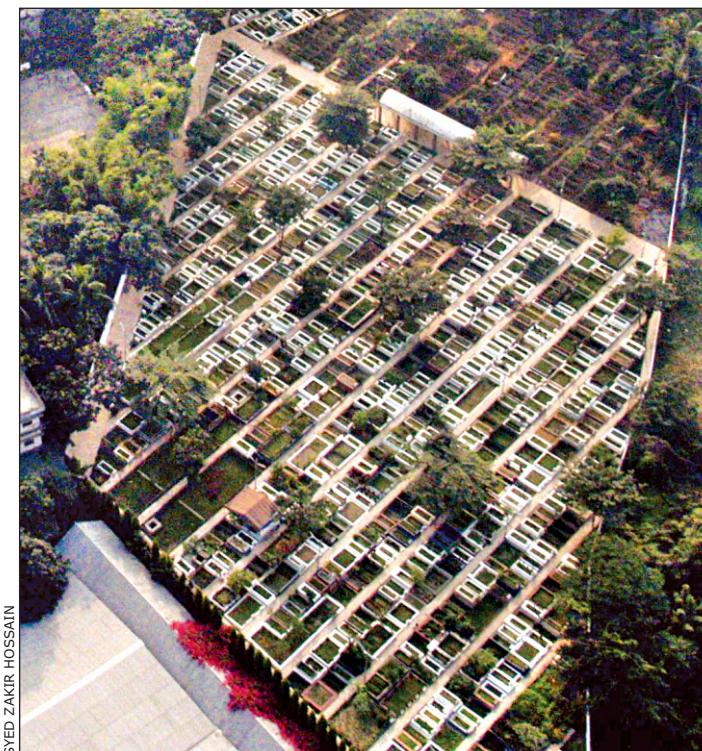
STAR PHOTO

Towards the end of BNP rule a mysterious project was launched by the parliamentary secretariat to replace the grass on the southeastern open space of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban. The project involving crores of taka was suspended and an investigation was started as to how such a project could be initiated without even the knowledge of the higher authorities. Now a stretch of the southeastern plaza lawn bears the testimony. Uprooted grass piled together now forms small mounds on the rare green space. The authorities never made public the report of the inquiry.

Grave problem

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

Efforts to scrape four new ceme-



Banani graveyard: Full to the brim.

teries in the capital remain buried under piles of files while the city continue to face acute burial problems and cemeteries con-

tinue to bury multiple bodies in single graves.

According to Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), a project of four new cemeteries at a cost of around Tk 200 crore was approved at Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC) during fiscal year 2005-2006, only to be rejected by Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) department later due to fund constraints.

"The LGRD reviewed the proposed project and suggested two new cemeteries instead of four due to fund constraints," said Shihab Ullah, project director of the designated project.

"The reviewed proposal approved by the LGRD was then sent to planning commission for their approval in February last year. Since then, there hasn't been any development with this project," added the project director.

According to DCC sources, the original proposed plan included construction of four new cemeteries on a 148.28-acre land at Hazaribagh, Mirpur, Badda and Demra.

On the other hand, the revised plan suggested constructing two new cemeteries at Mirpur and Aftab Nagar on around 100 acres of land at a cost of Tk 83 crore.

"As DCC is a non-profit and welfare organization, we asked the government to allocate money for land acquisition and construction work. Ever since, the government has been reluctant on this issue and I don't see any immediate solution to this," said Shihab Ullah.

While the project remains tied up in red tapes awaiting government approval, thousands of city inhabitants are living in anxiety that the existing DCC cemeteries would soon be filled up.

Moghbazar resident Mazhar Ahmed, 37, has been desperately looking for a grave for his uncle who passed away couple of days ago as he could not find any vacant grave in any of the 5 public cemeteries in the city.

"The only option available to me is to ask my relatives to introduce me to a government official who could help me get a grave," said Ahmed.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Efforts to scrape four new ceme-

teries in the capital remain buried under piles of files while the city continue to face acute burial problems and cemeteries con-

tinue to bury multiple bodies in single graves.

"When the press became free from the clutch of autocracy, many young people started to take journalism as their careers. The media flourished at that time and Ekushey TV [a private satellite TV channel] started to operate. It [Ekushey TV] was a milestone in journalism and they created a new ground," he said.

"In the past, people used to think that the work of a journalist was similar to that of a poet or a writer. ... Reporters were also quite casual in appearance. But now they wear impressive and professional attire. ... Journalism is truly a career now," Zahid added.

"A few years ago, people who had failed in their careers resorted to journalism. But now we are getting many quality individuals who are coming [to the media] by choice. Newspapers have also changed in terms of quality, display, content and looks with the introduction of colour photographs and computer composing," he said.

