Star city

DHAKA SUNDAY MAY 6, 2007

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source: accuweather.com

Weekly weather forecast for the city

Today	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Low: 28 °C	Low: 28 °C	Low: 27 °C	Low: 27 °C	Low: 28 °C	Low: 28 °C	Low: 31 °C
High: 35 °C	High: 35 °C	High: 35 °C	High: 35 °C	High: 35 °C	High: 35 °C	High: 37 °C
Times of clouds and sun	Clouds and sun; hot and humid	Clouds and sun	Hot and humid with some sun	Partly sunny; hot and humid	Times of clouds and sun	Partly sunny and summerlike

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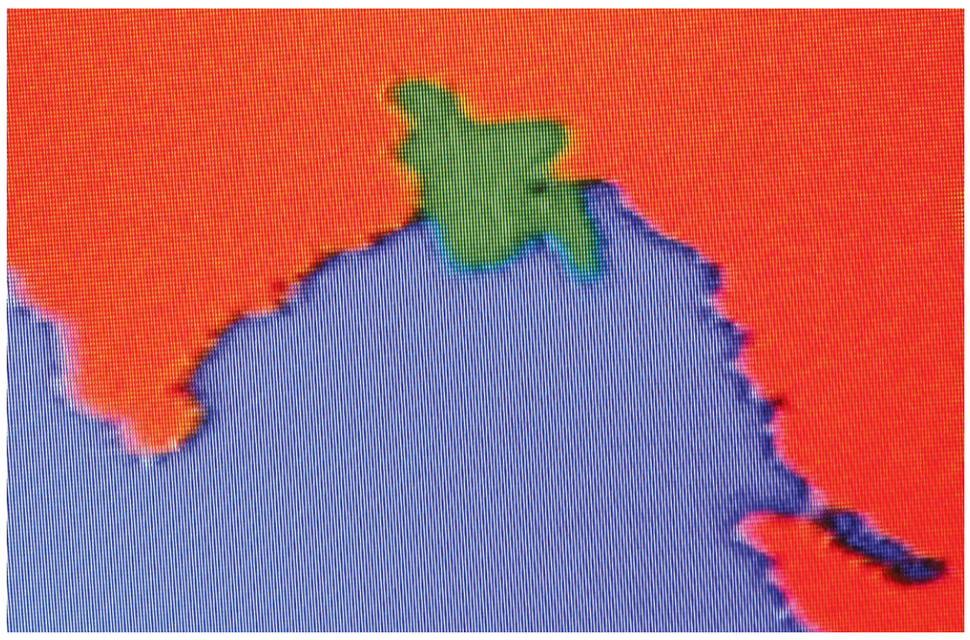
BTV'S BANGLADESH!

Bangladesh Television (BTV), before commencing its news bulletins every day wrongly depicts more than half of Bangladesh in the Bay of Bengal. The video graphic design instantly creates confusion among millions of viewers about the actual location of the country.



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Petty crimes mark sharp rise in city

Many attribute the surge to massive unemployment caused by recent eviction of hundreds of thousands of small traders from public places

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

Law enforcers have recently been caught off guard by an abrupt rise in mugging that is plaguing the city streets.

Law enforcement officials presumed that the sudden increase in hijacking and snatching might be a boomerang effect caused by recent eviction drives conducted by the authorities that turned thousands of slum dwellers shelter less and street vendors jobless.

Some of the muggers arrested recently turned out to be street vendors by profession who have taken up mugging for survival, said police sources.

"The recent eviction of street vendors from sidewalks is one of the probable reasons why the crime rate shows a rising trend," said Monwar Hossain, officer in charge of Dhanmondi Police Station (PS).

"A great number of 'part-time' and 'floating' hijackers have emerged on the streets, and it's a tricky business to track these criminals as they do not operate at any particular location," Hossain added.

According to sources, more than 100 cases of muggings have been reported during the course of the last six months while around 15 sophisticated mugging cases were reported across the Dhaka city during the first quarter of April.

A source at Ramna division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) told this correspondent that in February and March this year, reported cases of muggings were 18 and 19 respectively in 5 police stations in Ramna.

These figures are quite higher in comparison with January figures -- only 10 cases of reported muggings.

"It seems as if muggings in the last couple of months have somewhat doubled compared to months before," said Sub Inspector Kalpana Akhter from Ramna PS.

