

Who owns the public spaces of Dhaka?

Amirul Rajiv
is an art historian, curator and co-founder of Duniyadari Archive.

Bareesh Chowdhury
works at the Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association.

Naim Ul Hasan
is an economist.

AMIRUL RAJIV, BAREESH CHOWDHURY and NAIM UL HASAN

With record breaking heat and pollution in one of the least livable cities in the world, it is increasingly difficult for the people of Dhaka to breathe. As the economy of the country grows at a rapid rate, there are megaprojects being implemented which are touted by the government as “innovative” and “technological marvels.” Yet when it comes to public spaces in urban areas which serve millions of people at a fraction of the cost, our public officials have failed.

Ideally, a geographical area is supposed to have 25 percent tree coverage to protect its environment, but Dhaka has less than 7 percent. Cities use parks to maintain and protect their environment. Parks encourage active lifestyles and reduce health costs, make cities more resilient, manage stormwater and mitigate flooding, increase community engagement, reduce crime and, of course, help cleanse the air and improve public health. Dhaka lags behind woefully in terms of park coverage. Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) has only 27 parks for its 75 wards while there are 23 parks in the 54 wards of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC).

How these parks are managed is another tale altogether.

The DSCC has leased out six of its parks to local ruling party members. One of them is the Nawab Siraj Ud-Daulah Park in Old Dhaka, which underwent a renovation worth Tk 1.5 crore three years ago. It was intended to be open to the public as a green space. However, food stalls and warehouses have mushroomed since, encroaching on the space. Part of the park has been taken over by various types of rides, including trains and swings, which are being marketed as entertainment for children

and teenagers at the cost of Tk 30-50 per person. Leased out for a meager daily rate of Tk 650, this public park has now become a private money making enterprise.

The same thing has happened with the historic Bahadur Shah Park. Local residents have been protesting for a year to preserve this small patch of green space but the park's environment has been destroyed with the construction of permanent commercial structures in the already limited space. Similar scenarios can be seen in the Shaheed

petition resulted in putting a stop to the destruction of the environment and ecology of the park.

None of the parks in the DNCC have been leased out, but Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed Park in Gulshan was given to a third party for maintenance. Tall glass fences were built around the park which blocks airflow and a coffee shop was built inside the park. Regular parkgoers criticised the move and deemed this modification unnecessary.

Located in Farmgate, one of the busiest

space for the depot for construction materials and machineries. After the completion of the construction of the first metro rail of Bangladesh, the park was supposed to be handed over to the DNCC for restoration. But now, the DMTCL wants to build a station plaza there instead. While inaugurating the newly built footover bridge in Farmgate in October 15, 2023 both the DNCC mayor and the home minister promised concerned citizens that they will protect the park. The mayor promised that the Shaheed Anwara

If the DMTCL really wished to make shops, then why did it not build commercial space within their multi-storey stations? We all give example of developed countries every time we undertake a project, yet we do not follow developed countries' examples when it comes to preserving nature and protecting public spaces.

Similarly, located not too far from Farmgate, the triangle shaped Panthakunja Park in Karwan Bazar used to be an oasis for local residents. A project worth Tk 19.2 crore was undertaken for the “beautification” of the park a few years ago, work on which has since stopped. DSCC stated the pillars of the expressway might fall in the park which is why the renovation work was halted. The majority of trees were cut down in the park whose space has been used as a dump yard for construction materials and machinery. It has remained like that for the last few years and once a green gateway in the middle of the city fell victim to the uncoordinated “development” work of the city. In April, the DSCC mayor said the park will be renovated by July this year, but the results of this promise remain to be seen.

At the beginning of last year, the DSCC cut down most of the decades old trees in the median of Satmasjid Road in Dhanmondi. After protests from locals, students, environmentalists and others, only 37 trees still survive on the road. DSCC argued from the beginning that the newly designed road divider could not be built without cutting down the trees. But after fierce protest and public pressure, the portion of road divider at the Shankar Bus Stand was built with the trees still standing there. These last remaining trees are standing examples of how all the trees on that road could have been saved if the DSCC had wished.

We would hope as the citizens of a soon to be “smart” country that the concerned authorities would take smart decisions when it comes to protecting the urban environment, trees and parks. We need to rethink our approach towards privatisation of public spaces and find sustainable solutions which will serve the citizens as well as the urban ecosystem. We demand that the authorities hand over the parks to whom they belong, the people of Dhaka.



Bahadur Shah Park, a historic park in Old Dhaka, has been leased out for commercial use.

PHOTO: ADNAN ZILLUR MORSHED

Sheikh Rasel Park in Jatrabari and Shaheed Matiur Rahman Park in Gulistan, which were both leased out. These are examples of a dangerous trend of privatising public spaces.

