

Once Dhaka was adorned with several hundred ponds. Like canals, only a handful exist now. But they are also in death throes due to negligence of the authorities concerned. Although, according to the Field, Open Space, Park and Natural Water Body Protection Act 2000, filling up of any water body including pond is illegal, it's going on unabated. The Daily Star found 63 ponds in the maps of undivided Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) in its 28 wards out of 90. A survey for the map was carried out between 2003 and 2011. But many of the water bodies were filled up before the period and also even after the survey. We are publishing the seventh report of the series today covering the then DCC ward-83, which is now ward-47 of the Dhaka South City Corporation.

PART 7



Gandaria Pond under a constant threat of encroachment and pollution.



A soothing Govt Modern Flour Mill Pond remains protected.



PHOTOS: RASHED SHUMON

## PONDS of Dhaka

HELEMUL ALAM

Once there were six ponds in Ward-83 of the undivided Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), offering a much-needed respite to the residents from the jaded city life.

The water bodies were a vital part of the ward, used by almost all. Besides being a natural haven and a centre to relax awhile, these ponds used to cater for households of the communities.

But over the years four of the water bodies were lost to urban sprawl.



Postogola Cremation Ghat Pukur has become a cremation ground.

Of the remaining two, one is barely surviving due to the negligence of the authorities concerned. The other one is still in a relatively better condition.

Among the six, two were on the DCC base map where DCC mentioned that the ponds belonged to them. However, both have now disappeared due to a lack of protection.

The around 0.576 sq km ward comprises Gandaria, Postogola, Lal Mohan Poddar Lane, Dhaka Cotton Mills, Bangladesh Bank Colony and Dhalka Nagar Lane of Sutrapur among other areas.

It now falls under Ward-47 of Dhaka South City Corporation.

### GANDARIA POND

The around five-bigha pond in the capital's Gandaria was not only a source of fresh water for the residents, it was also a part of their heritage, according to locals.

Due to the negligence of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk), the water body is in death throes. Rampant encroachment and dumping of waste from the nearby households continue to threaten its existence.

If not immediately saved, the pond will disappear soon and remain just a whisper of the past, said locals.

Rajuk acquired the land for its residential project, Gandaria DIT plot, in 1962/63, said a Rajuk official.

When asked, he said they do not have any concrete plan to protect the pond.

Ali Hossain, a resident of the area, said they had many fond memories of the water body during their childhood. The area used to be abuzz with people swimming in it or relaxing by the banks.

The 0.33 acre pond was on the DCC base map where DCC was mentioned as the owner of the water body.

### POND AT JURAIN GRAVEYARD

The pond was first turned into a playground during the 90s under the initiative of a local ward commissioner.

But the playground did not last long either. It was turned into an extended part of the Jurain graveyard after five years.

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chairman M Bazlul Karim Chaudhury said necessary steps would be taken soon to protect the pond.

### BURIGANGA RIVER

The Buriganga River flows through the area, providing a natural water body for the residents.

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### CHHAPRA MASJID PUKUR

The privately-owned pond was used by residents of the Dhalka Nagar and Sutrapur areas on a regular basis.

There were three ghats (landing spot) and water of the pond was clean, said locals.

But the owner sold the pond in 1989 due to a financial crisis, said Syed Mozammel Hossain, a family member of the owner. The pond was filled up around that time.

"I still miss the pond," he said. "It would have been very useful during this hot weather. Not just for us, for everyone."

Now, there are furniture shops and

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The around 1.5 bighas of water body is comparatively in a better condition as its water was found to be clean during a visit in April.

"Like many others, I used to bathe in the pond," said Mofazzal. He said the pond was used by people from different areas even few years back. Now, access to the water body is limited as the mill has set up boundary walls surrounding it.

Contacted, an official of the flour mill said the boundary walls were set up around two years back for ensuring safety of the people and also for protecting the water body.

Julfikar Raham, chief miller of the mill, said the mill was constructed in 1956, since then the pond is there. The mill was shut down in 2005 and reopened in 2015 after renovation.

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### CHHAPRA MASJID PUKUR

The around 1.53 acres of pond was located next to 44/2 Dhalka Nagar Lane in Sutrapur area since the Pakistan period. It was filled up during the last part of the 90s.

A resident of the area claimed that the water body was owned by the Nawab family, and later came under the Dhaka City Corporation in the 80s under the initiative of a local ward commissioner.

The pond was filled up and divided into around 20 plots, said a local wishing anonymity. He said a mosque was also built on the land around that time.

Now, there are around 20 multi-storey buildings in the area.

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permanent and makeshift structures instead of the around one-bigha water body.

"We want to keep the pond alive as it enhances the beauty of the area. Also, it works as a retention area, which will help a lot during any fire incident," he said.

The water of the pond is clean and free of pollution, he pride.

(Edited by Hasan Meer)



The pond at Jurain graveyard has been filled up for extending the graveyard.



Shops and makeshift structures occupy what once was Ekram Shaheber Pukur.