

A repented BNWA starts fair anyway

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Amidst protest by local residents and environmentalists, Bangladesh National Weavers Association (BNWA) yesterday started its month long fair at the T&T playground in Sher-e-Banglanagar, depriving thousands of local children from sporting activities.

Dewan Mohammad Ismail, President, BNWA, an unregistered organisation, however said that they have obtained all necessary permission from the Ministry of Housing and Public Works to occupy the playground for a month.

"PWD regularly rents out the playground. We just rented it for a month", said Ismail.

"We understand how important it is for the kids to play but we have spent so much for the arrangement and therefore we just want to finish the fair and go home," he said.

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as rent and Tk 22,500 as vat to PWD. To set up 26 stalls we had to spend more. Throughout the fair we just want to retrieve the investment and wind up the fair," he added.

Ferdous Ahmed Quarishi, Editor, Dainik Desh Bangla inaugurated the fair. While contacted Quarishi told Star City that he had no idea about the recent developments.

"We do have a very limited numbers of playground in Dhaka city but we have to consider the poor condition of the weavers as well. They don't have a permanent place to sell their products", said Quarishi.

"Playground should be used for playing. Authorities should consider about sporting issues first and then decide about renting playgrounds," he added.

Local people yesterday expressed their anger over the allocation of the playground. They said the authorities keep renting the play-

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ground on a regular basis for making some quick money at the expense of the public health and sporting activities of the local youths.

"This culture of occupying playground for months on commercial purposes, depriving the youths is not new, we have seen how city corporation behaved over the last few years with playgrounds in Dhanmondi

and other places in the city," said a resident of Nakhpalpara.

The BNWA faced a stiff resistance on July 1 when officials went to take over the playground. On the day local youths who had set up an artificial turf to play cricket on the playground refused to budge when BNWA officials asked them to go away. The Tejgaon

police came to the rescue of the BNWA and arrested a young cricketer for demanding his right to play. The young cricketer had to give an undertaking to the police promising that he would not return to the playground until the fair was over. The police released him after the written undertaking by the young man.



A month-long weavers' fair started on the T&T playground at the Manik Mia Avenue.

Waste pickers toil to safeguard

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"I do not want to work here. Please do something for me," he said. "I want to go to school but I am stuck with this work as I have to help my family."

With a sack on his shoulder, Rubel goes to Matuail sanitary landfill on the outskirts of the city every morning and collects scrap. He sells the things to local scarp traders. These things finally go to recycling industry to produce metal, glass and plastic goods.

"But every day is not bad. Sometimes we get valuable things. Once I got two hundred-dollar notes! I sold those to some people for Tk 3,000. That was a good deal," said the child unaware of the real value of \$200 in taka.

Rubel, like several hundred child waste pickers working at Matuail, earns around Tk 90 to 100 every day working around 10-12 hours a day. He has mother, grandparents and two sisters in his family.

There are around 200 families living in the area, which have at least one member working as a waste picker. City's informal but vibrant recycling sector starts with waste pickers like Rubel. Almost nothing that every household throws away in its bins everyday is wasted.

Children as young as five are constantly on the lookout for anything from a bone to a piece of plastic. The broken piece of glass that is dumped in a household bin today, is destined to be picked up by one of the pickers and sold to a bhangari, a shop that buys these

wastes in kilos and sells those to different factories for manufacturing of various items.

On most days Rubel goes to his workplace at dawn and starts sifting through the garbage. He collects broken glass, shreds of tin and plastic, scrap metal and animal bones until the evening.

"I sell plastic at Tk 20 per kg, metal at Tk 18 and glass at Tk 2. One full sack of these things can be sold at Tk 200," he said.

In any summer morning the whole area is full of activities. Several hundred people including children are seen working diligently in the pile of garbage that covered an area of several square kilometers.

"Generally I work from 7:00am to 10:00pm. Sometimes I feel sick. I do not like working here but what can I do with an ailing and inert father at home?" said Kajal, another worker.

Every day 3,200 to 3,500 tonnes of garbage is produced in Dhaka city of which 42 percent is collected by DCC, said sources.

Iftekhar Enayetullah, director, Waste Concern, an NGO working on waste management, said composting is a profitable means to recycle organic waste. "We have three compost making factories in the city. Our aim is to stop organic waste from going to Matuail. We want to collect the waste from DCC or kitchen markets and then take them directly to the factories."

However, Dr Tariq Bin Yusuf, project director, Landfill Improvement Project, DCC, said that composting is not much via-

ble. "DCC is not always able to recycle organic waste because at the initial level of composting it produces bad odour. Therefore the communities do not agree to it," he said.

According to him, source separation (separating dry waste from household level) is not feasible because firstly it will leave thousands of waste pickers out of their livelihood. Secondly, separating dry and organic waste at households is something inconsistent with our domestic culture.

"Some NGOs have introduced pilot projects of source separation in some areas [Asian Urbs in Sylhet, Prism in Khulna and Gazipur] by giving households two bins free of cost to separate dry waste. But these projects failed because people have started using the nice bins to store rice, pulses and other commodities," said Yusuf.

