



thecitythatwas

At the turn of the last century a map of the city shows hundreds of ponds in the actual urban area. Without a policy to protect these environmentally critical water retention points, those have disappeared from the landscape.



Gulshan-Baridhara-Banani Lake suffers from confused planning and increasing encroachment.

SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Gulshan lake, reclaiming our urban beauty

SOHEL ISLAM

In an effort to reclaim 31.34 acres of land of the Gulshan-Banani lake, The Rajdhani Unnayan Katiripakkha (Rajuk) on August 7 filed a case with the High Court (HC) against the Land Ministry. The Land Ministry through gazette notifications in 1999 and 2001, released some land along the Gulshan-Banani Lake under Bholu Mouza from Rajuk's possession which it had acquired in 1963-64 and handed it back to the previous owners. In 1963-64, the then Dhaka Improve-

ment Trust (DIT) (now Rajuk) acquired the lands under the Town Improvement Act 1953 while developing the Gulshan Housing Project.

In 1969, the DIT authorities had requested the Deputy Commissioner's (DC) office to cancel some of the acquisition and to return about Tk eight crore which had earlier been paid as compensation to the original owners.

In the same year, the DC office in response asked the DIT authorities to demarcate the areas, which it wanted to release to the private owners.

"In 1970, rather than demarcating, the DIT authorities abandoned the idea

of getting the compensation money back and informed the DC office about cancellation of its earlier decision which had been sent by the letter," said an official of the legal department requesting anonymity.

But this letter got mysteriously missing from the files of the DIT.

"Taking this opportunity of the missing letter, a lawyer purchased a piece of land of the Gulshan lake from the original owner and filed a lawsuit at the Lower Court in 1997 to get back the possession of the land. Finally he won the case in the High Court against RAJUK later," said the official.

"Following that successful appeal, 11 more people filed similar cases. We have already lost six cases. Six more cases are now pending in the High Court."

"Fortunately, I have managed to retrieve the letter sent by the DIT authorities in 1969 from the DC office this year. With the assistance of this letter and wetland protection act, 2000, we filed the case against the gazette notifications of the land ministry," said the official.

"The files of the DIT revealed that compensation money worth about Tk 8 crore was not returned to the DIT or

RAJUK. There is no justification that we will lose both compensation amount and the land. Since we haven't got the compensation money back so this 31.34 acre land is ours," claimed the Rajuk official.

"Owing to this missing letter, the land grabbing at the Gulshan-Banani lake started in the late seventies. Only God knows how we will be able to protect the Gulshan-Banani lake from land grabbers," said RAJUK Chairman Iqbal Uddin Chowdhury while speaking at seminar recently.

city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.

"The political parties of the country do not believe in each other and therefore a neutral government has to take responsibility of the national election".

-- Justice Shahabuddin Ahmad
Former president
Speaking on the occasion of Chehlam of Barrister Syed Ishtiaq Ahmed, two times adviser of interim government. Source: Prothom Alo

"If the lives of the entire family members are threatened after seeking justice for my son's murder, why cry for justice then? We are now virtually hostage in our own home."

-- Zobaida Khatun
Mother of deceased Jubo Dal leader Barkat
Speaking to the journalists after receiving death threats from her son's killers on Wednesday. Source: Prothom Alo

"They talk about Islam but they accept flowers from women".

-- Mowlana Syed Md. Fazlul Karim
Amir of Islamic Shashontantro Andolon
Speaking in a meeting at Mukhtangan criticising the leaders of Jamat-e-Islami. Source: Prothom Alo

"If you aren't a good student how come you will be a good leader for the country."

-- Tariqul Islam
Information Minister
Speaking at a Chhatra Dal's (Ruling BNP's student front) convention in Jessore on Friday. Source: Ittefaq

"Criminals are rampaging the country freely. Life and livelihood of common people have become insecure. We achieved geographical freedom but failed to ensure economic liberty and democratic right."

