



Illuminated stylish bridges and overpasses of the Hatirjheel project, *left*, attract a large number of visitors in the evening and also in the day. But in absence of custodian authorities and lack of enforcement of street laws, people jaywalk, *top right*, and vendors occupy a portion of the road, *top bottom*.

PHOTO:
STAR

Striking Hatirjheel at stake

Right management missing; mindless activities of visitors pose danger to the public assest as well as to commuters

TAWFIQUE ALI

The authorities have not instituted a body in four months to look after Hatirjheel integrated scheme considered as one of the finest and rarest civic facilities Dhaka dwellers have ever had.

The government opened the much-hyped set of facilities to public early January hurriedly without designating a custodian in place for its upkeep, while components like footbridge, viewing decks, lakeside steps and amphitheatre were still under construction.

The 302-acre scheme offers an aesthetic public space including wetlands,

eye-catching fancily illuminated stylish bridges, overpasses, walkways, gardening, plantation, leisure benches and viewing decks giving an exotic aura.

In absence of a watchdog, the facilities have been left at the mercy of unruly elements, who indulge in rowdy driving, wrong car parking, littering, defacing and tearing off saplings and flower plants.

Vehicles take wrong direction on the one-way express road, which may cause fatal accidents anytime. Wielding of a safety barrier of a bridge was found broken. Unruly youths riskily climb up and down the 15-metre-high arch design of the bridge.

Mahfuza Akhtar, an admin officer at

a private university, who came on a weekend stroll to the site, said unruly behaviour of some people posed risks of accidents and was damaging for decorative features of the beautiful public asset.

Rowdiness of this kind may lead to some unnecessary disgrace to the beautiful site with any fatal accidents or property damage, fear ordinary visitors.

The local inhabitants apart, here converge people of all ages and occupation to enjoy fascinating recreational features of scenic lake view, floral landscape and open air stroll for a breathing space in a city of cramped concrete jungle.

The fascinating multi-colour illumination on the bridges beckons people from far and wide with a captivating view at night.

"While strolling there, I felt as if I were in some foreign land," said Tania Islam, a college student and resident of Badda.

Abdul Mannan Khan, state minister for housing and public works, said as to why the government had opened the scheme without maintenance mechanism that they had to hurry on political consideration.

The ministry on January 10 formed a 15-member advisory committee headed by its Secretary Khondaker Showkat Hossain and an 11-member manage-

ment committee headed by Rajuk board member Mahbub Ul Alam.

The secretary could not be contacted over his mobile phone for response.

Md Nurul Huda, chairman of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk), said the management committee's recommendation in this regard was delayed as he was not in office for a month.

"We hope we will come up with recommendations within a week," Huda said.

The combined scheme provides east-west road connectivity and storm drainage system through Tejgaon, Gulshan, Modhubagh, Moghbazar, Badda, Ulan and Rampura stretching

between Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue and Rampura.

While a few traffic policemen manage the entry and exit points, they are not deployed for internal traffic control in the scheme implemented at the cost of Tk 1,971 crore.

Brig Gen Abu Sayeed Mohammad Masud, one of the project directors of the scheme, said they presently deployed eight personnel at four entry points of the scheme after 11:00 at night to prevent reckless driving and patrol team for overall security.

Army engineering corps personnel would withdraw from the site in September when the project tenure officially comes to an end.

BNP readies for Tarique's return

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cooperation to ensure Tarique's return without any harassment, party insiders said.

Tarique, who came under severe criticism from different quarters for running what is considered a parallel seat of power at Hawa Bhawan during the last BNP-Jamaat-led coalition government, was arrested on March 7, 2007, by the past military-backed caretaker government.

It is widely believed that the military backed regime released Tarique on bail in 2008 on condition of his self exile in London. Family members and party sources said Tarique is undergoing medical treatment in London and his physical condition is much better at present.

He is now facing at least 15 cases at home, including a money laundering case, pending with different lower courts.

Tarique's counsel AM Mahbub Uddin Khokon last night told The Daily Star that the High Court had stayed activities of 12 cases filed with the lower courts.

The court had issued arrest warrant against him [Tarique] in the money laundering and the August 21, 2004 grenade attack cases, said Khokon, claiming that it was defective, as Tarique had been staying abroad for treatment obtaining bail from the higher court.

But Tarique's family members, including his mother Khaleida Zia, have advised Tarique not to

return home during the tenure of the present government for fear of harassment.

"We have suggested that Tarique should return after the interim government takes charge of the country and the next general polls are held under it," Moudud Ahmed, a member of the BNP national standing committee, said.

However, BNP high ups also feel that if the present government remains in power during the parliamentary election instead of a non-party caretaker government, Tarique will be harassed politically once he is back.

BNP vice-chairman Selima Rahman and its education affairs secretary Khairul Kabir Khokon said the party's activities at present have almost come

to a halt.

"At this stage Tarique's Monday speech in London [published in different newspapers of the country on Wednesday] has inspired all the leaders of the party, especially at the grassroots level," Khokon added.

He went on: "There are many leaders in the party who are not active now. But Tarique's return to politics will inspire them to engage in the party's activities."

Talking to The Daily Star on Wednesday, half-a-dozen leaders representing the rank and file of the main opposition at different levels, said they had been pursuing the BNP high command to engage Tarique in the party as early as possible to overcome its present crisis.

Family doubts fair probe

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Wednesday morning, the police super ordered the probe body formation with Ashrafuzzaman as its head and Uttam Prasad and Court Inspector Asaduazzaman as members.

