

Shaymoli, a northern place in Dhaka was named as this area was covered with lots of green in 1957 when Abdul Gani haider, a social worker of Becharam Douri came here and built his own house. The local people sat together in a meeting lead by Gani to name their residential area. Former Minister Hafizuddin was present in the meeting where the participants proposed to name this area as Shaymoli.

# Last minute land grabbing

## 'Dubious deal' on a parkland in Motijheel

TAWFIQUE ALI

Half-an acre of prime land in Motijheel is now under the grip of an influential quarter backed by ministry of housing and public works and the Dhaka City Corporation in the guise of beautification by a renowned bank in the last minute of this government's tenure.

The anomalies and fishy manner in which the DCC authorities have taken possession of the parkland for Dhaka Bank have given rise to high speculation that the million-dollar land at the prime commercial district is going to be eaten up through a shady deal.

All though the Dhaka Bank authorities, now the custodian of the park, denied having any planned commercial ventures at the site, the manner in which the land has been taken over suggests the fate of the public land now hangs in the balance.

According to various sources, this is just a ploy of the public works minister Mirza Abbas, who himself, his wife and his family members own most of the shares of Dhaka Bank, to eat up the public land in the long run.

Mirza Abbas said that he has no involvement as minister in the process of handing over the parkland to Dhaka Bank.

Founder chairman of the bank, Abbas said, "Dhaka Bank authorities long back requested me verbally to hand over the parkland to them to develop it as a car parking lot, which I refused to do."

"I instead intended to develop a green belt at the site but I could not do that," Abbas said.

The park is just adjacent to and lying to the east of Bangladesh Biman's local office in the heart of Motijheel commercial area, while Dhaka Bank runs its corporate head



The prime land in Motijheel was vacated on Friday in the name of beautification

office in the Biman office building as a tenant.

Biman, the national airliner, had taken over the park more than 40 years ago for beautification and ever since the land had been under Biman's management and in its possession, said a number of Biman officials.

"We have long been using and maintaining the parkland under our jurisdiction," said the deputy general manager (Estate and Common Services) of Biman Anwar Kader, "But DCC just all of a sudden took its possession keeping the Biman authorities in the dark without any prior intimation."

"The only thing we know is that the land has been handed over to Dhaka Bank," said Kader, "But we do not know what actually they are

going to do with the land."

The DCC should have intimated the Biman authorities of its taking possession and handing over to another organisation at least for the sake of decorum, said the Biman DGM.

"The DCC authorities even did not bother to inform us about demolition of Biman's car parking shade," said an elderly Biman staff, who has been serving for 35 years.

According to Biman staffs, who have been serving for more than last 30 years, said that it was the Biman authorities that planted trees in the park, fenced it off with iron grill and was maintaining it. This correspondent found Biman's monogram marked on the concrete pillars of the park's boundary fencing.

The 9-story Biman office in

Motijheel has no car parking provision and it was using a portion of the park as a car parking lot with a makeshift shade in between the park and eastern entrance of Biman office.

Staffs of different organisations, traders and temporary vendors in the vicinity said that the DCC officials equipped with bulldozers and backed up by police came just all of sudden on Thursday to take possession of the parkland.

They took possession of the land on a deserted weekly holiday Friday, started demolishing the Biman's car parking shade, enclosed the park with hard boards and raised signboards in the name of DCC reading beautification work in progress.

On a visit Saturday, this corre-

spondent found a number of security men of Dhaka Bank guarding the park while demolition of car parking shade was on.

"We have heard that Dhaka bank will build a car parking lot here," said one of the on-duty security guards.

Dulal, a tea vendor on the park side for last two years, said, "We have heard the bank staffs saying the bank will construct a high rise building at the parkland."

A cleaner of Dhaka Bank, requesting not to be named, said, "As far as I have heard, the green park will be turned into a car parking lot."

Managing director of Dhaka Bank Shahed Noman said, "We got the beautification contract from the DCC six months ago."

Responding to approaching the works minister, Noman said, "We did not approach the works minister. We verbally asked the Biman authorities to build a car parking lot in the parkland expressing our interest to sponsor the construction work."

