

Shishu Park refurbishment plan shelved

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

Even after five years of sitting on a project to refurbish Shaheed Zia Shishu Park, hugely popular among both children and adults, Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), the responsible authority for its monitoring as well as maintenance, has finally said the project is 'dead'.

According to sources at DCC, the project, proposed to revive the amusement park at Shahbagh, spent years for its approval at the city corporation and another few years at local government and rural development (LGRD) ministry.

However, with no signs pointing towards a possible green light, DCC has finally written off the much-talked-about 92-crore refurbishment project as 'dead'.

"We are now looking forward to alternatives such as renovating the rides and facilities of the park to attract more visitors," said Nurul Islam Patwari, executive engineer of the engineering department of DCC.

Since it was built in 1979, only three new rides were added to the park during the years 1992 and 1997. The rest of the rides are as old as the park itself and have exceeded their life spans by over 12 years.

"Jet Star, Astro Fighter and F-60 Fighter were installed later. Apart from those, the park has remained visibly the same for thirty years," said a DCC official.

"Even the children seem to have become jaded with the

obsolete and dull rides that have been around for over two decades now."

As warranty period of nine out of 12 rides have also expired 18 years ago, the DCC officials do not rule out the possibility of serious accidents. They said only a comprehensive renovation scheme can ensure public safety.

Proposed in 2004 and scheduled to be finished by 2006, the refurbishment project was supposed to be an answer to that -- a crucial step forward for the city's vision of turning the faded and almost dormant park into an exciting recreational destination.

The ambitious proposal outlined a comprehensive renovation of the park that included refurbishment of the worn-out rides and adding 16 new rides such as Barn Stormer, Roller Coaster, Monorail, Water Splash, Giant Wheel, Viking Mars, Bumper Cars, laser shows and 3-D movies.

It also included a plan to expand the park up to the police control room at Shahbagh and an increase of the park's land area from 15 acres to 19 acres.

However, the ministry's dilly-dallying with the project has thrown into doubt the future of the age-old park's refurbishment.

According to officials at the engineering department, DCC tried to obtain nine new rides for the park to attract more visitors. It also invited tenders in international market with an estimated



Shaheed Zia Shishu Park.

PHOTO: SHAWKAT JAMIL

cost of Tk 4 crore. "Although we figured that Tk 4 crore would be sufficient, it turned out that there are no rides available at a cost below Tk 10 crore," said an official of the department.

"For example, a Japanese monorail ride now costs around Tk 17 to 20 crore. So, there is no way we would get new rides with the money we

have," he added. So, the DCC has now shifted its focus on using the available Tk 3 crore budget to renovate and repair the existing rides of the park for the next few years.

Assistant Engineer Siddiqur Rahman, also in-charge of the park, told The Daily Star that they plan to keep repairing the rides with

minor refurbishments for the next 10 years.

"The renovation work of the train platform, flower cup, chair tower and flying plane has already been done. We will finish our work on rest of the rides soon," he added.

"It is quite impossible for any apparatus to offer optimum service for over 10 years as equipment and compo-

ponents wear and tear over time," said a DCC official concerned, adding that some rides are still functioning well thanks to sincere maintenance work.

On average, some 5,000 people visit the park every day and the city corporation earns around Tk 2 crore revenues from the park a year, DCC sources said.

CHILD WORKERS' RIGHTS Code of conduct for employers soon: Shirin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is taking an initiative to formulate a code of conduct for the employers of child workers with a view to protecting their rights.

State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury said this at the National Child Domestic Worker Convention 2010 at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the city yesterday.

The government is keen to eliminate child labour in the country, Sharmin Chowdhury said, adding that the demands of the child domestic workers would be considered during updating of the National Child Policy 1994.

Lauding the convention where child domestic workers found a platform to speak out for themselves, she said that the child labour issue should be addressed through a broader approach. Alleviation of poverty is crucial as poverty forces the children to be engaged in formal and informal sectors as workers.

