



thecitythatwas

A chouki or security outpost during the Moghul period in Karwan Bazar was set up where people were security checked before entering the city. There was a caravanserai near the chouki. The word Caravanserai was later distorted to Karwan Bazar.

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Rajuk cancels its own order under pressure

TAWFIQUE ALI

In the face of objection raised by a section of its officials, the Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk) has cancelled the approval for commercial use of a plot in the city's Banani area, according to highly placed sources.

The city development authority has virtually got divided into two blocks over the issue of whether the plot on the Kemal Ataturk Avenue is in an ancillary service zone or it can be used commercially with high-rise establishments.

Rajuk cancelled the plan within 40 days of approval by its building construction committee-2 for construction of a high-rise building on the plot. The cancellation came in the wake of protest by 19 senior Rajuk officials residing at Rajuk quarters adjacent to the plot.

The dissenting Rajuk officials argued that the high-rise commercial building could not be built in an ancillary zone and that the plot owner did not pay conversion fee for turning the plot into a commercial one.

Acting chairman of Rajuk KAM Harun said, "I think the plot can be used commercially as it is located on the main avenue where there

are other commercial set-ups."

He said that the plot was auctioned as an ancillary service plot for setting up a filling station. "The building construction committee on receipt of complaint cancelled the plan," he added.

Harun said the committee formed by the government acts independently. "The chairman has no direct role in its decision making," he said. "Now, the matter rests with the court and Rajuk will act as per court directives."

The said plot no-6 in Block-C, Kemal Ataturk Avenue, Banani was leased out to one Ahmad Faizur Rahman through a public auction by the then Dacca Improvement Trust (DIT) on February 27, 1971 to set up a petrol pump.

Rahman obtained permission from the estate department on January 17, 1996 to construct a commercial-residential building in place of the pump. He obtained no objection from the department on May 30, 2005 for the construction of a high-rise commercial building.

On February 2, 2006 Rajuk's building construction committee approved the plan for construction of a 15-storey fully commercial building. Then the landowner awarded the contract to private builder Prasad Nirman Limited.

But the committee, comprising

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authorised officer, town planner and deputy director of estate department, cancelled the approved plan through a letter on March 15, 2006 saying that the builder "suppressed facts in the proposed construction plan."

"A section of officials facilitated approval for the construction of a high-rise building although the



The controversial plot at Kemal Ataturk Avenue in Banani.

area is an ancillary service zone," said a top Rajuk official seeking anonymity.

But Authorised Officer-2 of the committee Shamsur Rahman said, "We approved the plan on the basis of documents produced by the estate department. But we had to cancel the plan in the face of pressure as there was an

objection by a number of Rajuk officials."

Rajuk's Town Planner Zahurul Haque said, "The landowner first obtained permission to use the land for commercial and residential purposes, but he later got a plan passed for a fully commercial high-rise building suppressing facts."

According to the dissenting officials, petrol pump is an ancillary service. "If this petrol pump is turned into a high-rise commercial establishment, other petrol pump owners too can demand for similar conversion," a Rajuk official said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

Osmani Udyan beautification going on in full swing



Excavation work for an artificial lake at Osmani Udyan continues.

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

Development and beautification of Osmani Udyan is going on in full swing to turn it into an attractive recreation spot for the city dwellers.

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has evicted most of the illegal occupants in the park to implement the project that includes a lake, a children park, fountains and walkways. It has fenced the entire park having a total area of 23 acres.

"We have evicted the bus stand, a library, an illegal nursery, type writers' shed, floating people and others from the park," said Sharif Uddin, executive engineer of DCC Zone-5.

However, DCC is yet to free three acres of the parkland from grabbers. One Monwara Begum claimed 2.8 acres of land inside the park including a building and got a High Court order in her favour. DCC's appeal against this order is now pending.

During the regime of HM Ershad the government had sold out a piece of the land to Muktiyoddha Sangsad. Besides, Dhaka Wasa established a pump house and Osmani Memorial Hall authority set up its air-conditioning plant in the park. The police department got another space for constructing a road towards a barrack.

The first phase of the beautification and development project is now going on at a cost of Tk 3.27 crore in line with the suggestions from two committees comprising representatives from the civil society, educationists and environmentalists.

More than 50 percent of the first-phase work has been complete. The first phase includes fencing off the parkland with iron grills and bushy plants, and setting up of an artificial lake on its eastern side. The existing pond inside the park will be integrated with the lake.

"We will turn this park into a natural garden with lake, fountains

and natural flowerbeds. Even the boundary walls will have beautiful flowerbeds. It will be one of the most beautiful places in the city to come and enjoy nature," said Dr Nizamuddin Ahmed, designer and planner of the beautification and development project.

