

WEATHER FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES

DHAKA
H 34.7 L 28.0

MYMENSINGH
H 33.4 L 26.5

CHITTAGONG
H 31.5 L 25.0

SYLHET
H 28.2 L 25.3

RAJSHAHI
H 36.0 L 27.5

RANGPUR
H 33.0 L 27.0

KHULNA
H 33.4 L 27.8

BARISAL
H 31.0 L 27.0

COX'S BAZAR
H 28.7 L 25.2

Light to moderate rain/thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at many places over Rangpur, Mymensingh, Dhaka, Barisal, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions and at a few places over Khulna and Rajshahi divisions with moderately heavy to heavy falls at places till 6:00pm today, says Met Office. The sun sets in the capital today at 6:08pm and rises tomorrow at 5:43am.

PART 22



PHOTOS: HELEMUL ALAM

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 second report of the series today covering the then DCC ward 28 and 27.

BY THE SERENE WATER

HELEMUL ALAM

As one enters the place, he or she gets welcomed by a melodic chirping of birds and whiff of earth and wet grass.

With blue sky overhead and the air buzzed with laughter and chatter of people, noise from the busy streets also begins to dwindle.

Can you imagine this place -- a pond -- is located right in the capital?

Anyone can visit the reservoir and spend time with families or friends there and fish to their heart's content.

The pond is located inside Kalimata Mandir (temple) at Basabo.

It is frequented by around 20 people a day. Anyone can buy a ticket from the temple authorities and fish in the pond for the entire

day. A fishing enthusiast will have to pay Tk 500 per fishing rod.

Abul Hossain, a retired National Board of Revenue staff, visits the pond on a regular basis. "I love to fish. It's a great way to spend time with family and friends."

He brought his son and a friend along with him. "Fishing also teaches you patience."

"Even when I was working, I used to drop by during the holidays. Since my retirement in 2011, I come here on a regular basis."

The pond is filled with fish -- from small to huge ones, he said. Except for winter, people can fish here anytime they want.

"Not just here, we also go to the Dhanmondi Lake, Ramna Lake and the water bodies at Mirpur zoo for fishing."



Meanwhile, Mohammad Kabir, a resident of Shantibagh, was all serious. "I started fishing since I was a boy." Though he was talking to this correspondent, he kept his focus on the fishing rod he was holding.

"I even caught a 4kg Pangash just five days back. It was quite tasty," he boasted.

Suddenly, he left the rod on the ground and smiled. "You know, I learnt to fish from my father. We used to fish together."

Utpal Das, a staff at the temple, said they allow people to fish for six months. "We use the rest of the months to breed fish."

HISTORY OF THE POND

According to legend, around five hundred years ago, Man Singh, Rajput Raja of Amber (now Jaipur in India), was travelling through the area. As the area had a scarcity of water, Man Singh, also a trusted general of the Mughal emperor Akbar, directed his soldiers to dig up the pond.

Since then, the several-acre pond is known as Ganga Sagar Dighi, said Lion Chittaranjan Das, president of the Baradeshwary Kalimata Mandir Committee. Later, people visited the area as a pilgrimage.

"If a person visits the pond, he or she will enjoy the time here as its water is very clean

and perfect for swimming." There are two ghats (landing spots) in it and the pond is surrounded by trees, said Utpal Das, a staff of the temple.

Aside from fishing, many still use the reservoir on a regular basis.

Uttam Chandra Das, a fish trader, said he bathes in it regularly.

While Profulla Sarkar, a resident of Basabo, said the pond is used by the people of Hindu community for performing rituals such as emersion of goddess Durga's idol.

Babu Chandra Rajbangshi, another resident of the area, said people not only bathe in it, but also use the water for household chores when they do not get water from the Wasa lines.

(Edited by HASAN MEER)

Left neglected

Once Basabo and Ahmedbagh were full of water bodies. There were at least seven ponds in the areas. But in course of time, most of them were filled up.

And, the ones alive are now struggling to survive.

Due to a lack of initiative from the authorities concerned, the reservoirs were replaced by buildings, schools, health complex and playground.

