

A piece of the past left behind

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

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Hundreds of rickshaws and buses struggling to find their way through the congested roads and lanes; rickshaw-pullers bumping into each other and swearing; bus drivers honking every few seconds -- this is a common scene in Old Dhaka. Amidst this chaos you can also find some horse drawn carts that carry a tradition of over 150 years.

According to eminent historian Prof Muntasir Mamoon, the first horse carriage landed in Dhaka from Kolkata sometime during the 1860s. It was brought in by the Armenians who used to live in Dhaka at that time and played an important role in trade within Bengal.

"By the end of the 19th century horse drawn carriages became the main mode of transportation in Dhaka city. Following the British people, local Zamindars (landlords) and the elite started to use it," he said.

"There were various designs of such carriages available in Kolkata. In Dhaka, however, the Palki style became very popular. It had wooden covers in all the sides with windows resembling Palki. It was designed for six," he added.

The carriages had different names in different areas such as tomtom, tanga, jurigari or ekka. The driver of the horse

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carriage was known as the Kochwan or Sahis.

Renowned artist Rafiqunnabi lived in Narinda during his childhood. "I first saw a horse carriage at Fulbaria railway station the day my family arrived in Dhaka. It was 1953 when I was a student of class three," Rafiqunnabi said strolling down the memory lane.

"I wanted to sit beside the kochwan and my parents allowed me. It was a thrilling moment for me -- an exciting ride. As the horses galloped, I had an amazing view of the road and roadside houses, sitting in an elevated position," said Rafiqunnabi.

"People in those days used to hire them the way we hire rickshaws now for family trips to relatives' houses or other places. Women used it more than men. My sisters used it

when they went to school basically for safety," he recalled.

Prof Mamoon said till 1950s horse drawn carriage was the main mode of transport in Dhaka. After that the city gradually became modern. With the arrival of motor vehicles, slow-moving horse drawn carts could not compete with them anymore.

With the passage of time the use of horse drawn carriages died out. Only a few of them are still operating in the old part of Dhaka carrying the century-old tradition.

Most of these carts are seen carrying passengers from Gulistan to Sadarghat. These are a modified version of the carriage of the past. Mostly young boys drive the carts. They said at present there are some 25-30 such carriages in old Dhaka.

Apart from its use as passen-

ger carriers, the carts are rented for wedding or other social functions. Colourful carriage rallies organised during festivals still attract people. A cart can be hired for special occasion for around Tk 300 per hour.

Many people still prefer tomtoms for a ride from Sadarghat to Gulistan. The fare is Tk 10. These carts stop at English Road, Johnson Road and Nawabpur Road. Although designed for six, these vehicles are usually crammed with 10-12 persons.

"It takes the same amount of time for a rickshaw and a tomtom to reach Gulistan," said Abdul Hamid, a passenger. "Amidst the unbearable traffic jams in old Dhaka, every vehicle runs at the same speed. Often gentle breeze from the Buriganga passes through, which is absent inside the crowded local buses."

Talking to Star City, Gani Mia, who has been the kochwan of a horse drawn carriage for the last eight years, said he makes six or seven trips a day. He stays at the cart owners' place and takes care of the horses and the cart.

Gani Mia said daily income of the cart is around Tk 1200-1500 of which Tk 400 is spent on feeding the horses and his daily wage is Tk 150. Most horses are brought in from Bikrampur and Mymensingh and they can run till they are 12 years old.



A horse-drawn carriage on a street of Old Dhaka.



Vast areas inside the flood protection embankment start to get inundated as the rivers outside the embankment swell with monsoon rains and flooding. Tubewells get inundated and WASA supply lines are often contaminated. Millions of households are forced to look for water elsewhere and at any cost. The picture shows a boatman carrying dozens of pitchers collecting water from illegal WASA lines at Trimohini in Sabujbagh in the city.

SHAFTQ ALAM

FOLLOW-UP

Stop destruction of Motijheel Park

CITY CORRESPONDENT

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The Save Environment Movement has appealed to the authorities to save the public park on the eastern side of the Bangladesh Biman office in Motijheel.

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has recently handed over the park to Dhaka Bank for 'beautification and development'. Thereafter, corrugated iron barriers were erected around the park, and according to some vendors around the park, about thirty old trees were felled there under the cover of night.

Chief executive officer of DCC Saifuddin Ahmed and the then chief conservancy officer Soheli Faruquee approved the original design on September 13, 2006. The approved design had no provision for trees.

Dhaka Bank Limited and Biman (Bangladesh Airlines) have begun constructing a concrete structure for an electric generator and a sun shed for drivers at one corner of the

park as part of the 'development'. The two organisations plan to put up advertisement signs at the site, and are expected to maintain it.

However, it has since emerged that DCC had no legal authority to hand over the park, since it had not taken possession of the land from the Public Works Department (PWD).

After DCC took possession of the site, the PWD in February asked DCC to explain the latter's ownership position on the land and demanded to know how they started the beautification programme.

The Save Environment Movement has protested that chopping down the trees and building any kind of structure there will damage the environment of the park and its surrounding area.

In the interests of all concerned, it has requested that the government make the details of the park development project available to the public.