-- A.B.M. Mohiuddin Ahmed
Mayor, Chittagong City Corporation
Speaking at a meeting following the human chain organised to demand enactment of the verdict of Bangabandhu Murder Case. Published in Jugantor on August 19

"I will suggest that the residents of the hall remain careful to avoid accident."

-- SMA Faiz
DU Vice Chancellor
Commenting on students' safety of Suriya Sen Hall as the university does not have adequate fund for renovation, on August 23

Dwelling on High-rise problems



SYED TASHFIN

With the trend of living in high-rise apartments setting in, the inhabitants of the buildings, especially children, are being mentally affected. Child therapists predict that the consequences of living an atrophied life can be immense.

"Forty-five per cent of the population in the city are children and five per cent of them are being brought up in such high-rises," said Dr AHM Feroz, director of the Mental Health Institute in Agargaon. "These children run the risk of being selfish and arrogant by the time they are fully grown," said Feroz.

Most of the children are living what the child therapists call a box-centric life grow introvert and would rather stick to their parents, cousins and a few others they know well. They consider it inadvisable to go out on their own and talk to other people, as they are all too mindful of a parental opinion that kidnappers are always on the prowl.

"I can now play in the parking lot, which was unthinkable at my previous home," said Sadman Rashid, a nine-year-old boy, who moved into a new apartment in Kalabagan with his parents. Earlier, Sadman was living in another building, not far from his current residence. He disliked the environment of the previous home, as it had no open space to

play in. "I did not get to meet or make new friends. I had to play with my cousins," said Sadman.

Barish Khondoker, a 15-year-old teenager, lives in an apartment in Eskaton where open space is totally unavailable, and he hates living in such an environment.

"I always wanted to go out and play soccer, cricket and all other games that I was allowed to watch on the television," said Barish.

The way these children are being brought up is theorised as a box-centric life by the child therapists, the boxes being computers and television sets.

"Since these children are mainly dependent on computer and television, they never get to experience the real life outside," said Dr Feroz.

He said such children would have problems adjusting to other people later in their life and their intelligence are affected from the beginning, as they believe what they watch and learn from the television and computer.

Moreover, the Internet and television programmes to which they are overly exposed give them unwanted access to pornography and violent TV shows. "These children would grow up selfish and arrogant. We all should work towards saving the future decision-makers from mental decay," said the doctor.

Accommodating Dhaka

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Each year, about three lakh people are added to the existing population of the city owing to poor opportunities for employment in the rural areas.

Dhaka at present is home to more than ten million people. The city has been struggling to provide proper accommodation to its existing citizens for quite a while now. Moreover, these three lakh additional migrants are creating a problem that is close to a calamity.

According to an estimate, 70 thousand dwelling places are necessary for meeting the crisis. But over the last decade, only 450 housing projects, which have been completed under the initiative of 254 developers, have only been able to house 12 thousand people.

"Rajuk has planned to develop separate housing projects for different income groups of the city. We are developing 60 thousand flats at Uttara, 40 thousand flats at Jhilmil, 20 thousand at Purbachal and at some other places as well. Besides, there will be 20 thousand flats for low-income groups of the society in these projects," said Rajuk Chairman Iqbal Uddin Chowdhury.

"When these projects are developed, they could solve much of the housing crisis of this city," said Chowdhury. Meanwhile, due to this bur-

geoning effect of population, citizens do not get expected services from utility service providers. The Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (WASA) can barely supply 63 per cent of the need of the dwellers. Only 43 per cent of the sewerage lines of WASA can dispose off the city's waste.

74 per cent of the citizens are lucky enough to have electricity while the Bangladesh Telegraph

and Telephone Board (T&T) can meet the demand of only 23 per cent of the people. At present, three cellular phone companies in the city have provided some sort of a solution in this regard.

Most of the rural migrants, who cannot afford to stay in reasonable houses, usually take refuge in slums that spread over 160 square kilometres of the city. At present, approximately 20 lakh people are residing in some three

thousand slums under seriously unhygienic conditions.

"Although the Population Centre of Harvard University of the USA warned two decades ago that the population of Dhaka will grow 10 times by 2003, no concrete steps were taken to address the situation," lamented an urban planner.



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