

# Buriganga encroachers raising heads again

TAWFIQUE ALI

To the sheer frustration of environmentalists and Dhaka residents, no effort has been made to protect the River Buriganga from land grabbers and encroachers since an eviction drive ended October 25.

Fresh encroachment has been spotted at various points from Hazaribagh to Keraniganj. In addition, pollution level in the Buriganga has risen many times.

Encroachments on the west of the 2nd Buriganga Bridge, along a small canal, are going on at a large scale, according to Abu Naser Khan of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon.

In some cases those evicted during the last drive are returning again. Makeshift bamboo structures can be seen jutting into the river close to Swarighat.

Fresh encroachments are occurring every day along both banks of the Buriganga since the eviction drive stopped, locals said.

"We will be able to resume the next phase of eviction a week after December 16 as the district administration will remain busy with the Victory Day celebrations," said the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) Chairman Abul Hussain Chowdhury.

A letter has been sent to the District Commissioner to depute a

magistrate and fix a date for the operation, he informed.

"This time the eviction drive will mainly focus on the west bank of the river," said the chairman.

Regarding fresh encroachment he claimed that there has been no new concrete constructions and that they were watching the situation.

"There is a daily kitchen market in the Shyambazar portion of the Buckland dam from Shashanghat to Lalbagh. It is not exactly encroachment. Our aim is to free the road on the dam," said Chowdhury.

"As a temporary measure, we have planned to lease the reclaimed land on the Buriganga banks from

Fatullah to Shyambazar for economic activities on an annual contract basis to wholesale rice, fruits and vegetables traders," he added.

The traders will have to comply with the regulations laid down by the authorities.

As a permanent measure, the BIWTA plans to construct three to four foot wide brick walkways and walls to protect the river, said the chairman. Besides, the BWTA will also erect some sheds for commercial use on the banks, and plant trees.

First and foremost, the exact area of the Buriganga has to be demarcated according to the 1912 CS land survey, said the convenor of Save Buriganga Movement (Buriganga Bachao Andolon) Prof. Muzaffer Ahmad, who is also a member of the Taskforce on Buriganga protection.

River erosion and other factors over the passage of time have been additions to the many legal complications related to land occupation on the Buriganga banks. The land ministry has proposed some amendments to the existing land laws. But the presentation is still lying with the law ministry, said Prof. Ahmad.

The Taskforce meeting, with the Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain in the chair, on October 29 decided on principal to construct walls, earthen walkways, and tree plantation to protect Buriganga.

Although the Taskforce members were supposed to visit the evicted banks during Ramadan and meet immediately after that, they are yet to do both.

Akbar Hossain could not be contacted despite repeated attempts for his views in this regard.

The BIWTA evicted a total of 576 illegal structures on the banks of Buriganga during a weeklong drive from October 19 to 25.



SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Iron railings placed around the footpath at Kakrail is part of the city's "ever-changing" beautification.

## Mega-plan to beautify the metropolis

Kuala Lumpur, Singapore are a model

SULTANA RAHMAN

Plans are underway to beautify the capital level with mega-cities of neighbouring countries like Malaysia and Singapore.

The move came after Prime Minister Khaleda Zia suggested formation of a beautification cell for the metropolis, headed by Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) to decorate the capital making it as beautiful as Kuala Lumpur or Singapore.

"The climatic conditions of these countries are more or less similar to those of Bangladesh they are a model for Dhaka," said a DCC member. "The PM chose video footages of these two cities for us," he added.

The beautification plan that does not consider the local climatic conditions sometimes proves a disaster, experts fear, pointing out that eucalyptus trees do not suit the environment in Bangladesh.

Dhaka will see beautification in sync with the environment, which also

encourages planting indigenous trees.

As many as 49 government, semi-governmental and private companies form the cell that held its first meeting on December 8.

"At present, the city lacks adequate vision at night. This project will brighten the city as more solar lights will be added," a cell member said, preferring anonymity.

Planting ornamental trees is part of the project: *holud mehdi, lal mehdi, rangan, almunda*, time flower, *malfizia, debdaru* (pine/fir tree) and *bougainvillea*, among others, feature on the list of plants.

"To avoid unplanned plantation and beautification, this project will integrate all initiatives under one cell that will give a new view to the city," the member added.

Another initiative is waste management in which a France-based organisation, CGEA ONYX, expressed interest. Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka's visit to France is expected to move the plan forward.

