



SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Save ageing Pogose School



DURDANA GHIAS

Pogose School, one of the oldest schools of Dhaka, has become a living relic due to lack of steps to conserve the building located near Shankharibazar.

Founded on June 12, 1848, the school was initially run at the house of NP Pogose, a well-known Armenian at Armanitola and founder head teacher of the school. At that time it was known as Pogose Anglo Vernacular School.

The school was shifted for some time to a rented house of JC Panioty, also an Armenian, before being shifted to this building.

On a visit to the school last week this correspondent found the old school building in a shabby state. The two-storey building was standing with the quaint features of its own in the midst of a vast field. In the middle of the pediment the year 1848 is embossed in plaster.

The building is now used for administrative purpose only. Classes are held in another building. The portico in front of the entrance was crowned with battlements, a style of the colonial period.

Climbing up the wooden staircase one will find a long veranda, lined with wooden doors, on the first floor. Entering the last door of the veranda one will find the old cashier working at a quaint counter with wooden banisters.

There is a fireplace in a room once used as a classroom. The old teachers' room has a big table



The wooden staircase leading to the pillared veranda with joist and parline roof on the first floor of Pogose School.

and long benches with handles all around it. It has a quaint chandelier hanging from the roof.

On the wall in front of the headmaster's room the portrait of NP Pogose is hung prominently. The portrait is assumed to be drawn by C Pote, also an Armenian and teacher of the school during its early days.

Conservation Architect Dr Abu Sayeed M Ahmed said the school's structural design reflects the classical architectural style of the colonial period. "The school has arcaded

The central portion of the veranda on the first floor is highlighted with three projected bays that include four columns.

"At present the outlook of the building is poor. Its surrounding is quite barren. If trees, plants and gardens can be arranged in the surrounding areas then the building will become more appealing and its features will be manifested greatly to the visitors," said Dr Sayeed.

Present head teacher Zulfa Mohammed said the school has lost its past glory as one of the best schools of Dhaka since they are not getting good students for the last few years.

"Now we don't get good students like we had before. Previously good students from Shyampur and the other side of the river got admitted to this school. That stopped after closing down the eastern gate, which we shared with Jagannath University," he said.

"We had to close it down due to the political clashes among students who used to get into our compound when a fight broke. Now we have the entrance near Shankharibazar," said Mohammed.

The school's former students believe it is a matter of pride for them that the school is their Alma Mater.

"I was a student of the school in 1950s. At that time it was one of the most prestigious schools of Dhaka," renowned cartoonist Rafiqunnabi (Ranabi), an ex-Pogosean, said.

"I loved my school a lot because of the big field in front of it," he said. "At that time I was not aware of the heritage value of the building. But now I feel quite proud that I belong to this quaint place," he said.

Waste transfer stations to stop littering the streets

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The city managers have embarked on an innovative plan to change the way of disposing of the thousands of tonnes of garbage the city generates every day. Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) with the help of a non-profit organisation has brought 56 zones of the city under the plan, which will work with small garbage dumping stations.

"We are calling them mini waste transfer stations," said an official at DCC's waste management department. "The trash collected from the adjacent neighbourhoods will be stashed in these stations. This way the garbage trucks will have to make one pit stop to collect the trash rather than stopping in front of every garbage containers."

"The basic idea is to standardise the garbage disposal system in a way that the trash would not be lying around in streets. People will be obliged to dispose of their trash inside the containers rather than around it," he said.

"The tall brick boundaries are there to make sure that the trash would not lie around in streets. This will also stop the foul odour from spreading," the official said.

The paved floors of the transfer stations are directly connected to Wassa sewerage lines to help the flow of liquid waste. Water hoses will also be available near the containers so that DCC cleaners can hose away the scattered trash.

"Full-time sweepers will be around the transfer station to make sure that garbage is disposed in the proper way," the official added.

Sources at the waste management department of DCC said 12 such stations are now operational in the city. Another 24 will

be introduced very soon.

"We have divided the city into different zones that need major refurbishments in the waste disposal management. We have constructed the mini transfer stations in some of zones. Construction of transfer stations in the other zones is currently in progress," said Commander Masudur Rahman Chowdhury, chief conservancy officer of DCC.

