



## the city that was

British East Indian Company officials formed Dhaka Pauroshabha in 1813 abolishing the post of Kotwali, the city father in 1814. Kotwali was in charge of health and hygiene, administration and cleanliness during the Mughal period. Kotwali was replaced by the 'Committee for improvement of Dhaka and other places immediately adjacent to the city'. This committee was the ancient feature of the modern Pouroshobha.

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# Basila: DCC's most neglected township

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

The inhabitants of Basila, an isolated area on the bank of the Buriganga, have been paying municipal taxes since 1962 but municipal facilities still elude them.

The locals got electricity lines just a few years ago but still they are deprived of water supply, gas connection and sewerage system. However, tonnes of wastes from the city's sewerage lines are disposed in the area, polluting the river and other water bodies.

Locals said they are deprived of development due to lack of able leadership and the authorities' negligence. Abdul Jabbar, a local, said Basila is under DCC while Keraniganj is out of the city, but the people of Keraniganj are enjoying all civic amenities.

Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd has recently started laying gas pipelines in the area but construction of a road by the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) hindered the work, sparking protests by the locals.

Hundreds of people on February 2 protested the construction work by the RHD as they were frustrated by the hindrance to the gas network. The RHD is constructing a bridge on the proposed approach road towards the third Buriganga bridge.

Officials from both RHD and Titas however promised to the locals that they will complete the construction without hindering the



SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

General view of Basila during a boat race.

pipeline work.

Titas officials said the company is working on about 4-kilometre gas network at Basila with 3-inch and 4-inch pipe, a portion of which would cross the approach road.

The RHD is yet to construct the road along which many low-lying areas are to be filled up for setting

the gas network. In the meantime, RHD in a letter requested Titas to suspend the pipeline work for some time so that they can start work on the approach road.

When Titas stopped work, locals protested the RHD move. "We don't need the bridge, we need gas," said Ashraf Ali, a local sand trader. "The

bridge is going to serve the people who live on other side of the river. It will rather produce traffic congestion for us."

A high official of the Titas said gas networking and the RHD work are inter-related. "Titas wants to finish the pipeline work in time," he said.

Locals said the Titas and RHD authorities have assured the people that they are not going to suspend the gas networking and complete their work in time. They want that the work must be done without hindering the gas pipeline work.

However, an RHD official at

Basila said they are not creating any obstacle to gas networking in the area. "People have become confused as both the works were being done simultaneously. I hope everything will be complete in time."

# DU's billboard venture unveils bad taste

TAWFIQUE ALI

The Dhaka University (DU) authorities have allowed business houses to erect scores of gigantic billboards and rented out space for commercial set-ups of various kinds at every nook and cranny on the campus destroying its landscape.

Prof Nazrul Islam, honorary chairman of Centre for Urban Studies and a member of the DU campus master plan and beautification committee, said that billboards just spoil the academic sanctity and natural beauty of the university campus.

President of the Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB) Mubashar Hussain said, "When we take the foreign students of architecture to the Dhaka University campus to show them some landmark works there, we find it difficult to see the marvelous buildings due to the huge hoardings."

Noted economist Prof Muzaffer Ahmad said there is no such example of renting out a university campus for commercial installations at any other university.



Choudhury said, "During our student days, the charm of the university was its cultural activities of various kinds," he said. "But that cultural ambience is no longer in sight at today's DU campus."

"The DU has not only lost its inner vitality but also outer atmosphere," he observed.

DU Vice-chancellor Prof SMA Faiz said: "There are too many billboards on the campus. I will ask the treasurer why the scenario is like this, as he deals with the matter. I don't think the university authorities have approved all of them."

When asked, treasurer of the university Prof Syed Abdul Kalam Azad said the university syndicate approves commercial billboards at the university for rent at the rate of Tk 40 to 60 per square foot per month. "All the billboards within the campus are approved," he said.

"It is true that such huge commercial billboards are not consistent with the concept and sanctity of a university," said the treasurer. "But it is an income generating source."

# City footpaths too uninviting



RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

Although the recent eviction drives somewhat freed up city streets and sidewalks from encroachers for easier movement of traffic and pedestrians, the sidewalks still remain virtually unusable for thousands of pedestrians.

Now that the illegal grabbers and street vendors are gone -- at least for the time being -- pedestrians find most of the sidewalks in the capital unfit for their use as those are either poorly maintained or tainted with all sorts of garbage including human wastes.

