

Allegations of nuisance at DU coffee shop

TAWFIQUE ALI

While Dhaka University (DU) authorities speak of space constraints to construct an academic building, they have leased out a prime site to run a coffee shop.

The coffee shop is located at a place close to Mokarram Hossain Bhaban housing the departments of pharmacy and chemistry, on the Science Annex premises, where authorities find no suitable site for the Mathematics building.

The DU authorities are presently facing public criticism for proposing a site for a 10-storey Mathematics building in the close vicinity of the Central Shaheed Minar.

The sponsor for Mathematics building may withdraw the proposed donation in the wake of public criticism, in case the authorities fail to find a suitable and undisputed site.

Faculty members and students of the Science Faculty, on the other hand, alleged that the

nuisance around the coffee shop hampers their routine academic activities.

A professor of mathematics requesting anonymity said different kinds of 'indecent' activities are going on at the coffee shop premises after dusk.

A number of teachers of Science Faculty have verbally lodged complaints with the university authorities in this regard but to no avail, he said.

Another professor of Geography and Environmental

Science Department, who also sought anonymity, said apart from students, many outsiders gather at the coffee shop and the subsequent nuisance hampers lab classes during afternoon.

He said that he had raised the issue at the academic committee of the department but the move has made no difference.

Abul Hasnat, associate professor of Pharmacy, said that 80 percent of the visitors of the shop are outsiders. "The gathering creates such nuisance that we cannot take classes," he said. "We all will be happy if the shop is closed and removed today."

According to sources, the coffee shop owner has turned the adjoining area into an enclosure by placing concrete benches beyond contractual agreement, with the university administration remaining silent for mysterious reasons.

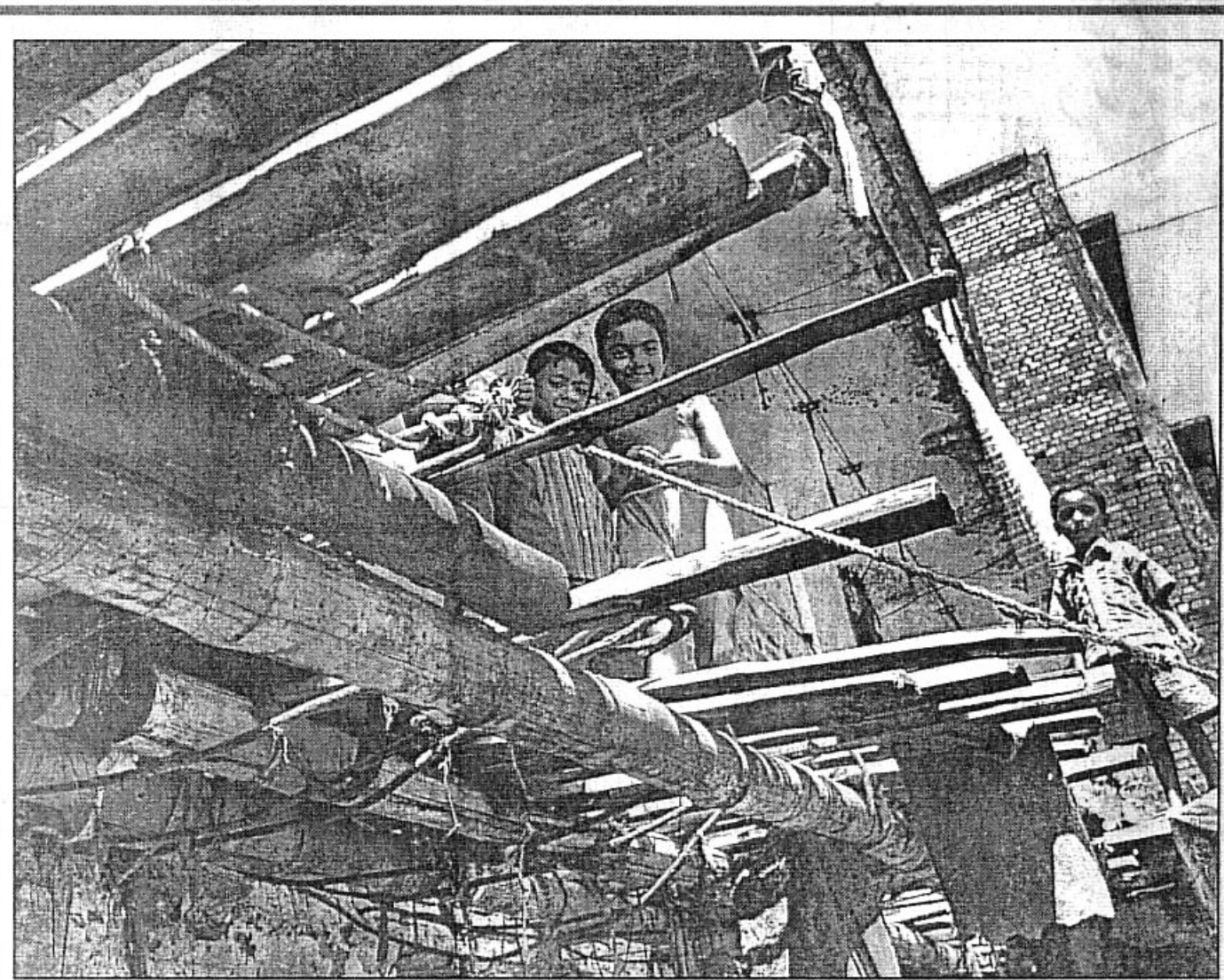
Vice-chancellor of Dhaka University Prof SMA Faiz said that it is in their knowledge that gathering at the coffee shop creates nuisance. "We have asked the owner to close the shop sometime after dusk," said the VC.

