

Only bypass gets too little attention

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The dilapidated bypass, with ditches and potholes connecting the old part of the city with Savar road in Gabtoli over the flood protection embankment is undergoing partial repairs.

Every day thousands of commuters in buses, trucks, taxis and other vehicles take the run-down road to commute to the old city avoiding the city centre traffic. Local people said if the authorities repaired the entire stretch of the bypass, it would greatly help reduce traffic problems in the western part of the city.

The Water Development Board took up the repair work on a small stretch between Gabtoli and the Kalyanpur sluice gate of the 30-kilometre road from Tongi to Kellar Moar. The rest of the road remains in a bad shape with hard shoulders disappearing and potholes appearing every day.

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The Water Development Board (WDB) built the road on the Dhaka Flood Protection Embankment in 2003. Despite

its bad shape, the road is used by thousands of people in Mohammadpur, Rayerbazar, Hazaribagh, Kamrangirchar, Nawabpur, Chawkbazar, Lalbagh, Swari Ghat, Babubazar and Sadarghat areas. People prefer this short-

cut to their destination rather than entering the city roads, which are always choked with traffic.

If the road is made usable for normal traffic, residents in the western part of the city could travel to Sadarghat in minutes. They could also reach the Savar highway, avoiding traffic snarls on the Mirpur Road. Normally from Dhanmondi, it takes over an hour to reach Sadarghat through the congested city during daytime.

The Superintendent Engineer of WDB's Operations and Maintenance Circle, Mujibur Rahman Khan had earlier blamed the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) for "destroying the road" at Gabtoli end. He said that for over two years DCC has illegally chosen a vast area along the bypass to dump wastes.



Workers partially repairing the dilapidated bypass road near Gabtoli.

STAR PHOTO



STAR PHOTO

Titas Gas has dug up a narrow passage for installing its pipeline on the Mirpur Road at Dar-es-Salam on the southern side of Kalyanpur. While the compaction is taking time to happen, the small but sharp dent on the road is forcing vehicles to come to a dead slow speed, causing snarls throughout the day.

DCC's misfield prompts

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Commercial use of parks and playgrounds by a certain group or organisation is not acceptable at all, said the former adviser. "In this case, it defeats the actual purpose of a public spaces. There should not any scope of commercial use in public parks."

Use of public parks may be limited at best to local communities, but not to any individual organisation, Shahjahan advised.

Absence of adequate sporting facilities for the public including parks and playgrounds is to a great extent reason for the alarming rise of obesity, frustration and drug addiction among today's youth, He observed.

Architect Salma Shafi, an urban planner, said the general public cannot use a playground when it is handed over to a club or a sports organisation.

"This is just unfair, illegal and against the public interest," she said. "Usually, local law commissioners patronise such possession of public playgrounds and a certain coterie of dishonest individuals make quick bucks exploiting public properties."

The High Court (HC) in a verdict (writ 1814/2004) on April 24, 2004, ordered not to use the Dhanmondi playground for any purposes other than as a playground.

In a similar verdict on writ 2420/2003, the HC on April 27, 2003, directed not to change the land use nature on the green open space of Asadgate New Colony playground.

But according to the aforesaid DCC survey, many public parks are being used for various commercial purposes. Shahid Park (Makil Park) in Mohammadpur is one such park.

Shyamoli Shishu Mela (children's park) is being used as a commercial amusement park, the general public has no access to Farmgate Triangular Park, which is entrusted with a private company for 'beautification'.

Narinda Shishu Park has been divided into a number of portions, the DCC survey found. Narinda Lions Club occupies a portion, a two-story building rented out for community programmes occupies another portion while several tin-roofed houses, known as Wasa quarters, occupy the rest. A small portion of

the parkland is being used by a nearby mosque.

A club occupies Outfall Staff Quarter Shishu Park in DCC ward 86.

Iqbal Road Shishu Park (Udayjal ground) in Mohammadpur is also occupied by a club.

