

Gulshan-i-Iqbal needs facelift

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LAHORE, April 16: The Gulshan-i-Iqbal, the second largest recreational park in the provincial metropolis after the Racecourse Park, is aging and requires major facelift to maintain its leading position and popularity among the city parks.

Stairs of the park hill require reconstruction. The slides in the children wing and the waterfall have started looking obsolete and require renovation. The walkways also require repairs and the benches' replacement with new ones. The boundary wall, too, requires repairs at places.

Non-availability of adequate parking space outside the gate

on the Wapda flats side is a major problem. Motorvehicles are parked on the road running along the park boundary as a result closing it to the traffic. The Lahore Development Authority has provided a car-parking space outside the main gate on the opposite side but most of the people enter the park from the Wapda flats side due to availability of public transport facility. No public transport is available outside the main gate.

The park office has been taken over by the Nazim of the area and the fish pond intended for allowing people to catch fish after payment of the prescribed charges is being used for fish

farming by the private contractor. The motor and pedal boats in the six acre artificial lake have also become obsolete and require replacement.

Designed by famous Japanese landscapist Kameo Kondo, the Gulshan-i-Iqbal continues to attract over 10 million visitors annually despite the loss of its original beauty during almost 20 years after its formal inauguration by the late President Ziaul Haq on April 19, 1982, because of its unique design. The LDA used 67 acres of land full of huge depressions and unfit for building houses without considerable expenses for landlevelling for the development of the park. The

useless piece of land, however, proved a goldmine for the authority on the one hand and its immense popularity among the masses after the opening was instrumental in attracting people to build houses in Allama Iqbal Town, which had only a limited number of houses at that time, on the other. Only the contract for its entry ticket collection fetched Rs4.4 million for the Parks and Horticulture Authority this year.

The circular railway, slides and swings were the only attractions for the children at the time of the opening of the park. A skating ring, motor and paddle boating facilities were available to the youth whereas the old people could while away their time catching fish at the pond. A person was, however, allowed to catch only one fish after paying for the fishing tackle once. The Walled City maze built for the children has also been demolished by the PHA and the space has been used for new games.

The LDA gradually developed the funland area and got various kinds of joyrides installed near the circular railway line and the gate on the Wapda flats side after the opening of the park. The PHA has also added a number of new games and the park now has entertainments like monorail, astrojet, teacup, dodgem cars, shooting gallery, hally gully and flying carpet. Tickets for games and joyrides cost from Rs5 to Rs15. The rabbits and the swans have been removed and replaced by peacocks. A 1.85 kilometre jogging track has also been built near the boundary walls recently. Floodlights have been installed



Photos by Tariq Mahmood

for keeping the park illuminated at night.

Apart from auctioning the entry ticket collection contract for Rs4.4 million recently, the PHA has auctioned the boating basin contract for Rs6,38,000, funland

contract for Rs600,000 and two other games contracts for Rs946,000. The parking stand contract has been auctioned for Rs2,93,000 in addition. It spent Rs3.5 million on the park last year and Rs6.63 million a year earlier.

