

A dream left unfulfilled

New truck terminal at Tejgaon nowhere in sight

HELEMUL ALAM

It has been one year since authorities announced construction of a multi-purpose truck terminal at the capital's Tejgaon to accommodate all trucks and keep Satrasta-Tejgaon road free of vehicles.

But Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) could not start any physical work for the plan.

DNCC Mayor Atiqul Islam on December 30, 2020 announced the plan while visiting the current terminal and meeting leaders of truck owners' association to solve the problem, as trucks are regularly parked on the road, especially at night.

The renovated Satrasta-Tejgaon road had become an embodiment of late mayor Annisul Huq's tireless efforts to ease the city's unbearable traffic congestion.

But the road, named after Annisul following his death in 2017, is now suffering through the same problem, as authorities concerned did not take any visible action for a sustainable parking solution, which Annisul had pledged.

On December 18, Mayor Atiqul told The Daily Star that shifting the truck stand present there to another location is not possible, as around 5,400 trucks load and unload goods at the area daily.

Authorities are planning to construct a new terminal at the location, and they need land from the post, telecommunication

and information technology ministry, he said.

"After getting land from the government agencies, we will prepare a project proposal and start implementing the plan," he said.

The mayor said they have already discussed the issue with the prime minister and Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan, who is also a lawmaker of the area, around three months ago, to take necessary steps in this regard.

Trucks are parked on the road, due to lack of space at the truck stand. When DNCC conducts drives against illegal parking, truckers clear the road but return soon after. So, a terminal is essential to resolve the issue, he said.

DNCC Chief Estate Officer MD Muzammel Hoque said there are six acres of land at the adjoining area of the truck stand, and have sought the land from the telecommunication and housing ministries.

Of the six acres, three are of the telecommunication ministry and three of the housing ministry. DNCC has issued letters to both several months back and are now waiting for their response.

"I have directed DNCC officials concerned to submit a proposal to Bangladesh Railway for getting around 21 bighas of land and forming a project to construct a multi-purpose truck terminal," Atiqul said last year, during the visit.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

➔ DNCC couldn't start any physical work for the plan, a year after announcement

➔ Mayor Atiqul said shifting truck stand to another location not possible

➔ Land needed from two ministries to build terminal

➔ When DNCC conducts drives, truckers leave but return soon after



Commuters who travel through the capital's Satrasta-Tejgaon road get to see a huge line of trucks parked to their left virtually every day. Despite the sincere efforts of late DNCC mayor Annisul Huq, the road could not remain free of these heavy vehicles, as authorities failed to implement a permanent solution for this long-standing issue. As a result, the otherwise wide road seems more like a choked alley. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

SONAI RIVER a victim of greed



In the past, the river used to be about 250 metres in width, but owing to encroachment, pollution and trash dumping, it has now almost halved. Its depth, presently five metres, is declining as well, as it hasn't been excavated in a long time.

MINTU DESHWARA, back from Habiganj

Sonai river, which flows through Madhabpur upazila in Habiganj, has almost turned into a canal due to illegal occupation and dumped trash. It now acts as a narrow drain carrying hazardous pollutants to the haor area.

Abdul Qayyum (56), environmental activist and a resident of Madhabpur's Shahpur area, said in the past, people from different upazilas, including Nasirnagar, Lakhai and Ajmiriganj, used to travel to and trade around Sonai river.

This was back when the width

of the river was about 250 metres, but it has almost halved now. Its depth, presently five metres, is declining as well, as it hasn't been excavated for a long time.

"An influential circle is constantly extracting sand from the river, which is also changing its course," said Qayyum.

"The image of the most visible occupation of Sonai river can be seen in the upazila town itself. Saiham Group has built a huge building for 'Saiham Future Park' there," he added.

Sheikh Md Kamal Mia, a resident of the area, said fish can no longer be found in the river's

discoloured water, thanks to toxic waste dumped from nearby factories.

"Factories on the riverbank are also causing serious air pollution, resulting in people living nearby getting respiratory illnesses," said Dr Ali Ahsan Chowdhury Pintu, a resident of Habiganj town.

When Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa) repeatedly protested against installing Saiham Future Park, the river commission, after several visits, instructed the district administration to evict it. But the eviction order wasn't followed

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

PHOTO: STAR

Five killed in road crashes

STAR REPORT

At least five people were killed and 11 injured in accidents across the country in last two days, report our correspondents.

In Jamalpur sadar, an accident at Kamal Khan Bazar area killed a rickshaw-van puller and injured two of its passengers after a pick-up van crashed into it yesterday morning.

The victim, Chand Mia (65), died on the spot, said SI Md Rafiqul Islam of Narayanpur Police Investigation Centre.

In Dinajpur, a mother was killed while her 7-year-old son was injured after the battery-run three-wheeler carrying them turned over in Nawabganj upazila on Monday night.

