

Rangamati park turns into nursery

SHANTIMOY CHAKMA, Rangamati

Rangamati Pura Park, the lone oldest recreational park in the hill district, has now turned into a nursery after the municipality authorities have leased out two thirds of its land to a businessman.

The nursery owner hung a big signboard reading "Pura Nursery" at the park.

The park was inaugurated on August 25 in 1985 to facilitate the people of Rangamati a sort of recreation. It remained uncared-for years.

The authorities floated a tender in a bid to construct a community centre on the middle of the park in 2004. The World Bank also donated Tk 12 crore in this regard. The authorities stopped the work the same year following a stay order by the High Court.

The court issued the stay order to the pourasabha chairman after Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association (BELA) filed a writ petition against the construction. The municipality authorities also filed a petition against the order that the court dismissed. Alongside BELA, different environmentalist groups also came up with strong protest to stop construc-

tion of the community centre.

Sources said Pourasabha Chairman Habibur Rahman, failing to build the community centre, called an auction in 2005 where two thirds of the parkland was given to businessman Md Mozaffar Ahmed, who allegedly has close link with Habib, to build the nursery.

Some sheds and several trees of the park have been demolished during construction of the community centre. Later, most of the remaining sheds have also been damaged. But the authorities took no step so far either to reconstruct the sheds or beautification of the park. Taking advantage of their indifference, some illegal structures have also been raised at the park.

"We cannot enjoy beauty of the park now as major portion of it belongs to the nursery. The nursery owner made fences around major portion of the park, prohibiting entrance to the park," school students Riddhi Chakma and Alida Chakma said.

Former Pourasabha Chairman Kazi Nazrul Islam said immediate measures should be taken to protect the once beautiful park from ruination.

"The park is an invaluable asset of the hill town. Several hundred trees with wide range of variety were planted on the park. It's the oldest park in Rangamati and a place where people can take breath in serene wind. We have to protect this for our future generation," he added.

Environmentalist Md Anwar Hossain said, "We are concerned about the ultimate fate of the park. It must be protected. Rangamati is a tourism hill town but it very much lacks civic amenities."

Mozaffar, however, said he is ready to return the nursery land to the authorities for greater interest of the town if they cancel the agreement.

He said he took a three-year lease to establish a nursery and have been paying Tk 300 a month to the pourasabha. He said its a government land and they can take it back any time by following rules.

Pourasabha Chairman Habib denied awarding lease of the land to anybody, saying 'how can we give lease of a government land? We just gave Mozaffar permission for a nursery on temporary basis. The period is already over and the land is now ours.'

STOP MASSACRE IN GAZA

Speakers at a rally observed that the United Nations should take more strict and effective steps to save lives of the civilians especially children and women of Gaza in Palestine from the indiscriminate air strikes by the Israeli military.

They were addressing a rally during a human chain programme in front of the Chittagong Press Club on Monday. Child Development Centre run by Aparajeyo Bangladesh, a non-government organisation (NGO), and

Karnaphuli Centre jointly formed the human chain protesting the inhuman Israeli attack and killing of innocent children in Gaza.

A number of children and activists carrying placards participated in the programme.

Speakers said the indiscriminate killing of children and women in Gaza is the violation of human rights since every child is equal and valuable.

They also urged all the peace loving people across the world to come forward and raise their voice against the massacre.

Project Director of Child Development Centre Dr Kuntal Barua, Karnaphuli Centre Manager Mahub-Ul-Alam, senior social worker of Karnaphuli Centre Ujjal Sikder, child members of the project Mahmuda Akhter and M Salahuddin spoke among others.



Children form a human chain in front of Chittagong Press Club demanding an end to Israeli air strike on Gaza where a large number of children were killed. Bangladesh Children's Rights Forum organised the human chain on Tuesday.

STAR PHOTO

Ctg fire damaged properties worth Tk 39.34cr last year

NUR UDDIN ALAMGIR

Properties worth around Tk 39.34 crore were damaged in 836 fire incidents in Chittagong district last year, said the sources at Chittagong Fire Service and Civil Defence headquarters.

Lack of sufficient water sources and narrow alleys in the densely populated areas cause additional damage to properties and human lives as the fire fighters can't reach the spot in time.

The amount of damage could be brought in a minimal stage with the available equipment, resolving the manmade problems, sources said.

The fire service officials said the main problem they face during the fire is lack of water sources that they need after the carried water from the fire stations.

The tanker can contain four to five thousand gallons of water while the pumps the fire fighters use discharge 250 gallons water a minute.

