



The lifeline of PORT CITY

Sunset over the Karnaphuli river never ceases to amaze the onlooker. Even as a blanket of smog covers the glorious winter sun's slow descent into slumber, the glistening of its light on the water still holds a sway over those who frequent the area. One can only imagine what the scene could look like if industrial pollution is ever to subside. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Jamal Khan

A ward like no other

Urmi Dutta, an eighth grader at Dr Khastagir Government Girls' High School, was seen reading captions written under the murals of 31 notable personalities on the retaining wall of Government Hazi Muhammad Mohsin High School on Thursday.

ARUN BIKASH DEY

Located in the port city's Jamal Khan Road, the artworks were inaugurated on December 16 by city Mayor Rezaul Karim Chowdhury to mark Victory Day.

"I had been curious about this ever since I saw artists working on the pieces on my way to school," Urmi told this correspondent.

Like Urmi, many more students were seen flocking to the spot as well.

"I heard the name of Kazem Ali Master as there's a school in the city named after him, but I knew little of him," said 10th-grader Ariful Islam. "After coming here, I have a much clear idea about him now."

Titled "Chattol Gourab", the murals by artist Pranab Sarkar boasts such names as Hazi Muhammad Mohsin, Muhammad Enamul Haque, Abul Kashem Khan, Syed Waliullah, Mojaffar Ahmad, anti-British revolutionary Kalpana Dutta, Chakma Rani Kalindi, Lokanath Baul, Benimadhab Barua, MA Aziz, Kabiyaal Ramesh Shil, Maolana Moniruzzaman Islamabadi, Purnendu Dastidar, Prof Abul Fajal, Jatindra Mohan Sengupta and more.

The project was initiated by CCC Ward-21 councillor Shaibal Das Suman. With assistance from Dainik Azadi and Four H Group, he took the initiative as part of beautifying the ward area, better known as Jamal Khan.

Suman has been taking up numerous such projects for the ward since 2016, thanks to



which Jamal Khan has been able to regain its stature as a clean and serene area. This has helped reinforce its reputation as a green and healthy ward as well.

Some of the initiatives include removing open dumpsters and setting up of roadside waste bins for dumping solid waste, beautification of road islands, tree plantation drives, and roadside seating arrangements.

The 0.78 square kilometre ward also boasts a fountain right at its centre, at Jamal Khan intersection. Quite the scene on its own, it only gets more dazzling when decorative lights are switched on every

evening.

There is also an eye-catching terracotta design depicting the country's history on the boundary wall of Dr Khastagir Girls' High School in the intersection area, which never fails to draw attention of the passers-by. There's another tile mural on the red brick boundary wall of Saint Mary's School, which is also situated near the intersection.

Contacted, councillor Suman said, "I was only trying to make the ward more beautiful and liveable. I'd like to thank all the organisations for patronage, without which we couldn't have completed our projects so fast."

Mayor Rezaul said he expects other wards of the city to follow the example set by Jamal Khan.

Ctg admin eyes reserve forest land

Experts warn against it, say area is extra-sensitive where tidal waves can reach

SANJOY KUMAR BARUA

Chattogram district administration has grabbed 30 acres of reserve forest land illegally in Uttar Kattoli coastal area in order to construct a memorial and museum on the Liberation War, said forest officials.

Abdur Rahman, divisional forest officer of Chattogram coastal forest department, said, "The district administration has also hung a signboard there in this regard." It is illegal to construct any establishment grabbing reserve forest land, he said.

"In 2017, the Ministry of Environment and Forests declared the proposed land (at Uttar Kattoli) as a reserve forest under Section 20 of the Forest Act of 1927," said the DFO. "We have sent a letter and informed higher authorities in this regard," he added.

Md Tohidul Islam, an assistant chief conservator at the forest department, said, "No one can occupy protected forest land and construct any structures



there in the name of development."

Contacted, freedom fighter and researcher Dr Mahfuzur Rahman said, "We don't support the construction of anything related to the Liberation War on reserve forest areas. The government could have chosen to construct the establishments at Pahartoli Baddhyabhumti area."

Chattogram Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Mominur Rahman denied the claims, saying, "The proposed 30 acres of land does not fall under reserve forest areas."

"We have already sent a proposal to the Prime Minister's Office in September last year," the DC added. "There were illegal brick kilns in the area, which I evicted while the forest department never took any action against them."

During a recent visit, this correspondent found Sagarlota growing in the proposed land area.

"Sagorlota, whose English name is Railroad vine, is a fast-growing plant that grow in saline environments, usually above coastal areas where tidal water rises to that height," said Dr Md Atiqur Rahman, associate professor of geography and environmental studies department at CU. It can hold sandy soil and control soil that is moved by sea waves and wind. It allows shelters and allows sand that flies in the wind to accumulate in the coastal area.

"It shouldn't be destroyed as it has a special role in preventing coastal erosion and maintaining ecological balance," he said. "It's risky to construct establishments in the coastal area where Sagorlota grows."

Dr Md Rabiul Alam, professor of civil engineering department at Cuat, said, "Special protective measures should be taken before constructing any structures in areas where tidal water can reach."

More than a cup of tea

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN

"When I first sat here it was almost like a small jungle beside the stadium. It's been 27 years since. I'm still here, but it looks nothing like what it used to. I consider myself a witness to Chattogram's transformation."

These are the words of Sarwar Alam, who is considered to be something of an innovator when it comes to the port city's tea culture.

"I was the first vendor to have introduced powder milk tea in the city instead of condensed milk one. This is very much in vogue now," prided the 61-year-old.

The lanky veteran, popularly known as "Kaku" to the Chittagonians, sells his tea at Kazir Dewri's MA Aziz Studiam area. Every day, he serves nearly 400 customers from noon to 10 at the night.

Recalling the old times, the tea seller said people from all spheres came to Kazir Dewri children's park



with their families. "This is right across the street from my spot, so they'd come to have tea from me."

Sarwar first came to Chattogram from Fatikchhari upazila at the tender age of 10 in search of work.

"I started by selling plastic dolls. That was a tumultuous time. I was only four months into my business,

and the Liberation War started. I packed my bags and went back home," he said.

"A year after the war ended, I came back and got a job at the cargo plane office warehouse in Agrabad. I worked there for 10 years. After the airlines' shutdown, I went back to the village and farmed for two years."

"But I couldn't stay away from Chattogram for long. This time, I started selling 'Mitha Paan' (betel-nut) in front of Shishu Park area. This was when I introduced powder milk tea to my customers," Sarwar said.

"It was Chattogram's first Bijoy Mela in 1989 where I started my journey as a tea vendor," he said.

"Seeing my volume of sales, the then country manager of Dano milk powder, a foreign national, interviewed me. I have also received several awards from Isphani tea."

Md Nur Nabi, wing manager of Isphani Tea Limited, told this newspaper, "Sarwar is an old customer. He stands out with his unwavering passion for quality."

Md Saddam Hossain, a private cricket coach in Patiya upazila, said, "I'm one of Kaku's regular customers. He never compromises with quality, which is why people come to him for a cup of tea."