

GULSHAN SOUTH PARKLAND

DCC asked again to follow PMO order

TAWFIQUE ALI

The good governance committee of the Prime Minister's Office has once again strictly instructed the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) authorities not to go for any commercial use of the Gulshan South parkland.

Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Kamal Uddin Siddiqui, who heads the committee, at a meeting on March 15 asked the DCC authorities to either develop a park or give the land back to Rajuk.

"We asked DCC to return the parkland to Rajuk (Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha) for development, as it handed over the parkland to DCC just for maintenance," Public Works Secretary Iqbal Uddin Chowdhury said.

City Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka told Star City last December that they would build a community centre there. He claimed that the local MP and ward commissioner were also interested to establish a community centre.

However, the DCC has not started work to develop a park at the site.

Contacted on March 27, DCC Chief Executive Officer M Saifuddin Ahmed said, "How do you know that we are not developing the park?"

"Developing a park is not a job to be done overnight," Ahmed said. "We will do the job and start working within a few days," he added.

The members of Gulshan Society, who had been very vocal for establishing the park, are now keeping mum on the issue. "We'll face reprisals if we speak out," said a top office bearer of the society requesting anonymity. "We don't want to go into any trouble."

"One thing is understandable that there is a very powerful lobby active to turn the parkland into a commercial site," said a member

Following a public interest litigation filed by Gulshan Society, a High Court bench on December 15 last year issued a rule on the DCC and its CEO to explain why they should not be directed to refrain from using the Gulshan South parkland for any purposes other than developing and maintaining a green park.

of the society expressing his apprehension that the park would be finally grabbed by powerful quarters.

In the 1962 layout plan for the Gulshan Model Town drawn by the erstwhile DIT, the parkland is clearly earmarked for a green park. Rajuk in 1982 handed over the 3.99 acres of land to DCC to maintain it as a park.

The land then remained occupied by DCC's 416 sweepers' families for about 25 years. The parkland was freed from illegal occupation around six months back.

The DCC later extended the parkland up to 6.5 acres by filling up a portion of adjoining Gulshan Lake, according to Rajuk Chief Engineer Emdadul Islam.

The DCC also raised a six-foot high solid wall with ceramic bricks around the parkland making its interior invisible though the DCC CEO had told Star City on November 2 that they would construct a three feet high wall.

The principal secretary to the PM in a letter to DCC on October

26 last year said the PM had given a clear direction to set up a green park at the site immediately. But the DCC ignored the repeated directives from the PMO.

Rajuk also formally asked the DCC in November last year to return the park land to it in the wake of an influential private developer's alleged move, backed up by a powerful quarter, to grab the parkland for commercial use.

"The land is a very valuable asset because of its location and it will be used accordingly in consultation with the Prime Minister's Office," said the DCC CEO on October 12.

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The court also imposed a status quo on the parkland.

Students of Fazlul Huq Hall living in danger

WAHIDA MITU

Students continue to live in danger at the Fazlul Huq (FH) Hall of Dhaka University (DU) as the authorities have not yet repaired the cracks developed in the aged building.

Nineteen rooms in the north block of the dormitory's main building were sealed off about two and a half years ago after the hall authorities spotted some cracks. To avoid possible accident, the authorities have raised walls to block entry points of each floor of the two-storey building.

"As the ground floor in the central part of this block has subsided, it affected the same area of the first and second floor," said a student who resides in a room beside the sealed area. "We are living at serious risk. The building may collapse any time," he feared.

The students said the rooms in the east block also developed cracks.

During a visit, this correspondent found that the ground floor of the north block has subsided at places and many potentially dangerous cracks are developing on the walls and pillars.

"The authorities renovated the west and east blocks of the building several times. But the north block has been left uncared for. We heard that the authorities will reconstruct this block," said a student who has been living in the hall for about six years.

Students are now passing their days in tension. "We are living here despite the risk of accident as we have no other option," said Tareq Ahmed, a student.

When asked, Provost Dr Mozammel Huq said: "The FH Hall is part of our heritage, so we have a plan to reconstruct the building without changing its original structure."

Experts at the Civil Engineering Department of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) have already submitted a model structure for the renovation of FH Hall which will cost about Tk 2 crore, the FH Hall provost added.

Dr Haque said it is uncertain when the reconstruction work will begin. He hoped the construction will start soon to avert any accident like the 1985 Jagannath Hall tragedy.

Sources said the DU authorities are planning to reconstruct only the subsided portion of the FH hall instead of



North block of FH Hall is the most vulnerable putting lives of students at grave risk.

reconstructing the whole north block.

"Architects and civil engineers from Buet will help in the reconstruction of north block. Other portions of the building will be repaired," said Md Ameer Hussain, chief engineer of DU.

Sources concerned said the DU authorities could not start the work due to lack of fund. The proposal for reconstruction of the building is awaiting approval of the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecne) for about a year.

When asked, SMA Faiz, the vice chancellor of DU, said he is aware of the matter. "For a long time we have been waiting for the Ecne approval for the work. The finance secretary has assured that the proposal would get approval soon."

