



IT'S A DIFFICULT PATH TO WALK

Pedestrians in peril as most footpaths remain occupied in port city

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

In Telipotti Road, footpaths were seen to be occupied by sanitary items shops in Chawkbazar, while in Fazlul Quader Road, they were taken over by medicine shops and street vendors in Chattogram Medical College Hospital area.

ARUN BIKASH DEY

Pedestrians in the port city cannot walk on footpaths for more than 200 yards at a stretch uninterrupted. The reason: illegal occupation by vendors, hawkers and shopkeepers.

This correspondent recently visited some of the main roads of the port city. In Nawab Sirajuddaula Road, steel almirah makers were seen spraying colours on their products on the footpath beside the Chawkbazar Post Office. Pedestrians were seen walking on the road avoiding the footpath.

Salma Akter, a resident of Chattogram College East Gate area, was seen crossing the road to avoid the spray paint.

"All the shops keep their materials on the footpath for which pedestrians have to walk in the middle of the road," she told this correspondent.

Mithu Rudra, a school teacher, said the illegal occupations have been going on for years but nobody did anything about it.

This correspondent found illegal occupations



took over those.

Flower shops had been occupying footpaths in Cheragi Pahar Intersection for years in Momin road. Upon complaints from locals, Shaibal Das Suman, Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) ward councillor of Ward 21, discussed the issue with representatives of flower traders' recently and convinced them to vacate the footpaths.

"I met with flower traders and requested them to shift the vases from the footpath to inside, and they agreed," said Suman.

Appreciating the councillor's initiative, Pampi Barua, a resident of Jamal Khan area, said, "Had the other councillors taken such initiatives to free footpaths in their respective areas, the sufferings of the residents would have stopped."

In Telipotti Road, footpaths were seen to be occupied by sanitary items shops in Chawkbazar, while in Fazlul Quader Road, they were taken over by medicine shops and street vendors in Chattogram Medical College Hospital area.

A restaurant is currently in operation

occupying a large portion of the footpath in front of Chevron Clinical Laboratory in Prabortak area.

"It's getting increasingly difficult to walk on the streets. The city corporation and traffic department should take steps to free the footpaths from illegal occupation," said Sajjad Hossain, a student of Chittagong University.

Contacted, Saleh Mohammed Tanvir, CMP commissioner, said CMP's traffic department conducted regular drives to free the roads from hawkers and vendors. He, however, said to conduct drives on footpaths and impose fines, police need a magistrate's authorisation.

The commissioner also mentioned that despite multiple drives by police, vendors and shop owners were still operating on the same spots from where they were evicted.

Contacted, CCC mayor Rezaul Karim Chowdhury said he would take steps to free footpaths from illegal occupation.

"We will be stricter regarding the issue," he assured.

Tale of port city's own racer

NAIMUR RAHMAN

At only 18, Aiman Sadat journeyed all the way from Chattogram to Dubai, to participate in the NGK UAE Pro-Cup Championship held in Dubai Autodrome, a fully integrated and FIA sanctioned sports venue in United Arab Emirates.

In what was the first time participating in this championship, Aiman managed to place second in two categories of the competition.

In the Dubai Race, he drove a Gen-3 car when all other participants were driving much more advanced Gen-5 cars, which makes his success all the more deserving.

But this was not his first time he won an international trophy. His first taste of success came when he competed in the Volkswagen Ameo Cup, held in Chennai, and became the youngest champion in its history.

Outpacing many skilled drivers, he won the trophy on his first go, following the footsteps of his elder brother Allan, who stood runner-up at the Volkswagen Junior Ameo cup before.

"My elder brother and father are my main

Another trouble was finding practicing spaces in the port city. Initially, he trained using simulators because not just Chattogram, but the entire country does not have any ground for his purpose.

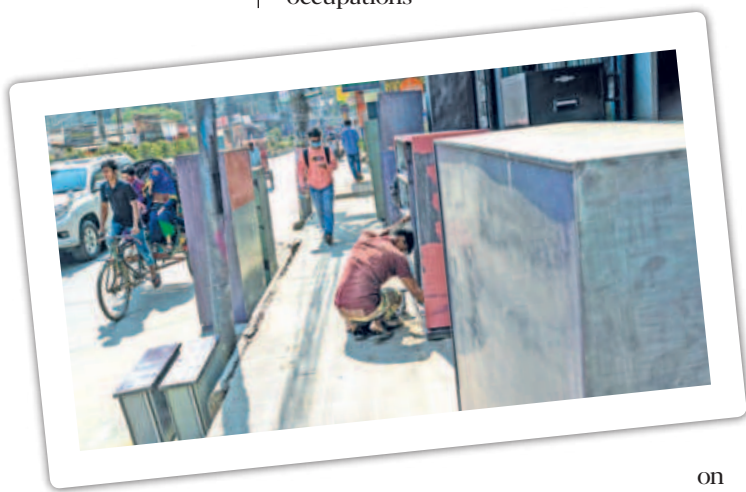
inspirations. We used to watch F1 together when I was younger. I always cheered for whichever car would come in first," Aiman recounted in a recent interview with The Daily Star.

