



The office building of Orion Group, the firm that is constructing Mayor Mohammad Hanif Flyover, stands on a compound earlier known as Sayedabad Park. The Dhaka city corporation let the firm use the parkland "temporarily" till the construction of the flyover is complete. The photo was taken this week. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

# Sayedabad pins hope on new mayor

**DISAPPEARING DHAKA PARKS**

**SAYEDABAD**  
EST: 1980s  
SIZE: 0.05 ACRES  
WARD: 84 (OLD)

How many parks does Dhaka city need? According to rules, it should be 92, one for each ward. But we have only 54, with several of them having ceased to exist and many threatened. At least 10 parks have been replaced with a community centre, kitchen market, mosque, rickshaw garage or truck parking lot, mostly by the city corporation itself. This is the picture when an urban expert, Prof Nazrul Islam, says every 10,000 city residents need an open space of four acres -- park or playground -- for healthy development of children and prevention of diseases related to physical activities. The Daily Star reports how and why we are squeezing our breathing spaces in our metropolis where 15 million people cram in. The seventh report of the series is published today.

HELEMUL ALAM

Under the very nose of their custodian, the Dhaka city corporation, the parks are gradually being destroyed one by one. And Sayedabad Park might be another victim.

It was built in the 1980s during the rule of HM Ershad on 0.05 acres of land, now along Mayor Mohammad Hanif Flyover.

Children played in the swings and slides, while adults passed their leisure sitting on the benches with family members or neighbours after exercise.

The park was the only open space for over 50,000 residents of south and north Sayedabad.

The scenario of the park, close to Sayedabad Bus Terminal, started to change in the 1990s when transport owners began

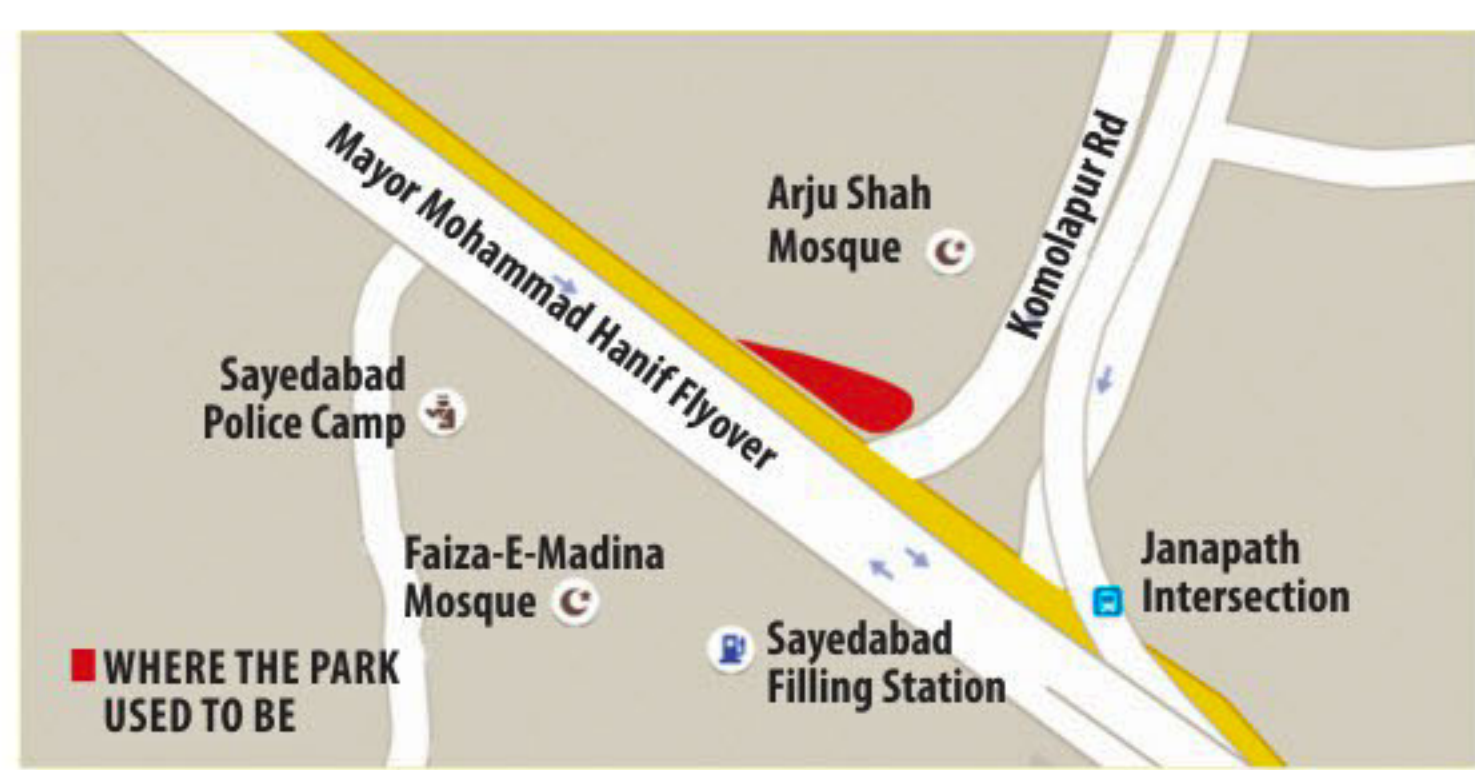
dumping rubbish on the parkland, said locals.

Eventually, transport owners of the terminal started using the land as a parking lot and two public toilets were also built there but the city corporation remained silent.

