



YESTERDAY'S

DHAKA

MYMENSINGH

CHITTAGONG

SYLHET

RAJSHAHI

RANGPUR

KHULNA

BARISAL

COX'S BAZAR

TEMPERATURES

H 35.0 | L 27.4

H 31.3 | L 27.0

H 33.5 | L 26.6

H 33.3 | L 25.5

H 36.2 | L 27.0

H 35.3 | L 27.6

H 34.5 | L 27.5

H 33.6 | L 26.0

H 33.8 | L 26.0

Rain accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at a few places over Sylhet, Mymensingh and Chittagong divisions and at one or two places over Rajshahi, Dhaka, Chuadanga and Barisal divisions with moderately heavy falls at places till 10pm today, reports UNB. Day and night temperatures may remain nearly unchanged over the country, says Met office. The sun sets in the capital today at 6:12pm and rises tomorrow at 5:42am.

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 Playground, 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 twenty first report of the series today covering the then DCC ward 12 and 10.



The reservoir at Road Research Institute.



The pond at Panchtola Staff Quarter lies neglected.



The pond at Paikpara Government Staff Quarter in Mirpur is being maintained properly.

PART 21

Even a year ago, the reservoir inside the Radio Staff Quarter in Kalyanpur used to be vibrant with activities.

Children, under the supervision of guardians, used to swim in its clean water. For many, the reservoir was also a source of drinking water.

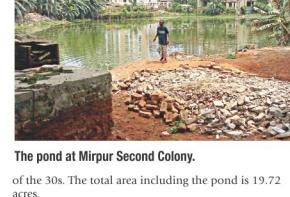
But the condition of the pond is appalling now. According to locals, the quality of the water deteriorated drastically after fish was released into it.

"I used to swim in it regularly. I even learnt to swim here," said Shahadat Hossain Ridoy, a sixth-grader. "But I stopped swimming from this year as the water became dirty," he said.

Many said the water started to get dirty after the authorities concerned started to use the reservoir for cultivating fish. The authorities released fish again around four months back, they said.

Urmii, an eighth-grader, was fetching water from a nearby well. She said, "Very few people use the pond now. Before, we used to collect water from it for our household chores."

Abdur Rashid, deputy station engineer of Radio station, said they purchased the land during the latter part



The pond at Mirpur Second Colony.

of the 30s. The total area including the pond is 19.72 acres.

"We handed over around 4.47 acres of land including the pond to the Bangladesh TV and Film Archive Institute," said Rashid. "National Institute of Mass Communication (Nimco) also received 2.40 acres."

He said the pond needs maintenance.

PONDS AT ROAD RESEARCH INSTITUTE
There are six ponds inside the Bangladesh Road Research Institute in Paikpara, which are being maintained by the authorities concerned.

Mohammad Bulbul Hossain, executive engineer at the institute, said the total area of the institute is around 40 acres.

The land was acquired in 1952. The reservoirs were dug up around that time.

Bulbul said they cultivate fish in the ponds. Though they have a plan to con-

struct a "road research training wing", they will not fill up the reservoirs to do so.

"We will continue to protect those," he said.

PANCHTOLA STAFF QUARTER POND
While the pond inside the Paikpara Staff Quarter is a glaring example of how a reservoir should be cared for, the one inside the Paikpara Panchtola Staff Quarter lies neglected.

A large portion of it has already been grabbed and filled up.

Mohammad Shahidul, a former staff at the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh, said structures have been built illegally on its eastern side.

"I used to bathe in it in the 90s. But the water became dirty due to dumping of waste from the nearby roads."

He also alleged that due to a rivalry between "two groups" in the area, no one takes any steps to renovate the pond.

(Edited by HASAN MEER)

People to the rescue

HELEMUL ALAM

When most of the ponds in the capital are failing victim to urban sprawl, residents of the Paikpara Government Staff Quarter in Mirpur have taken it upon themselves to restore and preserve one.

The condition of the reservoir inside the quarter was deplorable even 10 years back, but because of the initiative it is in a good condition now.

It is being maintained by the authorities of nearby Baitul Mobarak Jam-e-Mosque and Kalamy Samiti (welfare association) of the staff quarter.

Some portions of the water body were filled in the 80s to construct the mosque, an office of the Samity and a road, said locals.

Surrounded by trees, it is now being maintained on a regular basis.

Fayaz Rahaman, general secretary of the mosque, said, "Covered with hyacinth, the pond used to be a breeding ground for mosquitoes."

He said they started looking after it from 2006. "We've been taking care of it ever since. We release fish in it and sell those to generate income."

Asma Akhtar, daughter of a Gangabahani staff who lives at the quarter, said the pond also enhanced the living standards in the area. "Everyday, the pond area gets swarmed with people -- walking or gossiping beside it."

Her mother, Nazma Akhtar, was on an evening stroll by the reservoir. She paused, took a deep breath and said, "Even the air is fresh here..."

Saiful Islam, president of the Kalamy Samity, said not only the pond, the condition of the quarter was also not good before. "We took the initiative to clean the pond as well as improve the condition of the area."

He said they gave the pond to the mosque committee so that they can maintain it properly. "We cultivate fish in it by leasing it from the mosque committee. The money is then used for the development of the area."

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