

Rajuk forces illegal occupiers out

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Though Rajdhani Unnyan Kartipakkhya (Rajuk) appears successful in taking possession of its land at the east end of Gulshan-Mohakhali link road evicting illegal occupiers, some influential land grabbers in the vicinity remain exempted from government action.

Rajuk demolished all the unauthorised structures and forced its occupiers off nearly three acres of prime government land in a follow-up eviction drive last Wednesday.

Rajuk carried out the first drive on June 8 to retrieve the government land along the Hatirjheel Lake to the south of National Shooting Complex from illegal occupation.

The authorities demolished a so-called "shrine" of some Majnu Shah and office of a newspaper called Lalsabuj, establishments that Rajuk spared earlier at the site.

Authorities bulldozed all makeshift automobile workshops, shops and houses from the boundary wall of Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution plant up to the boundary wall of Fuleswari, a housing project of Capital Properties Ltd to the west.

Though the Rajuk demolished Ashik Automobile workshop on a portion of the land occupied by Fuleswari project, the developer's

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men raised a concrete wall in no time to encircle and establish possession of the land. The new wall is an extension of Capital Properties' boundary wall.

"We could not evict the occupation of Fuleswari project, as the on-duty magistrate Amzad Hossain was shown a document claimed to be from Rajuk, which we later found to be fake," said Rajuk's executive engineer Uzzal Mallik.

When asked, Abul Khair Litu, owner of Capital Properties Ltd, said he knew nothing about a fake document and would look into the matter.

"We will relinquish possession if found the land is not ours," Litu said.

Capital Properties Ltd presently owns 21 bighas of land along Gulshan-Mohakhali link road,

purchased from land's original owner Khalek Munsif, he said.

According to the superintendent of Rajuk's law section, Md. Miraz Ali, a number of builders and land grabbers have not only occupied government land illegally but also have land filled parts of Hatirjheel Lake.

Public Works Secretary Iqbal Uddin Chowdhury said that he had heard of the matter. "We will definitely demolish the structures and evict the occupants if the document is found to be fake," he added.

"We will evict the other occupants in our next drive," said Rajuk's chief engineer Emdadul Islam.

"Once the Project Proposal (PP) for Hatirjheel Lake Development Scheme is approved, we have to acquire more land along the link

road for the lake development project," said Islam. The PP is now awaiting Planning Commission's nod.

Rajuk will incorporate the reclaimed land into lake development scheme, he said, as the Prime Minister also has instructed to develop the lake taking any measures necessary for the scheme.

Though most of the land in lake area and its banks is government khas land, there are some private land claimants, said the public works secretary.

"But we have to examine the genuineness of such claims," said Chowdhury. "The government has to acquire a great deal of land from the private occupants for the project," he added.

According to the secretary, the said Rajuk land to the south of

the Shooting Complex has been illegally occupied for last 20 years.

Asked why they did not bring down all the billboards on the land during follow-up eviction drive, Malik said: "We could not bring them down as we had no gas cutter machine and other equipment required."