Later, some shops and another toilet were built on the parkland next to the busy Jatrabari-Tikatuli road but those were demolished in January 2007 during the army-backed interim government's tenure.

Mohammad Kabir Miyan, a resident of Koratitola, said he moved in to the area in 1986 and was lucky to get the park for playing. But his eight-year-old daughter is becoming dependent on computer games which can gradually make her aloof, the father feared.

Delu Ahmed of Sayedabad



said, "Whenever we felt low, we went to the park to pep ourselves up. My younger brother would come to my house every weekend and we strolled and jogged together in the park."

In June 2010, the park got a new look; this time Orion Group, the firm constructing Mayor Mohammad Hanif Flyover, made a shed for labourers and a three-story office building on the parkland by surrounding the park with a concrete boundary, denying the general public entry.

But the good thing is Corporate Manager of Orion Group Ashfaque Alam said they will hand

over the park by July after the construction work is complete.

Orion Group Managing Director Salman Karim said they are using the place as per a contract with the DCC, and they will renovate the place by setting up children's rides and hand it over to the DCC.

But the locals fear that the city corporation has different plans about the park; otherwise the office building of the firm would be built as a makeshift structure, not as a concrete one.

On this issue, Chief Estate Officer of Dhaka South City Corporation Khalid Ahmed said he cannot say anything about the park unless they get it back.

Now the residents pin their hope on the new DSCC mayor for the park that was once theirs.

## Resources yet to be explored

FROM PAGE 3

of resources in the waters it gained over the last three years.

"No headway was made in this regard as the people involved in policymaking have no specialised knowledge in this field," he added.

"Our neighbours who have achieved success in exploring marine resources have specialised knowledge in the field. The government should give importance to building experts and generating

knowledge in marine sector," Prof Maruf said.

Abdus Sobhan is in favour of setting up a Maritime Commission to provide the government policy options to protect and promote marine resources.

"The Marine Commission would primarily introduce best practices from various countries with huge marine resources and regulate the exploration works of

the resources. The commission should be formed involving maritime and environmental experts and policy planners aiming to convert our Exclusive Economic Zone into a storehouse of resources in the Bay," he added.

An extensive survey should be carried out urgently to assess the marine resources in the Bay, he said.

Ayaj Hossain Chisty of the Department of Fisheries and

Marine Resource Technology, Khulna University said, "Our achievement still remains stuck at the planning level. There is no sign of implementation of the plans."

He believes the potential for fisheries as well as other natural resources in the sea are "huge", and so it is imperative that the government expend its best efforts in exploring it.

Chisty said the government can

use local as well as foreign technology in exploring natural resources in the sea, although the use of foreign technology should be considered after national security concerns are addressed.

"The Bay of Bengal is full of biological diversity, diverging amongst coral reefs, estuaries, sea fish and mangroves. It is one of the world's largest marine ecosystems," he added.

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**Girl strangled in capital**  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A girl died when a piece of cloth she was playing with got entangled around her neck, strangling her in the capital's Korail slum yesterday, said police.

The incident occurred when seven-year-old Taslima and her younger brother were playing on a makeshift swing that they made with the cloth.

Quoting Rashida, the owner of the shanty, locals took Taslima to a hospital where doctors declared her dead. Taslima's parents were not at home at that time, said police.

The body was sent to Dhaka Medical College morgue for an autopsy.

**'Illegal' foreign medicines seized at Dhaka airport**  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Customs Intelligence seized 75kg of "illegal" foreign medicines worth Tk 20 lakh at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday.

Consumed for infertility related complications, the medicines are not banned in the country but the consignee, Hale and Hearty Medicine Ltd, imported those violating the import policy, said Customs Intelligence officials.

The medicines were brought in a cargo plane from India in two separate consignments by DHL courier, they added.

**Mask exhibit starts at Galleri Kaya**  
CITY DESK

A 12-day group exhibition of masks by 15 contemporary artists of Bangladesh began at Galleri Kaya in the capital's Uttara yesterday, said a press release.

Imtiaz Ahmed, professor of the International Relations department of Dhaka University, inaugurated the exhibition where writer Anisul Haque was also present.

The exhibition titled "Mukh O Mukhosh-6" and organised by Galleri Kaya will remain open from 11:00am to 8:00pm everyday.

**Boy falls to death in Old Dhaka**  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An 11-year-old boy died after falling from the roof of an eight-storey building on Patuatuli Lane in Old Dhaka yesterday.

Sajjad Hossain Rishad, son of Feroz Alam, a watch trader, was a class IV student of Udayan School and College on Dhaka University campus.

Abul Hasan, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, said the boy tried to jump to another building but fell.

**Private bus service providers go on strike in Rajshahi against BRTC**  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Private bus owners and workers yesterday began an indefinite strike in Rajshahi district demanding with drawal of BRTC services from there.

The strike is enforced by Transport Owners and Labourers Oikya Parishad, which threatened to expand it to Rajshahi division from today if their demand is not met.

The government reintroduced two BRTC double-deckers in the district yesterday. Eight months ago, such services were suspended in the face of a similar movement.

**Road crashes kill 5, hurt 90**  
CITY DESK

Five people were killed and 90 others injured in road accidents in four districts yesterday.

In Fatikchhari of Chittagong, a man was killed and another injured when a truck rammed into an auto-rickshaw.

In Chittagong city, a man died when a three-wheeler turned turtle. A woman died after being hit by a truck in Phulbari, Dinajpur.

In Kurigram Sadar, a man was killed and 25 passengers injured in a bus plunge. Another bus plunge killed a girl and injured 64 passengers in Saidpur, Nilphamari.