



Human settlement in Dhaka city started from the 7th century, but the natural geomorphological setting began to be modified, probably from the 12th century. In the first phase, until 1850, only the higher grounds, especially the natural levee and Madhupur Clay units along the Buriganga river were selected for urbanisation.

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Bloody hours of March, 71



A BDR 'Pilkhana' monument commemorating the martyrs of our War of Liberation

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

The witnesses to the massacre on the black night of March 25, 1971 are still haunted by the horrifying experience of the brutality by the Pakistani Army.

The Pakistani occupation army conducted the heinous "Operation Searchlight" on that night to kill thousands of innocent students, teachers, workers, politicians and common people within a few hours in different areas of Dhaka city.

The prime targets were Dhaka University campus, Tejgaon industrial area and Paltan. The massacre was carried out also in Mohammadpur and Mirpur areas which were dominated by Urdu-speaking people, several witnesses said.

"From the rooftop of our house I saw flames at Bashbari area at Mohammadpur, Tejgaon industrial area and the then DIT building at Paribagh," said renowned singer Sadi Mohammad describing his horrific experience of the night.

Sadi said he along with his father Saheed Salimullah could watch the brutal attack from the rooftop of their Salimullah Road (Mohammadpur) house, which was at that time the only four-storey building in the area.

"On 25th March, my father held a meeting with neighbours to review the situation. In the next morning the Pakistani Army

torched our house and one of our non-Bangalee neighbours stabbed my father in front of me," he said. "I lost my father."

"As Mohammadpur was a non-Bangalee dominated area, the army tried to cleanse Bangalees from the area. Actually they had taken shelter at the houses of our non-Bangalee neighbours before March 25. We noticed many unknown faces. They were in disguise to hide their preparation to massacre the Bangalees," he added.

Dr Sarwar Ali, member secretary of the Liberation War Museum, said they were anxious about something ominous as a Pakistani leader had informed some student leaders a day before the attack that something dangerous would happen within a short time. Most of the student leaders left the Dhaka University dormitories in that afternoon.

"From the evening people

started blocking roads with trees. The Pakistani Army launched the attack around zero hour after removing the blockades," he said.

Sarwar Ali was in a house opposite to the present Motijheel Police Station at that night. "At midnight, I saw tracer bullets for the first time in my life. Guns were roaring ceaselessly and I was hearing the outcry of the innocent people."

Recalling the memory of the night, he said the Pakistani Army's attack was most severe against the people who lived in slums along the railroad from Tejgaon to Fulbaria. Most of them were industrial workers. "Workers were targeted because they were playing a significant role in the demonstrations alongside students and politicians," Ali said.

The massacre continued until morning in those areas. Curfew was imposed in the city the next day so that the army could

remove the bodies. "But I saw hundreds of bodies lying on roads and in ditches on March 27," Ali said.

The Bangalee policemen embarked on the first resistance against the attackers. They came out of the barracks at Rajarbagh Police Lines and took shelter in the houses at Naya Paltan, Arambagh, Santinagar and Segunbagicha, Ali said.

Ashiqur Rahman Vulu, founder general secretary of Mukul Fouz, described the bloody attack by notorious Bihari (non-Bangalee) criminal "Akter Gunda" on the night.

Ashiqur said on March 25, he was at Kalapani, an area adjacent to Mirpur Section 11, which was a Bihari-dominated area. "Akter Gunda with a big sword came to our area and slaughtered many innocent people," Ashiqur said.

Akku Choudhury, one of the trustees of the Liberation War Museum, said on that night he was at Paribagh after fleeing from Nakhalpara area. At midnight, the army came to the area and torched the office of The People, an English daily. The army also killed many people at Khanabazar area as it was a Hindu-dominated area.

The Pakistani army also killed hundreds of Bangalee officials and jawans of East Pakistani Rifles (EPR) at Pilkhana, Akku

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.

"As an economist, I always think that allowing better choices, whether in politics or economics or any area, is a good thing"

-- Fakhruddin Ahmed
Chief Adviser

Said in an interview with Time Magazine, on Friday. Source: The Daily Star

"Why are you so greedy?"

-- CS Karim

Agriculture and environment adviser
Asked garment factory owners in a meeting at his secretariat office, as most of them remain indifferent about installing effluent treatment plant at their industrial units on the excuse of high costs, on Thursday. Source: The Daily Star

"I, Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman, hereby vow that if recruited as a teacher of the university, would never go against Jamat-e-Islami and BNP. And I would not write against the parties in any of my writings and would accept any decision of the parties even if it is wrong"

Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman

Lecturer of anthropology, Chittagong University (CU)
Said in an undertaking given on a Tk50 stamp in June 2005 when the aforementioned political parties assured him to be appointed as a teacher of CU if he takes the oath of allegiance. Source: The Daily Star

"We are not above all"

-- Justice ABM Khairul Haque

Said in a hearing at high court about a case of court contempt against a report in a Bangla tabloid, which questioned the integrity of the judges, on Thursday. Source: Prothom Alo

"We ourselves approve the designs of our buildings. Why should we go to Rajuk?"