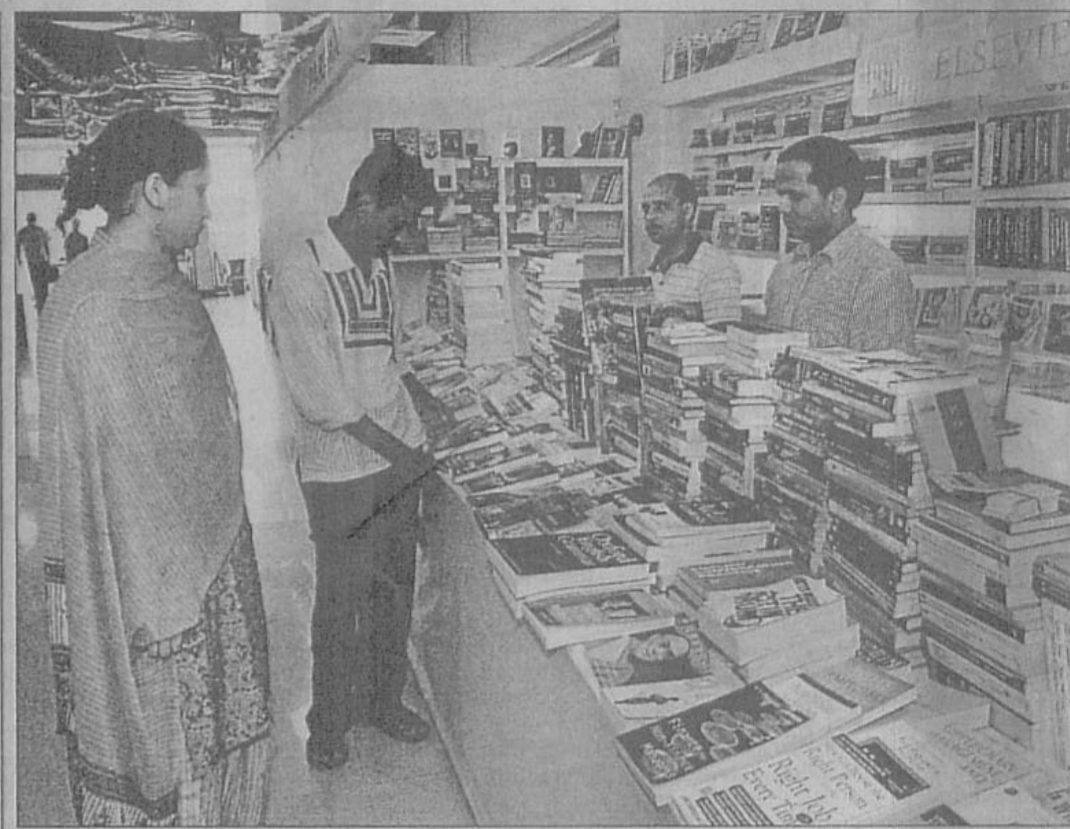
Local thugs, beneficiaries of land grabbing, were seen trying to negotiate with executive engineer Shamim to prevent him from carrying out the drive on Wednesday, but all pleadings were in vain.

One person clad in white pyjama and panjabi, supposedly a leader of the occupants, was heard telling Shamim when the "shrine" was being bulldozed: "You are demolishing all the structures, you have not kept any of your promises."

Regarding land ownership claims, Rajuk's chief engineer said the occupants could not produce any genuine documents in support of their claim.

The then Dhaka Improvement Trust (DIT) acquired the land in 1962, Islam said, but a number of land grabbers later managed fake documents claiming land ownership.

They have obtained some back dated documents prepared in connivance with some corrupt section of the land registry office, he said.



Borshar Boimela -- a unique book fair

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Borshar Boimela, a book fair arranged for the first time in the rainy season, is going on at Bashundhara City shopping complex in the capital.

"After the end of Ekushey and Dhaka book fair we have to wait for almost 11 months for another fair. This is a big gap for the bookworms. So we wanted to do something in between," said Ashrar Masud from Annito, an event management firm that organised the fair.

Asked why they chose rainy season for the fair, he said: "We have chosen rainy season as usually no fair is organised in this season. We also wanted to have a covered place like this one in Bashundhara City where people can move freely in rainy days."

"Another reason for choosing this place is to attract a certain group of people who come here do their own shopping but can also buy books," said Masud.

Many publishing houses and big importers are participating in this fair for the first time with imported books, which is a unique feature of this fair. Those who like to read foreign books but miss those in the national book fairs, belong to a different reading circle and their needs should be met, said the organisers and importers. The participants also include local publishing houses like Ananya, Agami, Pragati, Pathak Shamabesh, Oitijho, Mukthadhara etc.

