



GABTOLI: In a major step towards easing the capital's traffic jam, DNCC authorities have succeeded to stop illegal parking of buses on Shyamoli-Amin Bazar road. **TEJGAON:** Another instance of successful action against illegal parking. Before the DNCC drive in November, this road, *bottom left*, used to remain crammed with illegally parked trucks. The road divider also got a facelift.



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN



MOTIJHEEL: Under an initiative of DSCC, garbage dumping sites have been encircled with iron sheet fences to comfort people's sight and keep garbage from scattering. **SHAHBAGH:** One of over 80 food carts, *bottom right*, introduced by DSCC to serve safe street food to people.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Freeing illegally occupied roads

FROM PAGE 1
truck terminal of illegal structures and the adjoining wide road of decades-old illegal occupation and illegal parking late last year. The entire road and adjoining footpaths are now clear.

TDS: Your predecessors could not do it over the decades. How did you do it?

AH: I had no alternative but to act boldly. Both the jobs were with risks but I had to go for it courageously by persuading those who opposed the move. They could not buy the mayor's office.

TDS: Were there any obstacles?

AH: There was no political opposition but we had to face some musclemen.

TDS: What is your strength?

AH: The mayor does not work alone; political leaders, ministers, and local councilors helped with clear directions from the Prime Minister.

TDA: At a pre-election dialogue you had promised that you would fight the mosquito menace as a priority. What have you done to fight mosquito?

AH: We could not control the menace this year even though we had used more chemicals. Besides, the corporation cannot access those privately owned marshy or low lying breeding grounds. As a result, our mosquito control drive is not effective. People suffered this year but I hope to give them more relief next year.

TDS: What have you done to recover illegally occupied footpaths?

AH: We kept footpath recovery by evicting street vendors a low priority as it is also the livelihood of some people. We, however, have forced the shopkeepers at major markets in Gulshan, Banani, Gabtoli and Kalyanpur to move back to their leased space from encroaching upon corridors, footpaths or adjacent public spaces. Now the shoppers can move easily in the market corridors, for example at Gulshan DCC markets. But I need 150 environment police personnel under the mayor's office to make sure the evicted vendors cannot reoccupy the roads and footpaths.

TDS: What steps have you taken for better waste management?

AH: So far we have been able to build 58 secondary waste transfer stations though we needed 72 with two in each of 36 wards. Some had to be set up on footpaths and roads because there are no vacant spaces. Dhaka is not a planned city. There is no designated space in the city for waste collection centers. In Gulshan, despite being a posh residential area, we could not find any space for waste transfer station. We are [also] going to put 5,000 waste bins along the streets.

TDS: What could you do so far in addressing flooding in the city?

AH: Dhaka city's storm drainage system is made of surface and feeder drains maintained by two city corporations, while the large diameter storm water pipelines and lakes and rivers are maintained by Wasa.

There are 23 major canals in the city that play vital role as storm drainage. Unless these canals and large diameter pipelines are cleaned, the city's flooding cannot be solved.

TDS: What are the ongoing road, footpath, and drainage development programmes?

AH: Under the DNCC annual development programmes in the current fiscal year, this city corporation has undertaken repair and improvement of 118 km roads, 148 km drainage and 68 km footpaths. Currently, DNCC is laying wide diameter storm sewer lines in Gulshan, Banani and Baridhara and it will be completed by next year. We hope to reopen all the roads in Gulshan, Banani, Baridhara and other areas that have been dug for laying drainage pipelines, by end of May.

TDS: You initiated building U-Loops to ease traffic congestion and get 3000 new buses to improve the city's public transport. What's the progress?

AH: U-Loops are regulated traffic turning facility to be built along a 32-km stretch from Gazipur to the capital's Satrasta to reduce congestion by one-third.

There will be 22 U-loops along the road to replace 69 traffic crossings including 20 major intersections. We are going to get Tk 48cr from the planning ministry to build the loops by the end of the current year. The new buses would operate under a franchise system by only five companies instead of the current 190 private companies operating ramshackle buses in the capital.

