

SEGUNBAGICHA PLAYGROUND

Next victim of mindless construction?

DURDANA GHIAS

Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) has finalised plans to build a four-storey Upazila Research Centre (URC) on a part of the only playground in Segunbagicha following a proposal of the Department of Primary Education (DPE).

This playground in Segunbagicha is going to be another victim of mindless construction in the city destroying open spaces. The move has surprised as well as angered the locals.

Teachers, students and guardians of the three schools and residents of the area are now desperately trying to save the field as this is the only playground for thousands of students of the three schools and children of surrounding areas.

"Children from Kakrail and Topkhana areas also come to play here because this is the only open space in this area," said a resident.

Assemblies, annual and inter-class football and cricket tournaments of 2,500 students of the three schools are arranged on this playground. Girls' volleyball tournament and annual sports of UCEP and other schools are arranged here, locals said.

On Wednesday at around 11:30am, 20 children were playing football on the playground. "It broke our hearts when we heard that a building will be built here. We have tournament all round the year. If our field is grabbed then where will we go to play?" said Rubel, a student of class seven of Segunbagicha High School, looking sad and crestfallen.

The playground has an area of around 1.5 bigha of land. Forty four percent of the field belongs to Segunbagicha High School and 40.3 percent to Government Ideal Primary School, according to the headmasters of the respective schools. The field is also shared by



Children playing in the Segunbagicha playground, the only recreational open space in the area.

Begum Rahima High School.

Although most parts of the field belong to the schools the decision to construct the building was taken keeping the school authorities in the dark.

"A few days ago I saw some people doing soil test on the playground. They told me that a research center would be built here. That was the first time we came to know that a building would

be built here," said an elderly teacher requesting anonymity.

"Thousands of students of three schools, and children from nearby areas play on this field. These children can go astray in the absence of recreational facilities. How can any person with a conscience take such a decision to destroy this field is beyond my comprehension," he said.

The ground floor of Ideal

Government Primary School, which has a six-storey foundation, is mostly vacant and its vertical extension towards east can make space for eight rooms. Teachers urged that these spaces could be used as URC.

Motahar Hossain, assistant engineer, Dhaka division, LGED, said it is a project of Tk 16.40 Lakh funded by the World Bank and the proposal came from DPE. An URC

attached with the Ideal Government Primary School, will be built on the part of the field belonging to the same school to train primary school teachers. In the first phase they would build one-storey of the four-storey building.

"As an engineer I can come up with two suggestions to save the field, if one of the buildings has the required foundation and the rooms can be made 20x30 feet then URC

can be made on top of it," he said.

Sources at DPE said that its planning wing is looking after the project.

"As per official rule the site was selected by the representatives of LGED, Upazila Education Officer and URC Inspector and then approved by primary and mass education ministry. I do not know why they selected a playground in the first place and now after getting the approval we came to know about it," said a high official of DPE.

Now the headmasters can apply to the divisional deputy director of DPE and district primary education officer to solve the matter, he added.

Yusuf Chowdhury, convener of Shegunbagicha field saving committee said, "This is the only playground in ward-56. We treasure it. There is Dhaka University playground but we cannot use that. The area is now swarming with apartments. Where will these children go? If they remain confined for long they will go astray."

A local resident said that the authorities are in a hurry to lay the foundation of the building because of money involvement in the process of constructing a new building.

"I myself am a contractor so I know that there are ample chances of theft in laying foundation of a building than making additional floors. Besides why will they resort to a new building without discussing the matter with us when we can accommodate the URC in our existing buildings?" he said requesting anonymity.

Manjur Hossain Malu, deputy general secretary, Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) said that the playground is used by the project of BFF and Asia Football Confederation to promote football among youngsters under the age of twelve in the grassroots level.

"If this field is lost then we will not be able to use it as a training

ground," said Malu, who was a student of Segunbagicha High School and became a famous footballer. Many other famous footballers of the country had grown up playing football in Segunbagicha playground.

STORY OF YET ANOTHER PLAYGROUND!

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The T&T playground on Manik Mia Avenue still remains inaccessible to children and youngsters of Indira Road and Farmgate as the Bangladesh National Weavers Association (BNWA) left the playground in a dilapidated state after concluding a month-long fair over 30 days ago.

To the dismay of residents, the Ministry Of Housing and Public Works rented out the playground to the BNWA in March to set up over 100 stalls to promote traditional weavers of the country. Hundreds of children and youngsters in the congested Indira Road, Farm Gate and Nakhla para use the playground everyday.

"They have no right to leave behind hundreds of holes on the ground and also piles of bricks to turn the playground inaccessible," said Farhana Rahman of Indira Road, who accompanies her children every day. "This shows how disrespectful these people are to our children," she said.

Officials at the Ministry of Housing and Public Works declined to accept responsibility of cleaning up and repairing the playground.