Assistant vice-president of the bank Azam Khan said, "We got the four-year beautification contract and we have no commercial purpose."

Beautification Cell of the DCC has handed over the land to Dhaka Bank. Iftekharul Haq, officer-in-charge of the cell, said that the parkland is the property of DCC and they have handed it over to Dhaka Bank for beautification.

"We did not inform Biman authorities of the matter because we don't have time to follow the formalities of cancelling contract, if any," said Haq, "Above all, we were not aware that the park had been under Biman's maintenance and possession."

Rajuk handed over 42 public parks in the capital to DCC for maintenance by an order in 1982, according to Rajuk sources, many

of those parks are untraceable today because of grabbing and encroachment.

Sohel Faruquee, DCC's Chief Conservancy Officer and member secretary of the beautification cell, said, "We handed over the park to Dhaka Bank one and half a months back for beautification under certain conditions that do not allow it to construct any paramagnet structure without permission."

Industries ministry that sits beside the park too wrote to DCC to evict the illegal people in and around the park and to keep it clean, he said.

"We handed over the parkland to Dhaka Bank as it showed interest to maintain the park," said Faruquee.

Asked whether they approached Biman for better maintenance of the parkland, "I do not even know of any such arrangement under which Biman has been managing the park."

"Estate department officials know more about the park and possible commercial use," faruquee said, "We have no business other than determining an organisation for beautification of the parkland."

"We had no business in the handover deal other than eviction of illegal occupancy," said the chief estate officer of DCC Abu Taleb.

The estate department was asked to evict the illegal occupancy in and around the park for possession and start of beautification, as the beautification cell has handed over the parkland for beautification, Taleb said.

### Greetings of Eid

On behalf of Star City, we wish our esteemed readers a very happy and joyous Eid.

-- Star City Team

## STRAY DOGS

# Does killing make sense?

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

Dhaka City Corporation's (DCC) claim of trapping around 20,000 dogs annually does not seem to make a difference in the number of stray dogs that continue to wander about the city.

With an estimated population of half a million, these homeless dogs are being eradicated by DCC's veterinary department.

The department is having a hard time negotiating with the outnumbering barking street roamers, as they it is already understaffed with only one advisor, a part time truck and two groups of six hired trappers

Would killing these homeless creatures be a solution to the problem?

Dr A.K.M. Anwarul Hoque, scientific officer of the Deputation Central Veterinary Hospital does not seem to believe so.

"Dogs have an extremely high breeding rate as two animals can multiply over 200 to 300 in about just three years," he said. "Unplanned killing won't help much unless effective measures are taken to control breeding," he added.

Hoque told Star City that it is possible to control dog population on the streets by using a process called Ligation. Removal of the ovaries would ensure that the female cannot reproduce and this removal is called spaying.

According to Dr Hoque, this process sterilising costs around Tk 700 for each dog; but when exercised among a larger volume, the cost would reduce dramatically.

On the issue of controlling breeds of stray dogs, DCC's public health officials said that the conventional method of putting down a dog is more logical as they

do not have veterinarians who would take charge of breeding control operation.

"It's been about three months since our doctors were transferred to the ministry. We don't have many options but to continue to 'put the dogs to sleep' without expert supervision," said another official.

According to the veterinary officials, dogs are highly territorial creatures. Each dog has its fixed niche. "Not only the remaining dogs can help along the reproduction rate as they continue to multiply; but also with the territories becoming vacant, dogs from neighbouring areas move in to occupy them," said a veterinary surgeon.

"Existing dogs attack a new comer to the territory, leading to dog fights and bites that are prone to spread rabies as the dogs are not vaccinated," he said.

Dr. G.K. Siddiqi, a veterinary

specialist told Star City that the concept of killing stray dogs was directly imported from the developed countries without clear knowledge about the urban conditions of the developing countries.

Countries such as ours, where exposed garbage and slums encourage the existence of strays, killing or removing stray dogs have proved completely ineffective in controlling rabies or dog population. This is because dogs are easily replaced, he said.

"However controlling garbage disposal and slums would not be easy considering our present conditions, but breed control or vaccinations certainly would improve the situation," he added.

