

## Car owners cry for parking lots

But streets are the only options at most malls and Eid markets

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

The existing parking crisis of the city takes a seriously turn in Ramadan with Eid shopping getting momentum and shopping zones becoming crammed with vehicles.

Shoppers and police blame insufficient parking space in most of the shopping malls for the situation, which is common before every Eid.

Streets adjacent to major shopping areas like New Market, Chadni Chawk, Gausia, Dhanmondi Hawkers Market, Eastern Plaza, Mouchak, Karnaphuli Garden City, Baitul Mukarram Market, Elephant Road, Mirpur Muktijoddha Market and Shah Ali Market virtually get standstill every day with hundreds of vehicles parked there.

Sayedur Rahman, DC-Traffic (South) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), said New Market, Chadni Chawk, Gausia, Dhanmondi Hawkers Market, Elephant Road and adjacent places are the most chaotic shopping areas of the city.

"Ahead of Eid the situation turns into a nightmare for us. Durga Puja is also approaching. Both Muslims and Hindus are heading towards shopping malls. We are struggling to enforce traffic rules," said the lawman who is in charge of the city's most chaotic zones.

"At most malls of the city, street is the only parking option for the car owners. In other malls parking space is either too scanty to meet the need or it is rented for

other business purposes clearly violating building code," Rahman added.

Even the parking space of the DCC-owned Sundarban Market at Gulistan is also rented to variety of stores forcing vehicles to park on the streets, he mentioned.

Rahman explained that most malls with parking space are built in an unscientific way. They are too close to the street, creating traffic congestion regularly in front of them. There is no bay area in front of the malls. Most cars have to wait in lines on the street before entering the parking zone, creating gridlock on the streets.

He said a modern city must have around 30 percent traffic infrastructures. In Dhaka it is only around 7 to 8 percent but 40 percent of this insufficient structure is encroached by shops or building materials.

Vehicle owners, on the other hand, are in dilemma as they have no other option but to park vehicles on the streets most of the time. They also alleged that they are constantly being harassed by traffic sergeants with fines.

"If I have a car I must park it somewhere. If there is no parking space I have to park it on the streets. I cannot leave it at home as getting a vehicle back home is impossible especially during Ramadan," said a Moghbazar resident who was fined Tk 200 last week for illegal parking on Elephant Road.

During the last couple of years the city saw a chaotic growth of



Car owners do not have any options other than parking their vehicles in front of the most of the malls and markets. The situation is worsening as the Eid nears.

multi-storied shopping malls, and most of them were built without adequate parking space.

The situation has taken a worse turn as the number of cars is increasing in the city. Cars have become affordable to middle income group in recent time.

According to estimation by Bangladesh Road Transport Authority, around 100 newly registered cars are hitting the city streets every day.

Prof KM Moniruzzaman of the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) said, "The ratio of car ownership among the mall users is very high in Dhaka these days and compared to the demand most shopping malls have a very low-standard parking facility."

Before construction, the mall owners must estimate the ratio of visiting cars with the proposed

parking facility.

The building code require builders to reserve a 23-sqm parking space for a 200-sqm commercial building and in case of shopping complexes 23 sqm for every 100 sqm. Almost all the shopping malls defy the rules.

The professor added that in the master plan there were enough open spaces in the city meant for parking, majority of which are now gone. DCC either

built something on it or leased it out for other purposes.

The professor suggested building commercial parking facilities. "But it has been well distributed in the city areas so that it does not create pressure on one particular area."

He said developing a mass public transport system is a must in the long run. In this way people can easily take a public transport to shopping malls without worrying about parking.

## 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.

"No more there can be any doubt over the polls."

-- Fakhruddin Ahmed

Chief Adviser

Said in his speech addressing the nation as he declared the poll dates, on Saturday. Source: The Daily Star

"Though the government could not free the country from the grips of corruption it managed to free the corrupts from prison."

-- Amir Hossain Amu

Awami League Leader

Told reporters, on Saturday. Source: Jugantor

"Wherever corruption exists the media will have to ferret it out."

-- Prof Muzaffar Ahmed

Chairman, TIB

Said at an iftar party of Rural Journalists Union, on Saturday. Source: Bhorer Kagoj

"Father never ever will I nag you for anything. I will starve if I have to. But please do not die."

-- Kazi Sirajul Islam

Teenage son of a labourer at Khulna Jute Mill

Told his father when he was trying to kill himself over non-payment of wages for twelve weeks ahead of Eid, on Monday. Source: Prothom Alo

"We will have to listen to everyone. I have been scolded once for not doing that."

-- ATM Shamsul Haque

Chief Election Commissioner

Told reporters regarding the matter of not announcing the date for upazila polls in time, on Sunday. Source: Prothom Alo

Compiled by Durdana Ghias



The glittering interior of Hossaini Dalan.

## 350-YEAR OLD MAGNIFICENT EDIFICE

# Hossaini Dalan still dazzles



DURDANA GHIAS

Walking along the Hossaini Dalan Road in old Dhaka one will not be able to imagine that such a magnificent edifice is ensconced in an alley of the road.

The Hossaini Dalan turned into a centre of the Shia community in the 19th century. According to James Teller, in 1832 there were two centres for Muslims to offer prayers one was Dhanmondi Eidgah and the other Hossaini Dalan.

