



Clockwise from top, the enormous horseshoe pond, locally known as Jor Deba (twin ponds), sprawls over 25 acres of land and creates a stunning panoramic view in Pahartali of Chittagong city, but it has been encroached upon by shanties on south and west banks, while waste thrown from those is polluting its water. The slum grew over the years allegedly due to negligence of the railway authorities, the pond's owner. PHOTOS: ANURUP KANTI DAS

# Encroaching slum ruins beauty of port city's horseshoe pond

MINHAJ UDDIN, Ctg  
The horseshoe pond is one of the largest and most beautiful government-owned water bodies in Chittagong city. But pollution and encroachment by influential local people did not spare it either, damaging its potentials as another tourist spot of the city. Even 15 years ago, large trees lined all four banks of the pond on 25 acres of land in Pahartali. People from far-off places came to visit the water body, and splashed around in it. Besides, the railway authorities as well as locals used the clear water for drinking. According to the land office, its area is 25.87 acres excluding the

banks, but the railway (east zone) leases it as a 21.48-acre pond. Asked, Divisional Estate Officer Jashim Uddin said it was 21.48 acres as per the railway documents but he did not know why there was a discrepancy. Locally known as Jor Deba (twin ponds), it was dug by the railways authorities in 1896. A narrow, straight strip of land bifurcates the rectangular water body, giving it a resemblance to a horseshoe if seen from above, said Railway Estate Officer Abdul Bari. But both west and south banks are occupied by over a hundred illegal shanties. Besides, the slum dwellers also dump waste on the

banks as well as in the pond. In a recent visit, this correspondent saw nearly three dozen bamboo houses made on bamboo platforms, grabbing the shallow area of the pond in the southern part. The structures were built 5-10 feet off the banks. Nazim Uddin, a local shop owner, said, "It is frustrating that such a water body of panoramic beauty has been encroached upon and polluted by a few influential people while the railway authorities remain silent." The encroachment started after the railways authorities leased it for fish farming to Abdul Hai, a local businessman, in 1996. According to

locals, illegal shanties were built on the banks when Hai's lease was renewed for five more years in 2002. In 2003, the railways authorities investigated the allegations and found Hai's involvement in building the shanties. So, the authorities did not renew the lease. The divisional estate officer, Jashim, said it was the authorities' duty to maintain the large pond, and they could cancel the lease anytime. However, the official, who took the charge almost a year ago, said he did not understand why those steps were not taken when the encroachment was going on. Hai took the matter to court. SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

## IMPROVING URBAN POOR'S HEALTH STATUS Public health experts call for more investments

STAFF CORRESPONDENT  
Public health experts yesterday called for more investments to improve the health status of the urban poor. Over one third of the urban people live in slums with poor housing, water and sanitation facilities, which greatly contribute to the poor health conditions, they said. Besides, there is a lack of coordination among the government and non-government organisations in conducting health programmes, which needs to be addressed urgently, experts noted. The observations came at a consultation on urban health for the upcoming Global Strategy for Women, Children and Adolescents. Save the Children, Bangladesh Paediatric

Association, Brac, icddr, Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health and The Daily Star jointly organised it at the newspaper's office. According to the Bangladesh Urban Health Survey-2013, 50 percent of the slum children below the age of five are stunted, whereas it is 33 percent in the non-slums. A total of 43 percent of slum children are underweight, whereas the percentage is 26 for children in non-slums. Only half the women living in slums receive antenatal care (ANC) from the medically trained providers, while it is 83 percent for the non-slum women. NGOs are the major source of ANC in the slums amid absence of strong public healthcare facilities there. "There is a huge gap in many health SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Schoolchildren from slums of the capital brought to a rally of beggars wearing cardboard crowns that read "I will not beg and learn to work", in BMA Auditorium yesterday.



PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

### Rally of beggars?

STAFF CORRESPONDENT  
It was called a national rally of beggars. But the crowd at the auditorium was formed by people from different walks of life. Only a few said they were actually beggars. "I work for a garment factory. But I was brought here by a neighbour who works for the organisers," said a 16-year-old boy, SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

## চেষ্টার পরিবর্তন

পাইলস, ফিস্টুলা, কোষ্ঠকাঠিন্য, আমাশয়, কোলন ক্যান্সার, রেকটাম ক্যান্সার এবং কোলনস্কপি

বাংলাদেশ ও উপমহাদেশের প্রথম কলোরেকটাল সার্জন অধ্যাপক ডাঃ এ.কে. এম ফজলুল হক

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পুরাতন চেম্বার

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Participants nationwide are requested to send their selected outfits and accessories for the album.

Attention: Designers & Boutiques

The Daily Star

**Criteria for Participation:**

- Materials used should be produced locally.
- All submissions must be accompanied by, name of designer, address, contact no, price and a short description of the product. (either in English or Bangla)
- Designs should be original and suitable for the weather conditions.
- The attires and accessories sent for the album will be returned.
- Entry fee per submission is Tk. 500 (minimum 6 entries for each participating house)

Last Date of Submission 19 May, 2015

Contact: For submission of products and advertisement  
Sayeed Ahmed Chowdhury: 01711623905  
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