



thecitythatwas

On the banks of the Buriganga stands the pink majestic Ahsan Manzil, an example of the nation's rich cultural heritage. The home of Dhaka's Nawab and a silent spectator to many events, it has 31 rooms with a huge dome atop which can be seen from afar. Renovated and turned into a museum recently, it has 23 galleries displaying portraits, furniture and utensils used by the Nawab.

city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.

"I also want reforms within the party"

-- Khaleda Zia
BNP Chairperson

Told reporters after paying visit to the grave of former president Ziaur Rahman, on Thursday. Source: The Daily Star

"I can't imagine Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina joining hands ... I will quit politics and protest it, if it happens"

-- Tofail Ahmed
Awami League President Member

Told reporters, on Saturday. Source: The Daily Star

"For my grave health condition and looking at the faces of my family and the dear little sons, I have decided to retire from politics if necessary"

-- Abdul Jalil
Detained General Secretary of Awami League

Said in a letter to the chief adviser requesting release on humanitarian grounds, on Thursday. Source: The Daily Star

"I am a victim of circumstances. I have nothing to say other than heaving sighs"

-- Dr AZM Zahid Hossain
Secretary General of DAB, alleged to have amassed huge amount of money and property

Told a reporter after giving the description of his wealth to taskforce, on Saturday. Source: Prothom Alo

"Ask the town planner"

-- KAM Haroon
Chairman, Rajuk

Told a reporter when asked about the issuance of land use clearance to construct BGMEA building in the middle of Begunbari canal, on Sunday. Source: The Daily Star

"I have just joined this post"

-- Kamruzzaman Chowdhury
Chief Estate Officer of DCC for over six months

Told a reporter when asked about the handing over of 42 public parks to DCC from Rajuk, on Tuesday. Source: The Daily Star

"It must be kept in mind that we have started with a broken house"

-- Barrister Mainul Hosein
Law Adviser

Told reporters at his office, on Sunday. Source: The Daily Star

"Some unknown persons might have taken the land using my name but I don't know anything in this regard"

-- Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan
BNP Secretary General

Told reporters at his Gulshan residence, on Wednesday. Source: The Daily Star

Compiled by Durdana Ghias



The park at the Dhanmondi road 4 intersection has been taken over by a cricket academy

south part of Kalabagan Children's Park to the club during the then Awami League (AL) government. The club first raised a shed, later a one-story structure and recently it has built a two-story building inside the bound-

ary of the playground. As per the terms and conditions, the club is not supposed to build any structure on the playground. Moreover, the structures inside the playground do not even have Rajuk (Rajdhani

Unnayan Kartripakkha) approval, said a source.

Back when the Dhanmondi Lake development project was underway, the consultation firm involved with the project had suggested developing a children's park on the northern portion of the ground, a lakeside walkway along the filed as part of the lake development project and bridging the playground with the nearby island in the lake.

But the then AL minister for textiles Abdus Samad Azad ignored the suggestion.

Kalabagan Kirachakra later raised a boundary wall around the playground and occupied the entire children's park.

General secretary of Kalabagan Kirachakra, Saleh Ahmed Tipu, said, "It is true that we have no lease for the northern portion of the ground where we run a plant sales outlet."

"We have no approval for the two buildings constructed on the playground," he admitted and said that the use of the playground is restricted to all without prior permission from the club.

Another popular playground on Dhanmondi Road 8, known as Dhanmondi playground, is occupied by Dhanmondi Club and permission from the club is required to use it.

According to a recent survey conducted by the DCC in June 2007, Dhanmondi Club built office structures, five cricket pitches and a couple of football



Dhanmondi club enjoys the overall control of Dhanmondi playground.



The Kalabagan playground remains inaccessible to outsiders.

posts on the Dhanmondi playground and made the playground restricted to public.

Dhanmondi children's park, adjacent to roads 3, 4 and 5, is occupied by Dhanmondi Cricket Academy, a limited company.

A Dhanmondi resident, living there for over four decades, said requesting anonymity that the park used to be an excellent place for local residents for leisurely walks and their children used to play there freely. But now, the entry to the park has been restricted for the general public.

Locals complained that anyone wishing to use the ground has to pay the academy and even leisure walkers do not have access to the park.

The largest playground in Dhanmondi, known as Abahani playground, was leased out dubiously to Abahani Limited on a long-term basis by Public Works Department.

The public park behind Bangladesh Biman office at Motijheel was handed over to

Dhaka Bank for 'beautification'.

Former captain of national cricket team Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu, convenor of Parks and Grounds Programme Committee of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolan (Bapa), said the public use of a playground gets restricted once it is designated to a certain club or organisation.

"Usually, no tournament is held at such fields," Lipu said adding, "Any other club or team has to acquire permission to use the ground from its designated authority [the organisation that leased the ground]."

According to sources, anti-social activities such as gambling take place regularly at many of these so-called sports clubs.

