

Heatwave crisis: Let's Revive Nature in the Concrete Jungle

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For more than four hundred years, Dhaka, now the busy capital of Bangladesh, has shown its long history, culture, and beauty. But with the quick growth of the city in recent decades and changes in the weather, the beautiful cityscape with trees is disappearing. There aren't enough trees being planted compared to what's needed to keep the city green and healthy. The loss of these trees not only takes away Dhaka's beauty but also makes the city hotter, causing severe heatwaves that put people's lives and jobs in danger. This is what the people living in the city are dealing with now.

In the middle of the city are Dhaka University and a few other places, where you can find some really old trees that have been there for hundreds of years. These big trees remind us of Dhaka's history with trees. They used to cover the city, giving shade to people who were tired from traveling or studying. But now, Dhaka's trees are disappearing because people aren't taking care of them like they should.

Since the early 1990s, Dhaka has seen a lot of tall buildings and more roads being built. But all this building has meant that there's less and less greenery and fewer wetlands. Sadly, not enough trees have been planted to make up for all this building. Over many years, the city has gotten bigger, but not enough has been done to protect the trees that were already there. As a result, some special rare and indigenous tree species are slowly disappearing. This is a big problem, especially with the temperatures getting hotter and more heatwaves happening because of climate change.

The current heatwave in Bangladesh has made it very clear that Dhaka isn't doing enough to deal with the rising temperatures. As the temperature keeps going up, the city feels like a really hot oven, putting people at risk of getting sick from the heat. People who work outside, like farmers, rickshaw drivers, and traffic police, have it especially hard because they're out in the sun all day. The big difference in temperature between busy parts of the city and green places like Ramna Park and Suhrawardy Udyan shows just how important trees are in cooling down the city.

Even though experts suggest that 20 to 25 percent of Dhaka should be covered in trees, the reality is much different. According to Global Forest Watch, only about 5.9 percent of Dhaka has trees. This makes the problem worse by making the city hotter and less able to handle extreme weather. Trees are mostly found in certain places like Dhaka Botanical Garden, National Zoo, Ramna Park, University of Dhaka, Suhrawardy Udyan, Hare Road, Gulistan Park, Osmani Udyan, Bangabhavan, Old Airport, Sangsad Bhavan, and Ganabhaban. Some small parks and neighborhoods have trees, but most of the city doesn't have many. However, there are some rooftop gardens on certain buildings, which give us a little bit of hope in the middle of all the concrete.

The efforts made by Dhaka North City Corporation to plant trees in slum areas and along roadsides are praiseworthy steps toward solving the problem. They're even giving a 10 percent tax break for rooftop gardens, which is great. But it's not just the government's job to protect Dhaka's trees. Everyone who lives in the city needs to work together and take care of the trees. That means planting trees on rooftops, balconies, and empty spaces near their homes. It's good to see more and more people in Dhaka getting involved and doing their part to make the city greener.

But it's really important to plant trees that are from here, not from other places. These trees are super important and we shouldn't underestimate their value. Trees from other places might not be as helpful for us as the ones that belong here. If we plant trees that are from our area and fruit trees, we can make sure we have enough food to eat and keep the city from getting too hot. Trees like mango and banyan are perfect for cities like Dhaka because they can grow well even in busy places with lots of buildings. They can give shade and food to the people who live in the locality.

Once, there were banyan trees along the roads, with big canopies that gave shade to tired travelers on hot days. But now, you don't see them anymore. Even though mango trees were declared the national tree in 2010, there aren't many of them in Dhaka. Researchers from Dhaka University found that both mango and banyan trees are really good at surviving in the city's pollution. Banyan trees, especially, with their thick leaves, can handle pollution really well. That's why they're important for keeping Dhaka's environment healthy.

But planting trees is just the beginning; making sure they stay alive requires taking care of them over time. Trimming branches and keeping them healthy are important to stop trees from dying and to make sure they help the environment as much as possible.

We need to take some measures to plant more trees in Dhaka city. This will make our city greener and help fight the bad effects of city life and climate change. When we plant trees, we should choose trees that are native to our area and trees that give fruits. These trees are better for our environment and can help provide food too. We need to educate more people about why planting trees is so important for Dhaka city and get them involved in planting trees. We can do this by doing things like arranging events where we give out free plants, having talks with students at schools and encouraging them in tree plantation, and organizing rallies. These things can help people care more about the environment and want to help plant trees.

Government agencies, non-profit groups, and people in local communities working together can make big tree planting projects happen. Collaborative efforts can leverage resources, expertise, and manpower to maximize the impact of tree planting initiatives across Dhaka city.

It's also important to ensure that when we plan new infrastructures, buildings, and roads, we allocate space for trees and incorporate tree planting into those projects. Trees not only enhance the aesthetics of our city but also play vital roles in purifying the air, regulating temperatures, and managing rainwater.

Besides, monitoring and maintenance of the planted trees are essential to ensure the long-term success of tree planting initiatives. Regular inspections, pruning, and watering are necessary to support the growth and health of newly planted trees. When everyone in the community helps take care of the trees, we can make sure they stay healthy and keep our city green for a long time.

Dhaka's rich history, culture, and beauty are at risk because the city is growing fast and the weather is changing. This is causing the trees to disappear and making heatwaves worse. Right now, we really need to do something to plant more trees. Both the government and the people need to work together to make this happen. Prioritizing the planting of native species, working together with others to plant lots of trees, and integrating tree planting into urban planning are essential strategies. By collectively working towards these goals, we can strive towards a greener and more sustainable future for Dhaka.

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