POND AT BALURMATH

The around two-bigha pond near the Balurmata (playground) in Basabo is there since the Pakistan period.

Hanif Shahid, general secretary of a committee to protect the playground, said the field used to be a jheel (water body) during that time. The then Pakistan

government used its soil to construct the Kamalapur Railway Station.

Later, the place was handed over to the Public Works Department.

The area was earmarked as a jheel in Revisional Survey (RS), State Acquisition (SA) and even in the records of City Survey, he said.

It was turned into the field in 2003-2004. As people of the area put up a resistance against the move, a small portion of the water body survived. It is now being used as a pond.

Many still fish in it. But due to a lack of protection, its water has become polluted.

Babar Ali was fishing in the pond. The resident of Wahab Colony under Sabujbagh said he fishes here quite often. "Its water was very clean and many used to swim in it," he said. "The water started getting polluted

around five years back."

Mohammad Yusuf, a resident of Basabo, echoed him. "I still fish here. It gives me much pleasure. I caught a small tilapia in it recently."

The pond needs maintenance, he said.

POND NEAR AGOMON CINEMA
Though a portion of the pond on the eastern side of the Basabo's Agomon Cinema Hall is still intact, it will be turned into a stack of concrete soon as the owner of the reservoir has given it to a developer.

Disney Properties Limited will construct a multi-storey building there. Also, the privately-owned reservoir was filled up partially around 10 years back to make way for a market.

Mohammad Sabbir, a staff at Disney Properties, said they are waiting for Rajuk's approval to construct the 16-storey building. The pond is around two bighas, he said.

ABDUL AZIZ SCHOOL POND
Once there used to be a reservoir inside the Abdul Aziz School in Madartek. The one-bigha pond was turned into a playground and a building in the 90s.

Mohammad Akbar Ali, a member of the school's governing body, said the school was established in 1962. A four-storey building on the western side of the school and a playground was created after filling up the pond.

Akbar said many used to bathe in it. "It was also being used for fish cultivation."

POND AT BUDDHIST TEMPLE
The pond inside Basabo Buddhist Temple is there since the British period.

Pakistani ruler Ayub Khan allotted the land to construct the temple and an orphanage in 1960, said Anuj Barua, executive member of Bangladesh Bouddha Kristi Prachar Sangha. It was dug up during that time.



The pond in Ahmedbagh needs proper care.

Surrounded by trees, the pond is being maintained properly by the temple authorities.

POND BEHIND SHISHU KALLYAN SCHOOL

Most of the pond behind Shishu Kallyan Primary School was filled up and several buildings were constructed there.

Jabed Ali, a resident of the area, said as its water became polluted, people stopped using it.

POKA SARDAR'S POND

Once, the around two-bigha pond used to be vibrant with activities. It had two ghats (landing spots) and many used to bathe and swim there, said locals.

But the reservoir is in death throes now. The owner has given it to a developer to construct a multi-storey building.

"We handed it over to a developer around

eight years back," said Adnanul Bari, a relative of the owner -- Poka Sardar.

"My great grandfather dug up the pond in the Pakistan period for my great grandmother so that she could swim and bathe in it," he said.

POND AT AHMEDBAGH

The pond at Ahmedbagh has disappeared completely. Several multi-storey buildings were constructed on it.

Adnanul Bari said the pond was filled up around 10 years back.

Pond in middle of Ahmedbagh, Kadamtali
There is a privately-owned pond in the middle of Ahmedbagh and Kadamtali that has been lying neglected for years.

Kazi Nurul Amin, owner of a portion of the reservoir, however said it was not a pond, but rather a paddy field. "We purchased the land in 1983."



The reservoir inside Basabo Buddhist Temple.

CMP to get counter terrorism

FROM PAGE 3
leadership of an additional inspector general of police (IGP) with its headquarters in Dhaka; the proposed CT unit of CMP will work in coordination with the CTC upon getting the approval, said the CMP boss.

According to the CMP proposal, the existing bomb disposal unit and Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) will work under the proposed CT unit, which will have two other separate teams named CT (intelligence) and CT (operation). Each of the four teams will be led by an ADC, with a DC at the helm of the full-fledged CT unit, the sources added.

