



Jamboree field under grabbers' clutch

Jamboree field in the port city.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

PRANABESH CHAKRABORTY

Jamboree field, one of the open spaces in the port city, is in the row of grounds that are disappearing as authorities concerned have no interest in protecting it from illegal grabbers.

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) is illegally constructing a park on one portion of the field since 2000 and construction of a high-rise building is on cards on another portion of the ground.

Mentionable, housing and public works department, owner of the field, does not

look after the ground, locals alleged, while CCC is entrusted with the responsibility of taking care of around 8.86 acres of the grounds.

Local children and youths play football, cricket and other games in the field. It is also a breathing space for city dwellers. One portion is the extended part of Chittagong Government Servant colony project.

Earlier, more than 100 children could play simultaneously in the field, Suman, a local, said, adding that now they can not play as the remaining portion of the field is being used by locals to grow vegetables.

Zafar Ahmed, who lives in a building adjacent to the field, said now they go to other fields like outer stadium to play cricket or football as they can not play in the field.

CCC State Officer Ahmedul Hoque said they signed an agreement with "Ananda Mela", a private firm, for 25 years for constructing a children's park on the ground in 2000. CCC earns Tk 1.60 lakh a month from the firm, Ahmedul said.

A residential colony would be constructed on one portion of the ground, locals alleged. "The big playground is disappearing day by day," said Fahmid, a college student and

a cricket player, adding that it would be a great shock for them if the project for colony is approved.

Monwara Chowdhury, a housewife, told The Daily Star that she has a six-year old son but he has no scope to play. "If authorities or city corporation takes such a decision, where will our kids play?" she added.

Shahinul Islam Iti, chief town planner of Chittagong Development Authority (CDA), said they would not allow any structure in the open space and playgrounds.

He said CCC decision to construct structure in the name of park on the Jamboree

field is basically based on commercial mentality.

Dr Alok Paul, chairman of geography and environmental science department of Chittagong University, told The Daily Star that the people should come forward to save open spaces and playgrounds in the port city as they are disappearing rapidly.

Termining open space an important component of urban planning, Dr Alok said Jamboree field is a big open space in the city and the authorities should preserve the ground keeping the future generation in mind.

Halda carp spawning ground under threat



Fishermen collect spawn in the river Halda.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

PRABIR BARUA CHOWDHURY

The river Halda, the only natural carp breeding ground in the world and major source of major carps like Rui, Katla and Mrigel, is facing a threat to its existence.

Man-made problems and natural disasters brought the spawning ground to this position of decline.

Interference from man include cutting bends in the river to slow down its current, massive sand lifting, dumping of industrial waste, unplanned construction, rampant construction of sluice gates and indiscriminate catching and killing of mother fishes.

Natural disasters like climate change and rising salinity of the river water are also responsible for this situation.

Due to such interventions, mother fishes, which normally chose the Halda to release their eggs, are now coming here in very lower numbers for breeding.

Md Manzurul Kibria of zoology department of Chittagong University said the last ten years has seen a decline in the number of mother fishes arriving at the Halda to spawn.

During the 80s and 90s, over 1,000 kilogrammes (kg) of eggs were collected from the Halda river every year. But now this has come down to 20 to 30kg every year, Kibria said.

"If we want to get back the Halda to its earlier state, it is urgent to formulate a long-term plan for it," he said.

The government took a lot of projects in this regard on various occasions but those failed for lack of proper guidance and planning, he added.

He criticised a project titled "Restoration of the natural fish breeding habitats of the river Halda", whose main objective was to restore the river, for progressing in a slow pace.

He said though the river determines socio-economic fate of the people living in the adjoining areas, the authorities could not involve the local people with this project.

District Assistant Fishery Officer Mizanur Rahman said progress of the project was slow due to some official bottlenecks but now is back on track.

He said they united 43 local organisations of Hathazari and Raozan, comprised of local people and fishermen, under the banner of "Beneficiary of Halda" to accelerate the project.

The government gave around Tk 1.5 crore as soft loan to 1,050 members of these organisations, he added.

He said in the past the fishermen used "kua" to cultivate eggs but under this project, the government made hatcheries in the river

for better production.

Mohammad Imam Hossain, chief executive of Nowzwuan, an organisation working on the river Halda under this project, said they are creating awareness among the local people and farmers.

