

# Mayor finds city bus sheds extra hassle to manage

## SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

Commuters in the streets of Dhaka suffer immensely due to lack of passenger sheds especially during the monsoon while Dhaka City Corporation officials say they have no immediate plans to construct any new passenger sheds.

Dhaka city Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka brushed aside any possibilities of constructing passenger sheds in the near future saying it brings extra hassle for the DCC.

"In most cases they become the hub of drug addicts and vagabonds or the bus operators take over the shed as ticket counter that is why we dismantled some of the sheds during the recent eviction drive," he added.

According to DCC sources, the length of total road network in Dhaka city is around 2289.69 kilometres and there are around 163 kilometres of footpaths. Millions of commuters use public transport everyday.

According to Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), 20 private bus companies operate in and around Dhaka city. They pick up and drop off passengers at 108 stops.

BRTA Volvo service has 9 stops in Mirpur-Matiheel route and 12 stops in Tongi-Matiheel route. Local buses enjoy the liberty of loading and unloading anywhere, anytime they like.

In early 2006 Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB) in coordination with DCC, BRTA and BRTC placed a study report to DCC outlining the need for passenger sheds and their possible designs. In the report DTCB suggested the construction of around 280 to 300 new passenger sheds in the capital city.

Additional Executive Director of DTCB Dr. Salehuddin said, "In our country monsoon lasts for about six months. Where would the commuters go when it rains? Necessity cannot be stopped."

"DCC needs to rethink its decision. DCC must consider the agony of the commuters and immediately execute the plans", he added.

About DTCBs suggestions the mayor said, "Their suggestion and plans seem academic. It is not realistic and does not go with the existing condition of the our streets."

"The reality is that we don't have enough space on the footpaths to build so many passenger sheds and our roads are not spacious enough, so we cannot extend the footpath either", the mayor said.

Salehuddin however said that after the eviction of footpath encroachers, it should not be difficult to construct new sheds. The footpaths are almost free of hawkers now.

Syed Qudratullah, Superintendent Engineer, DCC Traffic Engineering Division, said,

"A study called route rationalisation is underway to identify bus stops and spots for passenger sheds in the city".

While authorities spend time and money on studies for decades, commuters are left to suffer under the sky waiting for transport.

The existing sheds have a little or no use to the commuters as the sheds, constructed in an unplanned way, remain always occupied by the shopkeepers, hawkers, drug addicts and in some cases floating sex workers.

Over the years the DCC built numerous bus sheds for other mischievous purposes. Political influence forced DCC officials to take up projects to build sheds in an unplanned manner only to allocate shops to party men in prime city areas. All the shops gradually extended their occupation, leaving little space for people to stand, waiting for buses.

Come rain or shine commuters wait on the eroded footpath or no footpaths at all, as they have no right over passenger sheds.

During the recent eviction drives DCC dismantled some of these shops but within a few months they returned to their places.

Business hubs like Farmgate, Motijheel, Purana Paltan, Gulistan, Phulbaria, Mohakhal, Banani, Malibagh, Mouchak, Rampura, Gulshan, Mirpur, Shahbagh and Moghbazar, where thousands of commuters

move about every day has acute crisis of sheds.

The passengers waiting for buses beside the National Museum or BIRDEM Hospital bear with rain or scorching heat everyday.