As per the proposal, there will be six assistant commissioners, four inspectors, 20 sub-inspectors, 14 assistant sub-inspectors, six nayeks, 44 constables, a stenographer, a computer operator, two office assistants, four cooks and four sweepers at the unit.

ADC Mirza Sayem Mahmud of CMP's bomb disposal unit, who took part in several operations against militants, told The Daily Star, "We have been working against militancy alongside other regular activities. It (formation of CT) will boost our activities against militancy..."

Apart from that, CMP has also sought 2,389 more personnel for strengthening its activities as CMP is reeling from manpower crisis, said some top officials of CMP. On October 5, 2015, Detective Branch (DB) of CMP busted a JMB hideout in the city's Khoajnagar area and arrested five militants including Towfiqul Islam Javed, military wing commander of the organisation's Chittagong region, along with nine handmade grenades and ammunitions.

Later, on December 27, 2015, a JMB den was busted in Amanbazar area under Hathazari upazila by the DB police. Police arrested three suspected JMB operatives and recovered one MK-11 sniper rifle, bullets and a huge amount of bomb-making materials.

On March 16, 2017, police busted two JMB dens in Sitakunda upazila where a militant couple was captured alive from one of the dens. Four persons including a woman and a child were killed in a suicide blast during the operation.

March towards

FROM PAGE 3
Announcing the programme, Imran said unless their demands are met by Monday, they would start a procession towards the Myanmar embassy from Gulshan-2 intersection at 3:00pm on that day.

Bangladesh has to consider both humanitarian situation and its national security while tackling the Rohingya crisis, Imran said. At the same time, diplomatic efforts have to be continued, he added.

Strengthen

FROM PAGE 4
must do," Amitabh said while addressing the session via a video link.

At the session yesterday, member countries adopted a regional action plan to end viral hepatitis -- a public health threat -- by 2030. Bangladesh, Bhutan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Maldives and Timor-Leste are members of the HWO South East Regional Committee.

New terminal to boost Ctg port

FROM PAGE 3
Army has been given the task to execute the project under Delegated Procurement of Public Procurement Rules 2008, as the port is experiencing huge annual growth in container and cargo throughput.

Dr Ashraf Ali, professor of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BuEt), the consulting agency for the PCT, hoped that the project would be completed by 2019.

Once completed, the terminal, having three 200-metre-long container jetties, would be able to handle around 4.50 lakh 20-foot equivalent unit (TEU) containers annually, he added.

MA Latif, member of the parliamentary standing committee on shipping ministry, said only seven jetties in place of 39 could be built at the port in last 47 years since independence.

Though discussion about three other mega projects -- Laldia Multi-purpose Terminal, Karnaphuli Container Terminal (KCT) and Bay

Terminal -- started 10 to 12 years back, no visible progress has been seen in these years, he said.

People behind the negligence, which has been taking toll on the country's economy, should be punished, he demanded.

Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan said the port authority had already taken initiatives to implement these projects.

If the present government comes to power again, these projects will be completed, he hoped.

Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) President Mahbulul Alam said the country's export and import trade is increasing.

Therefore, the port needs to enhance its capacity and efficiency to provide proper service to increasing growth of trade, he added.

CPA Chairman Rear Admiral M Khaled Iqbal said they had taken different short, mid and long-term projects -- constructing new terminals and purchasing equipment -- to

enhance the port's capacity.

He hoped that a vessel's turnaround time, which has reached nearly 3 days recently, would come down to 2 days within a year after implementation of these short and mid-term projects.

The terminal will also have a specialised dolphin oil jetty for unloading oil, backward yards having capacity to store 4,500 TEU containers, road and rail links and other facilities, he added.

Major General Siddiqur Rahman Sarker, chief of engineering corps of Bangladesh Army, said they would start the construction work within 15 days and the total project would be completed before the timeframe.

Afterwards, Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan visited container handling equipment at the port.
For easing the port activities, CPA purchased 46 equipment including four rubber-tyred gantry cranes in the last six months at a cost of Tk 138 crore.