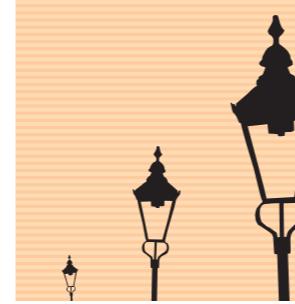


Narinda in the city means, "island given by God", according to its original pronunciation Narayandiya. The area came into being long before Mughal era. According to Azimushshar, Narinda stretched to present Bahadur Shah Park in the beginning of 17th century. He assumed there were English factories in the area in 1735. During Mughal period, Narinda was surrounded by canals and marshes. Narinda's washermen were famous in washing Muslin.

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Safety measures ignored in high-rise demolition

TAWFIQUE ALI

The authorities have ignored fundamental safety precautions in demolishing the 22-storey Rangs Bhaban in the city, said top engineers and experts.

Rajuk Chairman KAM Haroon said, "The labourer died because of his over enthusiasm and lack of cautiousness, as he moved to outer edge to hit a wall."

Asked about the safety gears needed for workers, he said safety belt was not arranged for them as they were not demolishing

any outer features of the building.

Bangladesh National Building Code (BNBC) provides for mandatory precautionary measures like safety belt, catch-platform, industrial safety helmet, goggles made of celluloid glass, gumboot and hand gloves for workers demolishing a building.

One of the 14 executive engineers engaged at the demolition site said on condition of anonymity that a number of labourers

suffered injuries in the legs in absence of gumboot.

Professor Sekandar Ali of the Civil Engineering Department at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) said that safety belt and helmet for the workers and protection roof or canopy around the building under demolition are some of the foremost and rudimentary safety measures for a demolition work.

Any demolition work must be carried out as per a plan and sequence prepared and supervised by engineers, he said adding that labourers should have insurance coverage.

Assistant Executive Director of Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS) Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed said there were no safety measures in sight from the day one. There was no protection roof around the building under demolition.

"Absence of this fundamental safety measure exposed the public to fatality or injury any moment... It is the over-enthusiasm of Rajuk for which an ordinary worker had to pay."

As per Bangladesh Labour Law of 2006, the employer or authorities concerned are obliged to provide the labourers with eye protective glass, ear safety gear and gumboot, said labour rights activist advocate Jafrul Hasan Sharif.

According to the BNBC, all the demolition works shall be done on approval by a building official or an engineer 'having experience in demolition of similar magnitude.'

There was an authorised officer concerned and a large team of 14 executive engineers were responsible for carrying out the demolition work of Rangs Bhaban.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22



Safety measures ignored during demolition of Rangs Bhaban.



File photo shows demolition of Rangs Bhaban.

FOLLOW-UP

Zoo badly needs more animal caretakers, other staff

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

Dhaka zoo, one of the most favourite recreational spots of the city's middle-income group is facing acute manpower shortage seriously hindering activities at the facility, said zoo officials.

Pointing out that the animals often bear the brunt of the crisis, they blamed the bureaucratic bottleneck at the Fisheries and Livestock ministry for delaying the recruitment process.

Dhaka zoo in Mirpur has a total number of 212 designated posts. Although the posts are not sufficient to run the facility efficiently, only 165 of them are currently working. The rest of the 47 posts are vacant for long, creating a pressure on the others.

According to the officials, the zoo is in desperate need of animal caretakers, security guards and cleaners. Around 40 posts are lying vacant for this particular group.

The situation developed during the last few years when employees in these vacant posts either retired or opted for other lucrative jobs. Situation worsened as none of these posts were refilled in time.

"It becomes really difficult when a member of the current staff become sick. It requires a certain person to take care of certain species of animals. One who takes care of the birds cannot handle the tigers", said a high official.

"Animals become familiar with certain caretaker. It takes time for them to accept a new face. Still we

have to employ one person for different species because we don't have any option", he added.

He said that the animal caretakers have no specialised education or training to handle the animals. They learn the job through 'trial and error' method.

Established in 1974 the zoo covers an area of about 186 acres of land. The zoo currently has 165 species of animals in the facility, out of which 55 are mammals, 72 birds and 32 are fish. There are also reptiles including snakes and crocodiles. The entire fleet consists of around 1823 animals living in around 400 sheds.

Zoo officials said that animal caregivers are often forced to work extra hours. Because of the acute manpower crisis, employees cannot even enjoy their

weekly holidays.