-- Mehedi Ali Khan

DCC Chief Engineer
Told a reporter as DCC embarked on contrasting three commercial and residential high-rise buildings in Gulshan and Banani without approval from Rajuk, on Tuesday. Source: The Daily Star

"Either kill me or give me opportunity to earn an honest living from the footpath"

-- Abul Basher

A footpath cloth trader in Rajshahi
Told a reporter as he could not buy books worth Tk500 for his school going son, on Saturday. Source: The Daily Star

"There is no restriction on the newspapers in the country but it should be remembered that state of emergency is in effect"

-- Syed Fahim Munaim

Press secretary to the chief adviser
Told reporters, on Saturday. Source: Bhoror Kagoj

Compiled by: Durdana Ghias

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Unfair fare hikes crush city commuters

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The government declared lower tariff incentives on imports of larger and environment-friendly (CNG-run) buses for transport service companies.

Soon afterwards, new transport companies with brand new imported buses started to launch bus services on newer routes in and around the city with a promise of better service for the commuters. Even though their fares were higher, people from all walks of life welcomed such bus services and they stood patiently in long queues to get on one.

The commuters did not know that they had more surprises coming their way. Less than a year had gone by, buses under the newer transport companies started to carry more passengers than they are approved to carry

and the buses started to pick up and drop off passengers anywhere they please. In a nutshell, although the new bus services shed all their distinctive features, they continued charging the extra fares.

This is not end of the story. The fares these transport companies are charging are way over the rates approved by the government. Besides, different bus services running on the same route are even collecting different fares from passengers. Ticket sellers are also forcing passengers to buy tickets for longer trips.

Bus is the means of transport of a staggering 64 percent of city inhabitants. It is very difficult to even imagine that all these people are being deceived every day by the office only a few days back.

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there is no existence of any type of government monitoring to ensure the passengers' rights to get their money's worth.

For every kilometre of a trip, the government through a gadget notification had fixed Tk 0.83 for 40-seater buses and Tk 0.80 for 52-seat buses.

Regional Transport Committee (RTC) headed by the commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) is supposed to monitor transport issues in the city.

When contacted, DMP commissioner Naim Ahmed could not respond to any queries made by this correspondent as he took the office only a few days back.

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A man sells bus tickets on a city footpath

GULSHAN-BADDA LINK ROAD

A road of public suffering

WAHIDA MITU

The Gulshan-Badda Link road has been in a sorry state since its birth in 2004 as both Rajuk (Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakha) and DCC (Dhaka City Corporation) continue to refuse ownership of it.

Thousands of motorists and pedestrians use the important road everyday that links Gulshan with Badda. The road is 2,500 feet long, 60 feet wide and has two lanes on both sides.

During the last one year, this road was dug up three times by three different utility service providers. Instead of considering peoples' sufferings caused by the digging, DCC, Rajuk and PGCB (Power Grid Company of Bangladesh) seem to be more interested in continuing to blame each other for the delay in the repair work of the road.

Rajuk blames PGCB for not being able to start repair work as PGCB has not yet completed its work. Earlier, in 2005, Titas Gas dug the road with Rajuk permission. Later, a private mobile



The Gulshan-Badda link road in sorry state

road with DCC approval.

Most recently, PGCB started to dig the road in October 2006 to lay cables for a substation in Gulshan 1. To the sufferings of thousands, the work has been virtually 'abandoned' ever since and the road users are being exposed to risk of accidents. The trench dug by PGCB is about 1.8 meters deep and about 1.2 metres wide. The authorities concerned at that time told Star City that the work would be completed by December 2006. Even after three more months have gone by, the work has not been finished.

It is alleged that a guideline on road diggings formulated by all utility service agencies four years ago is not being followed at all. The service agencies had reached a consensus that all road diggings would be completed in 15 days while laying sewer and water lines would be allowed 21 days.

Moreover, although the service providers sometimes put up signs when they start

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Busy playground makes room for business

The Ministry of Housing and Public Works has rented out the T&T playground on the corner of Manik Mia Avenue for a month, depriving children and residents in congested Indira Road, Farmgate and Razabazar areas of sporting activities

CITY CORRESPONDENT

... Residents of Indira Road and Farmgate areas have vented their anger at the authorities for renting out the only playground of the area for holding a month-long fair.

The ground next to BTTB office on the Manik Mia Avenue is the only playground in this congested part of the city, where hundreds of children and youngsters play every day.

The fair was arranged by the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs on the occasion of the Independence Day to promote traditional weavers of the country.

The Ministry of Housing and Public Works officially permitted the weavers to set up over 100 shops on the playground. At the

moment makeshift shops are being constructed on the ground. The fair will start within a week.

Mohammad Zafar Abdullah,



Workers constructing shops on the T&T playground