Former adviser to caretaker government and environmentalist SM Shahjahan said the public parks must be used properly in the interest of the public. Commercial use does not serve the objective of maintaining public parks.

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TAWFIQUE ALI

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) and various other government organisations ignored responsibility to look out for the public interest by authorising commercial use of numbers of city parks and playgrounds by different private organisations.

It is an irony that when the DCC spends public money to "maintain these breathing spaces" on behalf of the residents of the city, the organisations -- with exclusive permission from the DCC -- bar the public from accessing these places.

Kamruzzaman Chowdhury, chief estate officer of DCC, said, "It is true that public use of playgrounds is denied in such arrangements." He however was not sure of exactly how many public playgrounds have been leased out to various private organisations.

Kalabagan Kirachakra, a sports club, occupies the entire Kalabagan Children's Park (Kalabagan Maath) and uses the playground for commercial purposes on a regular basis, according to locals.

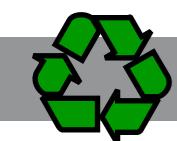
The then DCC mayor Mohammad Hanif leased out the

KHOKA'S CORNER

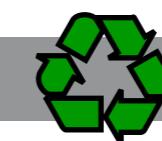


Parts of the main road at Hasnabad near the first Buriganga bridge is almost unusable. The road gets flooded with slight rains when traffic jam builds up as vehicles slow down to cross the dilapidated area.

STAR PHOTO



INFORMAL RECYCLING SECTOR 2



Plastic: Old town's silent revolution

DURDANA GHIAS

Using the waste plastic picked from landfill, plastic recycling industry is thriving in the old part of the city generating employment for hundreds.

Over 200 plastic goods factories are located in Islambagh, Kamalbagh, Siddiqbazar and Mitford areas. While walking through the countless dark alleyways of Islambagh it will be hard to believe that one of the most vibrant recycling industries is making a silent revolution in these areas.

On a visit to the area, this correspondent found hundreds of houses where workers were sorting through the waste plastic before selling those to the factories making plastic products.

Sitting in such a small house by a narrow alley, Monowara Begum was sorting through waste plastic collected and sold

by the waste pickers. Several gunny bags and cane baskets full of plastic pipes, mobile phone covers and plastic strips collected from worn out sandals were piled up there.

Monowara was sorting the waste plastic according to the colour and type. The red, blue and green strips were kept in different baskets. The strips from Bata sandals were of 'good quality' so those were kept in a different basket.

"The prices of plastic vary according to quality. Good plastic like the strips collected from Bata sandals sells at Tk 44 per kg. Low quality plastic sells at Tk 36 per kg," said Monowara who works for 12 hours a day, six days a week and earns around Tk 2000 a month.

Monowara's employer Shahidul Islam has been a waste plastic trader since 1978. He buys plastic collected by waste pickers and sells those to the

factories producing recycled plastic products.

Around 75 percent of the plastic factories are in Islambagh and Kamalbagh areas where this trade is going on for more than 50 years.

"We bring waste plastic from Nolgola in Mitford. Waste plastic comes to Nolgola from all over

DID YOU KNOW?

Every day total waste generation is 3315.70 tonnes in the city of which 137.57 tonnes of plastic is disposed of by the city dwellers

Every day 126.26 tonnes of waste plastic is being recycled in the city

Waste plastic recycling employs 22,792 people in the city

Recycling is saving DCC expenditure of Tk 3.08 crore a year by avoiding plastic waste

The rate of recycling in the city is around 66 percent

The growth of plastic waste is around 28 percent in the city

65 percent of the country's plastic factories are located in Dhaka

Source: Waste Concern

the other for melting the plastic for making various products. These factories make various products like sandals, shoes, bucket, mug, toys and bowls.

"At present we are passing through a bad time because of the government's move to evict roadside scrap shops where waste pickers sell the things they collect from waste. These shops supply plastic and other waste to places like Nolgola. So the supply chain is disrupted," said Shahidul.

The plastic sandal and shoe making factories in the area use worn out plastic sandals as the only raw materials. The other factories also use waste plastic.

In the factories, the waste plastics are cut it in smaller pieces in a machine and then melted in a furnace to make various products.

Abul Jalil, owner of a plastic shoe-making factory, told this correspondent how the cycle of

reproduction is complete in his industry.

"The plastic shoes we sell in the market wear out in a few years. Those are then collected by waste pickers and sold to scrap shops. Through sorting and melting the shoes return to us and are reproduced. This is a cycle," said Jalil.

"Our shoes are mostly used by villagers and people from lower income groups like rickshaw pullers, beggars, vendors and labourers. Our business was in its peak when village people started wearing shoes," he said.

"At present we are faced with two big problems; one is the huge competition with Burmese shoes and the other is load-shedding. The influx of Burmese shoes is eating up our industry. These are of good quality and cost less. The regular load-shedding is disrupting our production," he said.

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Workers assembling plastic shoes made of recycled plastic material.

STAR PHOTO