



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

OUTER STADIUM

All business, no play

Once home to prodigal sports talents, the stadium is now being used for anything but sports.

MOHAMMAD SUMAN

Imagine a ground that helped create the prodigies of the country's cricket -- names like Akram Khan, Minhajul Abedin Nannu, Tamim Iqbal, Aftab Ahmed and others associated with it -- remaining occupied in any and every activity other than sports for most of the year.

Such is the situation with Chattogram Outer Stadium. Located in the city's Kazir Dewri area, adjacent to MA Aziz Stadium, this ground was once home to the best talents of the country, but now remains

exposition and other programmes, are held at the outer stadium regularly. This phenomenon has stopped organisers from holding games, training and tournaments at the venue.

Local coaches say star youth tournament, star summer tournament, various club-based and age-based tournaments had been organised on this ground regularly before 2005.

"The outer Stadium was basically like our in-house playground. Akram Bhai (Akram Khan), Nannu Bhai (Minhajul Abedin Nannu), Nobel (Nurul Abedin Nobel) Bhai

Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) constructed a swimming complex occupying about half of the four acres of land of the Outer Stadium in 2017.

Later, an open stage and several shops were constructed, shrinking the open space. The rest are mostly reserved throughout the year for the fairs, events and expositions.

Local sports organisers also complained that even if the ground is free, there is absolutely no environment for playing, as the entire field remains accumulated with water.

"We can't make the field suitable for sports again even if we spend on renovation," said AJM Nasir Uddin, general secretary of CJKS.

"Muktijuddho Bijay Mela has been held in this field throughout December, but the fair setup has not been removed yet. Preparations go on for about a month before any fair, keeping the field occupied for three months for a month-long event," said Nasir, also general secretary of Chattogram Metropolitan Awami League and former city mayor of the port city.

However, when asked why the fair was allowed to be held on the ground in the first place, he said the stadium has been hosting the fair every December for years.

"It has almost become a customary affair," he added.

Hafizur Rahman, sports organiser and vice chairperson of the Chattogram Jela Krira Sangstha (CJKS), said, "We have failed to make policymakers realise the importance of such establishments."

"A separate place has to be fixed for the fairs, and prohibitions should be imposed on holding any fair or event on the field," he said.

SHORTAGE OF FOOTBRIDGE

Risk at every step

ARUN BIKASH DEY

Most intersections on the streets of Chattogram do not have any footbridge. Hence, pedestrians at these intersections are compelled to cross the roads, putting their lives at risk.

Accidents have become a more frequent phenomenon in these different areas of the port city. Pedestrian Fulchan Miah (54), was killed by a truck while he was crossing the road at Tulatoli intersection on December 16 last year.

Earlier on December 11, Abdul Quddus (45) was killed after being hit by a four-wheeler leguna while crossing the road in front of Baby Super Market at Sholashahar.

On September 21, Md Masiuddaulah (50) was killed by an unidentified vehicle while crossing the road at Haliashahar Port Connecting Road.

The city currently has 12 footbridges at New Market, Chattogram Railway Station Road, Dampara, Port Connecting Road, CEPZ Intersection, Colonel Hat, Fakirhat, Muradpur, Chattogram Customs House Intersection, Port Officers Colony and Navy Hospital Gate areas.

According to the residents, foot over-bridges are required at a minimum of 18 intersections and 22 areas of the port city, including Chawk Bazar, Nawab Sirajuddaula Road at Chawkbazar point, Kotwali, Bahaddarhat, Sholoshahar Gate-2, Wasa, Lalkhan Bazar, Dewanhat, Chowmuhuni, Agrabad Badamtoli, Oxygen, Anderkilli, Laldighi, AK Khan, Alankar, GEC, Tulatoli and Kazir Dewri intersections.

On Sunday, Tamanna Khanam, a West Bakalia resident, was seen to be waiting with her six-year-old daughter at Chawkbazar point on Nawab Sirajuddaula Road. She told this correspondent that she had been waiting for around 10 minutes to cross the road.

"The moment I try to



cross the road, a vehicle appears and I can't go to the other side," she said.

"We could have crossed the road safely and with ease with a foot over-bridge here."

There were many others like Tamanna. Some were also seen to be running to cross the road quickly and taking a risky endeavour.

Chattogram Development Authority (CDA) started to build two foot-over bridges in GEC intersections in 2019. However, the project was not completed.

Contacted, CDA chief engineer Hasan Bin Shams said they constructed a foot-over bridge in Muradpur Intersection, but the GEC project was halted as the city corporation has taken an initiative in this regard.

According to sources, Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) recently conducted a survey in different areas along with a feasibility study of constructing foot over-bridge in those different areas. Around 93.4 percent of people were found to prefer foot overbridge. CCC has taken an initiative to construct 38 foot-over bridges at 31 intersections in the city after the survey.

"The LGRD ministry has approved the project worth Tk 58 crore," said Rafiqul Islam, CCC chief engineer. "We will call for tender for the construction by March," he added.



occupied with fairs, expositions and programmes throughout the year.

Sports organisers believe that decreasing playgrounds in the port city over the last two decades is one of the main reasons behind the crisis of new talents to represent Chattogram when it comes to sports.

Several fairs, including Bijoy Mela, textile fair, Baishakhi Mela, Sabuj Mela, motor

used to play and regularly practice in this field," Aftab Ahmed, former national team cricketer and founder of Aftab Academy, told this correspondent.

"Prior to joining the national team Nafiz (Nafiz Iqbal), Tamim, I and many others used to play in this field almost every now and then. At present the field is not open for sports," he said.

Hathazari's own winter treat

The popular sweet is in such high demand that one may even find themselves waiting in a queue for 10-15 minutes before getting the chance to buy one.

NAIMUR RAHMAN

Everyone knows of "jilapis", but a "chaler jilapi"? Perhaps not many have heard of it, and for good reason.

Its claim to fame is not something you can find on Google, but this specific type of jilapi is noted for its unique recipe and taste. While in Chattogram's Hathazari, you cannot miss the taste of this mouthwatering, authentic jilapi, made of rice powder.

According to locals, the jilapi was first invented by a local vendor from Sarkarhat, an area from North Chattogram. Later, the recipe spread to nearby areas.

The sweet fragrance that pervades the air in neighbourhoods where a vendor makes this jilapi cannot be missed.

The shops that sell these winter delicacies aren't very fancy or well-decorated. They're mostly quite small. But during the season, their premises cannot contain the crowd.

Some vendors from Sarkarhat start preparing the jilapi in the morning, but they're



usually sold from the afternoon till 11:00pm. The popular sweet is in such high demand that one may even find themselves waiting in a queue for 10-15 minutes before getting the chance to buy one.

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT CHALER JILAPI?

The jilapi is made out of rice powder and molasses. The powder is first mixed with hot water, with the paste then placed inside a

piece of cloth with a small opening. The paste is poured on to the boiling oil and fried until it turns reddish. Over this, a syrup made of molasses is then poured.

But this is how all jilapis are made.

According to locals, what makes the chaler jilapi so special lies in the hands of its artisans from Hathazari.

Each jilapi can weight up to a kg or even more, but they're also made in small chunks for those who want to try it before purchasing a large amount. The big jilapi go for Tk 150 per kg.

Sabbir Khan, a seasonal fruit vendor, has been selling this jilapi in winter for the past 15 years. "I learned it from my father about 20 years ago. It's only suitable for winter because the batter stays good for a long time," he told this correspondent.

Bengali sweets, apart from their delicious flavours, also come with history. If you're looking for a special treat that encapsulates the history of North Chattogram, the chaler jilapi is a must-try.