

Modern slaughterhouse put on ice

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

Dhaka City Corporation's plan to establish a modern slaughterhouse in the city still remains on paper due to the Planning Commission's delay in approving the project.

DCC sources said they could not start the project due to lack of funding as a revised project proposal has been lying with the Planning Commission for the last one year.

"We have been planning to build modern slaughterhouses for long. But we could not go ahead with the plan for lack of funds," said Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka.

Meat processing practice in Dhaka city has been quite unhygienic that prompted the city corporation to undertake the project.

"Main objective of the project is to improve public health and environment in the city by controlling unauthorised and scattered slaughtering of animals," the mayor said.

"We cannot export meat due to dirty processing, lack of packaging and absence of clearance certificate system. Modern slaughterhouses will ensure safe meat both for the local and export markets. So the government should take the next step," he added.

DCC made the first move in 1996 to build four modern slaugh-

terhouses -- two in Gabtoli on four acres of land and one each in Uttara and Jatrabari on one acre.

The venture involving Tk 150 crore could not be implemented for the last ten years as the authorities failed to manage the fund.

In the financial year 2005-2006 the government tried to collect foreign funds for the 'Slaughterhouse and cattle market development project' but failed. German government showed interest in 2005 but they later stepped back.

DCC then revised the plan and decided to construct only one slaughterhouse at Gabtoli with its own funding at the cost of Tk 25 crore.

The corporation submitted the revised project proposal to the Planning Commission through the LGRD ministry in 2006, but it is still gathering dust at the commission.

At present there are five traditional slaughterhouses in the city. Two large slaughterhouses are in Kapatanzar and Hazaribagh and three small ones in Mohammadpur, Mirpur-1 and Mirpur-11. One in Gulshan was recently shut down.

Around 5,000 to 6,000 cows and goats are slaughtered in the city every day. Dr Md Azmat Ali, veterinary officer of DCC, told Star City that slaughtering takes place in a very unhygienic condition, posing threat to public health and environment.

"All of these slaughterhouses are operating in appalling condition. Only Hazaribagh slaughterhouse has facilities for examining

animals in ill health," said Ali.

"It is important to keep the animal under 24-hour watch before slaughtering to be sure that the animal is in healthy condition. This practice is absent in the city because slaughterhouses do not have sheds for the animals," he added.

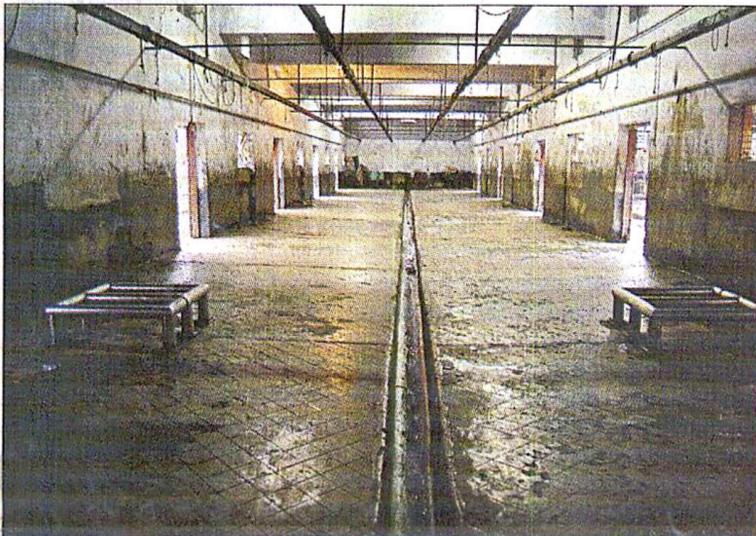
Slaughtering usually takes place within 3 to 4 hours after purchase.

"Slaughtering is done with traditional methods, in most cases right on the streets. Animal blood spreads foul odours causing environmental pollution. Meat gets dirty and germ-infested during such unhygienic processing," Ali said.

In the revised plan the corporation proposed to set up a model slaughterhouse at Gabtoli on 2.58 acres of land equipped with modern slaughtering machines, along with a meat processing plant, animal quarantine centres, by-product processing sheds, storage and wholesale shops for animal hide, car parking, cold storage and cattle market.

The project selected Gabtoli as location of the model slaughterhouse because the largest cattle market in the city is situated there. Around 1,600 cattle are sold here daily.

If constructed, the slaughterhouse will be able to slaughter and process around 200 cows and 300 goats per day and will follow the model of Bengal Meat's plant in Kashinathpur, Pabna.



A traditional slaughterhouse of the Dhaka City Corporation at Hajaribagh (left) and a herd of buffaloes.

A public park turns 'off limits' to visitors

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

Panthokunjo, the lone public park in the vicinity of Karwan Bazar intersection, has been practically off limits to city dwellers for years now since the authorities have been playing with park hours as they please.

The steel gates of the park remain closed throughout the day, only to be opened for a short period in the afternoon before it is closed again before

'Panthokunjo Park was off limits to visitors during years of renovation and beautification work under Dhaka City Beautification Project. But even after the completion of 'renovation' work, city residents are still being deprived of enjoying fresh air at the park since it is kept closed most of the time'

since it is kept closed most of the time, they added.

"I used to go there (Panthokunjo Park) for morning walks, but had to switch to Ramna Park as it (Panthokunjo Park) is never open during the early mornings. Later on, I had to discontinue my whole routine of morning walks as Ramna Park is quite far from my house," said Ashraf Alam from Kanthalbagan.

"What is the use of having a

during that period of the day was prohibited. They, however, could not give any satisfactory answer to when the park is open to the general public.

Jahangir, caretaker of Panthokunjo Plaza -- a section of the Panthokunjo Park -- told this correspondent that the park is opened for all from 5pm to 7pm.

"What would people do in the park during day time with all the sun? They have other jobs to attend to," Jahangir rationalised when asked why the park is kept closed during most part of the day.

When contacted, Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) officials said that they were unaware of the situation. They, however, assured that proper measures would be taken to keep the park open to general public.

"The park was leased out to a private company for beautification, but under no circumstances, they are authorised to keep the park closed to the general public," said a top official concerned at Beautification Cell of DCC requesting anonymity.

"Beautifying the park does not mean that it has to be completely closed to public," he added.

According to DCC sources, the park was leased out to a private firm named Arkay Group for renovation and beautification under a citywide beautification project in 2004.

Local residents do not believe that the present arrangement with the private firm will ever be beneficial to city residents and they demanded a permanent solution to the issue.

The park has been like this for years now. It remains closed most of the time. It is open to public for a few days and then it closes again for some type of work, said Shihab Hasan from Bangla Motor.

Cut off from visitors, signs of poor maintenance were seen

all over the park. The park ground was found littered with piles of garbage where grasses grew about a foot high.

The walkways surrounding the park are even worse, where a sign glares at passers-by announcing that the walkways cannot be used for any other purpose but for walking. However, filth and stench scattered there, most likely faeces, suggest that those are used for anything else but walking.

Besides, numerous irregularities including missing or damaged slabs over underground sewerage pits, overpowering stench of urine and faeces with homeless and drifters loitering freely inside the park portray how well the park is being maintained.



Panthokunjo Park opposite Hotel Sonargaon gives a deserted look.

the evening, said security guards on duty.

Panthokunjo Park, the solitary public park that could serve residents of Kanthalbagan, Bangla Motor, Hatirpool, Farmgate, Karwan Bazar and adjacent areas, is a glowing example of indifferent

attitude of the authorities, said locals.

Local residents including hundreds of children, desperately seeking some breathing space, are compelled to go to Ramna Park since the Panthokunjo Park stays closed throughout the day.

The park was off limits to visitors during years of renovation and beautification work under Dhaka City Beautification Project. But even after the completion of 'renovation' work, city residents are still being deprived of enjoying fresh air at the park

park near the neighbourhood if you cannot use it for recreation?" added an irritated Alam.

When this correspondent tried to enter the park on Wednesday morning last week at 10am, security personnel on duty said that entry to the park

city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.

"An evil force taking the cue of a trifle incident on the Dhaka University (DU) campus on August 20 wanted to create anarchy in the country. Within 24 hours, they poured in crores of taka to instigate vandalism on the street."

-- General Moeen U Ahmed
Army Chief

Told a cross section of people at Shariatpur Circuit House justifying the imposition of curfew on Wednesday night in six divisional towns including Dhaka, on Saturday. Source: The Daily Star

"A large number of general people, mostly of poor and deprived classes, participated in the recent demonstrations to express their resentments at the caretaker government for its different activities in the last seven months."

-- Prof Emajuddin Ahmed
Former vice chancellor of Dhaka University

Told BBC Bangladesh Sanglap, on Saturday. Source: The Daily Star

"We don't like to impose censorship, but that does not mean we will not do it if necessary."

-- Mainul Hossain
Law and Information Adviser

Told reporters at his office, on Wednesday. Source: The Daily Star

"They said 'Sir, you are a patriot and so are we. We are not the Pakistani Army. We are Bangladeshis.' Then they asked him to get ready sharp."

-- Ayesha Akhter

Wife of detained DU Prof Anwar Hossain, general secretary of Dhaka University Teachers Association

Told a reporter after the DU teacher was picked up from his Fuller Road residence at midnight on the charges of breaching emergency power rules, on Friday. Source: The Daily Star

"We are not thinking of propping up our damaged huts, but of survival itself."

-- Jamaat Ali

A flood victim and landless farmer

Told a reporter while living under a shed of banana leaves on the flood protection embankment at Par Baguria village in Gabandha, on Friday. Source: The Daily Star

"I started for DMCH [Dhaka Medical College Hospital] at 1pm from my Elephant Road staff quarter, but I was not only stopped, but beaten up by the law enforcers in front of New Market Police Station. They even threw away my ID card."

-- Mohammad Alam

A fourth class employee of DMCH

Told a reporter after he landed the city from Siraganj amid curfew with his nephew, a serious typhoid patient, to get him to the hospital, on Thursday. Source: The Daily Star

Compiled by Durdana Ghilas



Mishti, a 10-year old girl, is preparing a feast on a pavement of Dhaka University campus to celebrate Shab-e-Barat as the holy occasion nears. She has cooked 'pilau and egg' for her younger brother and imaginary guests with the petals and core of Kodom flower.