

# Angling turns passion into patience

AVIK SANWAR RAHMAN

Angling as an internationally recognized sports is dying in the city due to lack of ponds and lakes. Whereas angling as a sport has developed in Dhaka long before our independence.

Angling starts in Dhaka as early as the 1960s. Bangladesh Amateur Angling Association was established in 1963 in Dhanmondi to use the Dhanmondi lake for angling. Since then Angling has become a daily passion for 300 members of the Association as an entertaining sports.

"After the registration of the Angling Association in 1968 the members established an Angling Club beside Dhanmondi lake. And the club started to manage the lake for angling with a lease from the Fisheries and Livestock Ministry," said a member of the Angling Club of Dhanmondi.

It was all going fine and anglers of the city found Dhanmondi lake a place of retreat and amusement from their busy city life. After the independence of Bangladesh the Angling Association took lease of the lake from the Fisheries and Livestock Ministry for a season starting from April to December.

The Angling Club built more than 300 wooden platforms (*macha*) around the lake from the Zhigatola area to Dhanmondi road 32. The members had to pay Tk. 1200 per *macha* for the nine-month season.

The season actually started with

Independence Day on March 26.

"There were angling competitions on festival days at Dhanmondi lake and we used to start the season with a competition for anglers from all over Bangladesh," said an angler.

The fun of the game is the catch, but as expected, the angler with the biggest fish becomes the winner of the competition.

"More than 300 anglers took part in the competition for the whole day. We used to present prize like shields, cups and medals for the winners," said a member of the angling club.

However, the fishes have all been dying for a decade due to the pollution of the lake caused by industrial and household solid waste being released untreated from the Zhigatola and Dhanmondi areas. Eventually, it was the anglers who suffered most from this pollution.

"The Dhanmondi Angling Club has been asking the government for a decade to renovate the Dhanmondi lake because of the anglers' interest", said Abu Taleb, the general secretary of the Bangladesh Amateur Angling Association.

Because of the recent renovation of Dhanmondi lake the anglers had to stop angling and wait patiently to see the sport of fishing become popular once again.

But they were in for a shock after the renovation as the lake was not given back to the Angling Club.

"Dhaka City Corporation had even dismantled the Angling Club building from the lakeside, whereas the club is included in the original renovation plan of the lake," said a member of the club.

There are allegations that influential people are now undertaking fisheries businesses illegally in the Dhanmondi lake area, whereas DCC is not getting any revenue from this lake.

The Angling Club wanted their sport back by any cost. "We have paid Tk 2.5 lakhs as a revenue for a season before the renovation of the lake. We are ready to pay any revenue demanded by DCC for the angling sports", said Shahidul Haque, the Director of Water Development Board and a member of Dhanmondi Angling Club.

The amateur anglers are going for angling in the government and private ponds. The rate for the government ponds for angling is Tk. 1,000 for the day in the Shangshad Bhaban area, Tk. 500 in Dhaka Zoo and in National Park Tk. 250 per angle.

But to many anglers the price of the ticket is beyond their range. Anglers could not resist themselves from visiting the Dhanmondi lake even now.

"I am coming to this place for 40 years everyday. It is a habit which I can't live without", said A.T.M. Samsuddin, the Senior Assistant Editor of Jonokantha.

This is a testing time for the anglers' sporting spirit of patience to survive in the hope of getting back their sporting lake.



An angler enjoys his sport on a pontoon provided at Zahirul Haque Hall pond, Dhaka University.

## Equipped for life



Motor garages throughout the city provide a future livelihood for adolescent boys with few options.

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

He never needed to memorise any lesson to learn that life means struggle. Rather, the life, its nature and necessity taught Mohammed Manik to become tough and fight to survive.

This led Manik, a boy of fourteen, coming all the way from Jinjira to a motor garage at Lalmatia everyday. He anticipates that learning the skill will help him to carve a niche in life.

Not only to Manik but motor workshops in the city are serving as informal vocational

training centres to the underprivileged children in the city. A good number of children and adolescents, with dirt and grease all over them are found working as trainees in motor garages at different areas of the city.