In this situation, they said even in a small fire incident, fire fighting appeared difficult due to unavailability of open water source like hydrant or water body while going back to the stations for water amid traffic congestion is impossible.

Besides, rampant filling of water-bodies for constructing buildings in the city areas without space for roads by the landlords pushes the situation to a difficult stage.

On the other hand, during fire at any high-rise building the fire fighters can hardly use the snorkel, a sophisticated lift for fire fighting, due to narrow alleys and insufficient space for installing the

88.5 feet equipment.

Overhead electricity, telephone and satellite cables are the main barriers for using the snorkel, they said.

The damages of properties and life in the garment and other industrial units in the city occurred due to violation of the construction code while

have are sufficient to fight fire incidents if the building and industry owners follow the rules," he said, adding that their regular mass training and awareness campaign are going on to reduce damages in the fire.

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers' and Exporters' Association

(BGMEA) First Vice President MA Salam told The Daily Star that they have already taken initiative in this regard considering its importance.

He said eighty percent of factories have set up fire escape emergency staircases, installed hose pipe at every floor and reserved sand and blanket

to fight the fire initially.

He said though the fire incidents have reduced to a some extent while the casualty came down to a large scale. He said they are also emphasising on standard electrification and fire drill for the workers at least for once a month to avert casualty.



Nursery at Rangamati Pura Park.

STAR PHOTO

theweekthatwas



Modassar Ahmed Subrata Bhoomik

ICAB, Ctg executives

Senior General Manager of KDS Group Modassar Ahmed Siddiquee and Head of Finance of S Alam Group Subrata Kumar Bhoomik were elected new chairman and honorary secretary of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB), Chittagong region.

The regional committee of ICAB at a recent meeting here made the selection.

Newly elected Chairman Modassar is an ICAB fellow. He served in different top posts at BSRM and Aramit Group.

Honorary Secretary Subrata passed chartered accountancy in 1999 and had earlier served in various firms before joining S Alam Group, said a release.

Tribute to CU teacher

Speakers at a condolence meeting paid rich tribute to Dr Andrew Alok Dewary, assistant professor of communication and journalism department of Chittagong University (CU), who committed suicide on January 6 at his city residence.

"The tragic death of Dr Alok is an irreparable loss to the students of his department as well as the university," said the speakers on Sunday at the meeting, organised by Chittagong University Teachers' Association (CUTA).

CUTA President Prof Dr Mohammad Kamal

Hossain chaired the meeting. Former Provice chancellor Prof Dr Abu Yousuf, Cuta General Secretary Dr Kamrul Huda, Prof KM Golam Mohiuddin, Prof Mansur Uddin Ahmed, Dr Toiyab Chowdhury, Prof Ali Asgar Chowdhury and Prof Dr Abul Hossain spoke among others.

Seminar on Halda fish breeding zone

A seminar titled 'Analysis of Regaining the Natural Fish Breeding Zone of Halda River' was held on Saturday.

Speakers at the seminar urged the authorities concerned to postpone the controversial programmes of the project on regaining the natural fish breeding zone at the Halda River and re-evaluate those.

They hoped the expenses of the project would come down if their demand is met and Bangladesh would feel pride for the lone fish breeding zone.

Chittagong Citizen Initiative and Halda River Protection Committee jointly organised the seminar with the daily Prothom Alo Associate Editor Biswajit Chowdhury in the chair.

Media personality Shaikh Shiraj was the moderator at the seminar held at the seminar room of Institute of Engineers Bangladesh (IEB), Chittagong in cooperation with ActionAid Bangladesh.

Bangladesh Environment Lawyers' Association (BELA) Director Syeda Rizwana Hasan was the chief discussant while Assistant Professor of Zoology Department of Chittagong University (CU) Md Manjurul Kibria and local daily Dainik Purbokone Staff Reporter Mohammad Ali presented two keynote papers.

Chittagong Union of Journalists (CUJ) President Mostak Ahmad, CCC ward councillor Rehena Kabir Ranu, former president of IEB Chittagong Engineer Ali Ashraf, former president of Chittagong University Teachers' Association (CUTA) Dr ANM Munir Ahmad Chowdhury and Dr Abu Hena Mostafa Kamal participated in the discussion.

