

City roads' renaming puts residents in quandary

66 road names changed in 30 months, few address plaques bear them

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

Around sixty-six city streets have received new names over the past 30 months, rendering many city maps useless and leaving visitors staring at unfamiliar buildings and scratching their heads.

But the problem is far more serious for the local people.

As many of the new names given to the street are yet to be acknowledged by the residents, this may lead to unreliable postal delivery and potentially life-threatening delays in answering emergency calls.

A good example would be the street stretching from Sonargaon intersection to Mirpur Road (Panthapath). The street was named after Kazi Nuruzzaman Bir Uttam, a sector commander during the Liberation War. However, when asked to identify the name of the street, many residents in the avenue had their head scratching.

"I am not really sure whether this street was given a name. We always referred to this area as Panthapath, and still do," said Kamrul Islam, a resident of the area.

"I think the street is named after a Language Movement martyr, but I cannot remember the name," said Majharul Islam, another local resident.

Unsurprisingly, not one building in the avenue has the name of the street mentioned in its address plaques, save a lone

commercial complex that was built recently.

The situation is no different in many city neighbourhoods such as in CR Dutt Bir Uttam Street in Hatirpul or a good number of thoroughfares in Eskaton.

"I have been living here for over 20 years," said Shamsul Huq, a resident of Malibagh living adjacent to a thoroughfare stretching towards Kakrail intersection that received a new name earlier this month.

"I doubt whether using the new name would come to any use as barely anyone -- rickshaw pullers or even emergency services recognise the new name."

Sources at Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) said they are trying to promote the names given to the city streets through a variety of ways.

"It is unfortunate that the names given to many city streets were not accepted the way we may have wanted," said an official at the taxation department of DCC.

"We make it mandatory to use the new street names for the city dwellers who come to pay their holding taxes or traders who come to collect or renew trade licenses," he said.

In the past 30 months, Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) inaugurated name plaques for around 66 streets and seven odd structures in the capital city. The streets have been named mostly after Liberation War or Language Movement martyrs. A



A signboard stating the name of Abdul Ghani Road. Scarcely anyone knows who was this Abdul Ghani as the name is written incomplete, without mentioning his title Nawab.

few other prominent personalities are also in the list.

It all started in 2005 when the DCC took initiatives to name a series of city avenues after the sector commanders of the Liberation War. The first street to

receive the treatment was AK Khandakar Bir Uttam Avenue that stretches from Mohakhali to Gulshan-1.

Forty other streets received the same treatment and received new titles till August

last year.

According to Kamal Hossain, an official of DCC's Town Planning Division, 25 more streets have seen change of their names since then.

The most recent incident of

changing the name of a street occurred on October 8 when the street stretching from Bangla Motor to Moghbazar intersection was named after Rashed Khan Menon.

Another street stretching

from the Kakrail intersection to Malibagh intersection also received a new name on October 7. The street was named after Liberation War martyr Bir Uttam Shamsul Alam.

On October 6, two streets in Uttara were named. Alaol Avenue in Uttara 6 was named after late Dr Hafizul Islam Kusum, a former commissioner of DCC ward no-1.

However, this had blatantly violated DCC's vow to name streets after Liberation War and Language Movement martyrs.

Asked about the matter, DCC officials said Hafizul Islam had played a great role in developing infrastructure in Uttara area and the street was named to honour his contributions.

A section of DCC officials believe the street naming policies of the corporation lack proper planning and symmetry.

The corporation has a five-member sub committee titled 'sub committee for naming street/infrastructure'. The convenor of this committee is Kazi Abul Bashir, the commissioner of DCC ward no 74.

Proposals with street names are first sent to this committee that passes them on to the mayor after approval.

Later, the proposal is forwarded to the board meeting of the councillors. After it receives the approval of the board meeting, the name plaque is inaugurated, sources said.

The city authorities sudden interest in naming city streets

has raised questions even within the corporation.

The DCC's primary responsibility to improve road infrastructure, maintain streetlights, eliminate mosquitoes and manage waste are getting less preference while the mayor has become more interested in naming city streets.

"Many city streets are hardly usable, lots of street lights are broken and there are many other problems. The DCC should focus on solving these problems rather than spending time and money in naming city streets," said an official at the town-planning department of the DCC requesting anonymity.

DCC sources say raising a stone name plaque to name a new street usually costs around Tk 15,000. However, the fanfare and compliments adds much to the cost.

Reportedly, city Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka himself inaugurated all the name plaques that bears the name of the inaugurator in bold words.

According to sources, there are no specific law to regulate the naming procedures. The trend to name streets and important places after prominent personalities has been a traditional policy.

Earlier there was hardly any instance of naming a place or street after a living person but in recent times a few streets have been named after living personalities.

Shrinking Water Body



SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Sand traders continue dumping sand on the Turag River, shrinking the waterway adjoining the capital. The picture was taken from Amin Bazar.

DCC to set up 12 Eid cattle markets in city

HELEMUL ALAM

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) will set up 12 makeshift cattle markets in the capital for the forthcoming Eid-ul-Azha.

Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka approved it on Tuesday, and tender for the markets would be floated in a day or two, a DCC official said yesterday.

The markets will sit three days before the Eid and continue till the Eid day. Besides, the permanent cattle market at Gabtaoli will run as usual.

The number of cattle markets set up for the Eid-ul-Azha last year was 10.

The DCC had initially invited tender for 12 cattle markets last year but two of those -- one at Rahmatganj playground and the other at Dhupkhola playground -- were dropped from the list for lack of satisfactory offers from bidders.

Earlier, 12 such makeshift markets were set up in 2006, 16 in 2005, 16 in 2004, 19 in 2003, 21 each in 2002 and 2001, and 17 in 2000.

Sites for the cattle markets this year include open space

adjacent to Chitra movie house at Armanitola (Nayabazar), Jhigatola-Hazaribagh ground, Rahmatganj playground, Dhupkhola ground, Hosseni Dalan Road (from Chankharupul crossing to Bakshibazar traffic signal), Balurmath at Kamalapur, Azampur (Uttara) Government Primary School playground and adjoining open space, Meradia Bazar playground, open spaces near Alam Market at Postagola, Taltala (Khilgaon) bus stand and at Agargaon (adjacent to the LGED

Bhaban), and DCC's open space near Outfall Staff Quarters in Ward-85.

The DCC may cancel approval of any of these markets and go for other markets that are not on this list, officials said.

The 'hasil' at the cattle markets (payment to lessees of the markets by cattle buyers) has been fixed at five percent of the price of a cattle.

The DCC's revenue earning from 10 cattle markets was over Tk 5.67 crore last year and about Tk 3.55 crore in 2006 from 12 markets.

AIRPORT ROAD-AGARGAON LINK ROAD

STP suggestions ignored

TAWFIQUE ALI

The government has ignored the recommendation of Strategic Transport Plan (STP) in the project to build a link road between Airport Road and Rokeya Sarani (Agargaon), which may not serve the purpose completely, according to experts.

The STP recommendation for an underground tunnel across the Tejgaon Airport connecting west end of Mohakhali flyover and Agargaon, would have eased traffic load on the airport road more than what the link road may do, they said.

The transport experts involved in framing the STP suggested building an 800-metre underground tunnel starting from the Jahangir Gate of Dhaka cantonment. But the Air Force authorities showed reservation about the recommendation, said the STP experts.

"The link road is an unplanned intervention," said Prof Jamilur Reza Choudhury, who headed a 31-member advisory expert committee on STP. "It was never recommended or discussed in any transport plans of the capital city."

He said the experts concerned suggested that any transport intervention out of STP should be based on thorough study. "But we do not know who has suggested and planned this link road," said Choudhury, who is vice-chancellor of Brac University.

The council of advisers approved the STP for the capital city on August 28.

The 2.6km long and 53 feet wide four-lane link road, along Tejgaon airport, starts at the Prime Minister's relief fund building in front of the Chief Adviser's Office (CAO) and ends at the T-junction near IDB Bhaban in Agargaon.

The CAO played a facilitator's role in undertaking the link road project and the chief adviser inaugurated the project on June 5. It is expected that the link road will reduce traffic load in front of the CAO (or the PMO).

The caretaker government earlier undertook two other projects -- Banani-Gulshan link bridge and Hatirjheel-Begunbari development

scheme bypassing STP recommendations.

"The project seems to be an experiment," said Choudhury. He fears that the right turning of vehicles from the main road to the link road near the PMO will now cause traffic chaos from the Falcon Hall of the Air Force.

Dr Rahmatullah, who is a policy adviser of Transport Sector Management Reform of the Planning Commission said, "The suggestion of underground tunnel is still there in the STP, which was very essential for traffic management on the airport road."

Moreover, the suggestion was the same even in the Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (DMDP) or the Dhaka's master plan," said Dr Rahmatullah, who was an urban transport planning expert for STP.

The tunnel was suggested to drain out the traffic flow before going up to Bijoy Sarani.

While implementing the transport projects, government authorities are not following the STP recommendations, said Rahmatullah. "This link road is one of the examples."

"I even do not know how the new project was conceived," he said. "So I cannot say whether the project is going to serve the purpose for what it has been undertaken."

The link road project even bypassed the Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB), the custodian and implementation authority of STP, said the experts.

Prof Jobaer-bin-Alam of Civil Engineering Department of BUET, who leads a two-member consultant team including Prof Md Shamsul Hoque of the same department, said, "The underground tunnel, as recommended in the STP, would have been the best option."

But the Air Force objected to the tunnel on security and technical grounds, he said adding that the ongoing project was considered as an alternative option. "We got involved with the project only after the decision for present surface link-road was taken."

However, there is provision for an underground tunnel, from underneath the airport road from the PMO point to

connect with the link road at the relief fund building end, in the proposal of the project's second phase, said Alam.

The surface right-turn of vehicles from the PMO end to the airport will face a traffic conflict. To resolve this problem, it has been planned to coordinate traffic signal at the PMO point with that at the Bijoy Sarani intersection, said Alam.

