

What remains of the 'jheel' in Motijheel

|| HELEMUL ALAM ||



DHAKA VIBE

The waterbody stretches over an area of about one acre, and has two boat services -- benefitting hundreds of people who take the route.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

If you go to Motijheel and look for the proverbial "jheel" the financial hub of the capital is named after, you will be disappointed.

But after putting in some effort and asking around, you will find a waterbody behind Bangladesh Water Development Board where ferrying service is still in operation.

The waterbody (at present resembling a pond) stretches over an area of about one acre, and has two boat services -- benefitting hundreds of people who take the route.

This "pond" is the last remaining vestige of the fabled jheel in the area which supposedly linked Buriganga and Shitalakhya rivers to Sengunbagicha, Arambagh and Gopibagh canals, said locals.

Many used to commute to Motijheel using boats, they claimed.

Gopibagh canal was turned into a road in the 1990s and most parts of the jheel were filled up around that time, says Jahangir Alam, a resident of

Gopibagh.

Buildings and roads were constructed on it (parts of the jheel), said a former Wasa official.

As tragic as the death of the many waterbodies in the city is, many still use the pond that remains as a shortcut and save 10-15 minutes to go to Motijheel from Kamalapur, Gopibagh, Tikatuli and other adjoining areas. Fare is Tk 2 during peak hours, and Tk 5 after 9pm and in weekends.

Enamul Haque, an official of Bangladesh Water Development Board, who was in a hurry to cross the pond on a Monday morning, said that in the morning even five minutes are crucial to office-goers. Logically, a huge number of them use the boat services to get to work within a short time.

The route is so popular among office-goers that queues form at both ends of the waterbody during peak hours every workday, he said.

Ripon Ali, a first-year student of Kamalapur Sher-e-Bangla

Railway School and College, said every day he goes to school on foot and takes this shortcut on a boat.

"It takes only a couple of minutes to cross the waterbody. I can reach my school in 10-15 minutes," said Ripon, a resident of Tikatuli.

"It would cost Tk 30-40 if I take a rickshaw to school," said Ripon.

Kholilur Rahman, a resident of Gopibagh, said there was a huge waterbody named "Matimia'r Jheel" in the area and several thousand boats would come to the gudaraghat (where people embark and disembark) every day from different areas like Demra, Nandipara, Isapur, Trimohoni and Razarbagh.

The jheel was linked to rivers at that time, he said.

"We had taken relief materials on boats from here to Demra, Madartek and Bashabo during the 1998 flood," he added.

Encroachers started filling up the waterbody in the 1990s,

which sped up in the early 2000s, said locals.

At present, some individuals are claiming ownership of the pond -- putting up signs -- though it is government khas land, they alleged.

Heju Miah, a boatman at the ghat, said there are two boats on the small waterbody. Ferrying service starts very early in the morning and continues till 11pm.

Ekhlamul Islam, a resident of Gopibagh, said though it is still a vital waterbody in the area, it remains neglected by the authorities concerned.

The water of the pond looks polluted and a big part of it has been occupied, he said.

Authorities should take immediate measures to beautify this area -- as done with Hatijheel -- as it is the last remaining waterbody in the heart of Motijheel, he urged.

Do you have a Dhaka Vibe story to share? Email us your ideas or reports to dhakavibeds@gmail.com.

A family broken apart

Keraniganj accident leaves father, son dead; injured mother still unaware

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Along with his wife and son, on a motorbike, Asadul Haque Ipu (40) was going to see his ailing mother yesterday in Keraniganj. Their journey was brutally cut short. A head-on collision with a truck left Asadul and his son, Sohan (7), dead.

Asadul's wife Reshma Akhter (32) was undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

"We were going to Keraniganj to see my mother-in-law from Koratitola, as her condition was deteriorating. Our younger son was sitting in the middle of the motorbike," said Reshma, who still was not aware of what had happened to her husband and son.

Just after reaching Ruhitpur Bazar in

Keraniganj at 2pm, a menacingly speeding truck hit the motorbike from the front, said Reshma, adding that they all fell off the bike.

They were rushed to the DMCH around 3pm where on-duty doctors declared Asadul and Sohan dead, said Inspector Bacchu Mia, in-charge of DMCH Police Outpost.

Kohidur Rahman, Reshma's uncle, said Asadul was a machine mechanic at a private company in Dhaka. He and Reshma were parents of three sons, he said.

"Considering her condition, we still haven't informed her that her husband and son are no more," Kohidur said.

