



Sun Island, Harbin City, China

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

# Harbin city: A blending of nature and modernity

TAWFIQUE ALI, back from Harbin, China

Wetlands, gardens and rivers are all fondly preserved in China's Harbin city, where ambitious development activities are in progress to rebuild it into a high-tech global metropolis of economic and cultural vibrancy.

It showcases a wonderful mélange of nature and urbanisation.

In the cases of Dhaka and other cities in Bangladesh, unfortunately though, political avowals have proved hollow in conserving rivers, wetlands and lakes against ruthless destruction through grabbing and pollution in the name of urban development.

Even judicial activism time and again about saving the country's bounteous natural treasures, including rivers, has gone unheeded.

Harbin's municipal government religiously manifests efforts in the meticulously designed development endeavour to conserve all available ecological resources in the very heart of an unfolding cosmopolitan city, unlike what one experiences in Dhaka.

Harbin, fondly called the City of Ice, is the capital of Heilongjiang province and located in the heart of northeast China. It is one of China's 10 largest cities and a cradle of

brehtaking natural beauty and diverse cultural wealth with a thriving economy.

Wetlands in Harbin include Sun Island, Binjiang, Jinhewan, Mouth of Hulun, Volga Manor and Baiyupao while the river Soghua meanders through the city.

Sun Island offers the beauty of water and cloud as its theme. The 11-square km natural wetland of the island lies between the old (south) and new (north) towns of Harbin. A branch of the river Soghua, it harbours fish and water birds.

It appeared like an enchanting oasis in autumn, during a recent visit, in the heart of the urban setting now dotted with many high-tech under-construction development structures.

It is the only wet grassland by the river in the city centre in China.

Sun Island is a set of green fields, blue water, white sand, delicate fragrance of blooming flowers that pleasantly welcome a visitor during summer and autumn. It symbolises awe-inspiring tranquillity and a dreamy beauty that beckons one in winter.

According to Liu Bow Lin, a local government (municipal) official for Sun Island, it is off-limits to visitors, the goal being to preserve its pristine

beauty and ecology against pollution, fishing, and the preying of birds. Trees in the wetland include May Tree and Mulberry Tree.

The 578-square km Botanical Garden with many creeks is located south of the Soghua.

A 3.5-square kilometre area of the garden, once a wasteland, is dedicated to research work on plant development suitable for wetlands.

A total of 122 plant species and 190 animals have so far been found suitable for the wetlands, say officials of the garden.

The government's aim is to turn the wasteland into a garden in five years. It is designed to restore and conserve ecology. One-third of the garden is water body.

The local government (municipal party committee) has embarked on developing Binjiang Wetland, 18 kilometres away from the city. It will have a 161-km long ecological corridor in the Yu Dai river bay.

Across a six-square kilometre area is located Volga Manor, surrounded by the beautiful river Ashi. It is a 6-lakh square metre park in Harbin's Xiangfang district. The combination of forests, lakes, grassland, and the manor with buildings erected on the patterns of classical Russian architec-

ture makes it a much-coveted tourist attraction.

Lin Duo, mayor of Harbin city, said while meeting the representatives of Asian media in Harbin that the river Soghua is one of the four biggest rivers in China.

It provides the people of Harbin with drinking water and fish, hydro electricity, irrigation for one lakh hectares of agricultural land and water transportation.

On its south bank, three parks-- Nine-Station Park, Stalin Park and Dawai Park-- together form the longest park along a river in China.

The 1000-km long river that has formed 2.70 lakh hectares of wetland in Harbin flows 466 kilometres through Harbin territory.

A special committee headed by the mayor is responsible for ensuring that the river is protected against pollution and encroachment.

The river, however, suffered a pollution debacle with highly toxic benzene in November 2005 due to blasts at a petrochemical plant in neighbouring Jilin province.

A purification effort with carbon powders, sedimentation and absorption went into restoring the river to its natural appearance.