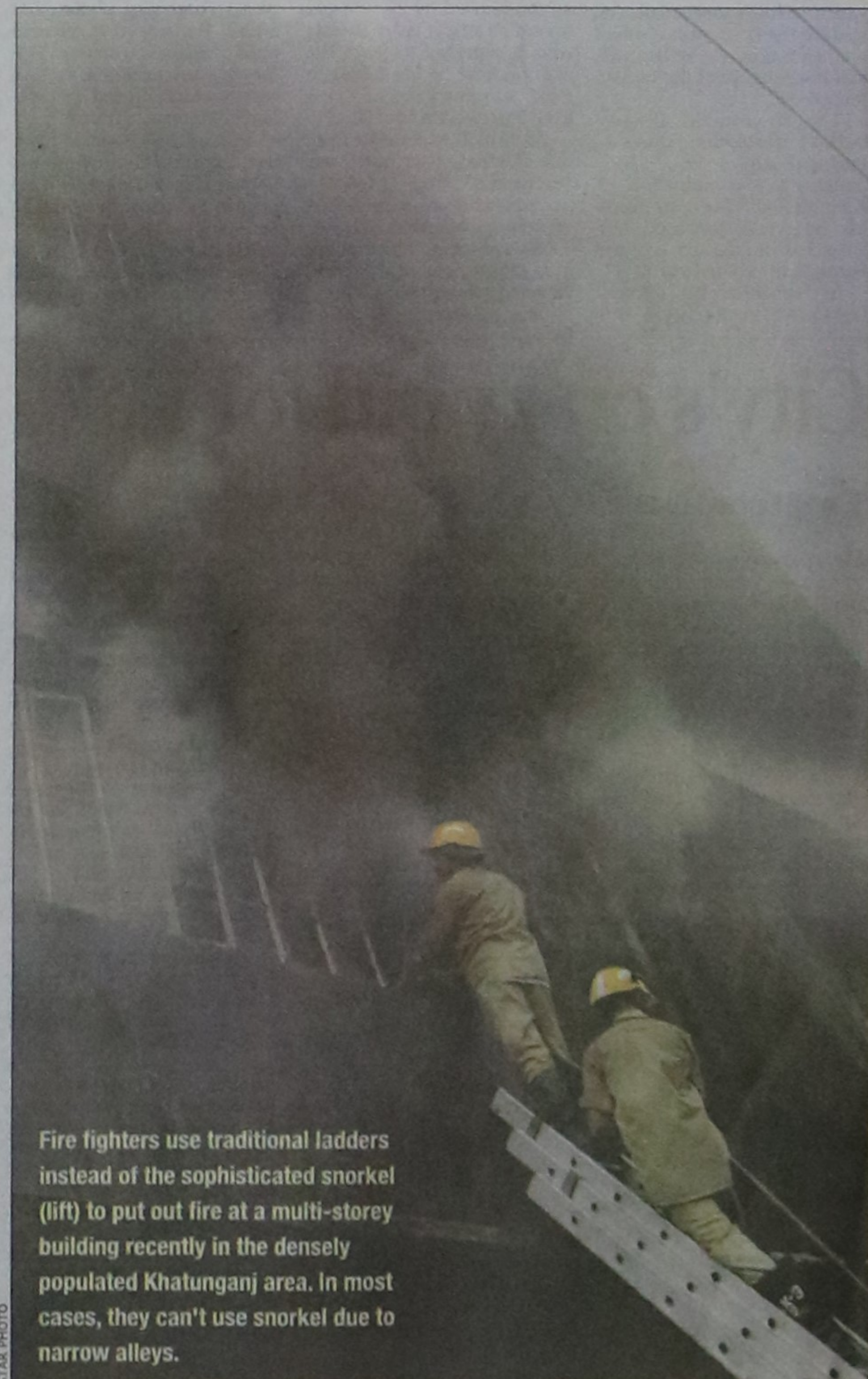
Lack of sufficient water sources and narrow alleys in the densely populated areas and violation of construction rules in the metropolitan areas cause additional damage to properties and human lives as the fire fighters can't reach the spot in time

reluctance to follow the rules for stockpiling the goods -- mainly the chemicals -- contributes much to the origin of fire, said the Chittagong Fire Service and Civil Defence Headquarters Deputy Director Mohammad Ruhul Amin.

"According to the construction rules for the heavy industrial units the buildings over six-storey must have to have own fire fighting equipment and a underground reserve tank for the emergency water supply," Ruhul said.

He said they hardly can monitor this regularly for lack of human resources. There are 19 fire stations -- 11 in the city and eight in the upazilas -- in Chittagong district.

"The equipment we



Fire fighters use traditional ladders instead of the sophisticated snorkel (lift) to put out fire at a multi-storey building recently in the densely populated Khatunganj area. In most cases, they can't use snorkel due to narrow alleys.

STAR PHOTO