

Protect Dhanmondi playground

Environmentalists urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government must stop any move to occupy Dhanmondi playground by a limited company to serve commercial and exclusive purposes, said leading environmentalist groups at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity yesterday.

Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa), Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB) and Dhanmondi Paribesh Unnayan Jote jointly organised the event to protest a reported move by Lt Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club Limited to build a mini-stadium and exclusive recreational facilities occupying the playground.

They demanded that the authorities must also evict immediately the existing illegal structures from the playground, by Dhanmondi Road No-8, to keep it as an open sports facility for the residential neighbourhood and hand it over to the community management.

Dhanmondi Club was converted into a limited company on August 20 comprising of powerful businessmen and named after the incumbent prime minister's brother Sheikh Jamal, who was killed along with his family members on August 15 in 1975.

The club is planning to build a stadium at the playground, develop exclusive recreational facilities and use it commercially, said Sharif Jamil, member secretary of Bapa sub-committee on grounds and parks programme.

"The club intends to occupy almost half of the playground to build a structure and develop various exclusive facilities, as per a draft design," said Bapa General Secretary Dr Abdul Matin.

IAB President Mubasshar Hussein, also a sports organiser, said, "The businessmen involved with the club belong to the country's wealthiest class and can buy space anywhere to build a stadium and exclusive recreational facilities."

A certain quarter is duping the prime minister into giving her consent to an illegal act using her late brother's name, said Mubasshar, adding that the Wetland and Playground Protection Act-2000 was formulated during the first tenure of the present prime minister.

Bapa President Prof Muzaffer Ahmad said, "The playground is a common property of Dhanmondi residents with their fundamental rights on it and there is no scope to use it in commercial and exclusive manner."

The businessmen on the club's governing body include Basundhara Group Chairman Shah Alam, Nitel Group Chairman Motub Ahmed, son of Partex Group Chairman MA Hashem and Rupayan Real Estate and Housing Managing Director Sadat Hossain Salim, club's top official said earlier.

The High Court on April 24, following a writ petition filed jointly by Bapa and IAB in 2004, issued a rule nisi upon Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) not to use the playground for any purposes other than sports.

The litigants are now planning to revive the case.

Dhanmondi Paribesh Unnayan Jote Co-convenor Architect Salma Shafi and Bapa Sub-committee on Grounds and Parks Programme Convenor Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu also spoke at the press conference.



Rickshawpullers negotiate a large pothole on the Mazar Road at Mirpur in the city yesterday. The road has been in a dilapidated condition for long, but the authorities appear to have turned a blind eye.

Govt must consider anyone under 18 a child

Marta Mauras refers to UN definition in an interview with The Daily Star

ALPHA ARZU

The Bangladesh government should adopt the definition of child as anyone under the age of 18 years, said Marta Mauras, a member of UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

In the country, there are different age limits for children under various rules and laws. Some consider children to be under 18, some define them as being 9-year-olds or younger and others set the child age limit as 14 years, she said.

In line with the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the government should take necessary measures to define the child as a person under 18 years for a uniform age limit to curb trafficking in persons, eliminate child labour as well as to remove discriminatory attitude towards girls and boys.

Marta, who came to Dhaka on a five-day visit to attend a national consultation on the implementation of the Convention of the Rights of Child (CRC), said this during an interview with The Daily Star on Sunday. She left Dhaka yesterday.

The UN committee member also expressed concern about the age of criminal responsibility in Bangladesh, which is nine.

She also said, "The government should take an action immediately to abolish the Vagrant Act of 1943, which criminalises children. Other laws dealing with children, including family laws, should also be reviewed and brought in line with the CRC."

"As a survival strategy, poor and street children in many cases get criminalised for shelter at vagrant homes," she added.



Marta Mauras

Unemployment and poverty force the parents to keep their child at shelter home, at street or elsewhere, said Marta, a sociologist.

She said the government has prepared a draft on the amendment to the Children Act 1974 in line with the CRC. The draft focuses on the rights of children in contact with the law, child victims and witnesses and children in need of care and protection, but it does not include other rights stated in the CRC.

So, the government should consider those

rights and the UN committee's recommendations while reforming the act, she added.

"All these depend on two things -- one is political will and the other is also political will -- but it also requires hard work in terms of setting up the institutions all the way from Dhaka to all the districts," said Marta, a sociologist.

The government officials, ministers and even the parliamentarians are very knowledgeable and well informed about the child rights, but now the most important thing is to move forward, she added.

The government has submitted its 3rd and 4th periodic report on the implementation of CRC to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in June last, though Bangladesh was among the first countries to sign and ratify the CRC in 1990.

The CRC is a legally binding international instrument and state parties are required to report every five years to the committee.

Based on the periodic report, the UN committee issued some recommendations to ensure the child rights.

The committee recommended that the state party should increase the allocation for children to provide quality education, health services and social protection.

It also recommended establishing a children ombudsman, improving statistical systems that can help data and analysis for policy making and implementation of children's rights, appropriately disaggregated by age, gender, ethnic origin and location, and adopting a national policy to prevent detention for the children and adolescents under 18.



Prof Muzaffer Ahmad speaks at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity in the city yesterday. On his right are Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu and Salma Shafi and on his left is Mubasshar Hussein.

50 shanties burn down

Another fire in garment factory

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several hundred people became homeless when a fire broke out at a slum in the city's Pallabi area last night, reducing 50 shanties to ashes.

Meanwhile, in another fire yesterday, 15 sewing machines and four tonnes of fabrics were gutted in a garment factory at West Shewrapara.

Witnesses said a fire burnt the shanties of the southeastern side of the slum located at Arambagh under Pallabi Police Station.