The apparently striking statistics are only a small piece of the whole pie. The real situation is much worse as most mugging incidents go unreported, admitted law enforcers.

In most residential areas, although mugging is on a meteoric rise, only around 5 percent of the incidents were reported to the authorities, said law enforcers.

Jalil Ahmed, a service provider, was mugged in the first week of April when he was caught in traffic near a traffic signal during late evening hours.

"There were only two of them [muggers] and they appeared to be checking all vehicles. Since they were well dressed and looked quite decent, I considered them to be law enforcers and barely protested when they tried to get in the car I was in," said Ahmed.

"They pulled out two pistols and pointed them at my waist from both sides before anyone could even realize what was happening. They took off with my laptop PC, a cellphone, a watch and Tk 3,000 in cash," he added.

According to law enforcers, this is one of the newest techniques used by a group of muggers who mostly operate on Airport Road. Both victims and law enforcers are taken aback by the innovative and resourceful methods used by these muggers.

"We received reports of muggings where muggers used sophisticated equipment to unlock cars or even follow victims in their car and send another group of assailants on motorbikes to commit the crime," said a police official.

Delowar Haque (not real name), a businessman, was mugged at Banani on April 3. Haque, along and his two acquaintances were walking towards Banani Bazar at around 11:30 pm when three unidentified men blocked their way.

"As they drew out sharp weapons and a firearm, we had no option but to handover all our possessions to them. They took away our cell phones, Tk 50,000 in cash and a large amount of dollars that I was carrying to make a business payment," said Haque.

"We later realized that the muggers were following us in a black Nissan Patrol all along. They drove away immediately after mugging us," he added.

According to police sources, there are other gangs pretending to be undercover law enforcers. These gangs prey on unsuspecting road users by stopping vehicles in the name of security checks.

"Because of their ever-changing strategies, it has become highly unpredictable as to when and how the muggers might attack," said an official from Rapid Action Battalion (Rab).

Another common approach taken by the muggers, especially on the streets of Manik Mia Avenue, Airport Road, Shahbagh and streets in Dhaka University, is to intercept vehicles as soon as they slow down before speed breakers.

The crime busters are discovering themselves one step behind the criminals due to their lousy intelligence work and lack of adequate human resources, claimed police sources.

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Rising petty crime: Law enforcers recently arrested three alleged muggers in the city.

City's second *Bodhi* tree spreads spiritual purity

The plant belongs to the family of the original Bodhi tree under which Gautama Buddha had meditated over 2,500 years ago to attain enlightenment

DURDANA GHIAS

A sapling of the Bodhi tree, the most sacred tree of the followers of Gautama Buddha, was planted on the day of Buddha Purnima on April 2 on the premises of International Buddhist Monastery (IBM) in Merul Badda in the city.

Gautama Buddha, the spiritual leader of the Buddhists, attained enlightenment in 600 BC under a sacred fig tree in Bodhgaya, which later became known as the Bodhi Tree, or the Tree of Enlightenment.

Buddha is referred to have been sitting underneath a Bodhi Tree when he was enlightened (Bodhi).

Buddhananda Thero, deputy chief abbot, IBM, said that officially this is the second Bodhi tree in the city. The first one is planted in the Buddhist monastery in Kamalapur.

"Bodhi tree is a special banyan tree under which Gautama Buddha attained *Buddhatta*. The original Bodhi tree is in Bodhgaya in India from which we collect saplings following scientific method," said Thero.

After his Enlightenment, Buddha spent a whole week staring at the Bodhi tree, gazing at it with gratitude. For another week he walked around the tree. A shrine was later erected on the spot where he stood, said Thero.

In 2004, Indian government arranged International Buddhist Conclave, a conference of Buddhist priests. Buddhist leaders from 27 countries attended the conference where President APJ Abul Kalam of India and Dalai Lama, Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader and statesman were chief guests. Twenty-nine Buddhist priests attended the conference from Bangladesh.

The sapling was given to Sangharaj Dharmasen Mahathera, the highest Buddhist priest of Bangladesh by President Kalam.

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The second Bodhi tree in the city planted at International Buddhist Monastry.

After getting the sapling Mahathera said that as he had received the sapling from the president of India he would prefer it to be planted by the president of Bangladesh, conveyed Thero.

"After getting the sapling we waited for three years for President Iajuddin Ahmed but he could not come due to his busy schedule. But this year on the day of Buddha Purnima he planted the tree. In the last three years we preserved the sapling in a tub and later in a big drum," said Thero.