Workers are now digging the lake and reconstructing the walkways inside the park. Concrete benches will be set up there for joggers and visitors. A children's park and an open stage for cultural activities will also be constructed.

"This lake will enhance the beauty of the park as well as the Gulistan area," said Sharif Uddin, the DCC executive engineer. "We are hopeful to open it by July," he said.

The second phase of the development will kick off soon, said officials. Under the second phase, eleven fountains bearing

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

TREE FELLING ON VIP ROADS

No sign of planting new trees

FAIZUL KHAN TANIM

No new trees have yet been replaced with the ones felled for the extension of roads from the Banani Staff Road level crossing to Bijoy Sarani fountain or near the Panthakunja Park.

Although the Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP) under the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) assured that trees would be replanted along the extended roads, no action has been taken to replace around a thousand trees that were chopped down.

Almost one hundred trees were felled in the Panthakunja Park, opposite to Sonargaon Hotel recently as part of the road-widening project of the VIP roads

in the city.

DUTP sources said that the trees were cut down to develop the drainage system, construction of footpaths and set up electric poles.

City residents said the authorities should compensate the felling of trees by fresh plantation considering bio-diversity and other environmental issues.

"We still have to build flyovers to curb the traffic congestion anyway. The felling of trees then would remain without purpose," said Rizvy Ahmed from Uttara.

"Trees play a vital part in keeping the environmental balance, but without them a lot of dust will circulate around these specific streets and make commuters' life miserable," said a student.

Of the trees already felled, at least 800 are between 10 and 30 years old, said one of the tree-cutters.

Environmentalists allege that trees like Debdaru, Koroi, Shegun / Teak, Mahogany were felled two weeks back to extend the airport road from six to eight lanes.

According to the DCC, the implementation of a Tk 20 crore project began last November to widen the airport road under DUTP's implementation.

"The tree felling project to broaden the roads ended with work on the Panthakunja Park. This was the last tree-cutting phase. We will start planting trees by June this year," said Syed Qudratullah DUTP's project director.

When he was asked why the footpath near Panthakunja that was built around 15 months back under the City's beautification project, was broken, he said that the footpath built by the roads and highways department was done without proper planning.

The footpath had to be broken now under a new project to broaden the street, Qudratullah said.

When asked why the Panthakunja Park, which is supposed to be open to the public has been closed, Qudratullah said it was open once few days back but they had to close it again because of the road broadening project.

"The park, too, will be opened by June," added Qudratullah.



More trees were felled at Panthakunja in the name of road expansion.

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.

"Sitting with Jamaat is equivalent to sitting with Bangla Bhai"

-- Sheikh Hasina

Leader of the main opposition and AL president Said at a seminar on the occasion of Mujibnagar Day at Diploma Engineers' Institute, on Monday. Source: Prothom Alo

"Jamaat should be in discussion"

-- Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan

BNP Secretary General and LGRD Minister Told reporters accusing the opposition of impeding the electoral reforms on this excuse, on Thursday. Source: The Daily Star

"I also did not know this act existed. Does anyone know every law of the land?"

-- Moudud Ahmed

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Told reporters denying his involvement in enacting a law in 1985 to dismiss a government servant who has been fined more than Tk 1,000, on Thursday. Source: The Daily Star

"We are faring well but nobody admits it"

-- Saifur Rahman

Finance and Planning Minister Said at the foundation stone laying ceremony of Bangladesh Economic Association, on Tuesday. Source: Bhorer Kagaj

"I can't remember exactly what I said in parliament. The ministries concerned usually prepare the answers we place in parliament. And sometimes we are too busy to verify those"

-- Hafiz Uddin Ahmed

Water Resources Minister and in-charge of the defence ministry in parliamentary affairs Told reporters about the discrepancy of \$24.3m in the prices of the 16 fighter planes purchased from China, on Sunday. Source: The Daily Star

"The Kansat incident is only the tip of the iceberg"

A high official of Rural Electrification Board (REB)

Told reporters regarding its scant supply of 500 MW power a day for three crore consumers while the demand stands at 1,900 MW power a day, on Thursday. Source: The Daily Star

"Everything cannot be said openly"

-- Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid

Social Welfare Minister Told reporters when questioned about the government's failure to stop corruption, on Saturday. Source: Prothom Alo

"No teacher agreed to carry the question paper to him. So I had to go according to the order of the university"

-- Dr. Enamul Haque

Proctor, Rajshahi University Told reporters about carrying the question paper to the BNP-backed Chhatra Dal leader in medical centre, on Wednesday. Source: Prothom Alo