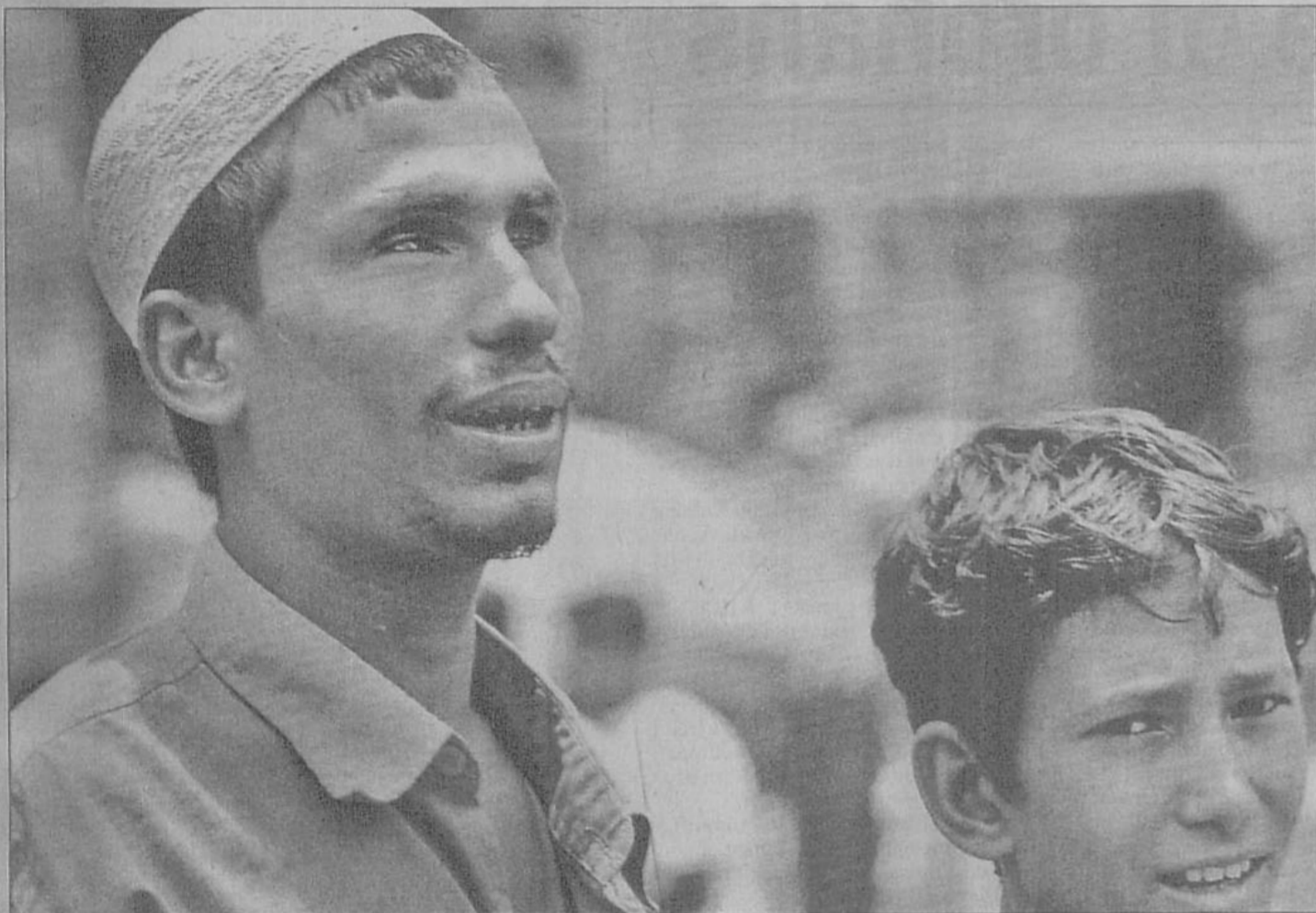
Around 2,500 imported books are being displayed in this fair. There are no foreign Bengali books, only English. Big importers like Hakkani Publishers, Mullick Brothers, UPL and Words n Pages are very positive about this fair.

"There are importers like Paragon, Words n Pages who are participating for the first time in a national level book fair," said Masud.

As a big house of importers, Words n Pages is intent on creating a big readership of English fictions and an environment for writing in

level fair," said Ziaul Haque Khaled, senior manager operation, Words n Pages. "It is important to have both Bengali and English books in a fair because these are two different kinds of books with different flavours. Those reading only Bangla books should also know about the international bestsellers," he said. "I came to Bashundhara City for shopping and found a book fair going on. It is nice to see that they have imported books also," said Sonia, a university student. "It's a good sign that pirated copies are not allowed in this fair," Khaled said. "High duty on imported books is encouraging piracy," he observed. "Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are the only countries in the world which have such high duty on imported books. Government policymakers have a dubious attitude towards importing books. If import of computer and related items can be made duty-free for being educational tools then why not books? Is computer more educational than books?" said Khaled. "It will be good for everyone if the import duty on books is waived," said Kamrul Hasan Mullick, managing director, Mullick Brothers. There is no entry fee in this fair. Channel i is the media partner. Noted writer Humayun Ahmed inaugurated the fair while Imdadul Haque Milon was the special guest. There are 800 units in the fair where 62 publishing houses, importers, NGOs and national dailies are participating in. From now on this fair will take place every year, said the organisers.

English. "As we are a Gulshan-based store many people do not know about us. Our aim is to let people know about our shop and what kind of books we have. We took part in many school-based book fairs since we started one and a half years ago but this is the first time we are participating in a national



Abu Taher, blind since birth, earns Tk 50-60 a day by singing at various traffic signals in the city in order to feed his family of six.

AFP PHOTO

healthouting, taxicab & train timing

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