The Bodhi Tree, which belongs to the Sacred Figs, is sacred to Hindus, Jains and Buddhists therefore its scientific name is or Ficus religiosa. It is also known as Bo, Pipul (Peepal) or Ashwattha trees. Its leaves are heart shaped with a distinctive extended tip. Its fruit is a green ripening purple.

In 288 BC, Indian Emperor Ashoka gave a graft of that tree to the king of Sri Lanka. That tree is still alive today, and ceremoniously worshipped in Sri Lanka.

When the original Bodhi Tree died in Bodhgaya, a graft from the Sri Lanka tree was planted in its place. Thus the living link of Buddha's Tree of Enlightenment was maintained through the use of grafting.

Other holy Bodhi trees which have a great significance in the history of Buddhism are the Anandabodhi tree in Sravasti and the Bodhi tree in Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka.

TRAFFIC DEPARTMENT'S LAUDABLE MOVE

Honking banned in more areas

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

A strict ban on using horns starts from today in a bid to minimise the level of noise pollution on the city streets. The ban is imposed by the traffic department of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP).

The previous ban including the VIP roads between the stretch of Sonargaon intersection and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medial University intersection has now been extended to the Airport Road from Shaheed Jahangir Gate to Uttara and Abdullahpur, from Kemal Ataturk Avenue up to Phoenix Bhaban via Gulshan-1 and 2 roads, from Gabtoli to Azimpur via Dhanmondi Russell Square, from Bijoy Sarani to Mohammadpur Traffic Office, from Hotel Sheraton to Kakrail intersection, from Matsya Bhaban to Rainbow crossing, from Science Laboratory to Matsya Bhaban, and from Matsya Bhaban to Golapshah Mazar via Old High Court intersection.

"Honking is completely prohibited in these streets, unless of course it is absolutely necessary," said Jashim Uddin, Joint Commissioner of the traffic department of DMP.

"Our prime goal here is to free city streets from noise pollution by creating public awareness, and consequently eliminate traffic jam from the city streets," he added.

According to traffic sources, use of horns will be strictly monitored by on duty traffic enforcers and offenders will be penalised. The offender will pay a fine of Tk 200 under the clause 139 of Motor Vehicle Act along with additional penalties.

Although the authorities' prior attempts to prohibit the use of horns in city streets fell short of expectations due to the lack of exposure and public awareness, officials from the traffic department of DMP expressed their optimism about gradually transforming Dhaka streets into a noise pollution free zone.

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A signboard jointly enacted by the Dhaka City Corporation and the Department of Environment showing maximum decibel level in a city residential area.

According to sources from the traffic department of DMP, undercover traffic officials will also be present on the streets to assist on duty officers to monitor the proceedings and implement the laws effectively.

"We have plans to deploy undercover traffic officers and additional traffic enforcers from other parts of the country to enforce the law," said Jashim Uddin, Joint Commissioner, traffic department, DMP.

While the authorities continue to enhance their efforts to create public awareness from excessive use of horns, a great number of motorists in the city still remain unaware of this sudden implementation of the law. This list includes thousands of drivers.

Most of these chauffeurs would simply go on a honking spree just to avoid collision with other vehicles namely the non-motorised vehicles.

"Most of the drivers in the city have little training and feeble educational backgrounds, therefore they would simply go through a honking spree if they find another vehicle in front of them," said Jahangir Alam, Additional Deputy Commissioner, traffic department, DMP (west).

"As keeping the car in a good shape is my responsibility, I will be held accountable for even the tiniest of scratches in the car. It is virtually impossible to securely drive in this city without using the horn," said Moajjem Hossain, a car chauffeur from Badda.

However, traffic officials believe that honking would not be required in these horn-free streets, as non-motorised vehicles such as rickshaws have already been banned there.

"I understand that chauffeurs have to use horns to keep rickshaws and other non-motorised vehicles and pedestrians away from their cars, but as the streets are rickshaw-free I don't see the need of honking anymore," said Jahangir Alam, Additional Deputy Commissioner of the traffic department of DMP (West).

"We don't really have any big campaigns going on to create public awareness against the use of horns, all we have are small signs and banners placed throughout the streets," said an on-duty traffic sergeant from Sonargaon intersection.

According to officials from the traffic department of DMP, gradually more streets will be brought under the banner of horn-free zones.