Representatives of DCC, Rajuk,

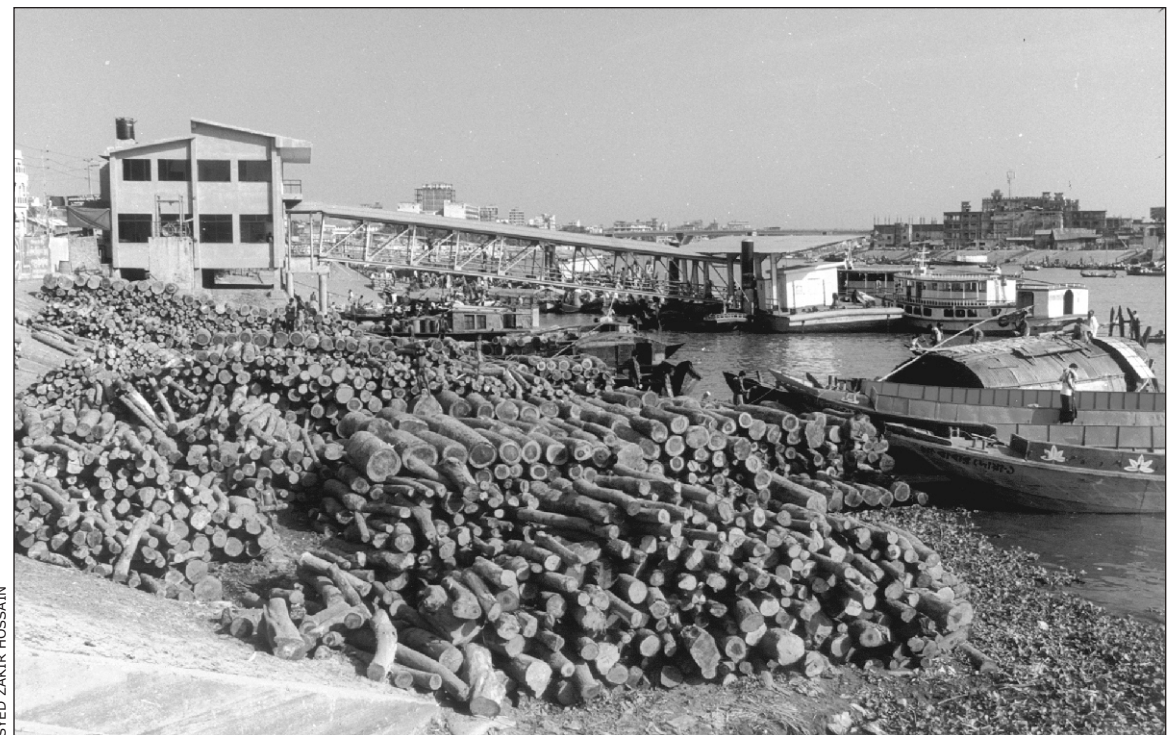
Roads and Highways, army, navy, GrameenPhone, Transcom Limited, Concord and BTV, among other organisations, attended the meeting, chaired by the DCC chief executive officer.

Prime Minister's Private Secretary-2 Saiful Islam, who will monitor the project, and Helal Uddin Nagri of DTCB (Dhaka Transport Coordination Board) were present.

The DCC Officers Association is expected to plant saplings along the road from Shahbagh to Matsya Bhaban. Rajuk will beautify the road from Paltan to Phulbaria, while Transcom will take charge of Mohakhali to Moghbazar roundabout.

GrameenPhone will work on the stretch of the road from Mirpur-10 to Technical Institute crossing via Mirpur-1, Concord from Malibagh crossing to Kakrail crossing and BTV from Mouchak crossing to Rampura Bridge.

The organisations, expected to maintain their domains, will finance the project with their own funds.



SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Timber traders have taken over part of the Buriganga's bank near Swarighat in Old Dhaka.

# One-stop utility bill collection unlikely to start in January

20 banks of the city and the four utility service providers, DESA, DESCO, WASA, Titas Gas and T&T, agreed to provide one-stop service to collect electricity, water, gas and telephone bills for the convenience of city dwellers.

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The government's decision to introduce a one-stop utility bill collection service in about 180 branches of 20 banks in the city by January 1, 2004 may not see light due to lack of preparation among utility service providers.

At a recent meeting of the Finance and Planning Ministry, 20 banks of the city and the four utility service providers - DESA, DESCO, WASA, Titas Gas and T&T, agreed to provide one-stop service to collect electric-

ity, water, gas and telephone bills for the convenience of city dwellers.

The government also decided to include the banks in the process as some foreign banks have expressed their interest in providing one-stop utility bill collection services to add to the number of service centres.

According to the finance ministry, the banks, which are providing two or more utility bill payment services may be used as a one-stop service. Also the banks, which are providing the T&T bill collection service may be converted to one-

stop service banks. At the same time the banks, which are providing only one service may continue providing the facility further.

At present none of the banks have any arrangements with all four utility departments in providing one-stop services to the residents of the city. Some banks have tried to strike a deal with the utility service providers but have not received permission to open the billing service even though a year has lapsed.

There is also doubt about the smooth functioning of the one-stop

service as it would increase the workload on the banks that are already pressurised with work.

The banks have proposed the utility departments to issue bills at the same time to facilitate the work of the banks. Some banks also suggested that a 24-hour service facility should be introduced instead of a counter-based system.

Already some of the banks are providing billing services through ATM and Rapid cash cards and also by automatic billing for many of their account holders.



SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Customers queue for bill payments at a bank branch in the city.

