

SIRAJ UDDOWLAH PARK

Unclean, unhygienic and uncared for

IMRUL HASAN

Siraj Uddowlah Park, at Naya Bazar, a place of historical value is losing its glory because of the negligence and mismanagement of authorities concerned.

The park beside Yusuf Road, once famous as a place of entertainment is now lying unclean and completely isolated.

"For the last four years, we have not been able to take a walk or exercise nor have children been able play in the open space as the environment is unhygienic and unclean," said Mirja Harun, a private employee living Bangshal for the last 20 years.

Taimur Alam, a 50 year-old government employee living in Babu Bazar said: "My children and I used to walk in the park every morning. But now the place is so dirty that I don't feel like stepping into it."

"The situation of all parks in the city is almost as same as this. It is sad that the authorities concerned are not taking any measures to preserve the park," Taimur said.

The iron fence around the park, the seats and trees are being destroyed day by day, he added.

"The guard deployed to safeguard the park is irresponsible and this paves way for miscreants to fell trees," said Abdul Rahman, a grocer beside the park.

Residents also alleged that the park is a safe heaven for miscreants, drug peddlers and addicts as well as prostitutes.

When asked, Mrs. Suraiya Begum, ward commissioner of Dhaka City Corporation's (DCC) ward number 43 about any action she has taken, she said that the DCC would start reconstruction of the park very soon as a part of its development programme...

"As dusk falls peddlers sell drugs openly and middlemen along with the sex workers gather in the park where the deals take place," said Habibul Bahar, a Nayabazar resident.

When asked, Mrs. Suraiya Begum, ward commissioner of Dhaka City Corporation's (DCC) ward number 43 about any action she has taken, she said that the DCC would start reconstruction of the park very soon as a part of its development programme to uphold the environment of all parks in the city.

Regarding the allegation that some of her men have occupied the open space and set up bus counter, she said: "If there is any specific allegation against my men, I will resign from this post."

Residents of Zindabazar, Babu Bazar, Naya Bazar, Prasanna Poddar Lane, Islampur Road and Bangshal are annoyed about the present condition of the park and the

negligence of the authorities.

"We applied to the DCC for the reconstruction of the park but no action has been taken yet. The environment of the park is worsening day by day," said a resident.

There are 10 to 12 bus counters along the footpath adjacent the park and the passengers too add to the unhygienic and dirty environment.

"Some people use the park as a shelter for their cattle," said a nearby phone seller.

A high official of the DCC's estate department admitted that they were aware of the situation of the park.

"Most parks in the city are encroached by miscreants. We tried to evacuate them from the park at least five times in the 12 months. They come back as soon as we leave the place," he said.

WATER CRISIS IN BADDA

A recurring problem

WAHIDA MITU

A severe crisis in water at Satarkul Road in North Badda has been persisting for over a month, causing unbearable sufferings to local residents.

The area that comes under the purview of zone-5 of Dhaka Water and Sewerage Supply Authority (Wasa) is receiving a scant supply of water from the Purbachal and Shadhinata Sharani pumps.

Earlier the residents received water just for 30 minutes between 1 and 4 am, and water was available on a first come, first served basis. On some occasions there was no water at all, leaving residents awake all through the night.

The water shortage has been prevailing for last three months but the situation worsened last month. Residents now depend on neighbouring areas to for water for daily use.

The crisis is giving rise to water-borne diseases like diarrhoea and dermatitis in the area.

Narrating the plight, Md Habibul Aman, a resident of the area, said they got a meagre supply of water late night only three times last month.

"I had to do without a bath for more than two days. We survived by fetching drinking water from neighbours," he said.

"My only solution was to set up a tube well which cost me Tk 8,000 in addition to the Wasa bills that I regularly pay," said

Fazlul Haq Sharif, another resident.

The residents of the area made verbal complaints to Wasa several times but received no results. Finally, they went to Wasa office and requested some action to be taken to solve the crisis, but the officer-in-charge was unable to respond positively.

When contacted, one of the high Wasa officials said that they were not aware of a water crisis in the area.