"Those who took the rent they should clean the playground," said an engineer of the Public Works Department requesting anonymity.

Despite repeated attempts officials of the BNWA could not be reached over phone.



T&T playground left in a sorry state.

Circulating raggedy two taka notes

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

Around 600 million pieces of worn out and dirty two-taka notes circulating in the market have become a major cause of public nuisance and suffering.

Some of these notes are so worn out that they have lost all the identification marks and original features. It has become impossible to identify the original from the counterfeit.

Some others shredded into pieces have been so widely taped to keep it in one piece that they have become a lump of paper and thin plastic hardly resembling money.

It has become a cause of quarrels in the streets of Dhaka and elsewhere in the country.

Abbasuddin, a rickshaw puller engaged in a scuffle with a grocer in his neighbourhood in Mirpur. The grocer refused a two-taka bill and demanded a better one. Abbasdudding explains, "Usually people refuse to take worn out money. In the case of two taka, no one is refusing to accept because this is what we all have right now."

"With all the scotch tapes needed to keep it together the two-taka notes are worth Tk 3," said another customer amusingly.

"They are so dirty and lumpy that it has become difficult to carry them in the money bag or pocket," he added.

Farhana Afrin a customer in New Market area said, "Every time I have to use Tk 2 notes I feel like washing my hands"

These notes are posing severe health hazards to its users. With the exchange of currency various germs are transmitting.

A high official from the



Worn out two-taka bills.

Bangladesh Bank (BB) who did not want to be named told Star City that around a year ago the bank decided not to print two-taka bills anymore.

He explained, "In our every day life when we deal with kitchen markets, grocers, bus or rickshaw fare, smaller or less valuable notes have more market demand. They

exchange hands more than the bigger notes. This is why they decay faster."

"It was decided that more coins would be circulated because they have prolonged durability while Tk 2 notes has around 2 years longevity. The crisis began when we could not manage to produce the coins in time

because of delay in the tender process", the official said.

"Another reason is that people have a habit of collecting coins. This has become a major problem and created pressure on the paper bill so we changed our decision all over again", he added.

During last Eid BB circulated 61 million pieces of newly printed Tk 2 notes. "But they have also decayed faster because of the scarcity of decent notes it created pressure on them too."

Old notes for new ones, it is a common business in Gulistan and Nababpur intersection. The businessmen usually offer a deal of Tk 95 in exchange of Tk 100 worth two-taka bill. Later they exchange the money from BB.

One of the businessmen from Gulistan said that it is a loss for them to accept Tk 2 notes these days because they cannot exchange them from BB.

BB has a desk to change worn out notes. People cannot change two taka notes even from the bank, as there are no new notes.

The central bank has over 30 million pieces of worn out Tk 2 notes, which the bank will destroy. Every year the central bank destroys 30 per cent currency of the total circulation.

The government in January has given the approval of printing and procuring notes and coins of Tk 2 to BB.

"We have asked all the banks to gradually withdraw the Tk 2 notes from the market. Fifty million pieces of new Tk 2 notes will be circulated within two months", the official said.

Around 50 percent of the country's total transaction takes place in Dhaka city he mentioned.

Cute cubs attract visitors in Dhaka zoo

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

On average around 10,000 people visit Dhaka Zoo each day. On Fridays and other holidays the visitors number increases up to 30,000. During the past week however, inquisitive visitors especially children are spilling over at the zoo premises. Special attraction, the sight of adorable tiger cubs playing around the cage.

Born three weeks ago on May 4, the triplet tiger cubs made their public debut on May 22. While the cubs play around the cage the proud mother Promila watches over.

Six-year old Nabila, merely a baby herself said, "All babies are beautiful but tiger babies are even more beautiful."

Another visitor in front of the cage said, "When they mature these tiger babies will become ferocious beasts but right now they are the most adorable creature on earth."

Kazi Fazlul Haque, curator, Dhaka Zoo said that the cubs so far seem healthy. "However it will not be possible to know about the gender of the babies before one or two month passes. If we handle the babies now the mother will stop taking care of them"

Before the babies were born the mother was moved to a separate cage. The father Raja is currently living in the adjacent cage.

Food for the mother has been increased. "We are giving 2kg milk, 12kg meat and water to the mother. To be more cautious in this weather we are adding medicine with the water," Haque added.

"The babies will remain in a

Dhaka Zoo has a good record of caged breeding. Zoo authority however is having a hard time providing room for the increasing number of inmates because of space constraints. In November 2006 two tigers were sent to Kuwait as gifts

separate cage with their mother for about 6 months. They will be shifted to another cage when they will start to take solid food," he said.

Dhaka Zoo has a good record of caged breeding. Zoo authority however is having a hard time providing room for the increasing number of inmates because of

space constraints. In November 2006 two tigers were sent to Kuwait as gifts. With the new addition the current number of tigers in the zoo is 15.



Promila, the mother, with one of her newborns.