"Waste picking is a livelihood of thousands of people. By introducing source separation we will leave these people out of work," he added.

"In a social impact study by DCC with consultation from Buet in December, 2006 we have seen that they do not want alternative work because they have freedom in this job. So now we are working for their occupational health and safety by giving masks, gloves and identity cards. They will work 3 to 4 hours in the morning and then leave the place for the pay-loaders and excavators to do their job. This project starts from this month," Yusuf said.

Permanent structure

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Construction of this market is another glaring example of vanishing open space in this city of concrete jungle.

Lt Col Fazle Akbar, chief coordinator, Operation Daal-bhat, said that they are constructing a 'temporary' market and have taken permission from PWD and the eidgah mosque committee for the market.

The Public Works Department (PWD) has a plan to do the landscaping of the park in front of the eidgah at a cost of Tk 13 lakh.

"We will demolish the market when PWD gets the funds," Col Akbarsaid.

The 350-year-old Eidgah Mosque on the Satmasjid Road is now going to be obscured from sight behind the 'Daal-bhat' market.

PWD has earmarked the spot for a public park. Its design was finalised last year but delay in getting allocation has held back initiation of work. The Department of Arboriculture is supposed to do the job.

Taslimuddin Jamaddar, executive engineer, PWD, said he is not sure about when the work of the park could be started. "We have verbally told BDR that there is an administrative decision on the park. They said they will demolish the market when we get the fund allocation," he said.

A BDR official said that as prices of essential commodities are soaring, Daal-bhat

programme has more priority over other things.

Meanwhile, several residents of Dhanmondi have called up Star City to express frustration at the recent developments at the park site.

"We do not need a market here. We need some open space. We want a place to walk and the opening of the park as soon as possible," said a local.

Sources at PWD said the eidgah belongs to the Department of Archaeology, the mosque is a Waqf estate and the rest 2.5 acres of land belongs to PWD.

On June 11, 2006, the Ministry of Housing and Public Works approved a proposal to convert the PWD-owned land into a road-side park.

At present the land is occupied by a fair price shop of BDR, a water pump house of Wasa, a madrasa, a dormitory for madrasa students, a Desa office, a government-run warehouse, a cleaners' shed of DCC, tea-stalls, a hand-made packet factory and a marriage registrar's office.

Earlier, the mosque committee with the help of local ward commissioner Abul Khaer Bablu chopped down several trees on the site. Finding the land unattended for years, they attempted to grab it. Bablu is now in prison.

Dhanmondi Eidgah is one of the two similar eidgahs built in mid 17th century in the subcontinent. The other eidgah can be found in Delhi.

DCC to hide

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The sweepers will clean the scattered garbage with hose pipes while the linked sewerage line would carry the water along with liquid wastes," he added.

According to sources from the waste management department of DCC, the project is still in its initial stage. In the first phase of the project, DCC has divided the city into different zones that need major refurbishments in the waste disposal management.

"Currently we are planning to start the project in the selected zones. We will also require assistance from other authorities for the success of this project," said the official.

Under the first phase of the project, DCC will initiate 2 pilot projects by this month. Further continuance of the project would depend on the success of the pilot projects.

DCC officials believe that the initiatives would help them bring some major changes in the very outlook of the city and somewhat tackle the problems in the waste management.

DCC is the sole organisation responsible for the management of around 3 to 4 thousand tonnes of waste generated in the city every day. Out of this, only around 1,500 tonnes are disposed properly, while the rest are left unattended and dumped locally, suggests a joint study from Japan

International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and DCC.

DCC has only around 5 thousand cleaners for sweeping the streets and waste collection and disposal activities, that means less than one sweeper per thousand people.

While households usually dump their waste in the nearby bins and containers located on the street, some specific neighbourhoods have arranged house-to-house collection of garbage through community initiatives. However, all the household, commercial, institutional and medical wastes are disposed in the same bins on the streets.

Although the DCC gave the responsibility of waste management of certain areas to private organisations, this scheme received poor feedback from the city dwellers.

DCC officials admitted that the problem lies in the very infrastructure as it lacks proper co-ordination. But they believe that their new project to revamp the garbage bins would be a huge step to ease the overall situation of waste management.

"We have to improve the whole system. If implemented properly, the new scheme would improve the overall situation in the garbage management in the long run," said an official from the waste management department of DCC.

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- Bishal Center-Friday
- Baitual Mukarram Market-Friday
- Powell Market-Friday
- BCS Computer City-Friday
- Isha Khan Shopping Complex-Friday.
- Rajlaxmi Complex-Friday
- Stadium Market-Friday
- Bangabazar Market-Friday
- National Museum-Thursday
- Ahsan Manzil--Thursday.
- New Market-Tuesday
- Gausia Market-Tuesday
- Mouchak Market-Sunday
- Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
- Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
- Eastern Plaza-Sunday
- Farmview Super Market-Sunday
- Muktijuddha Jadughar-Sunday
- Dhaka Zoo-Sunday
- Shishu Jadughar-Sunday