Scattered litter, construction materials and debris, missing or damaged slabs, potholes leading to underground sewerage lines, missing manhole lids, overspilling garbage containers, human wastes

along with horrible stench -- all are only a few of several problems the sidewalks of this city are grappling with.

"We were moved to think about walking on the streets unperturbed when they [the present interim government] launched drives to remove street vendors and encroachers, but things haven't changed much as the pavements are still too dirty to walk on," said Nahida Parveen, a resident of Mughabazar.

Worst examples of poorly maintained sidewalks would be the one beside Tejgaon Girls' School on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, the one next to BCSIR [Science Laboratory], the sidewalk near Mouchak Market at Malibagh, the one near the foot over bridge at Kakoli, Banani and the sidewalk on Asad Avenue.

These filthy sidewalks tend to overpower the passers-by with disgusting odour and compel them to get down and walk on the streets instead.

Nazmul Ahmed, residing in the Bangla Motor area, was seen passing through the sidewalk with long strides next to Kawran Bazar Ambar Shah mosque on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue while pressing a handkerchief tightly against his nose.

"There are signs all over the walls prohibiting urinating or defecating, but I wonder if anyone cares about the signs anyway," said a disgusted Ahmed. "It's so disgusting that the other day I saw this school kid throwing up while passing by this pavement. I'm just surprised to see the authorities doing basically nothing to clean one of the hectically busy sidewalks in the city."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

## NOISE POLLUTION

### DMP's limping campaign

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Lack of publicity by DMP (Dhaka Metropolitan Police's) to stop motorists from honking is yet to bring success to the campaign launched earlier this month to reduce noise pollution.

DMP meanwhile continued to impose penalties on motorists who remained defiant to the ban. Since Thursday until Saturday night traffic sergeants prosecuted over 761 motorists under which an offender has to pay a fine of Tk 200 under the clause 139 of motor vehicle act.

On February 16, DMP said it decided to implement the motor vehicles ordinance of 1983 that forbids honking horns within 200 yards of places of worship, educational institutions, hospitals, courts and offices.

Moreover, in a bid to turn the city's noise level down, DMP has primarily banned honking horns on VIP road between the stretch of Sonargaon intersection and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical university intersection.

But most of the motorists in the



city still remain unaware of this sudden implementation of the old law due to DMP's inadequate publicity in this regard.

In Sonargaon, Bangla Motor, Shahbagh, Panthapath this correspondent found only one banner urging motorists not to blow horns. On-duty sergeant Iqbal Hossain at the Sonargaon intersection however claimed that they had put up banners at Bangla

Motor and beyond.

"Motorists will stop honking unnecessarily but it will take some time, we need to grow awareness among the road users," said Iqbal.

Indiscriminate use of vehicular horns in this city is the major cause of serious noise pollution that has turned the city into one of the noisiest urban areas in the world.

## “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.

*"Although a number of thieves have been arrested, the 'big one' is still at large"*



**-- Sheikh Hasina**  
Awami League Chief  
Told reporters in a meeting at her Dharmundi office, on Friday. Source: The Daily Star

*"The way things are going there is no scope to stay out of politics..."*

**-- Dr Muhammad Yunus**  
Nobel Laureate  
Told reporters after taking decision to launch a party of his own, on Sunday. Source: The Daily Star

*"Other parties are fortunate because such drive was not launched after they left power"*

**-- Nazrul Islam**  
BNP leader

Said at Bangla Sanglap of BBC about the ongoing drive against corrupt politicians, on Saturday. Source: Prothom Alo

*"The less we hear from the political parties the better for us"*

**-- Mainul Hosein**  
Law and Information Adviser  
Said in an interview with BBC, on Wednesday. Source: Prothom Alo

*"I have not taken lease of any piece of land in the district and if my servant has taken lease of any land that's not my problem"*

**-- Mohammed Habibur Rahman**  
Former district commissioner of Cox's Bazar

Told a reporter after allegedly giving away lease of Goldia Island, a mangrove forest, for shrimp farming with false names of servants and relatives along with other officials, on Wednesday. Source: The Daily Star

*"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"*

**-- Mazhar Ahmed**  
A resident of Maghbazar  
Told a reporter as he could not find any vacant grave in any of the 5 public cemeteries in the city for his uncle who passed away a few days ago, on Saturday. Source: The Daily Star

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