He said that the shop owner has created a new gate opening the boundary wall and facing the adjoining road with permission of the university administration.

Responding to unauthorised occupancy of adjoining premises, the VC said the set-ups are 'very temporary'. "We prefer solving the problems concerning the shop instead of evicting it. But we will remove the shop if they really create problems."



The coffee shop on the DU campus.



It all went unheeded. In spite of several newspaper reports on cracked roofs and floors the authorities remained indifferent to the issue of the rickety Wapda building no 4 at Mirpur Bihari camp. With exposed pieces of bricks and iron rods jutting out of the structure the building is highly precarious to live in. Originally built for 24 families it is still home to 86 families housing more than 500 people.

Left out voters in city to be enrolled next month

DURDANA GHILAS

Voter registration is going on in full swing with most wards and thanas in the city already under the process.

According to sources at the Election Commission, registration is taking place at 27 thanas out of 28 in the city. Gulshan thana, which is yet to start registration process, will start it from January 1.

In the DCC area, around 45 percent of the population are now either under the process to be enlisted or are already enlisted, sources said.

A good number of voters could not turn up at the voter registration centres because of long Eid vacations. As they are coming back to the city now the registration workers will have to face an extra pressure in dealing their cases.

According to estimation by the Election Commission around 46 thousand pilgrims went to perform Hajj including five thousand from Dhaka city. They will be enlisted under special arrangements, said sources at EC.

Asked about the Hajj pilgrims Election Commissioner Brig Gen Sakawat Hussain said that the central server of each thana will deal with the Hajj pilgrims to

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catch up with the registration process.

"If any pilgrim misses the registration process of his area then he can contact his nearest ARO (assistant registration officer) office or the central server of his respective thana. The server will remain open until the registration process is complete," he said.

Nawabul Islam, district election officer at Lalbagh, said that registration process is going on in full swing in his area and it will take the month of January to cover all wards of Lalbagh thana.

According to the EC, 14, 27, 387 people got enlisted till the 28th of this month. Around 27 lakh people filled up the data collection forms. Sixteen wards

of the city have completed the registration process. Of the 90 wards of the city the process is going on in around 85 wards.

The registration process will go on till January 31, said officials.

However, many service holders with a tight office schedule are finding it difficult to get enlisted as many of them are not able to visit the registration centres on time.