## useful telephone numbers

### COURIER SERVICES

**International**  
Air Borne Express- 9561371, 9561372, 9550724  
Air Couriers Intl (BD) Ltd.- 8815970  
Aramex International Courier- 9558003, 9559582, 9565075  
Airspeed Express- 9563494  
Asian Courier Services Ltd.- 8313543  
Baishakhi Courier Service- 9558606  
Banmgladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114  
Bangladesh Courier Service- 9563989  
Bengal Express- 9560642, 9552666  
Bangladesh Intl Courier- 953636  
Continental Service Ltd.- 9552948, 9558425  
DHL Worldwide Express- 9881703-7, 9886305-9, 9882057  
Enem Express- 9330699  
Fedex Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114  
Modhuban Courier Service-

9550884  
Overseas Courier Service- 9352431, 8321169  
Pacific Courier- 9568446  
Reliance Express Service- 9558515, 7110249  
Sky International Service- 9660442  
Skynet world Wide Express- 9558062, 9560258, 7114787, 7113184  
TNT Express- 9566662, 9558239, 8618155  
Union Courier Service- 9341722  
United Parcel Service Air alliance Ltd.- 8826429, 8810223

**National**  
Asian courier Service Ltd.- 8313543  
BAE- 9884851  
Central Courier Service- 9881118  
Confidence Courier Service Ltd.- 9567036  
Christy Courier- 7110177-9, 7100842-4  
Cosmopol Services- 9552793, 9557975

Dhaka Courier Services- 7236222  
Dolphin Courier- 9558802  
Dreamland Courier Service- 9550326, 9566975  
Pioneer Courier Services- 9561727, 9569759  
Probashi Courier Services- 9346359  
Rainbow Express Parcel Services Ltd.- 8322773, 8315703  
Reliance Express Services- 9558515, 7110249  
Sundaban Courier Services- 9551984, 9556189, 9551656  
Sunrise Courier Services- 9568751

**TIPS**  
Do you know according to Dhaka City Corporation, you must deposit your waste at the collection site between 4pm and 10pm

### LIBRARY & INFO-

**Libraries, Cultural and Information Centers**  
**Central Public Library-** 8626001-4,  
**Shishu Academy-** 9564128  
**Shilpakala Academy-** 8614673  
**Bangla Academy-** 8619550  
**Islamic Foundation-** 9550280, 9556407  
**Nazrul Institute-** 9114602  
**Ford Foundation-** 8116133  
**Alliance Francaise-** 8611557  
**British Council-** 8618867-8, 8618905-7  
**Community Development Library-** 8113769, 8113604  
**Goethe Institute Int'l- Dhaka-** 9126525-6  
**Indian Information Centre & Cultural Library-** 8615096  
**The Russian Cultural Centre-** 9116314, 9118531, 9118314  
**Drik Photo Gallery-** 9120125, 8112954, 8123412

### OUTING

**Museum and Zoo**  
**National Museum-** 8619396-9  
Open: 10 am 5 pm, Friday 3 pm- 8 pm, Thursday closed  
**Muktijuddha Jadugarh-** 9559091  
Open: 10:30 am 6:30 pm,  
Sunday Closed  
**Bangabandhu Smiti Jadugarh-** 8110046  
Open: 10 am 5 pm, Wednesday closed  
**Ahsan Manzil**  
Open: 10 am 5 pm, Friday: 3 pm - 7 pm, Thursday Closed  
**Shishu Jadugarh-** 9666466  
Open: 10 am- 6 pm, Sunday Closed

### CITY BUS ROUTE

Bus No.	Route	Starts from
1	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 10, 11, 12	Golap Shah Mazar
2	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 1, 2	Phoolbaria bus station
3	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Mahakhali-Airport-Azampur	Phoolbaria bus station
4	Shyampur-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Airport-Tongi	Shyampur
5	Sayedabad-Kamalapur-Motijheel-Airport-Joydebpur-Gazipur	Sayedabad
6A	Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Gulistan 1, 2	Kamalapur
6B	Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 1, 2	Kamalapur
6C	Motijheel Shapla chattr- Malibagh- Farmgate- Gulshan 2	Motijheel Shaplachattr
7	Sadarghat-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 2	Sadarghat
8	Chittagong-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asad Gate-Kalyanpur-Gabtoi	Chittagong Road
9	Demra Rani mahal-Motijheel-Kalbagan-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 10, 11, 12	Demra Ranimahala
10	Sadarghat-Gulistan-Kakrail-Malibagh-Rampura-Biwa Road-Tongi Bridge	Sadarghat
11	Sayedabad-Motijheel-Fakirapool-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Tongi Bridge	Sayedabad
11/A	Sayedabad-Khilgoan-Malibagh-Rampura-Airport-Tongi Bridge	Syedabad
12	Shanir Akhra-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asadgate-Mohammadpur	Shanir Akhra
13	Motijheel-Shahbagh-New Market-Jhigatola-Shangkar-Mohammedpur	Motijheel
14	Signboard -Motijheel-Shahbagh-New Market-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 12	Signboard (Chittagong Road)
15	Chittagong Road-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Mirpur 12	Chittagong Road
24	Gulistan-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Airport-Uttara-Bipile	Gulistan