TDS: What progress could you make on your election campaign 'Clean Dhaka: Green Dhaka'?

AH: On May 2, we formally launched a green campaign of planting half a million trees at two lakhs households, along the roads and footpaths and at open spaces. Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed, founder of Bishwa Sahitya Kendra and a noted environmentalist would help guide this enormous task. The campaign would be piloted in Uttara during first three months. We have already floated tender to procure the trees and saplings through electronic (online) tender and are going to train 100 volunteers to carry out the job. Fifty-six foot over bridges are to be ornamented with flowering plants. We have a plan to set up 100 modern toilets two of which are already in operation.

TDS: What else are you planning?

AH: We have a plan to remove the 3.4 km long solid wall along the Tejgaon old airport with see-through fencing to add an extensive open green stretch. I have already talked to the chief of Bangladesh Air Force that manages the old airport and he has been positive to the idea.

TDS: What plan do you have to maintain and develop the parks and playgrounds?

AH: There are 27 parks and nine playgrounds under DNCC. We are preparing a master plan to take care of them.

TDS: What is your plan on city beautification?

AH: We have invited design for beautification and landscaping work and are going to form a committee to get the job done.

TDS: Are you going to involve any urban planners and landscaping architects in the beautification project?

AH: We are going to form a committee with those who understand the issue.

TDS: You promised to increase security.

AH: We have so far installed 600 high-tech closed circuit cameras at key points. Eleven hundred more similar cameras would be installed by June. A fund of approximately Tk 15cr has been raised with donations from businesses. We shall need Tk 30cr to cover the entire north city.

We are also taking stock of what exactly we may need to replace old energy hungry street lights and get 46 thousand LED lights from Europe instead of China, as it has some public health implications.

TDS: What about Karwan Bazar relocation?

AH: Karwan Bazar wholesale market will be relocated to Jatrabari, Amin Bazar and Mohakhali. We shall build a modern commercial hub there.

TDS: What measures have you taken to stop institutional corruption at the city corporation?

AH: We introduced electronic tendering from the very first day for transparency of the tender process. Nobody, however, liked it. I gave a clear message that mayor's office wants to remain clean. Two influential trade union leaders were transferred and demoted to their actual posts to enforce discipline. The DNCC is set to launch an online application to receive citizens' complaints.

TDS: How do you envision your remaining mayoral tenure?

AH: All the roads in north Dhaka city will be in functional state with 60 percent of the area made green and the solid wastes mostly managed in the next three years.

FROM PAGE 1

TDS: Do you have any plan to bring some sort of coordination here? How does lack of it affect service delivery?

SK: Lack of coordination among the agencies serving the capital city is a big challenge in providing better services to the people. I am helpless. Public suffering due to poor service will have no solution as long as there is such lack of coordination. We have asked the utility service agencies to draw up at least six-month development plans at a time but they don't.

We, both the mayors, have requested the Prime Minister to form a coordination committee headed by her. She assured us such a committee will be formed. We hope the committee would be in place soon.

I now have no authority to coordinate various service agencies. What can I do if other agencies fail to deliver civic services? Take for instance, the old town. Drinking water is contaminated and storm drainage is inadequate, the gas pipelines suffer from low pressure. Wasa and Titas fail to deliver the services but who will coordinate it?

Elected mayors have to have the power and the authority to be able to deliver civicservices.

TDS: You made a commitment to save the people from mosquito. How are you doing there?

SK: We could not get the insecticide in time because of quality control process. We could not ensure quality chemicals; it is a still a problem. There are allegations that spray men pilfer City Corporation chemicals. It is really a problem. Then there is a dedicated mosquito control authority under the health ministry that is inactive for long. If they sit idle leaving everything to us, then it is a problem. Nonetheless, we are taking better preparation now to control mosquito. It would be good if they took the whole responsibility.

But we are really in trouble with mosquito control. We could not handle the menace effectively. Whatever you call it-failure or weakness, we shall try to fix it in future.