Advertising, Bank & market timing

AD AGENCIES

Macommm
House 42 (2nd floor),
Satmasjid Road, Dhanmondi,
Dhaka. Ph: 9110351,
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Email:
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Suit 9/C, Azad Centre, 55
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8314306

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9330556

Media Comm Ltd
8861521 (9 lines)

Unitrend Ltd
9124380-4

A Positive Advertising Ltd
8856598-9, 8837751-2

ART & CULTURAL CENTERS

Alliance Francaise De Dhaka
26, Mirpur Road, Dhanmondi,
Dhaka. Tel: 8611557
Fax: 8616462,
Email: infoafd@afdacca.com

Bangla Academy
Dhaka University Area,
Dhaka. Tel: 8619577, 8619583,
Fax: 8612352, Email:
bacademy@citechco.net

Bangladesh Shishu Academy
Old High Court Road (Opp. Carzon Hall),
Dhaka-1000; Tel: 9550317, 9564128

British Council
5, Fuller Road, Dhaka
Tel: 8618905-7, 8618867-8
Fax: 8613375
Email:
dhaka.enquiries@bd.britishcouncil.org

German Cultural Center
House 10, Road 9, Dhanmondi, Dhaka
Tel: 9126525, 9126526, Fax: 8110712

Indian Cultural Center
H-25, Road-96, Gulshan-2, Dhaka-1212
Tel: 8850141, Fax: 8850142

Nazrul Institute

House 330B, Road 28 (Old),
Dhanmondi, Dhaka
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Email: nazrulinn@citechco.net

Russian Cultural Centre
House-510, Road-7,
Dhanmondi, Dhaka,
Tel: 9118531
Fax: 8113026,
Email: roscult@accsstel.net

Shilpakala Academy
Segunbagicha, Dhaka-1000
Tel: 9561709, 9562801-4

Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts
House 275/F, Road 27,
Dhanmondi, Dhaka
Tel: 8123115
Email: bf@bdonline.com

Cezanne Art Gallery
UAE Moitri Complex,
Kemal Ataturk Avenue, Banani
Dhaka
Tel: 8826578, Email:
cezanne@bangla.net

Drik Gallery

House 58, Road 15A(New),
Dhanmondi, Dhaka
Tel: 9120125, Fax: 9115044,
Email: office@drik.net

Gallery Chittrak
House-21, Road-4,
Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka
Tel: 8620345, Email: chittrak@agni.com

National Art Gallery
Segunbagicha, Dhaka-1000
Tel: 9562801-4

Shilpa Rag
House 15, Road 16,
Dhanmondi, Dhaka,
Tel: 8117085
Fax: 8117085,
Email: shilparg@vasdigital.com

Shilpangan
House-25, Road-5,
Dhanmondi, Dhaka,
Tel: 8614246

Tivoli Art Gallery
F/33, DCC Super Market (1st Floor)
Gulshan-2 (North), Dhaka, Tel: 9895903

BANKS

Agrani Bank
9566153-54, 956616069,
9566074-75

Bangladesh Bank
7126101-20, Fax: 9566212

BRAC Bank Ltd
8824051-4, Fax: 8813543

Citibank NA
9550060, Fax: 9562236

Dutch Bangla Bank Ltd
9568537-39
Fax: 9561889

Eastern Bank Ltd
9558390-1, Fax: 9562364

First Security Bank Limited
9562878, PABX: 9560229,
Fax: 9561637

Grameen Bank
8011138, Fax: 8013559

Habib Bank Ltd
9555092, 9563043-5, Fax:
9561784

Islamic Bank (Bangladesh) Ltd
95542402, 9563040,
9560099, Fax: 9564532

IFIC Bank Ltd
9563020, 9562060, Fax:
9562015

Jamuna Bank Ltd
9555141, 9570912-16,
Fax: 9565762

Janata Bank
9560000, 9560027-30, Fax:
9564644

Mercantile Bank Limited
9559333, 9560329
Fax: 9561213

National Bank Ltd
9563081-5, Fax: 9563953

NCC Bank
9561902-4
Fax: 9566290

Premier Bank Ltd
8015276, 8811417

Prime Bank Ltd
9567265, 9556282
Fax: 9567230

Shahjalal Bank Ltd
9570812, 9567435, Fax:
9557413

South East Bank
9550081, 9551411, Fax:
9550093

Standard Chartered Bank Ltd
9550181, Fax: 9562332

Sonali Bank
9550426-34
Fax: 9561410

The City Bank Limited
9565925, Fax: 9562347

The Trust Bank Ltd
9871095, 9871074, 9888068,
Fax: 4071094

Uttara Bank Ltd
9561438, 9551162-3,
Fax: 8613529

United Commercial Bank Ltd
9561580, Fax: 88-02-9560587

MARKET CLOSED

Gulshan 1, 2 markets-Friday
Elephant Road-Friday
Bishal Center-Friday
Baitul Mukarram Market-Friday
Polwell Market-Friday
BCS Computer City-Friday
Isha Khan Shopping Complex-Friday.
Rajlaxmi Complex-Friday
Stadium Market-Friday
Bangabazar Market-Friday
National Museum-Thursday
Ahsan Manzil--Thursday.
New Market-Tuesday
Gausia Market-Tuesday
Mouchak Market-Sunday
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
Eastern Plaza-Sunday
Farmview Super Market-Sunday
Muktijuddha Jadughar-Sunday
Dhaka Zoo-Sunday
Shishu Jadughar-Sunday