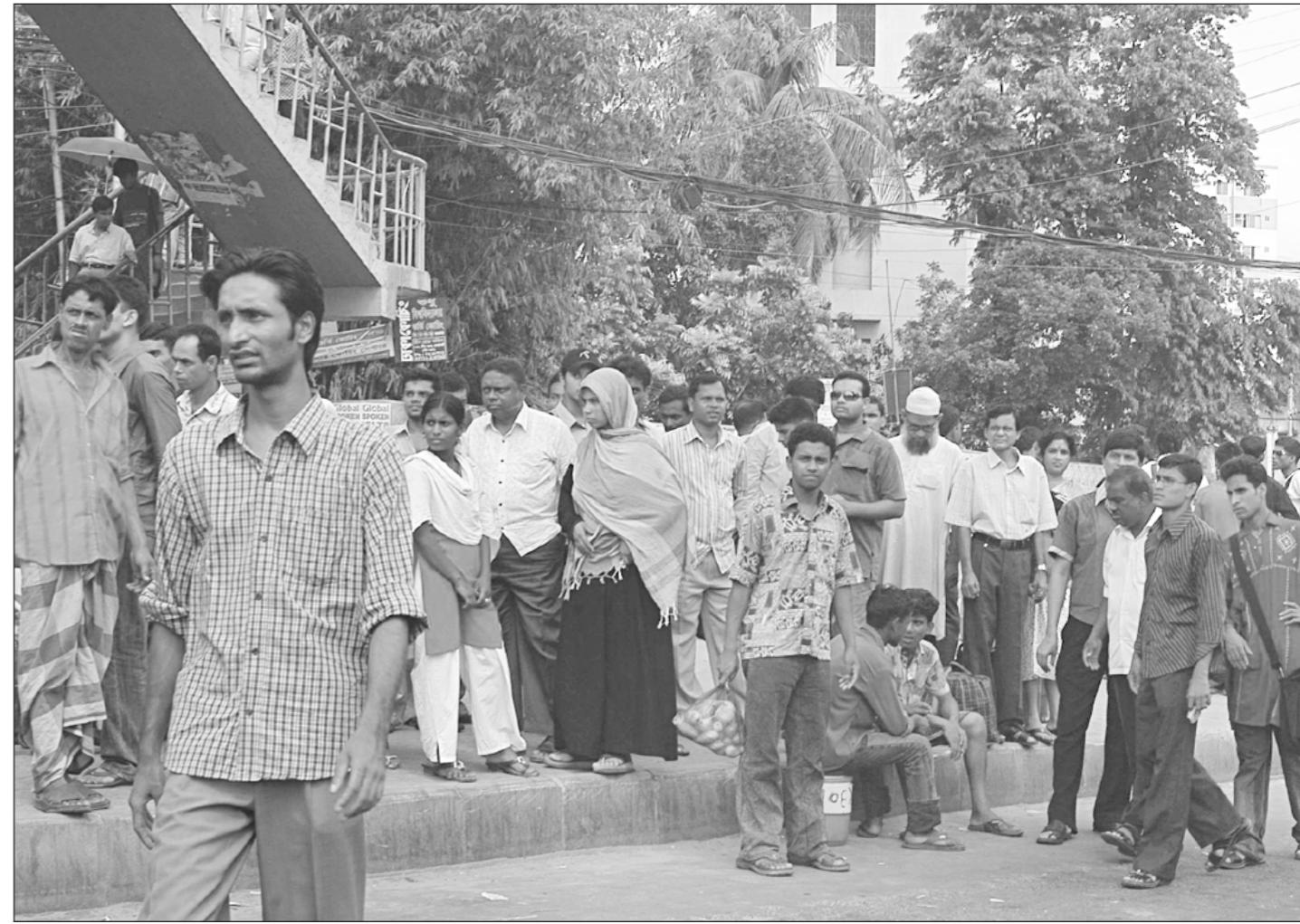
"I have to stand under the open sky beside the museum. Sometimes buses take long time to arrive because of traffic jam. I cannot even take shelter during the rain as shops are situated on the opposite side of the road," said Abu Hashem, a regular commuter in Shahbagh-Mohammadpur route.

Commuters at the Kalabagan, SOS Shishu Palli and Agargaon bus stop go through the same experience.

On the side of BIRDEM commuters stay under the over bridge or take shelter in the hospital when it rains.

The very few sheds of the city in most places are located far from where the buses stop.

Shyamoli Akter a commuter of Mirpur 11 to Matijheel route said, "The bus shed at Mirpur 11 is far away from where the buses stop. If it rains I have to wait in the medicine stores nearby. Most of the time I have to go to office all drenched."



Commuters suffer immensely due to lack of passenger sheds especially during monsoon. The photo was taken yesterday near Farmgate foot overbridge.

STAR PHOTO

## Careless DCC plunders

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encroached the Gulshan lake to occupy 6.33 acres.