In 2021, a large number of mature trees were cut down to build restaurants and walkways at the historic Suhrawardy Udyan. After months-long protests by environmentalists, artists, curators and regular people, a writ

spots of Dhaka, is Shaheed Anwara Park, named after the first woman martyr of the Mass Uprising of 1969, Anwara Begum. It was temporarily handed to the Dhaka Mass Transit Company Limited (DMTCL), the government owned company in charge of Dhaka's metro rail projects, during the construction of the MRT-6 back in 2016. Hundreds of trees were cut down to make

Park will be brought back to its glory and opened to the public. The park is yet to be handed over to the DNCC authority and repeated statements from the DMTCL proved that the idea of building a commercial plaza at the public park is still a possibility. It begs the question whether building more commercial space in an already busy commercial area like Farmgate benefits local residents or not.

Why the consumer protection law needs to change



Dr Ala Uddin
is a professor of anthropology at Chittagong University. He can be reached at alacg@gmail.com

ALA UDDIN

In today's consumer-driven economy, the notion that “consumers reign supreme” often masks the reality that they frequently bear the brunt of market manipulation, silently suffering at the hands of powerful market forces. In Bangladesh, the escalation in prices of basic necessities has diminished the buying power of those with fixed or lower incomes, simultaneously inflating the cost of living. Additionally, the price surge has pushed a segment of the population below the poverty threshold. When addressing the artificial inflation of prices in Bangladesh, the term “syndication” immediately springs to mind.

This term is widely recognised and often debated within the Bangladeshi context. It holds particular significance in the country's market dynamics. Notably, ordinary Bangladeshi consumers find themselves adversely affected by such practices, unfortunately regarding them as an integral part of their everyday lives. Policymakers frequently point fingers at a subset of traders

for allegedly forming syndicates that have thus far evaded legal repercussions. While the existence of these syndicates requires investigation by the appropriate authorities, the reality remains that consumers are bearing the brunt of exorbitant prices for daily essentials.

Prior to 2009, Bangladesh lacked legislation directly addressing consumer concerns. With the enactment of the Consumer Rights Protection Act (CRPA), 2009, there was optimism among consumers initially. However, it has since become evident that this law falls short in addressing crucial aspects of consumer rights. Despite clear legal deficiencies, there have been no amendments made to the CRPA since its enactment. Now, 15 years later, policymakers have yet to take significant action to address these issues, which hinder the effective implementation of consumer rights in Bangladesh. Therefore, the law needs to be revised.

The definition of “consumer” in the CRPA is detailed but not comprehensive. For example,

it doesn't specifically address e-commerce consumers. It isn't precise enough to encompass account holders for e-commerce transaction platforms like bKash, Nagad, Rocket, Upai, Foodpanda, Pathao, Uber, and others. Additionally, the CRPA's definition of “service” overlooks e-commerce services like ATMs, online banking, online shopping, online ticket purchases, and similar activities. Consequently, consumers engaging in e-commerce don't receive the same level of protection as those in other areas. The definition of “complaint” too is limited for Bangladeshi consumers. Section 2(2) of the Act defines “complaint” as a written claim submitted to the Director General by a complainant against a seller for engaging in anti-consumer behaviour as described in the Act. This restrictive definition creates a legal obstacle for consumers seeking direct access to justice.

Artificial inflation of prices is a crucial element contributing to the infringement of consumer rights in Bangladesh. The CRPA contains no clause addressing artificial price increases. Chapter 4 of the CRPA deals with the penalties for offences identified within the Act. According to sections 37 to 54, the minimum term for imprisonment sentences is one year and maximum three years, while fines are a minimum of Tk 50,000 and a maximum of Tk 2 lakh. However, these penalties are considered inadequate for offences like producing counterfeit goods, selling expired products or medications, adding prohibited substances to food items,

or any other action that endangers life. Such violations can lead to fatalities, but the Act lacks specific punishment for cases where these offences result in someone's death. The range of penalties should be expanded to address these concerns. Although the Act imposes penalties for filing false or frivolous cases, it does not cover punishment for aiding or inciting such cases or committing the offences described in this Act.

Section 59 indicates that offences under this Act are bailable, cognisable, and compoundable. However, while this section mentions the possibility of compounding offences, it does not provide a clear mechanism for how compounding should work. There are no detailed guidelines for compounding offences. Section 73 of the CRPA imposes two kinds of legal limitations. First, the Director General is unable to initiate legal proceedings even after identifying deficiencies in private healthcare services. Second, this section does not address public healthcare services at all. Regardless of whether it is private or public, health safety should be given top priority.