Officer-in-Charge of Keraniganj Police Station Saker Mohammad Jubayer said they seized the truck from the spot but the driver and helper had managed to flee.

Stop commercial activity at playgrounds

Green activists urge government

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Green activists at a protest rally yesterday urged the government to take tough measures against those who use playgrounds for commercial purposes, like arranging fairs and bazaars.

They also demanded that the relevant authorities, such as city corporations and local administration, immediately identify all playgrounds across the country and take initiatives to keep those free of illegal occupation and ensure proper maintenance as per a High Court order.

Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa) and Green Voice jointly organised the rally in front of National Museum in Shahbagh.

Speaking at the event, Bapa General Secretary Abdul Matin said Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Mayor Atiqul Islam recently assured that no fair will be held at any playground in the city, but the situation is completely opposite.

A close aide of the ward-31 councillor [under DNCC] arranges a weekly fair [every Thursday] at the playground adjacent to Jakir Hossain Road in Mohammadpur, he said.

The city authorities tried to stop such arrangement, but to no avail. It seems that the fair organisers barely care

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PRIMARY EXAMS

Teachers withdraw boycott programme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Teachers of government primary schools yesterday withdrew their programme to boycott Primary Education Completion Examination (PECE) and equivalent exams.

Confusion regarding holding of PECE and Ebtedayee exams surfaced as teachers declared they would boycott those.

An association of primary school teachers on October 23 announced that they would boycott the PECE and its madrasa equivalent, Ebtedayee exams, if their demand for better pay is not met by November 13.

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Prof Anu Muhammad of Jahangirnagar University speaks at a human chain, demanding removal of the JU vice chancellor for her alleged involvement in corruption, in front of National Museum in Shahbagh yesterday. Writer and anthropologist Rahnuma Ahmed, also a former JU teacher, among others, was present at the event.

Remittance inflow went up by 20pc in 4 months

BSS, Dhaka

Expatriate Bangladeshis sent \$6,154.22 million in remittance in the first four months of the current fiscal 2019-20, which is 20.48 percent higher than the amount of corresponding period of the preceding year, according to Bangladesh Bank data.

The country received \$5,108 million in remittance during July-October period in 2018-19 fiscal year.

"The flow of remittance into the country shows an upward trend in the fiscal 2019-20 as the government has taken measures, including two percent cash incentive, to streamline the legal channel for encouraging non-resident Bangladeshis to send money to the country," the central bank's spokesperson M Serajul Islam told the news agency.

He said the recent flow of remittance indicates that it is gradually increasing and this trend is likely to continue in the upcoming months.

According to their data, the country received \$1,597.69 million in July; \$1,444.75 million in August; \$1,472.16 million in September and \$1,639.62 million in

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PHOTO OF THE DAY

FIROZ AHMED



ALL FOR A QUICK HIGH...Children sitting on a road divider and sniffing glue together after dark should not be a common scene, yet in this city that is the case. This photo was taken recently near Modhumita Cinema Hall in Motijheel area.

BNP leaders quitting party for its negativity

Says info minister

BSS, Dhaka

Information Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud yesterday said BNP leaders are leaving the party because of its negative politics.

"They [leaders] are now saying that BNP has turned into a nationalist Skype party," he said while addressing a discussion in the capital.

Institution of Diploma Engineers (IDEB), Bangladesh, organised the event at its auditorium marking its 49th founding anniversary.

Speaking as chief guest, the minister said BNP leaders M Morshed Khan and Lt Gen (Retd) Mahbubur Rahman have already left the party due to its politics of vandalism.

As a result, the party's strength is diminishing, the minister added.

He said BNP should learn to welcome constructive criticism. The party criticises each and every move the government initiates. It should also acknowledge the government's good works and development activities.

Dr Mahmud, also Awami League publicity and publication secretary, said although the world lauds the progress made by Bangladesh, BNP turns a blind eye in this regard.

In his speech, he also highlighted the country's economic growth.

About the education system, the minister said it is time to ensure quality of technical education. Instead of opening new universities, number of technical educational institutes should be increased, he added.

Hasan said for a lack of skilled manpower, foreigners are taking a huge amount of money from Bangladesh to their home countries every year. "That's why it's important to develop skilled manpower," he added.

Deputy Minister for Education and AL Organising Secretary Barrister Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury Nowfel and IDEB General Secretary Md Shamsur Rahman, among others, spoke at the meeting with IDEB President AKMA Hamid in the chair.

Earlier, Dr Mahmud and Nowfel jointly inaugurated a rally on IDEB premises.