"I have been working in this garage for last one year," noted Manik. Right now he does the initial nitty-gritty works, he said. "Removing punctured tyre, fitting mat to tyres or welding the metal body falls in my responsibility," he added. "It is not an easy task but also not impossible to do," he sounded confident. However, Manik and

his co-workers mentioned there are no wages for them unless they acquire the dexterity. "They promised to pay me after three years when I learn the job properly and I am looking forward to it," Manik said.

"Everyone cannot stick to the profession since it demands a tight schedule from eight in the morning to eight in the evening," said Bijoy Das, in-charge of Topu Motors. Moreover, the intelligence level of the children differs from one to another. "Everyone do not have the innate quality to learn," Bijoy added.

Whether government or

private, no specific regulation exists for appointing children in motor garages. Even nine years olds are found as trainee in these places. However, most of the garage authority said the children come to them on their own. The owners of workshops do not force the kids to work there, they commented.

Moreover, they never let the kids do anything that is hazardous, most of the garage authority said. "We do not ask them to do any risky task," said one of the garage owners at Dhanmondi. "They start with handing small equipment like screwdriver or jack and gradually begin to do some small tasks," he added.

Parents of these kids are well aware of the work atmosphere in the motor workshops, which is of course strenuous for them. Nevertheless, they want their children to continue learning the skill. "We, the poor people cannot even dream to offer our kids education," said Abu Taher, whose two sons work in a garage. "It is better they learn some skill that will enable them to earn bread rather than getting hooked to drug or other criminal activities," he sighed.

However, reality sometime fails to console the kids working in the motor garages. "Father asked me to stop going to school since he cannot afford it," Khorshed Mia choked with tears. He had to leave school after class four. Now he looks forward to earn money after learning motor mechanism. "Some day I will become a Ustaad too," he said. "I will have my own garage," he added.

CITY CORRESPONDENT

More than five thousand sweeper families of Ganakutli City Colony are living a painful life in Hajariabag, though they are working under Dhaka City Corporation. Their living environment is unhygienic and their houses are extremely congested. They are suffering from a complete lack of drinking water, latrines, bathroom, electricity and other basic facilities.

The British government brought these sweepers from Kanpur, Kerala and Madras in India to provide cleaning services for Dhaka that others refused to do.

They were accommodated at Ganakutli City Colony since those long gone days. From the beginning, they have been deprived of their basic rights as city workers and dwellers. Their miseries have continued up to the present day.

There are only six separate living quarters for more than 30 thousand dwellers of Ganakutli City Colony. Among these, five quarters were made during the British period and one was made only three years ago.

"We all do jobs under the city corporation and if the city corporation takes steps to build more quarters for us then our accommodation problems will be solved easily," said Anisur Rahman, a member of the colony.

The supply of water is very low in the colony. What little water they get is mostly dirty. "We face a serious problem of shortage of drinking water," said Jamal Hossain, a sweeper of Hajariabag.

The Ganakutli City Colony has

only 7 bathrooms for each quarter and the dwellers usually have to line up for a bath. Latrines, however, are the greatest problem.

"Really it is pathetic. We have to line up and wait for so long time to use the latrine," said Mangal Mia.

The sweepers do not get gas facilities. They use *lakri* or kerosene for cooking.

"Gas and electricity are vital needs of our day daily life," said Mita Rani Rajbanshi, a housewife.

"We work very hard but our salary is limited. We usually get only Tk 2000 to 3000 per month. We can't run our family properly," said Malu Mia, a 70 year old sweeper.

Being a sweeper is still an obstacle to getting a good job.

"Although I have completed my BA, there is no good job for me. People are still prejudice against our community," said Shishir Chandra.

The Ganakutli City Colony has three clubs. These are Manab Seba Tarun Sangha, Samaj Seba Jub Sangha and Ashar Alo Jub Sangha. Each club has 21 elected members.

There was a law during the British period that if any sweeper committed wrong acts, the club member will judge them, not the police.

"In the club, children read here, we hold various functions and we discuss what initiatives we can take for the dwellers of this colony," said Jamal Hossain about the activities of the clubs.

"We informed the City Corporation several times about our problems. They always give us assurances but do nothing for us," he added.

The sweepers of the Mohammadpur Town Hall Colony are also deprived of their basic needs, although they too are workers of the Dhaka City Corporation.

"We have not enough bathrooms, water supply or gas facilities," said Ramu Das, a sweeper of Mohammadpur Town Hall colony.