The convention was jointly organised by Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), Together with Working Children (TWC), a

network of NGOs, and Save the Children, Sweden-Denmark.

The convention was aimed to break the silence of the society regarding realising rights of the child domestic workers in the country.

Speaking on the occasion, rights activists called on the policymakers to take an initiative to protect the child domestic workers from all forms of violations and economic exploitation.

Kelland Stevenson, country programme director, Save the Children, Australia, said child domestic workers may find a way to come out economic exploitation through such national level meeting and look forward to realising other basic needs such as education, entertainment and health.

At the programme, the child domestic workers handed over a declaration paper with their demands to Sultana Kamal, executive director, Ain O Salish Kendra.

Around 400 child domestic workers took part in the convention inaugurated by Elias Ahmed, secretary, ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment.

DU signs MoU with Korean university

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka University (DU) and Silla University (SU) of Korea yesterday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for establishing and promoting academic exchange and research programmes between the two educational institutions.

DU Vice-Chancellor Prof Dr AAMS Arefin Siddique and SU president Dr Hong Sub Jung signed the MoU on behalf their respective institutions at a function at VC Office, said a DU press release.

'Proposed pvt varsity bill outdated'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh (APUB) yesterday called on the government to stop further processing of the proposed Private University Bill 2009, saying that the opportunity of higher education will be stifled if the bill is passed.

Termining the bill 'outdated', the association leaders at a press conference said the existing act is appropriate for keeping the development of private universities further and it may be revised and amended in some respects.

The proposed bill, if passed,

would put obstruction in the way of building quality human resources in the country, they said, adding that it would snatch the autonomy and independence of private universities.

The cabinet on October 19 approved in principle the Private University (amendment) Bill 2009.

The press conference was organised at the Jatiya Press Club in the city.

Mentioning several clauses of the bill, CM Shafi Sami, chairman of APUB, said the private entrepreneurs would be discouraged to set up universities if the bill is passed.

The proposed bill has some

backdated characteristics and it would shrink the scope of higher education, he added.

Abul Quasem Haider, vice chairman of APUB, said the proposed bill is formulated with the plan to control the private universities, which have been playing a commendable role in expanding higher education.

He said the bill gives all the authority to the vice chancellor (VC) which will eventually weaken the university administration.

He also said the bill suggested forming an Accreditation Council which is important. "But why would

the Accreditation Council be formed only for private universities. Is the quality of the public universities reach atop?" he asked.

"We need an Accreditation Council for both public and private universities."

The bill keeps only one clause for the foreign university campuses, though these institutions are involved in different unfair means, he observed.

Prof M Alimullah Mian, secretary general of APUB, said the proposed bill would not only allow bureaucratic interventions but would also create obstacles to the private universities.

The bill also said the government will fix the tuition fee which is absolutely impractical as the universities set the fees on their own, he added.

Prof Abdul Mannan Chowdhury, VC of World University of Bangladesh, said the private universities will be closed and no new university will be established in the country if the bill is passed.

"There are some good suggestions in the bill also, but those are a kind of allurements to control us," he said.

National Professor Dr M Nurul Islam and VCs of different private universities were also present.

DU Alumni Assoc 3rd reunion Jan 16

DU CORRESPONDENT

The third reunion of Dhaka University Alumni Association (DUAA) will be held on Dhaka University (DU) campus on January 16.

Around 5000 alumni alongside a good number of guests will attend the daylong function at the DU central playground marking the 60th founding anniversary of DUAA, said Raqibuddin Ahmed, secretary general of the association.

Speaking at a press briefing at the Senate Bhavan on the DU campus yesterday, he said that the event will be the biggest one

in terms of participating alumni members and guests.

The day's programmes will start at 8:00am when the participating alumni will exchange greetings.

At 9:00am, the main session will start by hoisting the national flag, the DU flag and the flag of DUAA.

Later, alumni members will take part in a special cultural event of folk songs.

In the afternoon, there will be a reminiscing session and a raffle draw.

The function will end with a cultural session in the evening.



