



YESTERDAY'S

DHAKA

MYMENSINGH

CHITTAGONG

SYLHET

RAJSHAHI

RANGPUR

KHULNA

BARISAL

COX'S BAZAR

TEMPERATURES

H 29.2 | L 26.0

H 30.5 | L 26.6

H 27.5 | L 25.4

H 32.0 | L 26.4

H 33.4 | L 26.5

H 31.8 | L 27.6

H 29.6 | L 26.4

H 28.2 | L 26.0

H 27.6 | L 25.3

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 thirteenth report of the series today covering the then DCC wards 70 and 69.

PART 13



The around 19-katha Shikkatuli Pond in Nazirabazar of Old Dhaka still attracts people of all ages.



The reservoir in Alubazar, a popular recreational place for locals, needs proper maintenance.

PHOTOS: RASHED SHUMON

Legacy worth preserving

PONDS of Dhaka

HELEMUL ALAM

It was a sunny noon. A group of youths were playing cricket at Shikkatuli Park in Nazirabazar of Old Dhaka.

The day was hot and humid. By the time the match was over, all of them were drenched in sweat.

But the boys had the perfect plan. There was a pond just a couple of hundred yards away and they decided to swim in it to get a much-needed respite from the heat.

Once they reached their destination, they took off their shirts and jumped into the reservoir.

Among them, Sayem, a fifth grader, cheerfully said, "I learn swimming here." His friends did not let him finish and chimed in, "We all did."

Though people, especially children, of the area are fortunate to have a playground and reservoir, many areas of the city are deprived of such amenities.

A local club, Shikkatuli Muslim Juba Sangha, played a key role to protect those. And they are still fighting to save the around 19-katha pond from the eyes of encroachers, who are claiming its ownership.

According to locals, Bochi Bibi, wife of Munshi Emdadul Haque, an influential local, took the initiative to dig up the reservoir and a mosque for the people of the area in 1853.

It has been said that she paid for the work with her "denmohor" (dower) so that the residents could have a place for themselves to use its water and relax by its banks.

There was a time when Shikkatuli Pond used to be frequented by people from other areas also. The atmosphere surrounding the reservoir was vibrant and remained abuzz with activities, with parents and afterwards children.

While talking to this correspondent, all of them shared their fond memories of the water body – how they spent time swimming in its cool water with their parents and afterwards children.

Now it is surrounded by buildings on three sides. At times, residents throw waste in it, making the water dirty.

There is a sign on its eastern side



The Multibitala Pond used to be here.

that says the renovation work for the pond has been done twice by the government. ABM Sirajul Islam Chy, chairman of Dhaka City Corporation development committee, did its bank development work by spending Tk 95,000. And, former mayor Abul Haqam in 1981-82 renovated the bank on the south side.

At present, Shikkatuli Muslim Juba Sangha is looking after the pond located at Majed Sardar Road.

"But it's not possible to keep the reservoir clean all the time. We need support in this regard."

The water of the pond was used at least in five fire incidents within the last 10 years. "Even last year, there was a fire at a shoe factory that was dosed using its water," he said.

There is also a ghat on the south side used by locals for bathing or swimming.

Nasir said Awal Hossain, councillor of Ward 33, also assured that the reservoir will be restored. "The pond is under threat now. Claiming its ownership, one Aslam Adam, an influential local, is trying to grab it," he said.

When asked, Aslam Adam claimed that his father Ali Molla is the owner of the pond who purchased it in 1952. He said if they get the pond they will decide what to do with it.

Contacted, Councillor Awal Hossain said as the locals are demanding the pond's renovation, he has written to the Dhaka South City Corporation mayor in this regard and also got a positive response. "We will start the renovation work soon," he said.

ALUBAZAR POND

Though the around five-katha pond, located opposite to 165 Haji Osman

Gani Road (Alubazar), is still there, it needs proper care.

During a recent visit, it was seen that its water was not clean. Still, around 20 youths were swimming in it.

Mohammad Mahi, a seventh grader, said, "I swim here almost every day. But the water is not clean. That's why I have to take a bath once I go home."

Moyra Mia, former owner of the pond, said it was purchased by his grandfather Rajib Ali. "My father Bahadur Mia inherited the pond from him."

He said the pond belonged to him till the tenure of former mayor Mohammad Hanif.

"The pond then went under the possession of Dhaka City Corporation. Mayor Hanif removed the reservoir and built a like a swimming pool with concrete boundary," he said.

Also, there is a ghat (landing spot) on one side used by children for swimming. A portion in the pond is also fenced so that children do not go to the deep end and swim in the designated area.

Another local Solimulla Rabul alleged that a water pump was supposed to

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It's an unjust society

Say Prof Serajul Islam Chy



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terming the present society unjust, professor emeritus of Dhaka University Serajul Islam Choudhury has said the average people of this society possess knowledge, intellect, and kindness.

He expressed the views at the N.C.H.E.M.K.a.n Memorial Speech programme last week at East West University (EWU).

The veteran professor said the independence of the country transferred power from foreigners to the local rulers, but the power structure remained the same.

On the question of language, he said at present English was more dominant than Bangla compared to the British era.

The lecture was organised in the memory of ex-student of the university Noreen Khan, late daughter of former caretaker government adviser Dr Akbar Ali Khan.

On the occasion, Prof Serajul Islam Choudhury said.

Prof Dr MM Shahidul Hassan, vice-chancellor of EWU, presided over the programme while Dr Akbar Ali Khan, former DU professor Dr Fakruddin Alam, and Dr Shafiqul Alam were present.

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