"I go to office every morning at 8 and return home at 10 at night because I do a part time job. I missed the data collectors twice. At last I requested the official to give me his mobile number but he refused. Then I tried to be voter at Nurjahan School centre

near Shekher Mohammadpur but their forms were finished so I could not get into the process yet. So I am feeling quite tense," said Rabiul, a service holder living at Kalabagan.

Officials however asserted that those left out will be made voters in January.

Admitting the left out voters the election commissioner said that the data collectors are monitoring the problems and are waiting to get them enlisted.

"Yesterday (Saturday) I went to some centres where the registration officials informed me that some 200 to 300 people are yet to get enrolled but they are keeping track. Before rolling up the server the left out ones will be included," he said.

"We will have to coordinate the process to include all," he added. Police stations of the respected areas will declare schedules for their left out voters to be enlisted, said sources.

Earlier the EC said that anyone left out can become voters till the day before the election day.

According to voter registration officials in the city around 60 to 70 thousand people are currently getting enlisted each day on average. Data collectors are covering around one and a half lakh voters a day.

Cab drivers at ZIA

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Apart from the most common incident of overcharging, there have been instances when drivers forced passengers out onto the streets, sources said. Besides, a section of middlemen cheat the incoming passengers while beggars press for 'foreign currencies'.

During a visit to the airport, this correspondent approached a number of taxicabs in the guise of a passenger en route to Farmgate. A driver sporting a black shirt and white pants asked where exactly the correspondent would get off.

Having acknowledged the destination, the driver yelled out to another driver sitting nearby, "How much should I charge for Farmgate?"

The other driver replied, "I think it is Tk 450." Another elderly driver said, "No, Farmgate should be Tk 500."

After a row of reasoning and requests, the driver finally agreed on Tk 460, under 'special' consideration that the correspondent 'did not have any luggage with him'.

When asked to check the official fare for the trip to

Farmgate, the driver reluctantly dug out a bunch of jumbled up papers to check the official fare structure.

As it turned out, the official fare to Farmgate, Dhanmondi, Shyamoli or Mohammadpur is surprisingly Tk 420. But the genuineness of the papers on the fare chart could not be verified.

According to CAAB officials, the higher fare is charged to provide safer and more secure services. "Our cabs are safer and more reliable. If you even leave behind any valuables in them, you will get them back," said an official from the ticket counter office.

"We charge double or a fare of a round trip charged by other rental cars as the taxi drivers have to sit around the whole day for a passenger," he said.

However, the raggedy and battered taxis with busted front and backlights, no air conditioning and drivers without uniforms did not appear any more secure than the average taxis. Besides, none of the taxicabs had any complaint boxes inside -- as required by the scheme supervised by CAAB.

There are around 400 taxicabs and minibuses from 12

organisations operating under the authorization of CAAB at the airport. These vehicles have been operating without any formal rules or guidelines for years, said sources.

In June this year, the CAAB authorities came up with a draft plan. The draft plan proposes to bar vehicles older than nine years from operating under the scheme. It also proposes a simple fare structure and mandatory uniform for the drivers, added the sources.

"We are aware of the problems in the service and we are looking into them," said Nurul Islam, chief security officer of CAAB. "We have comprehensive plans to revamp the whole service. There's a plan to employ a single transportation company with good reputation to provide taxi service from the airport," he said.

To operate taxi service from the airport, a transport service provider is required to have at least a fleet of 20 vehicles.

Although the authorised taxicabs are required to display authorisation stickers provided by CAAB, many taxicabs on the ZIA premises were seen operating without these.

Winter birds

FROM PAGE 21

Dhaka, said, "There must be trees around water bodies for migratory birds. City is losing trees in a large scale for development. This might be one of the facts discouraging the guest birds."

Thriving commercial activities in the wetland such as fishing, hatcheries and activities of organised gangs of poachers are disturbing the birds. "People are trying to occupy every inch of the waters possible, living no room for animals or birds," he added.

Noise pollution caused by increased number of vehicles is another factor disturbing the birds. Dhaka Zoo Curator Kazi Fazlul Haque said, "The zoo lake is adjacent to Mirpur-Ashulia embankment. Vehicles using the embankment road are increasing gradually. This might be one of the reasons why guest birds are avoiding our lake."

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Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesdays
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