TDS: Is there any headway in recovering footpaths?

SK: We have made several attempts to recover city footpaths but we could not keep it going. We have no police force available for our use. Besides, a section of police allegedly help the illegal occupation of footpaths by vendors. We are now planning to build elevated pedestrian pathways at places where such pathways are illegally occupied.

TDS: Is there any solution to the city's water logging problem—one of your top pledges?

SK: Kathalbagh, Shantinagar and Razarbagh are known for serious water logging for 10 to 12 hours after an hour of normal monsoon rain. I promised to resolve half the problem. We have cleaned drains in Shantinagar and Razarbagh while Wasa is setting up a pump in Kamapur and this will together reduce the severity of the water logging in those areas. I hope we will be able to keep the promise. Water logging in Kathalbagh is caused by the water flow control in Hatirjheel development project. So it is a man made problem.

TDS: Box culverts built by the undivided city corporation over natural canals are widely criticized for reducing drainage flow.

SK: Box culverts cannot be removed. It is wishful thinking of some urban experts. There are settlements on and around the box culverts. Wasa removes sludge in the box culverts very slowly and it will take six years to clear one culvert.

TDS: What is the progress of drainage improvement?

SK: Maintaining storm drainage is the job of Dhaka Wasa. They are supposed to clean the canals. The canals and storm drains are blocked with decades-old sludge. We have asked Wasa to make the storm drainage system functional and hand it over to us. We are ready to take over [its maintenance].

TDS: What is the progress in making public toilet facilities available?

SK: We've a plan to build 50 public toilets. Currently work is going on for 25.

TDS: What improvement could you make so far in waste management?

SK: There are 81 big waste collection containers and 10 transfer stations across south Dhaka city. Of those, 50 containers have been fenced off to hide them from public view. We are looking for alternative spaces for building more transfer stations but there is no space in this old town. We have a plan to construct 25 stations.

We've installed tracking system to monitor 4,500 cleaners to make sure they attend their work. At least 300 cleaners remain absent every day.

TDS: Are there any plans to increase public security?

SK: Around 40 percent of the south part of the city is covered by CCTV installed by local ward councilors and individuals. We shall ensure 100 percent coverage.

TDS: What is your plan to better maintain the parks and playgrounds?

SK: We've taken initiative to renovate 21 parks and 12 playgrounds. The consultant hiring process is on. The work will begin by June. Fifty-two main thoroughfares will be decorated with different kinds of local flowering plants including Rangan, Palash and Bagan Bilsah. Design is ready. Dhupkhola playground will be modernised as a children's playground with modern rides and facilities and a Tk 200cr project has already been taken to develop the ground.

TDS: What is the progress in replacing street lights?

SK: Replacing the existing ones with LED lights is ongoing. Hopefully, by early 2017, the entire city will have LED street lights.

TDS: Do you have any plan on community centers?

SK: There are 21 community centers. We have sent project proposal to the ministry for seven of these centers. These will be turned into multistoried complexes with gymnasium, IT centers and women's training facilities. Rest of them will be renovated.

TDS: How do you see the rest of your tenure?

SK: I am trying my best. My concentration is to do my job. People will see a big change next year.

Feni AL men assault UNO

FROM PAGE 1

Rakib, accusing him of "not showing respect to him". At one stage, Tapan's followers started beating him up, leaving him seriously injured, they added.

Rakib was rushed to the Upazila Health Complex. Later, he was shifted to Feni Sadar Hospital.

Sarwar Zahan, a physician of the

hospital, said Rakib suffered severe injuries on the head.

The shipping minister, two local AL lawmakers, deputy commissioner of the district and the superintendent of police visited the UNO at the hospital and assured him of taking actions against the culprits.

Contacted, Tapan refuted the allega-

tion of assaulting the UNO.

Parshuram police arrested three AL men in connection with the incident.