PHOTO: STAR

Family members form a human chain before the Jatiya Press Club yesterday demanding exemplary punishment to the killers of stock market investor Kazi Zia Hayder Ali. Zia was killed by robbers at his Mirpur residence in the city on January 21.

## 3 held over friend's disappearance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Police yesterday arrested three teenagers on the 20th day of their friend's disappearance.

Nasrin Begum, mother of the missing teenager, Al Amin, 17, filed a case with Boalia Police Station on Friday night accusing Amin's friends, Mohammad Robi and Mohammad Jewel, of being behind Amin's disappearance on January 8.

The arrestees are Jewel of Chalk Koroitola and Sohag, 16, and Wahid Ali, 18, of Bornali Crossing area.

Talking to reporters, Nasrin said Amin, who used to drive an auto-rickshaw, was yet to return after going out riding bicycles with his friends from his residence in Bhadra Jamalpur area in the city at noon.

The next day, Robi told her that Amin was staying at a friend's house in the city's Laxmipur. But on January 10, he claimed Amin had gone to India, said Nasrin.

The same day, Jewel called her using Amin's phone. Impersonating Amin, he told her not to worry. But he hung up the moment she realised it was not Amin, added Nasrin.

ELEVATED EXPRESSWAY

## Cancel land acquisition

Demand Nakhalpara residents

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Residents of the city's Nakhalpara area yesterday expressed concern over the acquisition of private land for the proposed Dhaka Elevated Expressway.

They demanded cancellation or a revised layout of the proposed Nakhalpara ramp of the expressway and acquisition of the least possible amount of private land for the project.

They made the demand at a human chain programme in the area yesterday. They also held a meeting with the local lawmaker on the issue.

More than 100 land owners of some areas of the city are going to be affected due to the land acquisition, said Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan, joint convener of a committee for the movement.

The areas are Nakhalpara, Shahinbagh, Arjatpara, Rasulbagh, Baulbagh,

Nakhalpara Bazar and Samity Bazar.

District administration officials are now earmarking up to 80 feet into private land for the acquisition, said Wadud, also a Nakhalpara resident.

As per the acquisition notice, Nakhalpara's seven mosques, Hossain Ali High School, Samity Bazar and Nakhalpara kitchen market would come under demolition, said Shamsuddin Liton, another resident of the area.

Meanwhile, lawmaker Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal promised the locals a meeting with the Bridges Division officials today to address the people's concerns.

The district administration is to acquire 18 acres of private land in the nine-kilometer first segment of the proposed route stretching from Shahjalal International Airport to Tejgaon. A total of 258 structures need to be removed on the said stretch of the expressway.

## Body found in Keraniganj

UNB, Keraniganj

Police recovered the body of a young man from the Buriganga River in Hasnabad area here yesterday.

The identity of the deceased, aged around 25, could not be known immediately.

Sub-Inspector M Abu Bakar Siddique of South Keraniganj Police Station said local people found the body floating in the water at about 2:00pm and informed police of the matter.

Later, police recovered the body and sent it to Mitford Hospital morgue for autopsy.

## BCL man shot

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An activist of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) was shot allegedly by Jubo League men over previous enmity in the capital's Rampura last night.

Rokibul Hasan, 18, a student of Gulshan Commerce College, was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital with bullet wounds in his back and waist.

As this report was being filed at 12:30am, physicians said Rokibul remained senseless.

Shah Ali, a friend of the victim, said the attackers also snatched away Rokibul's cell phone when he came out of his Ulon Bazar road residence in West Rampura around 8:30pm.

Rampura police said around seven persons, including Pichhi Royees, Nasir and Mahid of East Rampura attacked Rokibul.

The attackers are known as the activists of Jubo League, said police sources.

Rokibul is an activist of Ward no 22 unit of BCL and a close associate of Rampura Thana unit BCL General Secretary Moyazzem Hossain Tapu, said Shah Ali.

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