The traffic load originated in Gulshan, Mohakhali and Airport Road bound for Mirpur, Shyamoli, Kalyanpur and Mohammadpur will take the link road instead of going to Bijoy Sarani. In the same way, traffic originated in Mirpur, Shyamoli, Kalyanpur and Mohammadpur areas and bound for Gulshan-Mohakhali will use the link road.

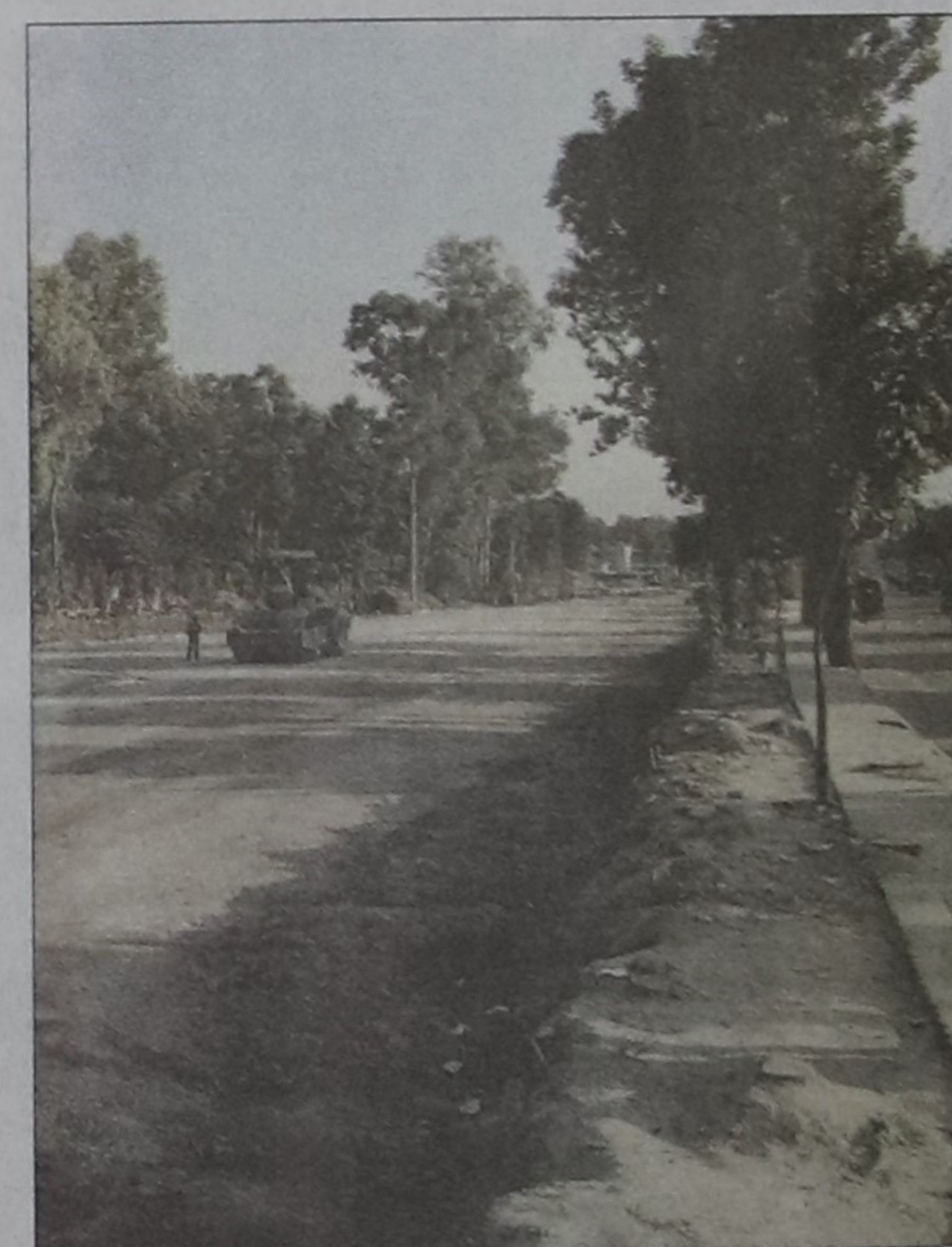
According to Alam, it will reduce at least 30 percent traffic volume at Bijoy Sarani and decrease traffic gridlock at Bijoy Sarani intersection and in front of the PM office.

But according to Rahmatullah's study for Detailed Area Plan, more than 50 percent of the total traffic flow from Mohakhali turns right at Bijoy Sarani intersection to go to Lalbagh, Lalmatia, Dhanmondi, Mohammadpur, Mirpur, Shyamoli and Kalyanpur.

The chief adviser approved the link road project in principle in September last year, when its components were different from what it became after later revision.

Engineering Corps of Bangladesh Army with the help of Dhaka City Corporation is implementing the project. Out of 53 feet width, actual carriage-way of the road will be 47 feet. The Tk 25-crore link road is officially expected to be completed by mid-November.

The project authorities recently chopped down more than 100 trees along Rokeya Sarani pavement for construction of the link road.



STAR PHOTO

The construction work of the road joining Airport Road and Agargaon Link Road in progress near Bijoy Sarani.