



An aerial view of the south-eastern part of the Agrabad Commercial Area bears testimony to the lack of open space in the port city.

Open spaces shrink, ecology under threat

ABDULLAH - AL MAHMUD

.....

Open spaces are vanishing fast here due to haphazard construction of concrete structures on public parks, designated playgrounds and ponds, threatening the entire ecology of the port city.

Environmentalists as well as the common people have expressed grave concern over the unplanned urbanisation.

With a population of about 3.3 million in an area of some 100sq miles, Chittagong has an open space of about 200 acres of land. It has now an open area average of about 0.06 acres per 1000 people.

The first Master Plan of Chittagong Development Corporation (CDA) recommended four acres of land per 1000 people as an open area standard in 1961.

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) and the CDA are responsible for managing the open spaces.

But the CDA could not ensure

mandatory open spaces as it failed to control the development work of the developers, sources said. It could not develop parks, playgrounds or any other amenity due to lack of government support, they said.

On the other hand, CCC opted for use of open spaces for commercial purposes. It already put a number of open spaces into commercial use while eyeing at more such places, sources said.

Designated parks and open spaces are being rezoned or converted into commercial plots. The open spaces kept in planned residential schemes by the CDA, CCC or Housing & Settlement at Agrabad, Halishahar, Sugandha and Koiballyadham, have often been reallocated for other purposes. Little concern or guidance/control was exercised, they said.

Among the authorities, CCC is mostly blamed for the shrinkage of open spaces here, say the sources.

To the much disappointment of the city dwellers, Jumboree field on 10-acre of land has been subdivided leaving aside a small

portion and walled up for an amusement park with admission charges. Construction of high brick walls to accommodate shops along its outer periphery even denied its neighbours' right causing visual pollution.

The open space in front of the Zia Museum (old Chittagong Circuit House) has been earmarked by the CCC for an amusement park with restricted entry.

Besides, the open site in and around the Jamiat ul Falah Mosque has been enclosed and subdivided by the CCC.

CCC is also developing a huge residential area at Khulshi leveling the hilly topography as well as constructing markets ignoring the necessity of open space.

Meanwhile, Chittagong City Corporation Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury while talking to this correspondent at his office on March 7 said that there was little scope for thinking about an open space in a country without having economic solvency.

"We need to achieve economic solvency first. Preserving open

spaces leaving lands unused or underutilised will not help the poverty-stricken people," he said.

"Besides, We have open spaces that do not come to any use as the city dwellers hardly dare to take a stroll over there due to lack of security," he added.

Mohiuddin said owner of such spaces can not be blamed much if they wanted to lease them out for commercial purposes to help businesses flourish and contribute to the economic growth of the country.

When asked about the impact of vanishing of open spaces, town planner and Architect Zarina Hossain said absence of open spaces and high plot coverage will lead to severe environmental degradation due to loss of trees and greenery.

"Large paved surfaces will deprive city areas of the soft surfaces for water seepage resulting in flash floods due to excessive loads on the drainage channels," she said. Pollution due to dust, noise and emissions will rise causing health problems.

Commercial capital runs without sewerage

City dwellers stay awake till late night for water

SHAHIDUL ISLAM

.....

The port city of Chittagong has been running without any sewerage though the Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) was established here 43 years ago.

The Dutch company 'BHK' showed keen interest to invest in the sewerage project for Chittagong Wasa in 1982, sources said.

'BHK' even prepared a feasibility study and the Chittagong Wasa also responded positively to the project and submitted a proposal in this regard to the ministry concerned but received no response.

Since then no suitable donor has come up in this regard, sources said.

The Wasa in fact hasn't taken any initiative or project in this connection in the last 20 years, sources said.

On the other hand, supply of water remains static for more than two decades as Wasa's newer projects have long been gathering dust only. As a result, the authority even fails to meet half the daily demand of the city dwellers leaving them in utter sufferings.

In absence of any sewerage, the daily human and household wastes are pouring in the canals and the river Karnaphuli. As a result, the river water is getting polluted everyday.

In 2002, LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan at a function organised by the Wasa in Chittagong announced that a project would be taken for sewerage soon. But his announcement has not seen any effect till date.

The city with about 3.6 million people needs 10 crore gallons of water daily. But Wasa supplies only a meager 2.5 crore gallons daily against the demand. For

the last few weeks, the supply was even below 2.5 crore gallons.

Tk505 crore Mohara Water Treatment Extension Project was taken during the Awami League government in 1999 to reduce the water crisis with a target of adding two crore gallons of water per day. The project had been shelved due to irregularities, system loss and corruption at Chittagong Wasa, sources said.

Wasa officials said that if implemented the Mohara Project would help reduce the water crisis in the port city to a large extent.

Researcher and journalist Muhammad Idris said the officials who appointed to head the Chittagong Wasa tend to set up deep wells or pipelines for increasing water supply rather than bringing a permanent solution to the crisis.

"For this reason, you see the

production of water for the last 21 years is the same. If this is the reality, then the officials at Wasa have accomplished nothing at the expense of people's tax," he said.

Citing a survey conducted last year, he said about half of Wasa subscribers stay awake till late in the night everyday to collect their required water from the supply and go for sleep just prior to dawn.

Wasa officials, however, attributed the present water crisis to the erratic power supply and frequent loadshedding.

"We could meet about 60 per cent of the total daily demand if we get uninterrupted supply of power," said an official seeking anonymity.

Regarding sewerage, he said that Chittagong Wasa was contemplating embarking on such a project but the officials could not give details.