They informed the local people about the benefits of not fishing in the Halda during the "off-season" and got a good response from them, he added.

But there have been recent incidents of mother fishes releasing eggs in the Halda at unusual times. Mother fishes usually depend on water temperature, water current, rain and thunder to lay eggs during the full moon and basically release eggs in May and June. But this year they released eggs without any such knowledgeable signs which experts termed an alarming incident.

Kibria said there were three reasons behind the increasing salinity of water in the river. Local people cut a lot of bends in the river, reducing length of the river by 25 kilometres, the level of water was lower than sea level due to sluice gates and shortage of water supply from the connected canals.

Nurul Hudda, a local egg collector, said the fish released eggs at 4:00am on April 19, which was not usual. By the time they went to collect the eggs around 2:00pm, they found most of them damaged, he added.

the week that was

May Day observed

Jatiya Sramik League, Chittagong unit organised a rally in observance of May Day at the Old Railway Station Compound on Sunday.

Primary and Mass Education Minister Afsarul Amin spoke at the rally as the chief guest.

Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) Chairman Abdus Salam, city Awami League leader Advocate Ibrahim Hossain Babul, Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) councillors Gias Uddin, Saleh Ahmed Chowdhury and Kabir Ahmed Manik also spoke at the rally with Jatiya Sramik League leader Mahbub Mintu in the chair.

A faction of Jatiya Sramik League organised a separate rally in observance of the day at Laldighi Maidan on Sunday.

Former mayor ABM Mahiuddin Chowdhury, former minister and Awami League lawmaker Engineer Mosharrar Hossain, Enamul Haque Danu, Khorshed Alam Sujon, Mahbubul Haque Chowdhury Eteley and Mahfujur Rahman Khan addressed the rally.

Chittagong Union of Journalist's (CUJ) organised a rally on Sunday marking the day. CUJ President Shahidul Alam, General Secretary Nazim Uddin Shyamal, Chittagong Press Club (CPC) President Abu Sufian and General Secretary Rashed Rauf addressed the rally.

'Include Pritilata's biography in textbooks'

Samajtantrik Mahila Forum, Chittagong city unit on Monday submitted a memorandum to the deputy commissioner demanding inclusion of biography of Beer Konya Pritilata in the textbooks.

Forum's Chittagong district president and councilor Jannatul Ferdous Popy, Nasima Akhter, Lipi Majumder, Monideepa Bhattachariya and Nayema Khaled Monika were present on the occasion.

Deputy Commissioner of Chittagong Fayeze Ahmed received the memorandum and assured them of sending it to the higher authorities concerned.

Journalists, newspaper employees and hawkers bring out a procession in the port city on May 1 marking the May Day.

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Bokhtaire Uddin presided over the meeting. National Garments Workers Federation organised rally in the Colonel Hat area on the occasion.

CCC Councillor Nichhar Uddin Ahmed Manju, Mili Chowdhury, Harun-ur-Rashid and Lokman Ali spoke at the meeting with Fayeze Ahmed in the chair.

Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal, Chittagong unit organised a rally at Nasiman Bhaban Compound marking the day.

BNP Vice Chairman Abdullah Al Noman, former CCC mayor Mir Mohammed Nasir Uddin, Shamsul Alam and MA Sabur spoke at the rally with AM Nazim Uddin in the chair.

Biplobi Sramik Andolan organised a rally at Shershah intersection in Nasirabad Industrial Area marking the day.

Freedom fighter Shamsul Alam Master, writer Ahmed Jasim, Rakib Uddin, Bishwajit Roy, Jasim Uddin and Rubel Ahmed spoke at the rally with labour leader Rony Miah in the chair.

Memorial meet held

Speakers at a discussion in the port city said due to unprotected embankment and unplanned afforestation, coastal areas are being destroyed.

They were speaking at an open discussion in memory of the ill-fated people who were killed in the 1991 cyclone.

Sandipana Sangskritik Forum organised the discussion with Jafar Iqbal in the chair. A mourning procession was also brought out on the occasion.

Speakers said the people living in the coastal areas are the puppet of the nature's will. 1991 cyclone is the testament to this, they added.

Chairman of Red Crescent Society Dr Sheikh Shafiul Azam, politician Ali Ahmed Nazir, Human Rights activist G M Mostafa Kamal and Prof Jahed Ali Chowdhury of Chittagong University (CU) spoke at the discussion.