

COMMERCIAL CAR PARKING IN GULSHAN

DCC itself occupying roads instead of keeping them free

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Instead of freeing the public roads from illegal occupancy, Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has embarked on leasing out roads of a residential area for car parking.

The DCC has recently leased out part of a number of internal roads in Gulshan residential area for commercial parking to a company in exchange for a yearly lease money of Tk 12 lakh.

"Occupying public space in this manner is an infringement on the pedestrians' rights," said Prof Jamilur Reza Choudhury, who headed a 31-member advisory committee on Dhaka's Strategic Transport Plan (STP). "It is not appropriate at all," he added.

They cannot lease out public roads in this way and should not have taken such action to convert a public space into a designated parking area for commercial uses, he said.

DCC Chief Town Planner Sirajul Islam said they did it to resolve traffic problems.

"We have taken this measure to solve traffic problems as most of the Rajuk-approved buildings used as commercially in the area do not have required car parking provisions," he said, "We have chosen wider roads for parking in single file."

He further said, "Our aim is to discourage chaotic car parking occupying the roads."

A joint body comprising DCC, Rajuk and Dhaka Metropolitan Police representatives made the decision. The system came into effect on November 2.

The principal responsibility of the lessee is to keep the main avenue and intersections free of illegal parking with its own manpower, he said.

CM Shafi Sami, a former adviser to the caretaker government and now president of Gulshan Society,

said it is not a solution to traffic problems.

"I think it is an infringement on the civic rights," he said. "It will not serve the purpose of easing traffic congestion, rather it will aggravate the situation."

According to Sami, the action will obstruct the pedestrians from walking. The authorities could easily find some open spaces and go for multi-storied parking facility for resolving traffic prob-

lems instead of occupying public roads, he said.

How do they officially occupy part of the road width for car parking when illegal occupants elbow the pedestrians from the sidewalks, he said.

Mohsin Sarker, an executive at a private company, said general people were not even notified of the DCC move. "I was suddenly made to pay for parking my car at the spots like in front of Pink City and Gulshan

Tower," he said.

The toll collectors exact Tk 10 per hour from the drivers and car owners.

"The DCC has leased out roads for car parking when Gulshan residential area is already unsuitable for walking at all," Sarker said.

Riaz Ur Rahman, convenor of Gulshan Society zone-3, said, "Those who do not like to pay for parking their cars will now go further interior and plague



A signboard shows DCC leased out this point near Gulshan Circle 2 as a parking lot.

the residential area with illegal parking and congestion."

The DCC chief town planner said the ESCAP

The provision in Shantinagar too could not continue as the traffic police department demanded for cancellation

said he was not aware of the society's consent to it.

Illegal car parking on the sidewalks and main thoroughfare chokes entire Gulshan residential neighbourhood every day making the residents' life miserable.

Illegally parked vehicles, construction materials and vendors occupy not only the main thoroughfare and pedestrian passage but also internal roads.

According to traffic experts, one of the main reasons behind perennial traffic congestion in the city is car parking occupying the main thoroughfares as it reduces road width.

Gulshan residents are already very resentful at the insufferable congestion in the main thoroughfare and internal roads invaded by big commercial houses, shopping malls, superstores, banks, convention halls, hotel, clubs and schools.

Footpaths and even part of the main road of Gulshan Avenue in front of shopping centres and other private business establishments remain occupied with illegal parking almost round the clock.

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(United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) carried out a survey in 2002 and found that Motijheel and Dilkusha commercial areas needed a total of 3,500 car-parking provisions.

The DCC introduced car parking beside the wide roads in the area with parking fee but the system could not continue for long as S a d h a r a n B i m a Corporation and communications ministry wrote for its cancellation. It was cancelled in December 2006.

The system at the road between the GPO and Baitul Mukarram market had to stop with the DCC accommodating a Holiday Market for hawkers at the site.

Islam said it is a worldwide practice to make provisions for car parking by the roadside.

He said DCC carried a survey in Gulshan last year and they sat with the Gulshan Society and Dhaka Metropolitan Police in this regard.