But his journey was quite challenging. Alongside studies, he had to practice constantly as well as look for sponsors who would enable him to attend the competitions.

Another trouble was finding practicing spaces in the port city. Initially, he trained using simulators because not just Chattogram, but the entire country does not have any ground for his purpose. His on field practices had to be conducted abroad, which was a costly process.

But even this was made difficult as Covid-19 set in worldwide. Unable to attend or apply for any race, Aiman was kept in touch by his brother Allan, who gave him theoretical training about cars, race tracks, safety measures, racing protocols and strength training.

No racer is certain where they will be in five or 10 years, but Aiman told The Daily Star that he wants to keep getting better. He wants to keep his passion high and continue serving his country by bringing in international recognition through his success in the sport.



on at least six points of this road, including Dewan Bazar Didar Market area, Jainab Colony and Room Ghata areas.

In Didar Market area, furniture shops were seen to occupy the footpath, while in Jainab Colony, Room Ghata and Sub, groceries, bakery shops and street vendors

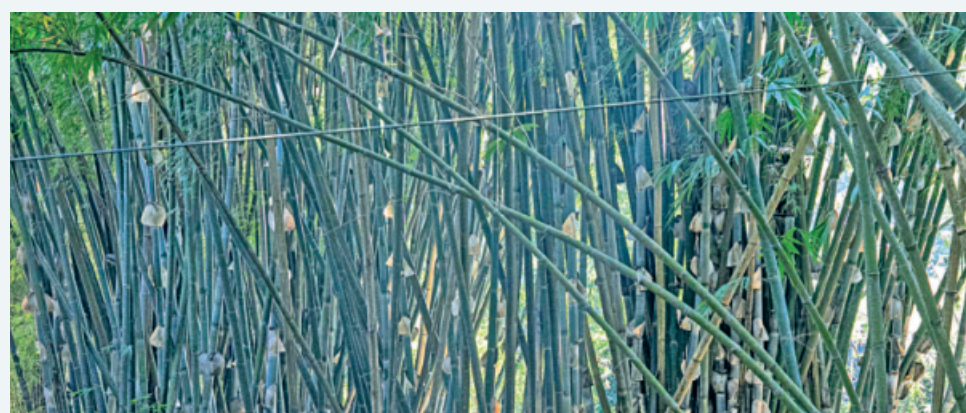
SIFAYET ULLAH

It's about 10 feet tall in height. At first sight, it may look like a wooden pitcher, but it's actually bamboo that came to Bangladesh's soil from Vietnam. This particular species of bamboo is called "Ghoti".

Like Ghoti, around 36 species of bamboo from home and abroad are being cultivated at the bamboo garden of Bangladesh Forest Research Institute (BFRI) in Sholashahar of the port city. Among them, 24 species are native while 12 were imported from China and Southeast Asian countries, said officials.

The bamboo garden was built on a five-acre land in 1973. Apart from conserving bamboo species, the park also functions as a bamboo plant management, seedling production, seed conservation and training centre.

During a recent visit to the BFRI garden, this correspondent noticed a signboard that contains the names of all 36 species of bamboos in the



museum, complete with their scientific names and origins. There are also nameplates in front of every species.

In the garden, some bamboos are thick, while others are twisted. All of them are distinct from each other in terms of their size and shape. There are "Kata", "Ora", small-sized "Mitinga", and "Mithia" bamboos -- 12-14 feet in height.

According to the global bamboo resource report published by the Food and

Agricultural Organization (FAO), Bangladesh stands eighth in the world in terms of bamboo varieties. Almost 10 lakh tonnes of green bamboo are used for different purposes across the country.

Recently, four new bamboo species were added to the collection, said Dr Md Mahbubur Rahman, lead researcher of the silviculture department at BFRI.

He said bamboo gene varieties are preserved at the institute as bamboo seedlings are

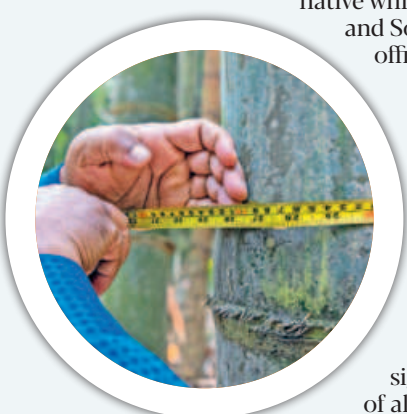
not readily available. A seedling is produced through cuttings of bamboo stalks and tissue culture, he said.

"At least 10,000 saplings are uprooted from this garden every year. The saplings are being used for creating gardens and forests in different parts of Bangladesh," he added.

Dr MA Gafur, former professor of the department of botany at Chittagong University, said the genetic diversity of indigenous varieties of bamboo is being preserved here. Of them, Bhudum, Muli and Baijjar have a lot of economic importance. The genetic diversity of these species are important not only for Bangladesh, but the world as well, he added.



Almost 10 lakh tonnes of green bamboo are used for different purposes across the country.



An international bamboo garden!

BFRI centre hosts, preserves 36 species from home and abroad