

# DU's mindless projects destroy green



Around 20 trees were felled on the site of proposed mathematics department 10-storey building.

MORSHED ALI KHAN and DURDANA GHIAS

Dhaka University (DU) authorities have failed to make a master plan for healthy development of its campus. Over the last 86 years successive authorities and policy makers of DU took up construction projects on piecemeal basis, virtually destroying its pristine landscape.

Since independence scores of buildings have been constructed

without taking into consideration any aesthetic value of the campus. In the process crores of taka has been spent for construction that wiped out valuable collection of trees, open spaces and playgrounds. DU's glory of open space and greenery is constantly being plundered.

DU's latest venture involves Tk 15 crore which was donated by a trust. The DU is going to build a 10-storey building for the Department of Mathematics. Between 15 and 20 big trees

were chopped down on Tuesday on the green patch near Science annex building to start the construction.

Successive DU authorities in the last 30 years have eyed open spaces in the campus with greed and in total disregard for environmental aspects, said leading architects of the country.

If DU builds the building without approval they would also violate the Building Construction Act 2006, they said.

Mubasshar Hussain, presi-

dent, Institute of Architect, said that DU needs a master plan immediately to stop it becoming a concrete jungle.

'Anywhere a building is constructed in the Dhaka city permission has to be sought from Rajuk, only the cantonment board is exempted from this law,' he said.

'DU should have a master plan where buildings and their heights should be specified according to their locations,' he said.

'DU authority is eager to start

the construction as soon as possible as the project cost is to be borne by a trust. They are behaving like they would drink even poison if it is free of cost,' he said.

'A bizarre building for applied physics department within the compound of Curzon Hall has destroyed the aesthetic beauty of the red brick edifice of British period,' he said.

ASM Ismail, chief architect, Department of Architecture, Ministry of Works, said that a phase-wise master plan for the campus is a must to stop unnecessary extension and plundering of the aesthetic beauty of the area.

'The central library, NIPA [National Institute for Public Administration] building and lecture theatre have seen some unnecessary painting and extensions which have destroyed their original features,' he said.

'An office room was made in the place of lift in lecture theatre, NIPA building, designed by noted architect Mazharul Islam, was subjected to erratic painting.

In the last 50 years no fine building was erected and the old ones were destroyed in the name of extension, he said.

'Extension of Shahidullah Hall was quite unplanned. The central library has been turned into 'a jail'. Pedestrian walkways and green spaces have disappeared in the process of haphazard extension.'

'DU does not have qualified engineers. Often they are deputed from PWD,' he said.

The DU authority has violated building construction rule of Rajuk by not bothering to obtain any official approval for the project.

DU's treasurer Prof Syed Abul Kalam Azad said that they should never obtain any permission from anybody.

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## NOISE POLLUTION

# DMP to go tougher on horn-happy motorists

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Deafening noise of vehicular horns continues to pester the city dwellers despite a slight awareness among motorists following a clamp down on horn-happy motorists.

Since February DMP (Dhaka Metropolitan Police) has enforced an age-old law banning vehicular horns in many areas of the city. In densely populated residential areas like Dhanmondi, Gulshan, Uttara and Banani, which are

'We have fined thousands of motorists for honking and issued verbal warnings about heavier penalties for future offences, but old habits die hard,' said a traffic sergeant at Farmgate intersection requesting not to be named.

'There should be a massive campaign against unnecessary use of horns which is already causing unknown physical harms to the public, particularly children,' he added. The DMP decided to implement the motor vehicles ordinance of 1983 that forbids honking horns within 200

will find that over 90 percent of the city's vehicles are driven by so-called professional chauffeurs and I can tell you from my experience that most of these drivers do not have any formal education,' said the sergeant adding, 'only penalising this workforce would not help curtail induse of horn, we need to educate them about the bad effects of horns in our city life.'

Joint Commissioner of DMP (Traffic) M Jashimuddin, presently coordinating to bring in some discipline to city roads, said that the drive against noise pollution would



DMP's traffic department has enacted similar road signs to warn motorists about the ban on honking.

dotted with private schools, universities and hospitals the joint forces, with the police and residents in the lead, convinced organisations to launch a campaign against use of horns. At places large banners have been enacted urging motorists to refrain from honking horns, which is the principal source of noise pollution in the city. The traffic department officials said that they would pursue the matter until noise from vehicular horns disappears from the city.

yards of places of worship, educational institutes, hospitals, courts and offices. Offenders are being fined Tk 200 for each violation under clause 139 of motor vehicles act.

Another traffic sergeant at Bangla Motor intersection said that the police high-ups should also talk to the driving schools, which are following age-old driving manuals and accordingly teaching learners to honk at every intersection.

