

OSMANI UDYAN

# Too scary for DCC officials

A nexus among addicts, vagabonds, beggars and other antisocial elements has made the park insecure even for the DCC officials

DURDANA GHIAS

Officials of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) are now scared to enter Osmani Udyan, one of the city's last remaining open spaces, due to threats from addicts, vagabonds and other antisocial elements.

Abul Hasnat, executive engineer, zone 5, DCC, said often the vagabonds openly attack DCC gardeners and other staff when they go to the park.

"I feel frightened when I go to inspect the ongoing work of the park's beautification. I fear they can attack me anytime because often they beat up our gardeners. Prostitutes roam freely after dusk," he said "At present our main challenge is to free the park from the grip of vagabonds and improve its environment, otherwise it will be difficult for us to continue project work," said Hasnat.

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One of the DCC engineers involved in beautification of Osmani Udyan said the park is at present under the grip of vagabonds, beggars and drug peddlers.

"There is a nexus among drug peddlers, muggers and prostitutes. The place is totally insecure," he said.

"Many times we have requested the police including the Inspector General of Police verbally to take action against the vagabonds. But what they managed to do till now is walking in front of the park's gate," said the

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official.

"Last month we lodged a general diary with Shahbagh Police Station but it was of no use. We need the help of the police because we do not have our own law enforcement people," he added.

Osmani Udyan, a historical park of the city situated on 23 acres of land, is the only breathing space in the area. It was closed down to the public over one and a half years ago due to its beautification.

The first phase of the project

In the first phase DCC fenced the entire park with a combination of a concrete wall, iron grills and shrubs. A 2-kilometre walkway and an artificial lake were made in the park.

The second phase of the work that has already been started includes landscaping, planting grass, ornamental trees and big trees, making flower beds, installation of lights, drainage system, non-mechanised recreational toys and sand pit for children and a separate area for women.

"For landscaping we are dividing the place into high and low grounds so that it does not become muddy in monsoon," said Hasnat.

Several acres of original land of the park are under illegal occupation by different groups for the last two decades. Among them are Peer Yameni Market, a club of Muktijoddha Sangsads, a Wasa pump house, Golap Shah Mosque, an air-conditioning plant of Osmani Memorial Hall authorities and a road to the police barrack, said DCC sources.

There is a committee called Osmani Udyan development, beautification and modernisation advisory committee, which consists of members of the civil society, educationalists and environmentalists.

Prof Sirajul Islam, member of the committee, said that they had submitted the plan of the project to DCC on September 25, 2004.

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was completed in September last year at the cost of Tk 2.93 crore. The second phase, costing Tk 3.40 crore, is going on.

The vagabonds were evicted from the park by DCC but they were back again after a year of the eviction.

To free the Udyan from this problem, DCC constructed a concrete wall around the park to prevent floating people from entering. But still they are infiltrating into the park and residing there at night.



Vagabonds, beggars, prostitutes and drug peddlers make Osmani Udyan an insecure place DCC inspectors.

STAR PHOTO

RAJUK DECENTRALISATION

## Not much to cheer about

New zonal offices of Rajuk are yet to make any tangible effect



Rajuk's zonal office at Mahakhali.

STAR PHOTO

TAWFIQUE ALI

Setting up of zone offices for decentralisation of Rajuk, aimed at lessening public harassment, has not made any tangible difference yet, rather is increasing sufferings of the service-seekers in some cases.

The city development authority, Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakha (Rajuk), on March 4 opened two, out of planned four, zone offices at Mohakhali and Uttara.

A special board meeting of Rajuk took the decision on decentralisation of Rajuk functions on February 6 with objectives to expedite service delivery, enhance efficiency, prevent corruption and lessen public sufferings. But the zone offices of Rajuk are not what they ideally should have been, said experts.

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## Rickshaw fare on the rise too

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

"You have to consider how the prices of food is increasing every day. We do not have any other cost involved in our life other than food. If we don't take it from you where would we get it from," said rickshawpuller Mohammad Ali who came from Sherpur

Some of the rickshaw pullers said the daily deposit of rickshaws has increased since there is a shortage of rickshaw in the city due to seizure of a large number of rickshaws during the past few years and making many roads off-limits to rickshaws.

Rahmatullah, another rickshawpuller from Tejgaon said, "Our daily deposit has increased. Owners are now charging Tk 40 for half day. For a new rickshaw the charge is Tk 50 and we have to bear all the necessary repairing costs during our shift. So we have to increase the fare to survive in this difficult situation."

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With the price hike of essentials rickshaw fare is also going up.

SEDD ZAKIR HOSSAIN

SHANKHANIDHI HOUSE

## DoA asks DC office to cancel lease

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Dhaka to immediately cancel the lease of Shankhanidhi House, a listed historical structure, and hand it back to the DoA.



Shankhanidhi House at Tipu Sultan Road in the old part of the city.

The move comes after Paribesh Bachao Andolon, an environmental group, urged the DoA to free the historical site from an illegal lease issued by the DC office in 2002, defying the law of the land.

Md. Khalequzzaman, deputy director, DoA, confirmed on Thursday that they have sent a letter to DC officially asking them to cancel the lease.

"We have sent a letter to DC asking him to cancel the lease of the house and hand it over to us," he said.

However, DC Kamaluddin, could not confirm the receipt of the letter on the same day.

Following reports published in the Star City the DoA said that they would send a letter to DC office asking them to cancel the lease.

Defying the law ADC Revenue office of DC office leased out two-thirds of this listed archaeological

heritage building on February 2, 2002.

Ananda Gopal Sankhanidhi, the successor of Sankhanidhi family visited Dhaka in May and urged the authorities to preserve this historical site.

Shankhanidhi House, a building with significant architectural features on Tipu Sultan Road in the city now houses an automobile workshop, lube shops, two families and an office of workshop owners association.

Present inhabitants of the house have changed its original features according to their whims while an automobile workshop rented out by lessees in the ground floor has blackened the beautiful courtyard.

According to an inscription, whitewashed at present, it was built in 1921 by two merchant brothers Lal Mohan Saha and Gaur Nitai Saha.