Only a few years back, most of the young journalists graduating from Dhaka University (DU) were hesitant to join the media industry. Whereas, more of them are now willing to settle down in this sector with higher revenues. Media workers, especially reporters, are seeing better pay and incentives lately as the industry is now willing to share some of its increased revenues.

There are around ten Bangla and eight English newspapers with a large circulation while six private satellite TV channels that are catering to the information and entertainment hungry people.

The recent development in information technology has

paved the way for online journalism and added a new charm to the profession.

Newly graduated journalists are considering building careers in the media industry more than ever before as this booming industry is drawing them in with higher wages and attractive benefits.

The country witnessed a stronger economic growth during the last few years. The economic growth trickled down on the media industry as well where many industrialists invested in the sector. Advertisements from large businesses and corporate giants continued to pour in and strengthened the sector with higher revenues.

Media workers, especially reporters, are seeing better pay and incentives lately as the industry is now willing to share some of its increased revenues.

There are around ten Bangla and eight English newspapers with a large circulation while six private satellite TV channels that are catering to the information and entertainment hungry people.

The recent development in information technology has

dom of press in the country.

"When the press became free from the clutch of autocracy, many young people started to take journalism as their careers. The media flourished at that time and Ekushey TV [a private satellite TV channel] started to operate. It [Ekushey TV] was a milestone in journalism and they created a new ground," he said.

"In the past, people used to think that the work of a journalist was similar to that of a poet or a writer. ... Reporters were also quite casual in appearance. But now they wear impressive and professional attire. ... Journalism is truly a career now," Zahid added.

"A few years ago, people who had failed in their careers resorted to journalism. But now we are getting many quality individuals who are coming [to the media] by choice. Newspapers have also changed in terms of quality, display, content and looks with the introduction of colour photographs and computer composing," he said.

Only a few years back, most of the young journalists graduating from Dhaka University (DU) were hesitant to join the media industry. Whereas, more of them are now willing to settle down in this sector with higher revenues.

There are around ten Bangla and eight English newspapers with a large circulation while six private satellite TV channels that are catering to the information and entertainment hungry people.

The recent development in information technology has

dom of press in the country.

"When the press became free from the clutch of autocracy, many young people started to take journalism as their careers. The media flourished at that time and Ekushey TV [a private satellite TV channel] started to operate. It [Ekushey TV] was a milestone in journalism and they created a new ground," he said.

"In the past, people used to think that the work of a journalist was similar to that of a poet or a writer. ... Reporters were also quite casual in appearance. But now they wear impressive and professional attire. ... Journalism is truly a career now," Zahid added.

"A few years ago, people who had failed in their careers resorted to journalism. But now we are getting many quality individuals who are coming [to the media] by choice. Newspapers have also changed in terms of quality, display, content and looks with the introduction of colour photographs and computer composing," he said.

Only a few years back, most of the young journalists graduating from Dhaka University (DU) were hesitant to join the media industry. Whereas, more of them are now willing to settle down in this sector with higher revenues.

There are around ten Bangla and eight English newspapers with a large circulation while six private satellite TV channels that are catering to the information and entertainment hungry people.

The recent development in information technology has

dom of press in the country.

"When the press became free from the clutch of autocracy, many young people started to take journalism as their careers. The media flourished at that time and Ekushey TV [a private satellite TV channel] started to operate. It [Ekushey TV] was a milestone in journalism and they created a new ground," he said.

"In the past, people used to think that the work of a journalist was similar to that of a poet or a writer. ... Reporters were also quite casual in appearance. But now they wear impressive and professional attire. ... Journalism is truly a career now," Zahid added.

"A few years ago, people who had failed in their careers resorted to journalism. But now we are getting many quality individuals who are coming [to the media] by choice. Newspapers have also changed in terms of quality, display, content and looks with the introduction of colour photographs and computer composing," he said.

Only a few years back, most of the young journalists graduating from Dhaka University (DU) were hesitant to join the media industry. Whereas, more of them are now willing to settle down in this sector with higher revenues.

There are around ten Bangla and eight English newspapers with a large circulation while six private satellite TV channels that are catering to the information and entertainment hungry people.

The recent development in information technology has

dom of press in the country.

"When the press became free from the clutch of autocracy, many young people started to take journalism as their careers. The media flourished at that time and Ekushey TV [a private satellite TV channel] started to operate. It [Ekushey TV] was a milestone in journalism and they created a new ground," he said.

"In the past, people used to think that the work of a journalist was similar to that of a poet or a writer. ... Reporters were also quite casual in appearance. But now they wear impressive and professional attire. ... Journalism is truly a career now," Zahid added.

"A few years ago, people who had failed in their careers resorted to journalism. But now we are getting many quality individuals who are coming [to the media] by choice. Newspapers have also changed in terms of quality, display, content and looks with the introduction of colour photographs and computer composing," he said.