The beautifully decorated building is surrounded by arches with cusps on all sides. The arches are topped with little floral cartouches. The domes and pillars of the building were lavishly ornate with colourful tiles.

The ceiling and the walls inside of the building, where the prayers are offered, were richly decorated with tiles, chandelier

and glasses donated by Iran many years ago.

A tranquil pond lies at the back of the building. Schools of fishes were swimming under its clear water.

There are mazars commemorating Hasan and Hossain inside the Dalan and visitors often do manat at the mazar. Hasan and Hossain are the spiritual leaders of the Shia community who sacrificed their lives for religion. The edifice turns festive in the Arabic month of Muharram. Milad, majlish, iftar are some traditions at the building.

A graveyard of the Shia community lies in front of the Dalan. Every grave is meticulously decorated with a clay pot at its head for putting incense.

"People from Shia community especially come on Thursdays and pray for the departed souls at the graveyard. During the time of Eid and Muharram the place turns into a festive ground. They sacrifice goats, chickens and pigeons so that prayers are accepted," said Nasrin, a resident of Hossaini Dalan Road.

"Not only Shia but people from other religions come to this place to pray for something special and we believe that they get what they want. People also come from outside Dhaka," she said.

"A special kind of bundia-like sweetmeat called Kanch Laddu is available during special religious occasions," she added.

Mirza Md Firoz Hossain, superintendent, Hossaini Dalan Imambara, said that the Dalan is a Waqf property.

He said that the 350-year old edifice is in good shape after it went through renovations around ten years ago.

Mir Murad, the superintendent of Nawara (the fleet of boats) estates of Nizammat built the Hossaini Dalan in 1052. At that time Prince Shah Suja was the viceroy of Bengal. Mir Murad had a vision one night in which Hazrat Imam Hossain was building a house of mourning and desiring him to build a similar house in memory of his martyrdom. Soon after that Mir Murad started to build the house, he said.

"There are other Shia mosques in the country but this one is the most important. During Muharram it remains one of the most revered places. Besides, zikir and prayers take place here five times every day.

"Before renovation the building was in a dilapidated shape. During renovation it was decorated with tiles. The decoration was done by Iran," he said.

Firoz said that at present the only source of income of the Dalan is the Cheragi Baksho, where the devotees leave money for the maintenance and other expenses of the Dalan.

"A one-bigha plot on the west side of the graveyard was leased out to a person for 50 years but the sons of that person are now refusing to return the plot after the deadline was over in 2007. They are now claiming the plot as their property.

"We have sent them a legal notice through court regarding the matter. The sooner we get the land back the better because it will be a vital source of income for Hossaini Dalan," he said.

## FOLLOW-UP

# Most hoteliers ignore police advice

They do not ask borders to fill up the questionnaire

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Criminals continue to use city's residential hotels as a base to plan criminal activities and a hideout after committing crimes, but the hoteliers tend to ignore the police advice to collect information about their boarders.

"Many hoteliers do not ask their guests to fill out the questionnaire we gave them," said a senior official at the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP). "The questionnaire is designed to collect some specific information on the boarders so that we can have an idea of what kind of people are staying at the hotels."

DMP sources said three murders took place in city hotels last month.

The DMP official said most of the hotel boarders enjoy the luxury of being anonymous. A lot of people use fake names, identifications and address to book rooms and hide their real identities, making it difficult to track criminals.

"We advised the hoteliers to ask their boarders to fill in the questionnaire so that we can monitor conducts of the hotels and contact the boarders in case we need their help in investigation to solve a case," he said.

In a bid to curb crime and unsocial activities in city hotels, the police gave the hoteliers the special questionnaire with a set of 24 questions.

The forms are designed to collect personal information on

the boarders such as names, addresses, passport identification numbers and driving licence numbers of the boarders along with cellular phone numbers. The police have also instructed the hotel authorities to verify the authenticity of the cellphone numbers provided by the boarder.

They are also required to have a digital camera and take a photo of the guests.

The hotel authorities are to send the documents to the local police station daily.

However, a good number of hotels are not following the police instructions. Some of them alleged that the police officers are not enforcing the new regulations properly and not

providing them with the said form or any instructions.

Meanwhile, gruesome murders continue to take place in city hotels. On August 6, a woman was strangled in a hotel at Shyamoli. According to hotel authorities, the victim's husband was a regular boarder, and therefore he was not asked to fill in the form.

Another girl was murdered in a hotel at Fakirapul on August 1. Reportedly, the girl came to the hotel with a young man who introduced themselves as a married couple.

After the homicide, police picked up the manager of the hotel. The acting manager of the hotel alleged that the police did not provide them with the forms. That is why they could not ask

their boarders to fill in the forms on that particular day.

Since then each and every boarder of the hotel is asked to fill out the form and their photos are taken as advised by the police, claimed the acting manager.

A taxicab driver was murdered in a hotel at Mohakhali recently. Police arrested two people as suspects who had reportedly taken the driver to the hotel and murdered him.

The hotel has been under lock and key since the incident and its staff members have been in hiding.

Sources said the hotel never bothered to follow the instructions given by the police and never stored information about their guests.



STAR PHOTO