'If you analyse the situation you

continue till every motorist realises it is against the law. He also said that the traffic department is currently posting 600 sergeants in the city.

'We need 175 more traffic sergeants immediately to address some of the pressing problems infesting our roads and vehicular circulation,' Jashimuddin said. He emphasised the need for awareness programs and installation of more road signs and said that the

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## DETAILED AREA PLAN

# Delay, anomalies spoil the purpose

TAWFIQUE ALI

Gross anomalies and deliberate delay in implementation have put Dhaka's Detailed Area Plan (DAP) in a total mess, professionals and urban experts said.

The DAP includes in details every structure, lake, canal, wetland, retention pond, road, open space, place of worship and all other topographical features of the city.

It also minutely takes into account environmentally critical aspects in the areas of infrastructural development. Once it is completed,

town planners will have a ready reference for development planning for the city.

The DAP is crucial for planned urbanisation and development of the capital city and conservation of environment through proper implementation of Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (DMDP), popularly known as master plan.

But the delay in implementation of the DMDP has resulted in the filling up of vast low-lying areas in and around the city exposing it to environmental hazards, flooding and waterlogging with even insignificant volume of rainfall, the environmentalists said.

It is alleged that a section of corrupt officials of Rajuk have deliberately delayed the DAP to make room for private land developers to destroy city's environment.

Geographical and topographical features of the city have been altered recklessly, in absence of the DAP, during the past decade.

The environmentalists expressed serious doubts whether DAP will contain original and detailed positions of the flood-flow zones, retention ponds, lakes, rivers, canals and Strategic Planning Zones (SPZ), as earmarked in the DMDP.

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DAP is crucial for planned urbanisation through proper implementation of the city's master plan.

# 'We want to go home'

Hundreds of lost children unable to remember their addresses languish in makeshift shelters

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

Hundreds of lost children are languishing in drop-in centres run by NGOs with a little or no hope for going back to their parents as they cannot tell their addresses.

The NGOs took an initiative to develop a 'national child help line' a year ago to help these children and their parents, but the move has been stalled.

Under the initiative, the NGOs are supposed to develop a countrywide network to extend instant and long-term help to the lost children through coordinated efforts.

The help line initiative will have a toll-free hotline telephone number so that anybody can inform the network about any lost child.

The concerned child rights organisations, institutions and government departments will be linked to this network for ensuring support and care to the children in need.

Treatment, counselling, rescue, shelter and legal aid would be ensured for the children through the specialised partner organisations.

'My father is Rashid Poddar and mother's name is Hazara,' said three and a half years old Nayan at a shelter home in Mirpur. But Nayan cannot remember where his home is.

Police picked him up from the street and sent him to the drop-in centre.

'I dreamt of my mother last night...she is very beautiful. She fed me puri in the dream. I want to go to her,' Nayan said while talking to Star City on Friday.

Like him, five-year-old Janu cannot tell her address but she always wish to go to her parents. Janu is living in a drop-in centre at Arambagh.

Star City found more than a hundred children aged below ten years at different drop-in centres run by NGOs, which are dealing with lost children.

Aminul Islam, a coordinator of Aparajeyo Bangladesh, an NGO dealing with child rights, told Star City that police often bring these lost children to the NGO.

The NGO gets 2/3 such children daily from the police stations of the city. The government has no mechanism to return such children to their parents, he said.

'Police is bringing such children to us regularly but our centres are overloaded. The government shelter homes are not liveable for these children. We saw a number of children fed recently from such a centre at Dhola in Mymensingh,

he said.

He said the NGOs provide the lost children with food and shelter. They search out their parents if possible. If they fail, those children grow up at the shelter homes.

Doulat Akbar, officer in charge of Ramna Police Station, said he always send such children to the government shelter homes or safe custody or to the NGOs.

The children who can tell their addresses are sent to their parents directly.

Wahida Banu, chairperson of Bangladesh Shishu Odhikar Forum, an umbrella organisation of

the NGOs, said, 'A national help line can solve the problem easily.'

She said that prevailing help lines of the NGOs are not enough to return those children to their parents.

Returning these children to their parents often requires coordinated search because those children cannot say anything about their home.

It is Bangladesh Shishu Odhikar Forum which initiated to develop a national child help line for the children at risk.

Wahida said Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board

has already approved the proposal for providing a hotline number for the national help line.

The proposal is now waiting for final approval of the finance ministry.

'As the hotline is a toll-free number and the finance ministry has to bear the expenditure, they have to decide whether they will approve it or not. But they should not make delay for the sake of protecting child rights,' Wahida said.



Lost children growing up in a drop-in centre at Arambagh.