

A park plagued by renovation

Even after 4 years, work for Dhaka’s Osmani Udyan incomplete



HELEMIUL ALAM

When Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) inaugurated renovation work for the capital’s Osmani Udyan back in January 2018, it had promised to complete it in 10 months. Four years have gone by, but only 65 percent of the work has been completed. The deadline has been extended thrice, while costs kept escalating. The first deadline was June 2019, the second June 2020, and third June 2021. And now, the deadline has been extended yet again, till June 2022. Presently, DSCC is preparing a fresh tender for the work, as the previous contractor could not finish the job on time. The city corporation canceled the contract with The Builders Engineers in May, as it failed to finish work despite repeated deadline extensions.

“We are preparing to give the work order to a new firm,” said Project Director Munshi Md Abul Hasem. “A fresh tender is expected to be invited before the first week of December.” “We are hoping to complete it within the scheduled time. But the cost will remain the same,” he claimed. Nestled between the secretariat and Nagar Bhaban, the park is named after General Muahammad Ataul Gani Osmani, the commander-in-chief of Bangladesh forces during the Liberation War. It is divided into 11 sectors, as a tribute to the country’s forces that were divided into 11 divisions. The 29-acre green sanctuary has a number of rare trees and plants of different shapes and sizes, two small lakes and islands made of sand along with walkways, sculptures, and an auditorium.

One of its major attractions is the Mughal-era cannon “Bibi Mariam”, which was commissioned by Emperor Aurangzeb’s trusted general Mir Jumla II to protect Dhaka -- the 17th-century capital of Bengal -- from raids by bandits. According to the city corporation, at first, the project deadline got extended in 2019 and the cost escalated from Tk 54 crore to Tk 89 crore for additional work like setting up food courts, a museum, library and better drainage system. Then last year, DSCC Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh said they will set up an underground parking space inside the park, which will be able to accommodate around 200 cars. However, DSCC has cancelled that plan. Architect Rafiq Azam, principal designer of the project, said they have

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Former BWMRI official stabbed to death in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former Bangladesh Wheat and Maize Research Institute (BWMRI) chief scientific officer Anwar Shahid (72) was stabbed to death on a street near Shyamoli area in the capital on Thursday evening. Tejgaon division Deputy Commissioner Md Shahidullah told The Daily Star that one of his acquaintances called him over phone and killed him as part of a plan. “We suspect the killing took place due to some financial matters,” the DC said without going into details. As of yesterday, police could not arrest anyone in connection. Selim Hossain, inspector (investigation) of Adabor Police Station, told The Daily Star that an unidentified man stabbed Anwar in Holy Lane near Shyamoli around 6:15pm. The killer didn’t take his phone, wallet and or any valuables, he mentioned. Locals took him to Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital where he died around 11pm. Police said Anwar was on his way back from Hanif Paribahan’s bus counter at Shyamoli to meet someone. Afterwards, he took the Holy Lane next to the bus counter, where he was stabbed. Hearing his cries, people went to the scene and found Anwar lying on the street. A knife was found near him. Hailing from Domar of Nilphamari, Anwar used to stay with her sister’s family in Kalyanpur area after his retirement.



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Dhaka’s first library at its last stretch

DIPAN NANDY

Before proceeding, let’s ask a question: what was the first library of the capital? Common knowledge would say it’s the Northbrook Hall Library, but it’s a little known fact that the Ram Mohon Roy Library was constructed 13 years before this establishment, way back in 1869. But 152 years on, the legendary library is slowly inching towards its demise, owing to negligence and a tragic lack of visitors. As a result of this, its books have caught paper-rust. This only worsened during the pandemic. Closed off for months, the library has almost lost all of its readers, who weren’t too many to begin with. Though it has reopened since then, the library now remains closed for a majority of the time, opening its doors only if readers arrive. The library is located near the capital’s Jagannath University, right across Dhaka Collegiate School. During the construction of the Brahma Mandir, Abhay Chandra Das, the then General Secretary of the Brahma Samaj, took



upon the initiative to build the library inside the temple. On January 18, 1871, the library came to life as a two-storied building of its own. However, as the building’s condition worsened, the library had to be shifted back to the temple building. Today, the library is housed in a section of the second floor of the Brahma Mandir building. One has to cross a rugged wooden deck and climb up wide, steep stairs to gain access to

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From a glorious beginning, the Raja Ram Mohan Library now finds itself housed in a section of the second floor of the Brahma Mandir building. It currently has five to six hundred books, including almost all books based on the Brahma religion.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Exercising in Bahadur Shah Park, Dhaka.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Exercising Away Trouble

