

## NGO, KMC breathes new life into Victoria Square

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**KOLKATA 6 FEB:** In a unique move, members of a non-governmental organisation and school students along with the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC), have restored a park and a water body that was lying unused for years.

The park ~ Victoria Square ~ located off Camac Street in Ward 63 and covering around 2 acres of land has been restored with efforts from school students and a non-governmental organisation, Public. The park was opened for common people today.

Students from various schools like the La Martinere for Boys and La Martinere for Girls, Modern High School, Loreto House and Pratt Memorial took part in an initiative by the Public, for the restoration of the park and preservation of the waterbody located inside it.

Lauding the efforts made by the school students, mayor, Mr Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharyya said that orders to remove squatters and illegal occupants from inside the park premises has already been issued. He also added that necessary steps will be taken for the preservation of the waterbody and the park.

Officials of the parks and squares department of the civic body pointed out that the park has remained unused for over 20 years now. Initially, there were plans to carry out a construction inside the park, but following orders from the then municipal commissioner, Mr Asim Barman, no construction was allowed.

Efforts to restore the park were not taken up even after that. Following this, the park was closed for the public and different open spaces were encroached upon by squatters and outside people. Subsequently, the park turned into a garbage dump. Plastic packets were irresponsibly dumped in the water body inside the park. "On 5 June last year, Public took an initiative to restore the park and mooted the proposal of community management for the park. The project was cleared by the KMC and work was started," Mr Pradip Kakkar, founder member, Public said. Garbage dumped inside the park was removed and steps were taken to clean up the waterbody. Some of the broken down walls were replaced, fencing was done and beautification was also carried out inside the park. Paintings have been done on the boundary walls by the students while a new jogging path has been laid out along the park. Attempts are also being made to restore the waterbody located inside the park. An Australian landscaping expert, Ms Jane Fosterlink, has also agreed to help in the landscaping and beautification of the park.