Only a few years back, most of the young journalists graduating from Dhaka University (DU) were hesitant to join the media industry. Whereas, more of them are now willing to settle down in this sector with higher revenues.

There are around ten Bangla and eight English newspapers with a large circulation while six private satellite TV channels that are catering to the information and entertainment hungry people.

The recent development in information technology has

Rajuk bulldozer rocks Gulshan Avenue

In a rare demolition drive Rajuk officials take over the mighty building owners of the Gulshan Avenue and knocks down illegal structures, clearing spaces for car park

TAWFIQUE ALI

On Thursday at around noon a large bulldozer belonging to the Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) rolled into the city's Gulshan Avenue. With it came a magistrate and workers of the Rajuk. The team's intention was soon clear. Powerful landowners in the area had built structures, in addition to the actual buildings and encroached on the pavements and other public spaces. The bulldozer started knocking those down one by one.

The authorities hit any building found to have deviated from the approved design or encroached upon the public space.

Most owners of residential buildings along the avenue were found to have converted their plots into business establishments without permission from the authorities concerned.

These defiant building owners showed disregard to the laws of the land, occupied public spaces to expand their businesses apparently equipped with an 'unwritten immunity' from prosecution. Strong evidences suggest that the encroachments and deviations took place over the years with blessings from a section of Rajuk officials.

As the demolition continued, some influential owners and occupiers of those structures who had so openly defied the laws for years, begged for leniency before a large crowd of curious onlookers.

The Rajuk action was a part of the ongoing drive against the deviators of building rules and occupiers of pedestrian passages.

The Rajuk eviction team led by magistrate ASM Emdadul Dastagir hit around a dozen buildings along the eastern part of the Gulshan Avenue that included names like Desvista, Hosna Centre, Standard Chartered Bank, Shoppers World, Shagun Wedding Mall, Moli Capita Centre, Kumudini and three restaurants Golden Rice, Thai House and Asparagus.

The magistrate said that the owners and occupiers of the buildings have either encroached upon the pedestrian passage or have deviated from the approved design of the building construction.

The authorities asked the building owners not to run busi-

nesses in residential houses without permission and to open the car parking facilities to public.

The drive began at 12:45 p.m. with removal of building construction materials of an under-construction building named Ridgepark illegally occupying the footpath opposite of Gulshan Avenue.

Illegal ornamental work occupying footpath in front of Desvista (Grameen Phone Centre) was destroyed. The two basement car parks of the building were dumped with construction materials. The magistrate ordered the workers to make room for the car parks.

Rajuk's authorised officer Shamsur Rahman and executive engineer Shah Didarul Alam Shamim asked the owners and occupiers of Hosna Centre to wrap up all their offices, as the building has approval of a resi-

dential structure.

"The entire building was approved as a residential one but they have illegally converted it into a commercial one," said Shamim. "They even did not follow the rules of a residential building."

The building that houses Standard Chartered Bank on the Gulshan Avenue is a residential one but it has been illegally converted into a commercial facility. It also demolished an illegal portion of Kumudini building and asked their officials to remove a huge signboard.

warehouse immediately.

The team then pulled down all commercial signboards put up on the building of Shagun Wedding Mall, and also demolished an illegal high-rise foundation at the site. Its owner SM Walir Rahman could not produce any documents for converting the building into a commercial facility.

Moreover, the car parks are off-

limits to customers. The entire stretch of the avenue in front of the bank remains occupied by scores of vehicles of those who visit the bank round the clock.

Traffic congestion on the spot is so regular that even traffic sergeants on various occasions complained about it.

The eviction team removed an iron staircase and a concrete fencing to clear a car park area in front of the bank. Owner of the building Hafizuddin Ahmed rushed to the spot but could not produce any documents for commercial set up.

Though Moli Capita Centre has kept two basement car park facilities, the building owner was found occupying one floor as a warehouse. The owner used the footpath for parking and installed ornamental structures. Rajuk demolished the structure on footpath and asked the restaurant owner not to run business in residential houses

without permission for commercial conversion.

The team also removed illegal structures, encroaching upon the pavement by the Mercantile Bank. The bank authority could not produce any document in support of converting the residential house into a commercial one.

However, many prefer print media to the electronic one because the latter mainly covers surface reporting in this country while the print media does more in-depth reports. Nevertheless, preference of working at TV stations is becoming increasingly popular.

Shah Alamgir, head of news at Ekushey TV, said even though we are experiencing a tide in the field of journalism, we are yet to have a solid infrastructure.

"We do not have proper guidelines in this sector. Many newspapers do not even have any recruitment policy. They do not have any proper salary structure or a wage board either."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22



A young TV reporter at work at the Central Shaheed Minar.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22