The DCC, contrary to the concept of a public park, obstinately built a six-foot high solid wall around the parkland instead of a see-through one.

In the face of tremendous public pressure, the DCC developed a walkway and set up a number of benches without even levelling the ground.

"Our plan is to build a community centre on the open space alongside a park," city mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka told Star in December 2005.

Following a writ petition filed by a Gulshan resident MA Reza in 1995, a division bench of the High Court on May 24, 2007 ordered the authorities of Wonderland to remove all the establishments of the amusement park within six months.

Regarding Gulshan South Park, Prof Serajul Islam Choudhury, who is chairman of DCC's park development and beautification committee, said the development plan for the second phase was not consistent with the concept of an open public park.

The committee rejected a Tk 77 lakh second phase develop-

ment scheme for Gulshan South Park, on the ground that the design was not in keeping with the concept of an aesthetic and open public park, said an official of DCC.

The DCC is now reviewing the plan.

Dr Akbar Ali Khan, current president of Gulshan Society and a former adviser to caretaker government, wants immediate reclamation and development of the parks.

Regarding Wonderland, Mayor Khoka told this correspondent in February this year that his predecessor had leased out the public park for commercial use and he (Khoka) refused renewal of the lease contract.

"There were many gross anomalies in the process of leasing out the park for commercial use," Khoka said. "Another portion of the same park occupied by a nursery was reclaimed during my tenure."

On June 2, Khoka said, "Public parks in many cases are of no use."

Responding to some other parks, Khoka said the idea of setting up a children's park at Karwan Bazar was wrong

because there are markets and other commercial establishments in and around the area.

## Fixed fares

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The pressure from owners, in the absence of market considerations, helped the government to increase the fare from previous chart, said the transport official. "The passengers are not in fact paying less than the market price – it is the government fixed fare chart that is wrongly overfixed."

About the passenger transportation, Humayun Rashid, director (operations) of BRTA said, "The information about under charging in bus transportation is new to me."

While asked about the inflated government fare chart and the distance disputes that affect passengers adversely, he admitted that there were disputes over the official travel distances of different bus routes. The distances BRTA follows were provided from the Roads and Highway Department, he said. The BRTA was working hard and within a short time the authority and owners would solve the route distance problem, Rashid said.

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## Local government should be strengthened, seminar told

### CITY CORRESPONDENT

Everybody should play a strong role to strengthen the local government in order to develop the country, said speakers at a seminar at LGED Bhaban yesterday.

Dr Dora Rapold, ambassador of Switzerland, in her speech as the chief guest emphasised the need for a strong local government.

"In Switzerland local government is working side by side with the national government. All sections will have to work simultaneously to construct strong local government in Bangladesh," she said.

The seminar was organised by Rupantor, an NGO and USAID on importance of local government.

Dr Akbar Ali Khan, former adviser to caretaker government said, "Although the local government is given priority in our constitution, it is being neglected. Local government is not the servant of national government; it is a sovereign government. It is our great misfortune that we are yet to have a strong local government in the country."

"From our past experience we see that non-elected governments gave the local government top priority but elected governments neglected it. Political governments gave promises of upholding upazila parishad but did not take effective steps."

"Democracy does not mean sovereignty of politicians; it is the sovereignty of people. If democracy is to be strengthened

then local government should be given importance. It is also important to eliminate poverty," he said.

Roger De Carlson, mission director, USAID said, "USAID is working to strengthen local government in this country. Already we have helped activate Municipal Association of Bangladesh (MAB) and Bangladesh Union Parishad Forum. The work done by Rupantor has helped Union Parishads wealth by 50 percent."

Some proposals were given at the seminar. Among them were government orders and circulars should not go against the constitution; members of parliament should not be involved into the local government and development programmes; women empow-

erment should be given importance; incumbent leaders should be given individual offices, local government staff should be trained at NILG, BARD and RDA; the fund for health and education should be given directly to the local government; salary of the staff should be increased; new laws should be introduced to divide revenue between national and local government; an autonomous body should be introduced to handle financial stuff. It should be given the necessary power.

