

The fight to save their field

Residents of Mirpur-11 on mission to protect only open space in the area

HELEMUL ALAM

For decades, the residents of Mirpur-11 have made themselves well-acquainted with the only open space they have, the one located on Paris Road. Many grew up playing there every day after school, and many made lifelong friends and memories after spending hours on end in the field.

Fourteen places had been earmarked as playgrounds, parks or fields in Mirpur. But they were turned into plots in 1994, as per the decision of then housing minister, violating the master plan and depriving local residents.

This place was one of them.

"This field on Paris Road was also turned into plots at that time. But we've been trying to protect the place since then," said Kazi Jahirul Islam Manik, ward-3 councillor of Dhaka North City Corporation.

Manik said the three lakh residents of ward-3 do not have any field or park aside from this open space.

And so, for a long time locals have been waging a fight, demanding the government protect their lone field, he added.

Recently, after the new DAP was gazetted

last month, their protest got momentum as the place has been designated as an open space there.

Locals also organised a human chain and hunger strike to save the place, which was allotted to a section of people, violating the master plan of Dhaka Improvement Trust 1963.

Currently the space remains abandoned, with piled up garbage dumped there.

"This land was earmarked as an open space in the 1963 master plan. It's also an open space in the new Detailed Area Plan," said Manik.

Manik initiated a hunger strike on Thursday. A large number of people, including students, teachers, and guardians of 37 schools; former national football players; local clubs; and imams took part.

The residents want the field to be handed over to the city corporation, no matter who the owner is. They wish for this place to turn into a proper field, he said.

Sustainable Development Goals states that for every 12,500 people, a separate playground and park is a must. Going off that information, 24 such spaces are

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This open space on Mirpur-11's Paris Road, currently abandoned with piled up garbage, is supposed to be a field for those living there. But a decision taken in 1994 changed its fate, as the site was turned into plots. But locals have been continuing their protest, demanding the authorities turn this place into a proper field. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Short in stature, big in heart

NILIMA JAHAN

Shantona's parents started worrying about her height when she was four years old, as she was not growing as tall as the other children of her age.

After a detailed examination by doctors, it was confirmed that she had dwarfism, a genetic condition that can also be caused by growth hormone deficiency.

Her parents could not afford her education beyond 4th grade. She needed assistance in school and would often be mocked by other students.

Struggling to make ends meet, they gave her away to an uncle, who was in the entertainment business. Shantona was given dance training and she started performing at weddings and cultural events all over the country.

"Initially, I used to enjoy that life. I could travel frequently, I was earning and people praised my performance," said 22-year-old Shantona.



If the government could arrange rehabilitation and employment opportunities for people with disabilities, our lives would get better.

SHANTONA

However, it got increasingly harder as she grew older.

"I started to realise that I was being made fun of for my height. But I had no choice other than to keep performing as that was my only way to financially support my parents."

"My uncle earned a whole lot of money from my act. However, he would only give a small portion of my earning to my mother," added Shantona.

When Shantona was 10 years old, she had to stop performing as she was diagnosed with excessive fluids in her kidneys, along with regular headaches and hormonal issues.

"I had to perform two to three days at a stretch. After every performance, I would suffer from sore muscles and pain," Shantona said.

However, she still attends shows occasionally when faced with financial struggles.

A few years ago, she became involved with different disability development organisations in the capital's

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Dhaka's canine conundrum

Little to no effort to control dog population; residents becoming more hostile towards the animals



Coordination between the two city corporation authorities is required to conduct neutering programmes. DNCC has been running such programmes for 10 years despite the lack of human resources. However, DSCC has not shown much zeal.

DR M MUJIBUR RAHAMAN

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Dhaka North City Corporation and Dhaka South City Corporation have taken no visibly effective measures to control the urban dog population, and this has led to city residents treating neighbourhood dogs in a cruel, violent and inhumane manner.

The High Court banned dog culling in 2020 on grounds of animal rights. Meanwhile, experts and animal-rights activists believe sterilisation is the appropriate measure to control the dog population.

However, due to the lack of human resources, budget and planning, neither DNCC nor DSCC are unable to discharge their duties in this regard.

According to Dhaka Infectious Disease Hospital, 45,477 people were treated for dog bite-related injuries in 2020, while the number rose to 52,012 in 2021.

So far, around 38,000 people

have received treatment from the hospital with similar injuries this year.

Compared to these numbers, vaccination drives have proven to be insufficient.

Communicable Disease Control (CDC) of DGHS stated that 42,935 dogs were vaccinated in areas under the two city corporations in 2019.

As part of rabies eradication measures, 49,580 dogs were vaccinated in 2020.

However, the drives stopped after one year and nine months.

"There has been no activity for a year. Councillors have no opportunity to take any action in this regard. People in my area have killed three dogs in the last two weeks," said Saidul Islam, councillor of ward-57 under DSCC.