Abul Kashem, driver of the UNO, last night filed a case against seven named people, including Tapan and the three arrestees, and 10 to 12 unnamed people with Parshuram Police Station in this connection.

An undesirable disagreement

FROM PAGE 1

government has reinstated some provisions of the original constitution by the 16th amendment in 2011.

It also relied on the apex court's verdict to abolish the caretaker government system by the 15th amendment after the court declared the 13th amendment that had introduced the caretaker administration, unconstitutional and void. It may be remembered the caretaker government system was introduced in the constitution by the then BNP government in 1996 in face of demand of the AL.

Abolishing the caretaker government system has allowed the AL to hold the last parliamentary election on January 5, 2014 while still in power. The AL could not have remained in power during the election had the caretaker government system existed.

Scrapping of the 7th amendment that validated the second martial law regime

of General Ershad has also been welcomed by the AL-led government.

The AL-led government however did not take kindly the nullification of the constitution's 16th amendment by the High Court. It passed the 16th amendment in 2014 abolishing the chief justice-led Supreme Judicial Council to remove an SC judge.

Hours after the HC declared the 16th amendment unconstitutional and void on Thursday, some ministers and MPs launched a blistering attack on the judiciary in parliament.

The way they castigated the HC is not healthy for the proper functioning of the three organs of the state— legislative, executive and the judiciary.

The attack rather exposed an aggressive attitude of the legislative towards the judiciary. This is unhealthy for proper functioning of all three organs and this will not have any positive result for any of them.

In their attacks on the judiciary, the ministers and the MPs claimed that the HC verdict had humiliated and undermined the parliament. Even the law minister called the judgement unconstitutional and questioned the court's jurisdiction to deliver the verdict.

Their claim, however, is largely rhetorical. The constitution says something different. Considering the sensitivity and importance of the judiciary, the constitution guarantees its independence. It also says, judges will be independent to discharge their functions, according to article 94 (4) of the constitution.

Even in the parliament, an MP should not make any statement or comment which may undermine the independence of the judge of the Supreme Court, according to section 270 (iii) of the rules of procedure of the Jatiya Sangsad.

So the MPs' immunity under article 78 of the constitution in respect to their

speeches in the parliament on judiciary is not unqualified.

The constitution does not mention any such significant things for ministers and MPs.

It is the constitution that has given its guardianship to the Supreme Court.

The SC has been given the power of judicial review by article 102 of the constitution.

In exercise of the power of judicial review, the apex court can strike down any law for inconsistency with any provision of the constitution.

And in exercise of this authority, the apex court has scrapped some constitutional amendments and some other legislations enacted by the parliament.

This means our parliament cannot make just any amendment to the constitution with two-third majority.

Our constitution has defined the boundaries of the three organs of the state.

Our parliament is empowered to enact laws, but it can not make or unmake any law at its will. It is to abide by the constitution to make laws. If any law contradicts any provision of the constitution it will be rendered void by the Supreme Court.

The 5th, 7th, and the 13th amendments to the constitution were scrapped by the court as the parliament had overstepped its powers by enacting them.

So, everything is clearly laid out in our constitution.

What the HC did on Thursday is nothing new. And the HC verdict is not final. The government can challenge the verdict by going to the higher court. The law minister has announced that the government will appeal against the verdict next week.

If the HC overstepped its jurisdiction in declaring the 16th amendment unconstitutional and void, this can be corrected by the appeal. This is the legal procedure.

But without following the legal path, the way some ministers and MPs criticised the court cannot be healthy.

We note Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who is also leader of the House, did not say anything on the issue while she was giving valedictory speech at the parliament's 10th session.

The HC in its verdict on the 16th amendment has made some significant observations on article 70 of the constitution. According to the HC this article has fettered the members of parliament and it has imposed a tight rein on them.

Members of parliament, the HC observed, have no freedom to question their party's stance in the parliament, even if it is incorrect.

Article 70 has long been blamed for curtailing freedom of MPs. If our MPs now want to see a really independent parliament, then a fresh debate should start on how to remove the restrictions on them.