The currently functional mini garbage transfer stations in the city are located in Kalyanpur, Mirpur-2, Mirpur-14, Kachukhet Bazar, Sayedabad, Karwan Bazar, Kalabagan, Natun Bazar and some other places.

The DCC scheme is being financed by a non-profit organisation called Association to Assist The Underprivileged (ASAUP), sources said.

"This is undoubtedly a good move," said Shafayat Hossain, a resident of Kalabagan. "If you watch closely, most of the people tend to drop the trash beside the

garbage container, not inside it. Now people will have to go inside the dumping station and dispose of their garbage rather than throw them in the street."

"Every morning on my way to office I see the garbage trucks making rounds inside the narrow streets to collect garbage from the containers, creating traffic jams. It will be better if they can collect the garbage from the mini dumping station on the main road," said Rezaul Rahman, a resident of Sayedabad.

"However, the authorities should put more focus on creating awareness among general people so that they dispose of their trash in an appropriate manner. Otherwise, this scheme will have little meaning," he said.

DCC officials believe the new initiative will help the corporation bring some major changes in the outlook of the city. This will allow them to tackle the multi-dimensional problem of

waste management that has become a major concern over the years.

DCC is the sole organisation responsible for the management of over 4,000 tonnes of waste generated in the of 360 sq km city every day.

Out of this whopping amount of waste, only around 1,500 tonnes are disposed properly, while the rest are left unattended and dumped locally, suggests a joint study by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and DCC.

The corporation has around 5,000 cleaners to sweep trash and litter off city streets. They are also responsible for waste collection and disposal activities. The number of cleaners per thousand population in the city measures below 1, sources said.

"We have to refurbish the whole system. If implemented properly, this would improve the overall situation in the long-run," said Masudur Rahman.



A mini waste transfer station in Mirpur.

Shops without trade licences on rise in residential areas

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

Ruining the residential character of Mohammadpur, most of the house owners of Tajmahal Road are setting up shops on the ground floors of their houses.

It is alleged that most of the traders are opening big shops there without trade licences in absence of monitoring by the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC).

"Recently, a good number of shops have been opened in our road and some are under construction. These shops are causing lots of sufferings to us," said Sarwar Jahan, a resident at Tajmahal Road. Customers of these shops park their vehicles occupying the road and creating traffic congestion, he said.

"Due to these shops, now it has become hard for children

and women to cross the road," alleged Shipon Akhter, a school-teacher and a house owner of the area.

For preventing commercialisation of the residential areas in the city DCC stopped providing trade licences in residential area since May 2007.

During a visit to the road this correspondent found about 50 under-construction shops on both sides of Tajmahal Road apart of existing shops of renowned companies.

Decoration of a new branch of 'Muslim Sweets' was going on just beside 'Writu Rang', a gift shop, launched last week.

This correspondent asked several traders about the trade licences. Some of them said they have licence while some others said getting the licence is under

process.

One of the owners of 'Writu Rang' admitted that they do not have trade licence. He said, "We are maintaining contacts with DCC for trade licence and the officials assured us of finding a solution. We do not have any intention to avoid DCC taxes."

A zonal official of DCC said DCC has not provided any trade licence for any shops at Tajmahal Road. Without commercial approval from Rajuk and National Housing Authority, DCC has not issued a single trade licence in a residential area after the ban.

"All these new shops on this road are operating their business illegally and dodging all kinds of DCC taxes as they do not have any account with DCC," he said.

Asked about taking action against such unauthorised traders, he said DCC would renew trade licence till September 30 and conduct spot inquiry afterwards.

Mohammad Alauddin, chief executive engineer of DCC, said the road inspector of the zone should report the issue but reality is that he did not.

He said local criminals often threaten the DCC inspectors asking them not to report suggesting action against the unauthorised activities. Most of the inspectors do not go for any action fearing attack by the criminals on their families.

A source at DCC said thousands of traders are operating business without trade licences not only at Tajmahal Road but also in other residential areas.



Police in a drive yesterday drove away the hawkers from the main roads and restricted them to the pavements. These hawkers occupied most parts of the pavements increasing sufferings of the pedestrians. On the other hand a section of unyielding vendors failing to get space on the pavements became 'mobile hawkers' selling their items on the streets. The drive was taken in view of the recurrent traffic jam in the city for the last few days.

ANIPUR RAHMAN