"The authorities of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) know the problem of the sweeper colony at Hajariabag and we will try to solve their problems as soon as possible," was the comment of Sohail Faruque, the chief conservancy officer of DCC.



Traditional tattooed identification marked on a colony residents arm.

## eventhorizon

### Conversation with a CNG driver

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Commuters of Dhaka City regularly face many and varied problems. When it comes to CNG three-wheelers or taxicabs, however, the problems become intense.

One is in a hurry but is hindered by the noncompliance of CNG and cab drivers. This is an everyday ordeal for commuters. Though the rules are clear the drivers are bound to go wherever a commuter wants the rules seem of no importance to the drivers themselves.

Whenever and wherever a passenger wants to go to the common answers from drivers are: "I have run out of gas" or "I waited for five hours to fill the gas tank." And the inevitable then follows: "So please give me extra bucks in addition to the fare..." or "I won't travel such short distances!"

Recently, a passenger was more bewildered than usual when faced with a new excuse from a CNG driver. Initially the

passenger complied with all of the driver's terms and conditions and started the journey.

During the initial conversation the driver had said, "My meter is faulty."

So the passenger asked why he didn't fix it? "I refuse to fix it any more," replied the CNG driver.

Why? Apparently many of the city's CNG drivers have decided to get rid of the metered system altogether. "Within a few months, we will enforce this decision," stated the driver.

The reason behind their decision, he said, was that "we cannot earn hardly any money these days after the installation of this meter. The meter rates are not in our favour." The CNG crisis in the city has made the situation worse, the driver added.

"We don't have any option but to get rid of the meters, because we barely subsist on our present meagre incomes."

### New life for city's community centres

SULTANA RAHMAN

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has decided to extend the uses of its community centres, including cultural programmes and training. DCC hope to implement this decision from September this year.

The city's mayor, Sadeque Hossain Khoka, announced the decision in a meeting held at the end of last month.

He stressed that promoting the interests and well-being of children and youths of the city was the basis for the project.

Utilising the present infrastructure of 38 DCC owned community centres, these will be adopted as coaching centres or academies of dancing, singing and other cultural activities.

At present, these community centres are used only for marriage ceremonies, birthday parties and so on.

### Commuters face unease

AKBAR HOSSAIN

For commuters who travel the Mirpur Road from Mirpur Section 1 to Azimpur, the shortage of public transport is creating a serious problem.

The stretch of the road between Gabtoli and Russell Square became off-limit to rickshaws from January this year to ease traffic congestion but the authorities still haven't arranged sufficient alternative modes of transportation for the general public.

The Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) gave route permit to Metrolink bus service, a sister concern of Navana Group and around 40 buses of Metrolink now ply the route. But Metrolink is the only 'decent' bus service available and its numbers still fall short of the need.

There are enough local minibuses but the middle-class and

particularly women, are reluctant to travel by them for their dilapidated condition, over-crowding and claustrophobic interior.

Because of this, there are very long queues at the Metrolink stoppages throughout the day.

"I have to wait in the queue for at least half an hour to board a bus," said Kabir Hossain whose office is located in Dhanmondi.

Kabir said the fear of being pickpocketed prevents him from taking a local bus.

Shammi, a student of Eden Girls College also complained about the long delay in queues. She said that the women prefer not to travel by local buses, as they are often victims of physical harassment by passengers and the attendants.

"We have little option other than taking the Metrolink as there are no other similar services from Mirpur to Azimpur. Besides,

Mirpur is basically a middle-class dominated area so it's hard for the public to travel by a CNG taxi or cab everyday," adds Shammi.

Students bear the brunt of the transport scarcity more than others. There are significant numbers of important educational institutions including the Dhaka College, City College, Home Economics College and Eden Girls College beside the route and a good proportion of their students come from Mirpur, Kallyanpur, Shymoli, Sobhanbag and Sukrabad.

Even staffs of the Metrolink



acknowledge the difficulties of the commuters.

"It is impossible for Metrolink alone to deal with such a huge volume of passengers. The government should create more provisions for transports on this route," said a supervisor of Metrolink preferring anonymity.

When contacted Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) Chairman Taimur Alam Khondokar said that the BRTC would introduce 20 double-decker buses for the Mirpur Azimpur route soon but he failed to say when exactly.