Hazaribagh Kasaitola Park is in possession of a club. Presently, Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) runs a kitchen market on the park.

Dhupkhola playground in DCC ward 81 has been split into three portions. East End Club is one of the occupiers of the ground. There is also a Shahid Minar, office and parking of a rent-a-car business, a public toilet and a restaurant on different parts of the playground. There are also two shops, a rickshaw garage and a construction material shop on the same ground.

Parks and Grounds Programme Committee of Bapa found that Haji Alim Eidgah Maath in Bakshibazar is under exclusive possession of Orient Cricket Academy.

The sponsor of the academy, a private firm, uses the playground for loading and unloading goods, said Sharif Jamil, member secretary of the committee quoting locals. A kitchen market has been allowed on the playground to justify the commercial use of the field, locals alleged.

Shyamoli PC Culture playground is in possession of Shyamoli Club and a by kitchen market. The market pays both to the local commissioner and the club, said Sharif Jamil.

Architect Iqbal Habib, Member secretary of Bapa, said, "The DCC should give up its duty of maintaining parks and playgrounds unless it can ensure free public access to these."

Prof. Serajul Islam Choudhury, noted educator and head of a high-level advisory committee on the city's park development and beautification, said the people have to make the DCC accountable for its duties.

"The DCC must do its duties properly," he added.

Residents of every neighbourhood, in their own interest, have to create pressure on the local ward commissioners to keep the public spaces in good shape, Choudhury suggested.

Plastic: Old town's

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"Earlier I used to employ around 30 workers and paid them Tk 1,000 each. But now I employ 10 workers and pay them Tk 3,000 each. The situation has been worse for the last two years. Earlier, we sold one dozen shoes at Tk 200 but now we sell at Tk 400 to 600. Demand is going down because of the high price but we have tagged this price to offset our costs," he said.

"Another problem is that we are experiencing a 12-hour load-shedding every day. It takes one hour to heat up the die machine. Often when the machine is fully heated up electricity goes off. I have to pay the bill for heating up the machine but I cannot make a single pair of shoes. When the electricity is back it takes another hour to heat up the machine," he said.

"There is no one to listen to our problems. Our ward commissioner is on the run. We went to the DESA office where no one pays heed to us," said Jali.

For the producers of plastic household utensils, the situation is almost the same. They are also incurring loss due to load-shedding.

All Hossain, owner of a factory producing plastic buckets, bowls and mugs, said, "The erratic electricity supply we receive every day is disrupting smooth operations in the factories. Production has declined. It is not possible for me to pay off my workers," he said.

Hossain has a reconditioned Japanese machine to make die of utensils, which he bought at Tk 20 lakh.

Itekhar Enayetullah, director, Waste Concern, said plastic recycling is needed in Bangladesh to save environ-

ment, create jobs and save millions of dollars of foreign currencies spent for importing virgin plastic.

In 2005 the total demand for plastic was 540,000 tonnes of which 295,167 tonnes (55 percent) was imported and 244,833 tonnes (45 percent) was recycled. The import value of the recycled amount was \$350 million, he said.

Recycling of plastic ensures removal of significant quantities of non-degradable materials from the landfills saving the quality of soil and environment, he said.

According to him the management of plastic waste through source separation and proper recycling based on 4R approach (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Recover) should be encouraged at all levels.

If source separation (separating plastic waste from kitchen waste) can be enforced at household level then a good amount of time and water can be saved which is used to clean soiled waste plastic, he said.

About the frequent health problems of factory workers he said, those working in plastic factories suffer from headache and skin infection from dust, fume, crammed environment and lack of proper ventilation.

"We have signed a deal with DCC where we will collect 700 tonnes of waste each day. This waste will not go to Matuail and we will process it. The deal will be implemented from November this year," he said.

"To promote proper recycling we need no financial help from the government. We want only policy support," said Enayetullah.

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