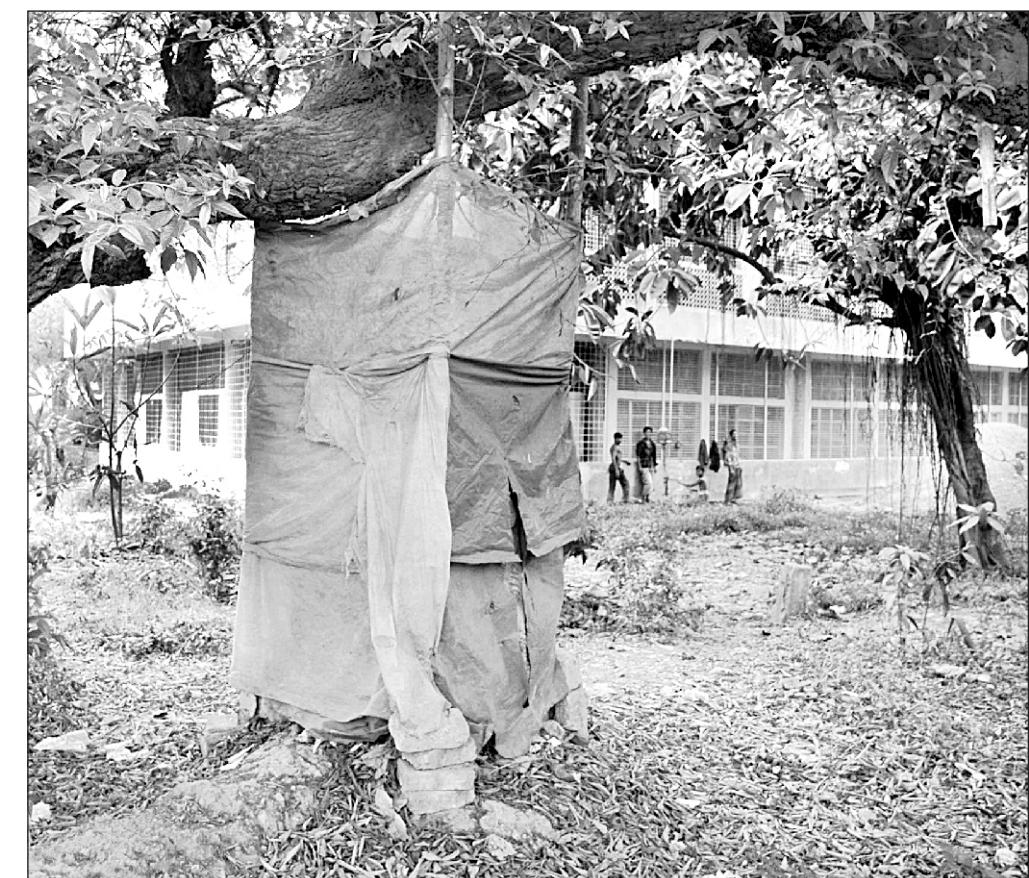
"We have established nine complaint offices, but there are no such complaints lodged at any one of them," he said.

He also said: "Wasa has the ability to flood the Saturkul area. Most Wasa vehicles used for delivering water during emergencies are idling. If we had received complaints we would have utilised the vehicles to supply water to the affected areas."

He contacted some officers concerned and found the existence of the water crisis in Satarkul Road and assured a solution to the problem immediately.

The residents of the area were furious when they were told that Wasa had not received any complaints.

"They are so disorganised that they are not aware of the crises that residents have to face without water," said Waziullah Ahmed, a resident himself.



A makeshift latrine built behind Central Library of Dhaka University. The authorities have not taken any action to remove it.

From bad to worse

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According to sources, Wasa produces 130 to 132 crore litres of water against a demand of 160 crore litres a day and 40 to 45 percent of the production is wasted everyday due to system-loss causing a crisis of 80 crore litres of water daily.

City dwellers were not familiar with a gas crisis, and that too has hit them when everything else is going wrong. The situation is bad in kitchens in most areas but is worse in the CNG filling stations.

About 25 stations have suspended operations due to the gas and the electricity crisis, resulting in long queues of vehicles waiting to be re-fuelled.

The worst affected are the commoners who are bound to pay extra to CNG auto rickshaws, taxi cabs and other such vehicles.

"Earlier CNG drivers claimed Tk five to 10 in excess to the metered fare. Now they ask for a minimum of Tk 20, blaming the gas crisis and

related problems," said Afzal Islam a private service holder.

The election season has started. The wheels of politics are turning in the capital with meetings, rallies and other programmes everyday adding to the already chaotic traffic in the city, along with the unplanned road digging all over the city by the utility service authorities.

The two 'dream flyovers' opened to control the traffic congestion have failed to serve their purpose, because of the lack of vision at the time of their construction.

Overall situation is going from bad to worse, more and more people are migrating to the city daily dreaming of opportunities. It is predicted that in 2016 Dhaka will be the fourth largest city in the world with 21 million people. Are we ready to face this challenge?

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