The Act falls short in establishing an effective grievance redress mechanism. As mentioned earlier, under this Act, only designated government officials have the authority to file cases against violations of any of its provisions. Another limitation of the CRPA is that it assigns a supervisory role to the Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection. It stipulates that the directorate will oversee the anti-consumer

rights practices outlined in the Act, but it does not specify any guidelines on how this supervision should be carried out. Furthermore, the Act does not incorporate the fundamental concept of the product liability principle, a recognised standard in international law when it comes to consumer protection. As a result, consumers in Bangladesh are at a significant disadvantage in safeguarding their rights compared to those in developed countries. In this context, policymakers in Bangladesh could look to the Indian Consumer Protection Act, 2019, for guidance. This Act includes comprehensive provisions on consumer dispute redressal commission, mediation, and product liability.

The CRPA, despite its initial promise, has proven to be inadequate in providing comprehensive protection to consumers. Its deficiencies span across several critical areas, including the scope of consumer definitions, the lack of provisions addressing e-commerce, insufficient penalties for severe offences, and a weak mechanism for addressing grievances. The law's narrow definitions and failure to recognise strict liability in product-related issues contribute to an environment where consumer rights are not fully protected, and enforcement is lacking. Additionally, artificial price inflation due to “syndication” exacerbates the already challenging situation for ordinary consumers, impacting their purchasing power and overall quality of life. Consequently, the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs should take the required steps to amend the CRPA, 2009.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer, DPHE, Store Division
Charerhat, Khalishpur, Khulna. Phone # 762159
E-mail: Khulna_store@yahoo.com

Invitation for Tender (Works)
e-Tender Notice Number-05/2023-24

Memo No. 46.03.4700.028.07.001.19-438 Date: 16/05/2024

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Office of the Executive Engineer, Store Division, Khulna.

Tender ID No.	Tender package	Description of goods	Last selling date & time	Closing date & time	Opening date & time
986731	APP/K/S/04 /2023-24	Re-Construction of Road and Drain at DPHE, Executive Engineer, Store Division, Khulna office FY:2023-2024	03-June-2024 Time: 16:00	04-June-2024 Time: 11:00	04-June-2024 Time: 11:00
986870	APP/K/S/05 /2023-24	Electrical System Improvement at DPHE, Executive Engineer, Store Division, Khulna office FY:2023-2024	03-June-2024 Time: 16:00	04-June-2024 Time: 12:00	04-June-2024 Time: 12:00
98641	APP/K/S/06 /2023-24	Repairing and maintenance of Godown floor at DPHE, Executive Engineer, Store Division, Khulna office (FY:2023-2024)	03-June-2024 Time: 16:00	04-June-2024 Time: 13:00	04-June-2024 Time: 13:00
986956	APP/K/S/07 /2023-24	Procurement and Installation of CCTV And FIRE ALARM system at DPHE, Executive Engineer, Store Division, Khulna office FY:2023-2024	03-June-2024 Time: 16:00	04-June-2024 Time: 14:00	04-June-2024 Time: 14:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

Md. Khairul Hasan
Executive Engineer
DPHE, Store Division, Khulna

GD-805

Government of The People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of The Director
Chittagong Medical College Hospital
www.cmch.gov.bd

Memo No: CMCH/Tender/2023-24/Cardiac Surgery/ 5472 Date: 18-05-2024.

Invitation for e-GP Tender

This is an online tender, where only e-tenders will be accepted in e-GP portal and no offline/ hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-tender, please register on e-GP system portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>). For more details, please contact support desk contract numbers. e-Tender are invited in e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Brigadier General Mohammed Taslim Uddin, Director, Chittagong Medical College Hospital, Chittagong for the Procurement of:

SL. No.	Tender Id	Name of Goods	Tender/ Proposal Last Selling Date & Time	Tender/ Proposal Closing & Opening Date & Time
1	973688	Procurement of Surgeon OT Head light for the fiscal year 2023-2024	2-June-2024 14:00	3-Jun-2024 14:00
2	973689	Procurement of Invasive Cardiac Monitor for OT for the fiscal year 2023-2024	2-June-2024 14:00	3-Jun-2024 14:00
3	973690	Procurement of Invasive Cardiac Monitor for ICU for the fiscal year 2023-2024	2-June-2024 14:00	3-Jun-2024 14:00
4	973686	Procurement of Defibrillator external & Internal for the fiscal year 2023-2024	2-June-2024 14:00	3-Jun-2024 14:00

For pursuer e-Tender details can be downloaded on e-GP system portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>), e-tender will be accepted only as stated in above list, accepted tenders will be opened online as

(Brigadier General Mohammed Taslim Uddin)
Director
Chittagong Medical College Hospital
Telephone: +8802333360179.
E-mail: cmch@hospi.dghs.gov.bd

GD-808