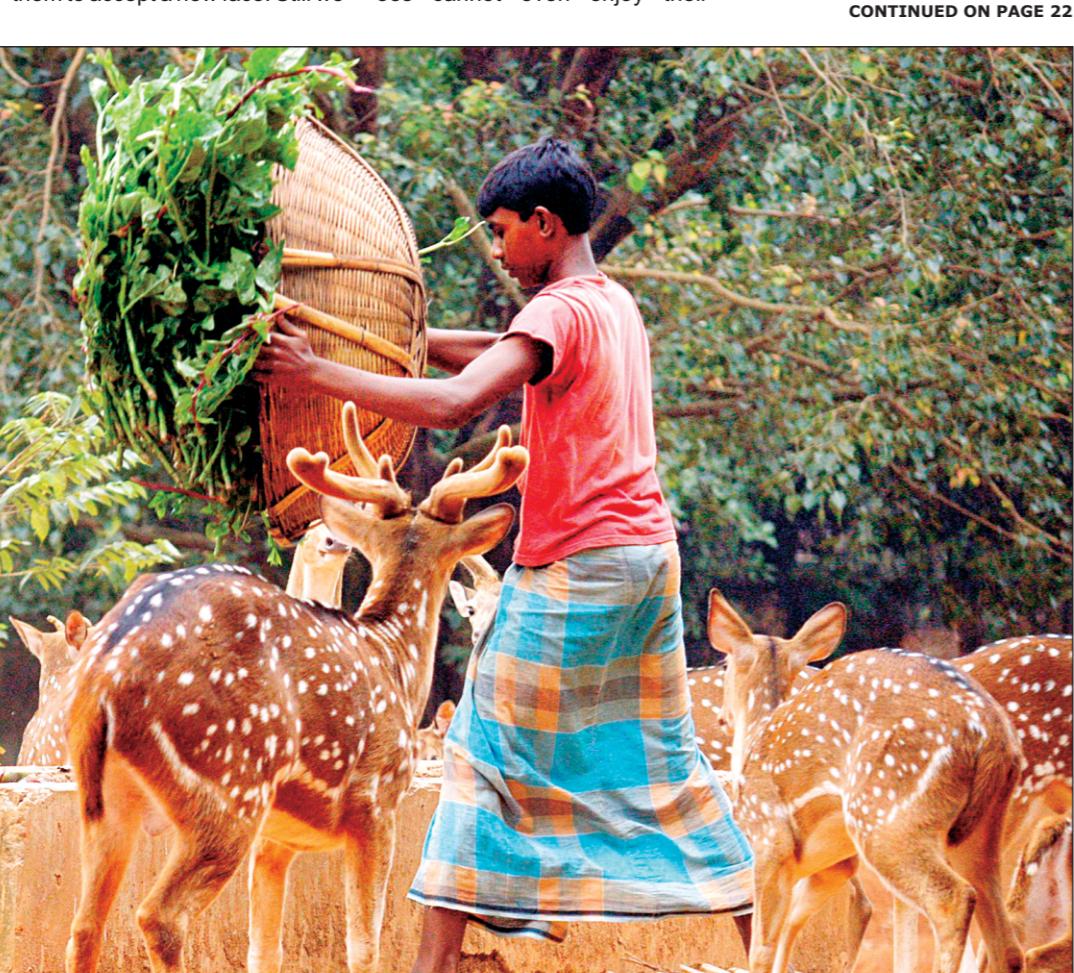
On an average around 10,000 people visit the zoo a day. On Fridays and Saturdays, visitors swarm the place seeking respite from the busy lifestyle of the city.

Majority of them belong to the middle and lower middle-income groups who visit the place hoping to spend a day merrymaking with the family members.

During the weekends the number of visitors almost doubles, increasing the workload of the staff tremendously, another official said.

"Animals are very sensitive. Sometimes visitors annoy them, for which an attendant is needed at the shed. We cannot provide attendant in many necessary cases", he said.

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SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Gulshan South Park finally to become a public park

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Gulshan South Park, at long last, is going to be turned into a public park by Dhaka City Corporation (DCC).

It is pathetic that the DCC took two years to reach this decision after freeing the park from a 25-year-long illegal occupancy by 416 of its sweeper families.

Since the park was freed in the first week of October 2005, ignoring formal directives from the then Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and repeated pressures from the ministry of public works, DCC remained dubious over developing a park on the site and was hell-bent on using the land for commercial purposes.

Following the eviction of the illegal settlement, the DCC tenaciously built a six-foot-high solid wall around the parkland although its chief executive officer M Saifuddin Ahmed had told The Daily Star on November 2, 2005 that DCC would build a three-foot see-through fence on the site.

According to DMDP (Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan) structural plan, boundary wall of a park must be see-through, said experts.

After wasting time and spending public money on the solid boundary wall, DCC now has to tear down the wall to replace that with a see-through one.

According to sources, city mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka has recently given his official approval for hiring a consultant to work out a plan for the development of a public park on the location.

It will, however, take around two months to get the proposed design of the park approved by beautification and park development advisory committee.

Chief town planner of DCC, Sirajul Islam, said, "We will dismantle the existing six-foot high solid boundary wall, leaving two to three feet height at the base and install transparent iron grille upto eye-level height so that the park remains visible from outside."

As per the proposal, DCC will initially rebuild the boundary wall

and develop walkways around the park on priority basis. There will also be a children's' corner with non-mechanised rides.

As per terms of reference (TOR), the landscaping consultant will get 45 days to survey the existing features of the parkland, prepare a drainage design (plumbing), electrical design and landscaping master plan.

The South Park, also known as Taltala Park and earmarked in the layout plan of Gulshan Model Town of 1962, has been abandoned since it was reclaimed from illegal occupancy.

Despite repeated directives from the PMO and objections raised by civil society and the media, the DCC took a mysterious stand and lingered on the park project.

In December 2005, DCC Mayor Khoka told Star City, "Our plan is to build a community centre on the open space alongside a park."

The DCC took over the South Park along with 42 other park-lands from Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) in 1982 to

develop and maintain those as public parks.

At that time, Rajuk handed over 3.99 acres of parkland to the DCC. Whereas, the latter occupied 6.33 acres of land by filling up a portion of adjacent Gulshan Lake.

Though entrusted with maintenance of around 50 public parks and playgrounds in the capital, DCC, over the past two and a half decades, has consistently facilitated encroachment and destruction of those, denying the city dwellers a little respite with open spaces.

State of most of the public parks is appalling while many are cleverly encroached on under DCC's authorisation for commercial use.

The DCC took over the South Park along with 42 other park-lands from Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) in 1982 to

develop and maintain those as public parks.