The committee has been asked to submit its finding in three days.

Yesterday, asked about the family's claim, SP Nurul Islam said, "As far as I know, Ashrafuzzaman was not present at Shamim's interrogation. But Uttam, as the assistant police super of B-circle in which Sonargaon Police Station falls, might have been present."

The officer added he himself had talked to Shamim at his office on May 20 and the youth described how the Sonargaon murder was planned.

"Shamim was not ill at that time." If he was not physically and mentally fit, the magistrate would not have recorded his statement, the SP said.

Nurul Islam also said Shamim was arrested on May 19. "We cannot respond to everything that relatives claim happened. We will go by what our documents say."

Arup Tarafder, inspector (investigation) of Sonargaon Police Station inspector, who allegedly beat up Shamim in his quarters and also demanded a bribe from Shamim's family in order for the torture to stop, said the victim was not arrested on May 14.

When his attention was drawn to the family's claim that many villagers of Protaper Char had seen law enforcers picking up Shamim on that day, the police officer insisted that

they were lying.

Talking to this correspondent yesterday, he also refuted all the other allegations.

Now, Shamim's relatives fear that the probe body will not carry out a fair investigation. "How can we believe that the very people who deny Shamim's arrest on May 14 will carry out a fair probe?" questions his brother Iqbal Hossain.

Sultana Kamal, executive director of the rights body Ain o Salish Kendra, said an independent probe body must be formed in a case of police torture.

"At least members from the police force from a different area should lead the inquiry committee. But if the probe body is comprised of members from the place of the incident, it is unlikely that the truth will come out."

Mizanur Rahman, chairman of National Human Rights Commission, said the commission would take up Shamim's case even if no complaint was filed by the victim's family.

"Initially we will send a letter to the home ministry asking it for a probe into the incident. Based on the findings, we will decide our next course of action," he added.

"Since the victim had injury marks in his body, we would request the government to include at least one medical doctor in the investigation team."

At the time of his death at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Shamim, 26, had marks of injury all over his body and blue, round swollen spots on his wrists.

Workers

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Legal Counsellor to the American Centre for International Labour Solidarity AKM Nasim pointed out, however, that the workers could no longer file a lawsuit with the labour court for further damage claims as they would be unable to demonstrate proof of employment.

"Most garment factories do not issue appointment letters to workers, although by Bangladesh's labour law they are required to do so. Besides, they were neither given any notice explaining the circumstances of the lay off and details of the compensation packages, nor were they given a pay slip," he told The Daily Star.

Nargis Akhter, 23, collected her salary from the Savar shooting ground field on May 8 and said, "They made us stand in queue and said we would not be paid our salaries and overtime dues if we could not show our ID cards."

Nargis underwent surgery for head injuries at Enam Medical College Hospital after she was rescued from the collapsed building. Her ID card was the only evidence of her being a sewing operator at Phantom Apparels since March 2013.

Nasim said the BGMEA could have kept workers' signatures on photocopies of the ID cards when disbursing the salaries as an alternative measure to prevent fraud in the future.

However, Rafiqul said that taking signatures on the salary sheet was not enough because there have been past instances when workers disclaimed their own signatures.

Dhaka deluged

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the water became all stinky.

"The residents of our building drink supply water after boiling it. But now it is so stinky," said Sushanta.

Mamun Akram of Shahjahanpur said all the lanes and bi-lanes in his locality had been in dilapidated conditions for the last few months and yesterday's rain took the entire area under water.

Some of the worst affected areas are Gendaria, Shahjahanpur, Green Road, Dhanmondi 27, Asad Gate, Shyamoli, Iqbal Road, Indira Road, Rajabazar, Shyampur, Shahjahanpur, Fakirapool, Old Dhaka, Shantinagar,

Malibagh, Nayapaltan and Motijheel.

Hundreds of passengers suffered long tailbacks on the Dhaka-Mymensingh, Dhaka-Narsingdi and Dhaka-Narayanganj roads.

According to the Met office, heavy to very heavy rainfall is likely to occur at places over Dhaka, Barisal, Chittagong, Sylhet and Rajshahi divisions today.

EXPERTS' OPINION

Jahangir Alam, chief engineer of DSCC, said the rain water could not pass through the surface drains as many of Dhaka's canals and drains are blocked by waste.

He added that the once 60-feet Genda canal that

used to carry the waters of Kalyanpur, Shantinagar and Malibagh has now been turned into a 12-foot culvert and that, too, is largely blocked by waste.

Taqsem A Khan, managing director of Wasa, said Dhaka city now had 26 canals, down from 65 in the 1970s.

According to Iqbal Habib, joint secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, most of the existing canals were either filled up or turned into box culverts over the years, leading to the waterlogging.

He blamed the authorities concerned for not properly maintaining the drainage system.

A Wasa official said Dhaka city now had

about 300km of storm water drainage lines, only half the city of around 13.5 million people requires.

Apart from the drainage lines, Wasa maintains some 10.5km box culverts.

TWO ELECTROCUTED Two people were electrocuted to death at Malitola in Bangshal yesterday morning.

The dead are Sagor Ahmed, 23, a shop employee, and Awlad Hossain, 25, a shop owner, at Bangabazar.

They stepped in the rainwater, where there was a live wire, at around 9:30am, said Abdul Kuddus Fakir, officer-in-charge of Bangshal Police Station.