"Chandranath Dham," a hill-top temple of mythological and religious interests to the members of the Hindu community, once again became lively with the footsteps of thousands of devotees on the day of Shibchaturdashi Puja on March 8. The Shibchaturdashi Puja, a four-day fair, was held amid festivity and grandeur at the temple located on the top of Chandranath Hill in Sitakunda. Clockwise from left top: Pilgrims irrespective of age and sex climb long and sinuous 3500-step stairs leading to the temple, some 800 meters above the sea-level, defying the scorching pains of journey, A priest blowing a shinga (horn) on the temple premises, Female pilgrims take lessons about conducting the rites before taking a "holy bath" and Devotees sing kirtan, religious songs.



theweekthatwas

Foundation of Buddhist temple laid

The foundation stone of Buddha Bihar (Buddhist temple) of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) was laid at Chittagong Bandar Uttar (north) Residential Area here on Saturday.

Minister for Shipping Akbar Hossain laid the foundation stone of the temple to be constructed at a cost of Tk23 lakh.

Shipping Secretary Md. Rafiqul Islam, S Dharmapal Mahathero of Bangladesh Bhixmu Mahashabha, Buddhist religious leader Dharmasen Mahasthabir also addressed the function with CPA Chairman AMM Shahadat Hossain in the chair.

CWE observes Int'l Women's Day

Chittagong Women Entrepreneurs observed the International Women's Day here on Tuesday with a call for women's empowerment for the socio-economic development of the country.

As a part of its programme, a 23-member delegation led by CWE President Monowara Hakim Ali visited the Kalurghat main factory of Unilever



Chittagong unit of Amra Muktijuddhar Santan, an organisation of the children of freedom fighters, forms a human chain with a slogan "Shantir Paxmey Nilima" (a programme for peace), at the call of Asma Kibria, wife of former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria. Dr. Muntasir Mamun, extreme left, opens the programme by

Bangladesh Limited that carried out different welfare activities for women.

Addressing a ceremony held on this occasion Monowara said that women of the country made increasing progress in every sectors, including education, trade and commerce. It indicated that women would be able to make more contribution to the national economy in future, she said.

Unilever Bangladesh General Factory Manager Hasan Zafar, Personnel Manager Md. Shahabuddin, Safety Manager Mashi-Ud-Doza, Production Manager Mahmudul Hasan, PPM Co-ordinator Enam Ahmed were present.

9 bill defaulters arrested

Nine consumers were arrested for defaulting on the bill of Tk44 lakh during a mobile court of Power Development Board (PDB), Chittagong, on Tuesday.

Magistrate Abu Naser conducted the court. Giasuddin, proprietor of Maxwell Re-rolling Mills of Bandartilla, was arrested as his mill alone defaulted on the bill of Tk33.74 lakh.

The court was also conducted at different areas of Katgarh, Uttar (north) Patenga, Maizpara and Sea-beach.

The court also arrested one Shafiq for defaulting on the bill of Tk1.40lakh, Sekander and Yusuf for Tk74 thousand, one Nurul Alam for Tk84 thousand, one

Hanif for Tk1.37lakh and one Abdus Salam for Tk2.74 lakh.

Fertilizer worth Tk one crore seized

Members of Bangladesh Navy during their regular anti-smuggling drive on Sunday seized 7,700 sacks of locally produced urea fertilizers from the bay near Saint Martin's Island in Cox's Bazar.

The fertilizer was being smuggled by two boats.

The Navy men also seized the engine boats used in the smuggling and arrested 22 people in this connection.

New CCC school bldg opens

A newly constructed two-storey building of a school run by the Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) at Lalkhan Bazar was inaugurated on Sunday.

Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury inaugurated the new building of Shaheed Nagar City Corporation Girls School constructed on 8,355 sq feet area involving around Tk67.5 lakh.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony as the chief guest the city mayor said as

the number of schools was insufficient proportionate to the students of the city, the CCC initiated for setting up and running schools at every ward.

CCC Chief Executive Officer Mostafa Kamal Uddin, Chief Education Officer Professor ATM Saleh Zahur, local social worker Dr. Md. Yusuf Chowdhury, Maizuddin Ahmad, Ridwanul Bari, Woman Ward Commissioner Hasina Zafar and Head Master Saifur Rahman also spoke at the inaugural ceremony.

School Implementation Committee President Moslem Uddin Ahmed chaired the ceremony and local Ward Commissioner Badiul Alam made the address of welcome.

Standard Bank to set up modern hospital in Ctg

Standard Bank-Chittagong Press Club (CPC) Annual Sports were held here on Friday.

Standard Bank (SB) Chairman Quazi Akramuddin Ahmad inaugurated the sports competition at the CPC auditorium.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony as the chief guest, Akramuddin said that journalists played the role of spokesmen and provided guidelines for the nation

through their writings.

He assured continuous support of the bank to Chittagong Press Club. He said that Standard Bank would also set up a modern hospital in Chittagong soon.

Industrialist and Standard Bank Nani Gopal Saha and noted sports organiser Ruhul Amin were special guests at the ceremony with CPC President Abu Sufian in the chair.

CPC General Secretary Kalim Sarwar and Sports Secretary Mohsin Chowdhury also spoke.

CHT ministry plans to import Indian ass

Ministry for Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Affairs has taken an initiative to import ass from India and train locals to use them for transporting goods in the hilly areas of the three hill districts.

CHT Affairs Minister Mani Swapan Dewan said this while he was talking to the journalists at Bandarban on Friday.

The process for importing Indian ass will be completed within a month, he said.

Each ass will cost Tk25,000, he said. An ass breeding centre will be set up in the country to send those in different inaccessible hilly areas, he said.