

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 fourteenth report of the series today covering the then DCC ward 63.

PART 14



The pond inside the Dhakeshwari Mandir is not only properly maintained, also revered by all.



The Hussaini Dalan pond enhances the serenity of the place even further.

PHOTOS: RASHED SHUMON

Maintained with care

PONDS of Dhaka

HELEMUL ALAM

It was a lazy afternoon. Around 10 to 15 ducks were relaxing by a pond. Suddenly, a group of people gathered in the area and started playing trumpets, flutes and drums.

The ducks went in the water and swam to the other side.

The band kept on playing.

There were other people too, dancing to the music. They were all visiting the water body to perform a marriage ritual in it.

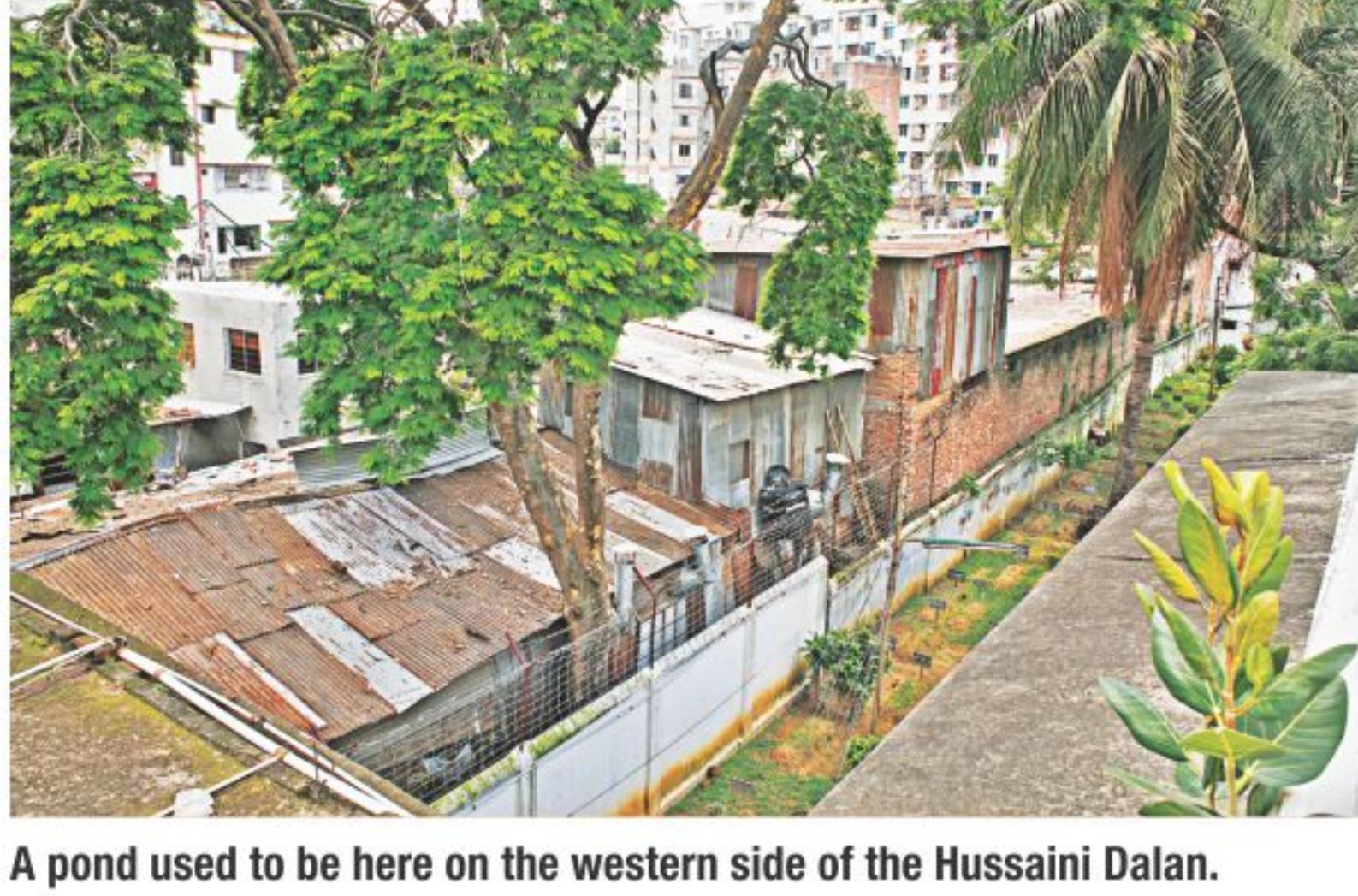
Krishna Saha, one of the relatives from the bride's side, said, "This pond and its water are sacred to us. We came from Azimpur to perform the marriage ritual."

The around one-bigha reservoir is located inside the Dhakeshwari Mandir (temple).

The temple is state-owned, giving it the distinction of being Bangladesh's national temple. The name "Dhakeshwari" means "Goddess of Dhaka". Since the destruction of Ramna Kali Mandir in 1971 by the Pakistani army during the 1971 Liberation War, the Dhakeshwari temple has assumed status as the most important Hindu place of worship in the country, according to Wikipedia.

From the clean water and serene surrounding, it becomes apparent that the pond is maintained with love and care by the temple committee.

The pond is around 900 years old, said Biplab Kumar De, office secretary



A pond used to be here on the western side of the Hussaini Dalan.



Nawab Bagicha pond lost to the urban sprawl.

of Bangladesh Puja Ujjapan Parishad.