The deceased is Latifa Begum (45). OC Ferdous Wahid of Nawabganj upazila of Dinajpur said the duo were on their way Birampur, when their three-wheeler turned over in front of the upazila parishad around 8:30pm.

Critically injured, they were rushed to Nawabganj Upazila Health Complex, where the mother succumbed to her injuries. Police said Al Amin is in stable condition.

In Mymensingh, at least three people were killed while eight injured in a road crash on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway at Trishal upazila on Monday afternoon.

The victims are bus driver Jewel Mia (23), truck mechanic Hemendra Sutradhar (58), and truck owner Abdul Matin (54), said police.

The accident took place around 4:45pm, when a Mymensingh-bound bus overtook another vehicle and hit the truck, which was standing beside the road at Nauder Zero Point area, police said.

This killed the bus driver and truck mechanic on the spot.

A fighter through and through

Country pays last respects to Mushtari Shafi



Eminent personalities and many cultural and political organisations from across the country paid their last respects to artist and activist Shaheedjaya Mushtari Shafi at Central Shaheed Minar in the capital.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mushtari Shafi was a fighter all her life, and she was at the frontline of all progressive movements in the country.

Eminent personalities said this while paying their last respects to Shaheedjaya Mushtari Shafi, an artist of the Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra in 1971, at the Central Shaheed Minar in the capital yesterday.

CPB, Ekattar Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee, Sector Commanders Forum, Socialist Party of Bangladesh (BSD), BSD (Marxist), Jubo Union, Udichi and other organisations paid their respects, organised by Sammilita Sangskritik Jote.

"My mother has struggled all her life, losing her mother at the age of

three months and her father at the age of seven," said her son Miraj Tahsin Shafi.

"Even after losing her husband and her brother to the war, she inspired the freedom fighters as a 'Shobdo Shoinik'," said CPB president Mujahidul Islam Selim.

Shahriar Kabir, president of Ekattar Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee, said when the movement for the trial of war criminals started in 1992 led by Shaheed Janani Jahanara Imam, Mushtari organised it in Chattogram.

She was also one of the witnesses of Ghulam Azam's trial in the people's court. When Ghulam Azam went to Chattogram to attend a public

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Reazuddin critically ill, family seeks prayers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The family of Ekushey award winner and senior journalist Reazuddin Ahmed yesterday sought for prayers from citizens for his early recovery.

Reazuddin, former president of Jatiya Press Club, was taken to Dhaka's United Hospital on December 16 for Covid-19 related complications and is now undergoing treatment at the hospital's intensive care unit, as his oxygen level dropped.

After being diagnosed with Covid-19 recently, he initially took treatment at his residence, said Ahsan Habib, managing editor of The Financial Herald, in a press statement.

But he was admitted to United Hospital when his

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



The capital's roads are full of dust round the year, but this kind of pollution goes up a notch during winter. Due to the stillness of air, dust that gets whipped up from the dirty roads by vehicles end up settling on the surrounding tree and plant leaves. Apart from screening out sunlight, dust on leaves also blocks their stomata, not to mention the aesthetic irritation it causes. This photo was taken yesterday from Mirpur's Goran Chatbari-Beribadh road.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Boi mela back on time

Set to start on Feb 1, say organisers

DIPAN NANDY

The month long Amar Ekushey Boi Mela is set to begin in time from the first day of February next year. The book fair will also mark the golden jubilee of the nation's independence and the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Though February 1 has been the fair's usual starting date throughout its history, this year's was different, as the fair started on March 18 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The fair also ended early -- on April 12 instead of April 14 -- after the government enforced a nationwide lockdown around that time.

"For this year's Boi Mela, we will pay due respect to Bangabandhu and uphold the spirit of the Liberation War while decorating the fair premises," book fair committee member secretary Jalal Ahmed told the Daily Star.

The committee has already started preparations for organising the fair at the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan and Bangla Academy premises, Jalal said, adding that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to inaugurate the fair.

Juergen Boos, president and CEO of Frankfurt Book Fair, is also expected to attend the opening ceremony, he said.

Boos is also the president of Society for the Promotion of African, Asian and Latin American Literature (LITPROM).

The fair committee is expecting all participants of last year's fair to join this year's one as well.

"We've already received applications for 300 stalls, Jalal said.

Stall allocations will be finalised by January, he said.

According to the fair's guideline, any publishing house with a minimum of 100 published titles will be allowed to have stalls at the fair.

For new publishers, this number comes down to 50 titles.

A total of 540 publishing houses and government and non government institutions participated in the last book fair.

The fair will remain open from 3:00pm to 8:30pm on weekdays, from 11am to 8:30pm on weekends, and from 8:00am to 9:00pm on February 21, on the International Mother Language Day, according to organisers.

While speaking to many publishers, they told this correspondent that most of their business takes place during the book fair, which is why they try to unveil most of their new books there.