PHOTO: STAR

Despite different steps taken by Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), the city's traffic scenario remains unchanged. The picture was taken at Paltan intersection yesterday noon.

SUNNY MURDER Protest today

DU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra Moitree, a left-leaning student organisation, will form human chains in front of press clubs across the country today demanding punishment to the killers of Rezwanul Islam Chowdhury Sunny, a leader of the organisation.

Meanwhile, the organisation completed its three-day mourning programmes in memory of Sunny yesterday. During the programmes, the leaders and workers wore black ribbons and hoisted black flags atop its central and unit offices.

Sunny, a leader of Chhatra Moitree, Rajshahi Polytechnic Institute unit, was killed in an attack by Bangladesh Chhatra League men over establishing supremacy on the campus on January 7.

The condition of another Moitree man, Sherifat Ali Khan Bulbul, who was also injured in the attack, is stated to be critical. He is undergoing treatment at the Metropolitan Hospital, says a press release.

IN MEMORIAM

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In loving memory of Brigadier General Tahsin Uddin Muhammad Iftakharul Bashar who left us 4 years ago on this day..... Please remember him in your prayers today.

Rezwana, Rahib, Ambrina & Azham

Call for effective steps to curb tobacco use

BSS, Dhaka

Speakers at a workshop yesterday underscored the need for taking effective measures to control use of tobacco products to save huge amount of people's funds and protect users from health hazards.

They said 81 percent of people consider imposition of higher taxes and duties on tobacco products is an effective measure to reduce tobacco uses without affecting government's revenue collection.

The workshop titled "Effective utilisation of GATS date for tobacco control advocacy in Bangladesh" organised by Progga in cooperation with Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids.

Md Raisul Alam Mandol,

Deputy Secretary of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, inaugurated the workshop. Dr Mostafa Zaman, National Professional Officer of World Health Organisation (WHO), spoke with Progga Chairman Taifur Rahman in the chair.

Dr Mostafa Zaman presented the report on Global Adults Tobacco Survey (GATS) 2009 in the workshop.

According to the report, 44 percent of men and 1.5 percent of women use smoking tobacco across the country while non-smoking tobacco is used by 26.4 percent of men and 27.2 percent of women in both urban and rural areas.

He said although the Tobacco Control Act covers smoking tobaccos, but non-smoking tobaccos like jarda, sada pata, gul are still out of

the purview of the act.

"Both smoking and non-smoking tobaccos have similar impacts on health and incur financial loss, so non-smoking tobaccos like jarda, sada pata, gul should be brought under the coverage of the act," he added.

The report said the use of tobacco is higher in lower education and poor families than higher education and rich households.

The use of cigarettes per day is five sticks on an average while that of bidis is seven, the report said, adding that the price gaps between cigarettes and bidis should be reduced to discourage smoking tobacco among lower income groups and youths in rural areas.

Dr Mostafa quoting his survey said 47.3 percent of

the smoking tobacco users and 28.5 percent of non-smoking tobacco users attempted to give up tobacco last year. This group of people needed support for making their efforts successful, he added.

Despite lower capacity on both financial and institutional aspects, the anti-smoking drive was 49.8 percent successful, while giant tobacco manufacturers' efforts of marketing tobacco products was 48.7 percent successful.

In his paper, Taifur emphasised more focus on anti-tobacco activities in both print and electronic media.

He said effective awareness building drive against tobacco through utilising media could bring better

results in making the efforts successful.

He said illegal advertisements for tobacco still continue violating Tobacco Control Act as 32 percent of people noticed advertisements of tobacco products outside stores.

Of the non-smokers, over 93 percent are exposed to second-hand smoking (passive smoking), he said, adding that this also causes health hazards to a great extent.

The study shows, among adults, 45 percent were exposed to second-hand smoking in public places while 27.6 percent in restaurants, 26.3 percent in most common places.

Among all indoor workers, 75.7 percent or 51 lakh people are exposed to second-hand smoking, it added.

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