

# 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.

"We have spent Tk 1.5 lakh

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-

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 Nakhalpara.

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.

were 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.

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.

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.

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.

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 scrap 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.

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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.

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