

DISAPPEARING DHAKA PARKS

MIRPUR-13

EST: PAKISTAN ERA

SIZE: OVER 1.0 ACRES

WARD: 1 (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 10th report of the series is published today.

Two vanish from records



Most of these tin-roof structures are built on an "udyan" and a park, the two measuring more than one acre, in Mirpur-13. The open spaces were earmarked in the records of the National Housing Authority and undivided Dhaka City Corporation, but after DCC's split, both vanished from the list of parks of Dhaka North City Corporation. In 2001, a mosque was built on the "udyan", bottom, and in 2009 it was extended taking almost all of the "udyan" land. Only around 10 feet away, another park was occupied by some 20 tin-roof houses, top. The photos were taken this week.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

HELEMUL ALAM

Two open spaces in Mirpur, which had been identified as an "udyan" and a park in the map of the National Housing Authority (NHA), are now occupied by locally influential people.

A mosque and a tin-roof house have filled the space of the "udyan", while some 20 more such houses occupied the park. The two places, located 10 feet apart and wedged between road 5 and road 8 in Mirpur 13, cover more than one acre of land.

An official of NHA said the park and the "udyan" were still earmarked in the map of NHA, and they did not allot any part of it for anything, even for the mosque.

The park had swings, slides and other amusement equipment while children played different games on the verdant "udyan".

Abdul Mannan, a businessman of the area, said the local people built Baitur Reza Jam-e-Mosque on the "udyan" in 2001, as three other mosques of the area were overflowing.

He said the authorities concerned allotted five kathas of land (0.10 acres) to the mosque and the rest had been kept for the children to play

games, but the mosque was extended after 2009.

Though the "udyan" and the park were on the list of undivided Dhaka City Corporation, after the split they vanished from the record of the Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC).

An official of DNCC said the "udyan" and the park were on NHA's document, but they did

ago.

There is another park in ward 1 (old) under DNCC where many children play now, he added.

Abdul Hakim, imam of Baitur Reza Jam-e-Masjid, said the local lawmaker, councillor, and then DCC helped to build the mosque as per the local people's demand.

Wishing anonymity, a resident of the area told The Daily Star

almost all of it was occupied by the mosque following the demand of devotees, he claimed.

Manzur Hossain Liton, another resident, said the children were being deprived of the opportunity to play outdoor games because of the occupation of the "udyan" and the park.

Mohammad Helal Uddin, the owner of the only tin-roof house on the "udyan" land, said they got the allotment from NHA -- NHA denied allotting land to anyone -- and had a stay order on eviction from the High Court.

Mohammad Foysal, a student of Hazi Ali Hossain High School, said they had to go to the playgrounds of two local schools, but the school authorities often kept those off-limits to other children.

Two fifth-graders of Heaven International School, Mohammad Ferdous and Fardin Khan, said they could not go to distant places to play games. It would have been nice, had they had the "udyan" now, they observed.

Mayor of DNCC Anisul Huq said he would first meet the councillors and later visit every ward to identify the problems. It will take one month, he added. "But the city parks will be a priority to me," Anisul said.



not get those officially from NHA.

"We will take an initiative to take the land officially and then will take steps to evict the occupiers from the park and the udyan," he said.

Mannan said children would play badminton, volleyball in the "udyan" around a decade

that there was a playground in the neighbourhood but land grabbers occupied it and sold it as plots. The local people constructed the mosque on the "udyan" to save its land from grabbers, he added.

Initially, there had been some space to play even after construction of the mosque but later

JIHAD'S DEATH

Railway engineer gets bail on surrender

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday granted bail to an engineer of Bangladesh Railway on surrender in a case filed over the death of four-year-old boy Jihad into a deep well last December.

The court gave the order after Jihad's father Nasir Fakir told it that he had no objection to granting bail to Senior Sub-Assistant Engineer Jahangir Alam who surrendered before it praying for his bail yesterday.

Jihad fell into the abyss, some 40 yards from his house at Railway Colony in the capital, around 4:00pm on December 26 last year while playing with friends. His body was pulled out by a band of indomitable volunteers around 2:45pm the following day, around 15 minutes after the fire service called off a near 23-hour search in the 17-inch diameter abandoned shaft.

Jahangir was on the run since a case was filed by Jihad's father. Earlier, Abdus Salam, a contractor, who installed the deep well, got bail.

On April 17, police pressed charges against Salam and Jahangir over the death.

NEWS IN brief

Ruja condemns death threat to DU VC, nine others

RU CORRESPONDENT

Rajshahi University Journalists Association (Ruja) yesterday issued a statement, demanding immediate arrest of the "radicals" who threatened 10 people, including Dhaka University Vice Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, with death.

They separately received identical letters, purportedly from Ansarullah Bangla Team, on Wednesday, which list their names and read, "Must you will prepare for dead (sic)".

The nine others are writer Dr Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, DU professors Kaberi Gayen and Asim Sarker, prime minister's adviser HT Imam, Awami League lawmaker Tarana Halim, spokesperson of a faction of Gonojagoron Mancha Imran H Sarker, Bikash Saha, Md Iqbalur Rahim, and Paltan Sutar.

Man gets life term for killing wife

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A Sylhet court yesterday sentenced a man to life term imprisonment for killing his wife.

The convict Kawsar Ahmed, 30, of Boroachatul village was also fined Tk 1 lakh in default to serve one more year in jail.

According to the prosecution, Kawsar strangled his wife Rojina Begum, 22, of Sundisail village following a family feud on August 30, 2009.

Later, Rojina's father filed a case accusing Kawsar.

Handcuffed man flees from Ctg police custody

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A handcuffed man fled while he was being taken to Joraganj Police Station in Mirsarai upazila of Chittagong early yesterday.

Rezaul Karim, 37, of Karer Haat of Mirsarai, who was arrested over a clash in the area around a week ago, managed to escape as some locals and his relatives had an altercation with police on the way, claimed Assistant Superintendent of Police (Sitakunda circle) Salahuddin Shikder.

Police, however, detained two persons on the spot in this regard, he said.

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Last date for submission: 31 May 2015

HSBC The Daily Star

Junior Climate Champions 2014

Junior Climate Champions

NATIONAL FINALE

Saturday, 23 May 2015; Time: 3:00 PM

Venue: Bangla Academy, Abdul Karim Sahitya Bisharad Seminar Hall, Ramna, Dhaka

The Junior Climate Champions programme aims to raise awareness among the children of Bangladesh on climate change and the importance of preserving our environment. 223 regional winners, selected from around 6000 participants from Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet, will be participating in the national finale of Junior Climate Champions 2014.

Mr. Asaduzzaman Noor, Hon'ble Minister, Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh will be present as Chief Guest and Manoj Kumar Biswas, General Manager, Green Banking and CSR Department, Bangladesh Bank will be present as Special Guest.

Please join us in congratulating the Junior Climate Champions from Bangladesh.

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