Shyamol Roy, the parishad's general secretary, said, "The reservoir is used by devotees on a regular basis to perform various rituals. On an average, two to three such programmes are held here every day."

Shyamol said the temple was constructed around 800 years back on 20 bighas of land and the pond was there before that. "The pond is a part of our culture and history."

"We have a plan to develop its banks and setting up pumps to keep the water clean."

THREE PONDS IN CHAWKBAZAR

Other than the pond in Dhakeshwari Temple, the capital's Chawkbazar area used to be blessed with three more ponds.

During a recent visit, it was seen that one of them is in a good condition. But the other two have vanished com-

pletely due to encroachment and a lack of proper initiative.

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) prepared a base map carrying out a survey between October 2004 and February 2005, where they did not mention the ponds clearly. In the map, the locations were marked as river/lake/pond/khal.

POND INSIDE HUSSAINI DALAN

The pond inside the Hussaini Dalan in Old Dhaka is still being maintained properly by its authorities.

Constructed during the later half of the Mughal rule (17th century) in Old Dhaka, Hussaini Dalan was built as the Imambara or house of the imam (religious leader) of the Shia community.

The main building is situated in the middle of the complex, built on an area of about 0.65 bighas.

The stonework water tank is located directly to its south. This around one-

bigha pond is one of the main attractions of this building, which touches its walls.

During a recent visit, it was seen that around 20 ducks were swimming in the reservoir, creating gentle ripples in the water.

It has three ghats (landing spots). There are also benches where people can sit and relax.

But swimming or bathing is not allowed to keep the water clean and for the safety of people, said SM Jamal Behbahni, a member of the development committee of the Imambara.

He said former mayor Mohammad Hanif during his tenure built the ghats in the 90s. "This pond enhances the beauty and serenity of the area. We try to maintain it properly by cleaning it once a week."

POND ON WESTERN SIDE

Behbahni said there used to be another pond inside the property. It was occu-

pied and later filled up by an influential local.

"The around one-bigha pond used to be on the western side of the main building. It was rented out to one Piyar Mia Sarder at Tk 250 per year in 1957."

The rented-out land was around 3.5 bighas including the reservoir. The rent contract was supposed to expire in 2007, he said.

But Piyar Mia after an SA (state acquisition) porcha (land ownership record) stopped paying rent, alleged Behbahni. He also filled it up in the 80s.

"We filed a case with Artha Rin Adalot (financial loan court) against him and learnt that Uttara Bank will auction off the property as Piyar Mia took loan against it and defaulted payment."

Behbahni said after losing the case they filed a writ petition with the High Court again. "We got the verdict in our favour as it was a waqf (endowment)

property."

The HC asked the bank to auction off Piyar Mia's other properties instead and it did that in February 2013, he said. Another case regarding the property is ongoing at a Savar court, he added.

Behbahni said the reservoir had three ghats (landing spots).

Sayed Salem Ali, kadem of Hossaini Dalan, said the pond water was clean and a good number of people used to bathe in it.

At present, tin-shed structures have replaced the reservoir.

POND IN NAWAB BAGICHA

There used to be a pond at Nawab Bagicha in Nazimuddin Road that has been lost to the urban sprawl during the late 80s.

The pond was there since the Mughal era. The nawabs and their family members used to arrange jalsas (musical soirees) beside it, according to elderly locals.

Also, they would watch the Tajia processions from their house next to the reservoir. It was near the Hussaini Dalan, said SM Jamal Behbahni, member of the development committee of the Hussaini Dalan Imambara.

Afterwards, it was used by the locals. It used to be around two bighas and there was a ghat (staircase), where people used to bathe.

He said the pond land was acquired by the government and later it was filled up and sold to individuals. Eventually, several buildings were constructed there.

"Even in 1985/86, I used to bathe in it," he said.

(Edited by HASAN MEER)



Colleagues, friends and dignitaries observe a minute of silence in memory of one of the most gifted singer-composers of the country Lucky Akhand, inset. A musical programme was held in the capital's Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy yesterday as a tribute to the legendary artiste who passed away on April 21.

PHOTO: STAR

Mechanix
guitarist Zeheen
'commits suicide'
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A guitarist
for heavy
metal band
Mechanix,
Zeheen
Ahmed,
hanged



himself at his Dhanmondi residence in the capital yesterday, said the family.

Son of renowned keyboard player Manam Ahmed, the 26-year-old was taken to Labaid hospital around 3:30pm, where the doctors declared him dead.

Dhanmondi Police Station Sub-inspector Ziaur Rahman said a member of the family called them saying that Zeheen committed suicide and his body was kept at the hospital.

He hanged himself from a ceiling fan, police quoted the family as saying.

The family, however, do not know why he committed suicide, said police.

Meanwhile, Zeheen formerly played in alternative rock band Nemesis.

Not all of us are crazy

FROM PAGE 4

The parliament in September 2014 passed the 16th amendment, which abolished the chief justice-led Supreme Judicial Council and restored the authority of parliament to remove SC judges.

The High Court in May last year ruled that the 16th amendment was illegal and unconstitutional.

On January 4, the government filed an appeal with the SC against the HC verdict.

A seven-member SC bench, led by Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha, on July 3 unanimously upheld the HC verdict.

While dealing with the appeal, the SC in February requested 12 senior jurists to place their opinion.

Nine of them recommended scrapping the amendment. One spoke in favour of it while the other two did not give any opinion.

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২৯/০১/২০১৭ই (মেজিজার)

৩১/০৭/২০১৭ই (মোহবার)
০১/০৮/২০১৭ই (মোহবার)
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*** হ্যান্ড উপলক্ষ্যে বিশেষ ছাত্র ***