President of the society



Another bylane at Gulshan Circle 2 leased out as parking lot by DCC in a similar way.



Bakorkhani still going strong

Savoury delicacies of old Dhaka

Many items are still famous and unique

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Although the quality is going down every day, the once famous delicacies of old Dhaka still today attract the food connoisseurs and gluttons.

Biriyani, borhani, bhuna khichuri, korma, mutton curry, different types of kebabs and drinks are among the mouth-watering items. The alleys of the old city are famous for different kinds of such delectable foods.

"The flavour and taste of biriyani in old Dhaka is still unique and this is the reason people come to old Dhaka to eat biriyani," said Tauhid, a service holder.

"Maybe because of the ingredients they use in the biriyani it tastes different from shops in other areas," he said.

However, another veteran chef in the area lamented that because of price hike and non-availability of many essential spices and ingredients the flavour and quality of the food items are not as it was before.

"The prices of the items have also gone up," he remarked.

Kazi Alaaddin Road, Aga Sadeq Road, Bangshal and many other areas in old Dhaka are famous for their biriyani outlets.

"Once in a while I go to old Dhaka and eat Hajir biriyani. It's speciality is that I can eat more than when I eat biriyani from other shops because of its preparations and taste," said Samin, a service holder.

"In old times when I was a student we used to dine in old Dhaka. My favourite items were lassi, paratha and bhaji. But nowadays the taste is not like the old days," said Salam, an elderly person from Dhanmondi.

The foods of old Dhaka are a mixture of Sultani, Mughal, Portuguese, British, French, Dutch, Greek and Armenian traditions. The added ingredients are the styles of the cooks and women of old Dhaka.

Bakorkhani is one rare item that exists from the

Mughal period. It is served with sweetmeat and hot dishes. There were three types of Bakorkhani -- gao joban, shuki and nimshuki.

In many parts of old Dhaka the narrow lanes are flanked by bakorkhani shops. All the shops have big ovens in the middle with lots of people engaged to make bakorkhani. They are busy kneading flour, making small balls and then making two straight cuts in the middle of the tiny disk-like pieces.

Bakorkhani is made of oil, flour, water, salt, dalda, ghee and cheese. After making small disk-like pieces those are put inside the oven for 10 minutes. Then they are yanked out of the oven with a metal stick and packed for sale.

"Around 6,000 pieces can be made in a day with the help of two apprentices," said owner and baker of a bakorkhani shop at Alaaddin Road. The demand of bakorkhani is very high during the two Eids.

In the past there were many popular drinks in old Dhaka. Sheerberenj and Sheer-e-faluda were two of them.

Sheerberenj was made of half ground fine rice, milk, sugar, raisin, pistachio, rosewater, cinnamon, cardamom and saffron. Sher-e-faluda was made of vermicelli of fine rice, sugar, honey, pistachio, raisin, banana, mango, papaw, saffron, rosewater and ice.

"The faluda that are now available in New Market and Gausia are no match with the original faluda," said Nasima, an elderly woman from old Dhaka.

Hajir biriyani, Nanna Miar biriyani and Hanif biriyani are among the famous biriyani houses in old Dhaka. Many biriyani outlets are open even the whole night.

Many types of biriyanis were made in Dhaka in the Mughal period. Among them was the famous torabondi pilau. It was made of 24 items including four types of biriyani, four types of breads, four types of kebabs, four types of curry with cheese, borhani and pickles.

Korma, mutton curry, shik kebab, cheese, mint, borhani, sheer-e-faluda, and sweet jorda were served with biriyani. Sometimes tehari, pilau, kachchi biriyani and bhuna khichuri were served in torabondi.

Many types of bread were consumed in Dhaka in old times. One of them is Sheermaal. It was made of milk, ghee, flour and some spices. This dish came from Agra in the Mughal period. It was eaten with kebab, korma and rich curry.

Other famous breads are -- bogdadi bread, sohaili parata, bon roti and khasta (crisp and well-kneaded) parata.



Famous Hajir Biriyani



Traditional sutli kebab



Mouth-watering Borhani



Matchless faluda



The last of the lassi makers