Dr Rezaul Haque, team leader, democracy and governance, USAID was the coordinator of first work session.

Advocate Azmatullah Khan, president, MAB, and Mahbubur Rahman Tulu spoke at the seminar. Dr Swapan Guha, chief executive of Rupantor, gave the welcome speech.

Selina Hayat Ivy, Prof Dr Tofail Ahmed and Prof Mohammad Khan were panel discussants.

Qamrul Islam Siddiqi, former chief engineer of LGED, was coordinator of second work session. Dr Ashok Sarkar, director of public welfare in India, Tri Bikram Pande, executive director, CPREC, Nepal and Ram Balak Singh spoke at the seminar. Prof Amirul Islam Chowdhury, Dr Salahuddin Aminuzzaman and Taleya Rahman, director, democracy watch were panel discussants.

Deprasad Jana and Dr Shibrat Lohani local government specialist of India and Nepal spoke at the seminar. Swapan Guha, chief executive of Rupantor, gave the welcome speech.

## health, bus services, airlines & train timing

### OSPITALS & CLINICS

Ahsania Mission Cancer & General Hospital	8311721-25 9008919, 8051618
Islami Bank Hospital	9333739
Apollo Hospitals Dhaka	9891680-4, 01713046684/85 Emergency no. 9896623, 0171409000
Bangladesh Medical College & Hospital	9118202, 8115843
Central Hospital	9660015-19,
China Bangla Hospital (JV) Ltd	8913674
Dhaka Medical College Hospital	8626812-16
Gana Shasthyo Kendra	8617208, 8617383, 8620178,
Greenland Hospital	8912663
Gulshan Mother & Child Clinic	8822738, 8812992
Holy Family Hospital	
Monowara Hospital	8318135, 8319802
Pangal Hospital	9112150, 9113041
PG Hospital (BSMMU)	9614545-9, 9612550-4
Rashmoni General Hospital	8317606, 9557354, 8317819

### BUS SERVICES

Ratan's Dental Clinic	Drooti
9111090	8014563
Salimullah Medical College Hospital	Eagle Paribahan
7319002-6	7101504
Japan Bangladesh Friendship Hospital	Green Line Paribahan
8828855, 8827575	9339623, 9342580, 8353005
Labaid Cardiac Hospital	Samorita Hospital Ltd
8610793-8	9131901
Marie Stopes Clinic	Shahid Suhrawardy Hospital
8821874	9122560-78
Medinova Medical Services Ltd	Shishu Hospital
8620353,	8116061-2, 9119119
Monowara Hospital	United Hospital
8318135, 8319802	8836444, 0194001234
BLOOD BANK	Neptune A/C Coach Service
Bangladesh Red Crescent Blood Bank	7101945, 7101951, 9123092
9112653	Shohag Paribahan (Pvt) Ltd
Modern Clinic & Blood Center	9334152, 8316766, 8126293
9883948	Shoukhan Paribahan
Sandhani, Dhaka Medical College	Silk Line
9668690	9333803

### AIRLINES

lines	Drak Air	Malaysia Airlines
Aeroflat	9862243, 9892862,	9888211-20
9559930, 9559111, Fax: 9563787	Airport Office: 8916953, Fax: 9890478	
Air India	9892801, 9885574-75	PIA
86117783, 8611929, Fax: 9670591	9349293-5, Fax: 9345300	Singapore Airlines
Biman Bangladesh Airlines	8825845-9, Airport Office: 8960404, 8915699, Fax: 8826115	8811504-7, 9883259
8917400-19 9560151, 9559610	Airport Office: 8917400, Fax: 8913005	Airport Office: 8911928, Fax: 8811503
9120116	British Airways	Thai Airways
Keya Paribahan	8815111, Fax: 8815346,	8314711-18, 8914343
7101894, 7101250, 9121280	Cathay Pacific	9115182, 9118829
Modern Enterprise	9557117, Fax: 9562667	9886324-5, Fax: 9896481
9123743	Neptune A/C Coach Service	
7101945, 7101951, 9123092	Shubra	