Many people exercise for fitness and good looks but I exercise to stay out of trouble. Over the years parts of my body have caused me trouble for various reasons. For example, consider my camera and lens. Bird photography requires a long telephoto lens because birds fly away if one comes too close. My camera and lens together weigh fourteen pounds. When out birding, I have to walk long distances carrying this camera. Sometimes I have to climb a hill or two. When I find the bird it is likely to be positioned above me. So I have to point this camera upwards while looking through it. And because they don’t understand the notion of posing, I hold the camera in this position until a good pose when I click the shutter. This may take a few seconds or several minutes. My biceps protest the camera’s weight and sometimes give up before the right moment. So my upper arms and my shoulders are often in trouble. Then there is my running habit. I will be the first to admit that I am a really slow runner, but I have done it for four decades and accumulated considerable miles of pounding on my feet, legs, knees and hips. At one time or another running has caused pain in parts of my legs starting at the toes and climbing all the way to my hips. Running keeps my lower body teetering on the brink of trouble. Trouble came from other sources as well. Four years ago I had a nasty bout of chikunguniya. For many weeks, I

remember waking up every morning and wondering what part of my body will hurt on this day. Eventually the pain subsided except for one place. It wreaked havoc on my left knee and I had to limp for several months. Chikunguniya also weakened my sense of balance. I could not easily walk on ails of paddyfields or climb up narrow trails in the forest. Even putting on a pair of trousers became a challenge. Another time, for no apparent reason, I had severe lower back pain. Other sufferers will agree that this kind of pain has a mind of its own and does not yield easily to a doctor’s diagnostic procedures. I am lucky that so far I have managed my way out of these troubles without serious medical intervention (with one exception – a torn meniscus two decades ago.) With every troublesome episode, a doctor or a physiotherapist showed me a set of exercises to recover from it. After some weeks of exercise, the pain usually left me. But I held on to the exercise and continued it like medicine. My balance is much better with proper exercises. Over the years I have accumulated two dozen such exercises. Doing them regularly keeps me out of trouble. I have no illusions. At some point I will run into trouble that cannot be fixed by exercise. Until then I am grateful for knowing these exercises and try to make the best of them. For me, the exercises of physiotherapy are nothing short of miraculous.

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‘Justice, not character certificates’

Protestors demand abolishment of section 155(4) of Evidence Act

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

‘Justice denied on grounds of character, for how long?’ was the slogan of the women who took to the streets of the capital at midnight on Thursday. ‘March to break the shackles’ started at 11:59pm on Thursday from Shahbagh, demanding the abolishment of section 155(4) of the Evidence Act-1872. The protestors then assembled in front of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban and presented their demands. According to section 155(4) of the Evidence Act-1872, “when a man is prosecuted for rape or an attempt to ravish, it may be shown that the prosecutrix was of generally immoral character.” This essentially means that defence lawyers can introduce character evidence against rape complainants during trial. Protestors also condemned the acquittal of the five accused, including Shafat Ahmed, son of Dildar Ahmed, co-owner of Apan Jewellers, on the Raintree hotel rape



PHOTO: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRIAR

case and the court’s recommendation to the police following the verdict. Begum Mosarrat Kamrunnahar, the judge of the case, instructed the law enforcers that no rape cases should be filed if 72 hours have passed since the incident. “The court raised questions about the victims’ character during the hearing. The state is being allowed to set the parameters of

the victim’s character by Section 155(4),” said Prapti Taposhi, one of the organisers of the event. Barrister Sara Hossain, while participating in the procession, said, “We have been demanding the abolishment of this section for many years. Just today a verdict was given, denying justice to the victims, and on top of that, questioning their characters. This is

utterly reprehensible.” “Today’s verdict speaks volumes on how important it is to abolish section 155(4), the demand that brought us all together,” said anthropologist and writer Rahnuma Ahmed. “This is the 21st century, and it is completely unacceptable for a judge to give a verdict like this, stating the victims had previous sexual experiences. A court is supposed to provide justice, not character certificates,” she added. “If a woman is raped and kept hostage for 72 hours, will the police still not take her case?” asked Rahnuma. The procession was joined by women across classes and occupations and men as well. Singer-songwriter Krishnoli, actor Ashna Habib Bhabna, photographer Shahidul Alam, founder of ‘Ganashastha Kendra’ Zafullah Chowdhury also joined. The organisers also arranged a mass signature programme demanding the abolishment of section 155(4) during the demo.

Ferdousi Mazumder, Mamunur Rashid get ‘Aly Zaker Padak’



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The “Aly Zaker Sanman Padak 2021”, commemorating the late thespian and cultural activist Aly Zaker, was awarded to noted cultural personalities Ferdousi Mazumder and Mamunur Rashid. The event, organised by Agontuk Repertory, took place at the National Theatre Hall of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy at 6:30pm yesterday. Guests of the event included prominent media personality and Zaker’s wife Sara Zaker, eminent actor and Member of Parliament Asaduzzaman Noor, Md Mahbub Ur Rahman, CEO, HSBC bank; playwright Masum Reza; and theatre personalities, among others. The open-for-all programme was hosted by Trapa Majumdar and Pantho Shahriar. Awardee Ferdousi Mazumder said, “All I could ask for now is if only he [Zaker] were here with us today. I will forever cherish my experience working with him.” “We wanted to perform on the stage in an independent country, and we did it. What else can we ask for?” said award recipient Mamunur Rashid.

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