"The fire caught the slum at around 10:00pm and five units of the fire fighters doused the fire at around 11:00pm," said an official of the Fire Service and Civil Defense (FSCD).

However, he said the reason behind the fire could not be known immediately.

Officer-in-Charge of Pallabi Police Station Iqbal Hossain said the fire gutted the shanties built on the water and all the shanties were made of wood and bamboos.

Asked, the OC said that no casualty was reported so far.

Locals said there were over 350 shanties in the slum located in a wetland and around 1,500 people had been dwelling there.

In the morning, a fire broke out at a garment factory at West Shewrapara under Mirpur in the capital yesterday, damaging 15 sewing machines and around four tonnes of fabrics.

Fire brigade sources said the fire might have originated from an electric short circuit at a room of Spicy Fashion Ltd on the fifth floor around 7:30am and engulfed the entire floor.

Commercial officer of the factory Al-Amin told The Daily Star that one of their security guards Al-Amin saw smoke emitting from other rooms.

He immediately informed the authority and fire fighters of the incident. Fire fighters rushed to the spot and doused the fire around 8:50am.

However, the fire could not spread to the other floors as the factory having offices on the fourth, fifth and seventh floors of the building.

Bill placed in JS to protect cultural heritage of ethnic people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A bill was placed in parliament yesterday seeking to enact law to protect and develop the cultural heritage of different ethnic people and communities in the country.

Information and Cultural Affairs Minister Abul Kalam Azad placed the bill titled "The Ethnic Community's Cultural Institution Bill, 2009". The bill proposed to establish new organisations and run properly the existing institutions on cultural heritage of ethnic people.

The bill was sent to the parliamentary standing committee on cultural affairs ministry for scrutiny.

With the proposed law taking effect, existing seven cultural institutions will be regarded as cultural institutions of ethnic people.

The institutions are -- cultural academy of ethnic people at Birishiri in Netrokona, cultural institute of ethnic people at Rangamati, cultural institute of ethnic people at

Bandarban, Cox's Bazar cultural centre, cultural institute of ethnic people at Khagrachhari, Rajshahi divisional cultural academy of ethnic people at Rajshahi and Monipur Lolitkala academy at Moulavibazar.

Any other cultural organisations declared by the government in official gazette will also be regarded as the institution of ethnic people.

About functions of the cultural institutions, the bill said every institution will collect information and conduct research on history, social and cultural heritage, literature, language, religion, customs, ritual of the concerned ethnic community.

The institutions will publish books, magazines and make documentaries on life, history, social and cultural heritage of ethnic community.

They will also take steps to ensure participation of local cultural activists in the programmes to celebrate different national days and

Project to cut maternal mortality

METRO DESK

Health Secretary Shaikh Altaf Ali, Director General of Family Planning Md Abdul Quayyum and USAID Deputy Mission Director Carey N Gordon jointly launched a new pilot health project yesterday to reduce maternal mortality rates, says a press release.

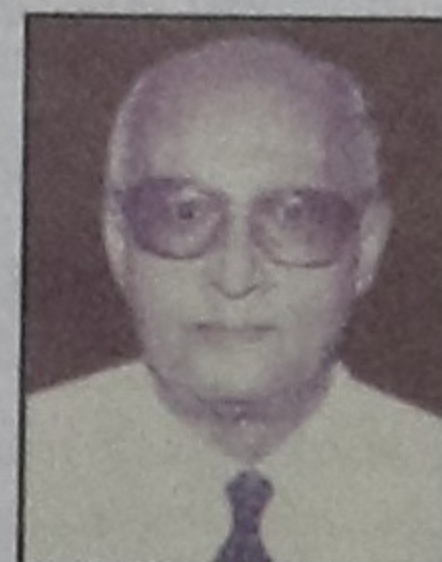
Under the project, the government and NGO field workers will distribute and administer Misoprostol, a medication that controls bleeding after delivery. The medi-

cation is especially important for home deliveries or where there are no trained birth attendants.

The pilot programme will be implemented in five upazilas in Cox's Bazar to identify the most effective ways to deliver and monitor this new treatment.

The project will also raise awareness among health care providers and community members about pregnancy-related complications and will allow them to identify and treat these life-threatening conditions.

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim
In memory of November 03, 1998
11th Death Anniversary



Waris Ali Chaudhury

"Those who have grown old and those who are young,
Each runs his course at his own desire;
This old world is not permanent for anyone,
They have gone and we shall go also, others will come
And they will go, too". Omar Khayyam

In our heart with respect and love forever
Jahanara, Dilruba and Rafique, Dilara and Azim,
Yasmin and Tariq, Shamim and Zeba
All Grand Children

কক্সবাজারে সাফকবলায়

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টিকিট	মূল্য	বুকিং ফানি	৩০টি মাসিক কিস্তি
A	৪,২৭,৮৮০	২,০৮,৯৮০	৬,৯৬৬
B1	৩,০৬,৯৮০	১,৬৭,৯৮০	৫,৬০০
B2	৩,২৮,৮২০	১,৬৮,২৮০	৫,৮৭৬
C1	৩,০৬,৯৮০	১,৬৬,৮৮০	৫,৮৮৯
D	৪,৭০,২৬০	২,০৬,৯৮০	৭,৮০৮
E1	৩,০৬,৮০০	১,৬৭,৮৮০	৬,৬৮৯
F2	৩,০৬,৯৮০	১,৬৭,০৬৮	৬,৬৬৯
G	৪,৭৮,২৬০	২,০৬,৬৮০	৭,৮৬৮
H1	৪,০৬,৬৬০	২,০৭,৭৮০	৬,৯২৬
I	৩,২৮,৮৮০	১,৬৮,৬৮০	৮,৮৮৯

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