Rubaiya Ahmed, chairperson of Obhoyaronno, said DNCC has provided some support to their operations, while DSCC has remained inactive since 2014.

In 2020, after a petition was

filed to stop transferring dogs from their territories, DSCC promised to implement a neutering and vaccination programme for neighbourhood dogs, Rubaiya said.

"However, they continue to cull and relocate dogs at any given chance. They do not have any sustainable plan in this regard," she added.

Rakibul Haq Emil, founder and chairperson of People for Animal Welfare (PAW) Foundation, said sterilisation operations are crucial from the July-to-September period, the peak season for dog breeding.

"However, no such activities have been in place. People continue to grow more hostile to their neighbourhood dogs," said Emil.

"Our organisation receives four to five reports of dog culling every month. The two city corporations cannot avoid their responsibility in this regard," he added.

DNCC Public Health Officer

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Mamun takes charge as new IGP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun took charge as Inspector General of Bangladesh Police yesterday.

Mamun, the outgoing director general of Rapid Action Battalion, has replaced the outgoing IGP Benazir Ahmed who went on retirement yesterday.

On September 22, the home ministry issued a notification appointing Mamun as the new IGP. Meanwhile, Additional Inspector General of Police M Khurshid Hossain is taking over as the new Rab DG.

If needed AL leaders will guard mandaps: Quader

STAR REPORT

Awami League general secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday urged party leaders and workers to resist communal forces during Durga Puja.

Quader, also road transport and bridges minister, said this in a meeting with representatives of different religions yesterday morning.

Calling on leaders and workers of AL and affiliated organisations across the country, he said, "I am calling on everyone to be careful in view of the unfortunate experience of last time."

"If necessary, other than law enforcers, our leaders and workers will also be on guard at the temples and puja mandaps," the minister said.

"We hope that everyone will participate in this festival. Therefore, I am calling upon our leaders and workers at all levels to be vigilant and proactively address all security concerns and follow instructions from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina," Quader added, reports BSS.

AL desperate to prevent fair polls Alleges Rizvi

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi yesterday alleged that Awami League has become desperate to prevent a neutral and credible general election in the country.

The BNP leader made the remarks while talking to reporters after paying homage to party founder Ziaur Rahman by placing a wreath at his grave at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, along with the leaders and activists of Jatiyatabadi Ulema Dal, marking its 43rd founding anniversary.

Rizvi said AL secretary Obaidul Quader has been making unfounded comments about BNP to prolong "misrule" by misleading people.

Though people are suffering, ruling party leaders are living a happy life as they made money through corruption, he alleged.

He said the ruling party is against the polls under a caretaker government as they know AL will face a catastrophe if a fair election is held in the country.

He alleged that AL has handed over sticks instead of books and pens to the leaders and activists of its student organisation Chhatra League. "You have seen its proofs a few days back at Dhaka University and Eden College," he said.

He said the ruling party is also not paying attention to the statements of the foreign envoys about holding the next polls fairly as it wants to continue its misrule.

Ensure quality housing for all

Speakers urge govt at IPD dialogue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Proper analysis of the housing needs of people from different income groups and essential civic facilities like schools, hospitals and playgrounds are very necessary to ensure quality housing in Dhaka, said speakers at a virtual dialogue yesterday.

They also said the housing crisis in Dhaka is particularly acute for the lower and lower-middle income groups.

The dialogue, titled "Quality housing for all in Dhaka city: its perspective and way forward", was organised by Institute For Planning and Development (IPD).

"Strategies and incentives proposed in Dhaka's Detailed Area Plan and structural plan can play an effective role in providing housing facilities for the lower-income group," said Adil Mohammad Khan, IPD executive

director.

Unplanned industrialisation and economic activities have put continuous pressure on Dhaka's housing, which is also one of the reasons for the influx towards Dhaka, said Adil.

"We have not been able to link housing plans to our industrialisation-economy-trade activities. It is possible to gradually ensure quality housing in Dhaka by ensuring citizens' facilities by implementing DAP's proposals to stop plot-based housing projects in Dhaka and create flat and block-based residential projects," said the executive director of IPD.

"In Malaysia, they discourage plot-centric development. They could ensure open spaces, civic amenities and housing units for lower-income groups through block-based development," said

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- Analysing housing needs of different income groups
- Ensuring civic facilities
- Implementing DAP proposals to stop plot-based housing
- Creating flat and block-based residential projects

Strategies and incentives proposed in Dhaka's Detailed Area Plan and structural plan can play an effective role in providing housing facilities for the lower-income group.

ADIL MOHAMMAD KHAN
IPD executive director



Dengue death toll **55**

Total number of patients **16,092**

1,916 still undergoing treatment

Number of recovered patients **14,120**

240 more hospitalised yesterday

SOURCE: DGHS

PRAYER
TIMING
OCTOBER 1



Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4:45 12:45 4:15 5:53 7:30
JAMAAT 5:20 1:15 4:30 5:56 8:00
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION