EXPLAINED

WHY TREES ARE IMPORTANT FOR A CITY

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Around the world, urban areas, especially in developing countries like Bangladesh, suffer from an acute lack of trees. To accommodate infrastructure, houses, offices, etc., trees get treated as simply an obstruction that needs to be cleared out. This, however, ignores how trees are an essential organ for a city in order for it to function properly and be liveable for its residents. Trees work in various ways to maintain a city's environment, beauty, and liveability. Ignoring this fact produces grave consequences for a city that become impossible to rectify unless the role of trees in cities is acknowledged and respected.

PREVENTING WATERLOGGING

One of the main reasons cities like Dhaka get waterlogged during monsoons, no matter how much the authorities invest in drainage infrastructure, is the lack of trees. Trees act as a canopy that slows down rainwater, thereby reducing the rate at which the ground receives rainwater. This allows rainwater to be drained without overwhelming drainage systems with excessive rainwater at once. Trees also improve soil's ability to absorb rainwater. Trees have deep roots that create paths for water to flow deep underground, reducing pressure on drainage systems, canals and rivers, and also stop water from accumulating on the surface. Trees also stabilise the soil by essentially acting as an "anchor". This prevents soil and pollutants from washing into canals and rivers, thus improving the ability of the water bodies to carry off water and prevent flooding.

AIR POLLUTION

Trees absorb harmful gases like sulphur dioxide, carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, etc. that are profuse in urban areas. This makes trees essential in improving a city's air quality and protecting its residents from breathing harmful gases.

HIGHER TEMPERATURES

Urban areas contain a lot of concrete and asphalt, which are excellent absorbers and emitters of heat. A large concentration of concrete creates what is known as an "urban heat island", which raises the surrounding temperatures. For example, a study published in the journal Environmental Challenges found that the construction of Dhaka's MRT Line-6, which cut down many trees and increased the density of heat-absorbing materials, has increased the temperature in that corridor by 3 to 5.5 degrees Celsius.

Trees can prevent such heat islands from forming by providing shade and hence stopping sunlight from directly reaching the heat-absorbing materials. Trees also cool surrounding areas by releasing water vapour in a process known as "evapotranspiration". This water vapour produces a cooling effect, lowering temperatures and providing much-needed relief to city residents.

BEAUTY

Trees provide a sense of beauty and serenity in the otherwise dull and lacklustre concrete jungles of urban areas. Imagine this: you go out for a walk. What would you prefer? A vast swath of pavement, with large, dull concrete buildings at the side with no hint of greenery or a boulevard with rows of large, tall trees lining the sidewalks, with the road median decorated with various plants.

A walk in the latter obviously will feel much better for the mind and make you feel more rejuvenated due to the beauty of the backdrop. Having beauty must be a priority for every city in the world, and having more trees is one of the foremost ways of doing that.

References

1. Prothom Alo (2026). *Metro rail increases temperature in nearby areas, research shows.*

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A dense canopy of mature trees provides a vital green lung for the city as it stands in sharp contrast to the sprawling concrete skyline of Dhaka.

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