It may be mentioned that there is not a single animal refuge in the city.



STAR PHOTO

# Dhaka: Yesterday, today and tomorrow



Amalesh Sen, an ex-national footballer who received national award and is the present coach of Abahani Limited football team, spoke to Wahida Mitu of Star City.

**The Daily Star (TDS):** What is your first memory of Dhaka?

**Amalesh Sen (AS):** I first came to Dhaka in 1962. At that time I lived in Bogra. I came to Dhaka to play a football match for Fire Service team. I reached Dhaka from Ishwardi by plane. I played the match in the afternoon and scored two goals.

**TDS:** What was the city like when you first came to Dhaka?

**AS:** Dhaka was beautiful and clean compared to the present city. There was a very pleasant environment for sports. City people were very much enthusiastic about sports.

**TDS:** What do you miss most in the city as compared to your early

days?

**AS:** I miss the playgrounds, parks and the secured life that we used to lead in the past. Most of the parks in the present city are encroached by drug addicts and others involved in antisocial activities. I also miss the compassion and cooperation of people, the friendly relations among sport organisers, players and spectators in my early days in Dhaka.

**TDS:** What is your most memorable event in Dhaka?

**AS:** The most memorable event in my life is that I scored twice in my first football match in Dhaka. Another memorable period of time was the days after our independence when we formed Swadhin Bangla Football team

and came to Dhaka to play with full of energy. We all were ecstatic to play on the soil of an independent country.

**TDS:** Which part of Dhaka in your eyes, should we be proud of?

**AS:** Ahsan Manzil, Lalbagh Fort and other historic sites in Old Dhaka are the places for which we should be proud of.

**TDS:** What do you envisage for Dhaka in future?

**AS:** I hope there would be sufficient number of playgrounds for young people. We cannot utilise the available opportunities due to lack of playgrounds. If the young generation is not fit physically, then their mental fitness is impossible. The present

generation is suffering from inadequate sports facilities. They do not find playgrounds in their schools and the localities where they live in. That is why most of them are wasting their time by watching television at home or wandering in the streets.

Besides, the Buriganga River has been encroached by land grabbers; its water has been polluted. I hope the government will take some steps to restore the lost glory of the river. I also hope that the government will do something to minimise the unbearable traffic jam in the city and free the educational institutions from politics.

# Rajuk chief engineer forced into retirement

TAWFIQUE ALI

In a last minute move, the Ministry of Housing and Public Works forced the Rajuk Chief Engineer Emdadul Islam into retirement.

The chief engineer was removed under the section 9 (2) of the public servant retirement act 1974 in which the government is empowered to send a public servant into retirement after 25 years of service. Under the same law the public servant may opt for retirement after this period. In normal cases since experienced bureaucrats and technocrats like Emdad are hard to replace, the officials are given the choice to decide whether or not opt for retirement.

In an official letter to different

newspapers yesterday Nurul Islam Khan Masud, the APS of the housing and public works minister alleged that Emdad was removed for the 'greater interest of the people'. The letter alleged that Emdad was deliberately slowing down the development process and was in various corruptions in the Rajuk.

Emdad has been serving as an engineer at the Rajuk since 1979 and as the chief engineer for last 3 three years.

Emdad made enemies when he tried to stop top real estate developers from filling up thousands of acres of low lying lands, earmarked in the city master plan as flood flow zones. He played instrumental role in drafting the Private Housing Land Development rules of 2004 and the

Metropolitan Building Construction Rules of 2006. Currently Emdad is investigating incidents of building collapses in the city.

"The government could ask for explanation from me if I am seen at any fault," said Emdadul Islam, "I am a victim of something that I do not know of at the last minute of the government's tenure."

Commenting on the forced retirement public works minister Mirza Abbas said on Saturday a thought of such an action against him 'has been going on for sometime'.

Emdad received the ministerial letter yesterday. Sources said that the chief engineer might appeal against the government decision.

## 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.

*"It is you who actually deserve the honour"*

-- Dr Muhammad Yunus  
Nobel Laureate and founder of Grameen Bank

Told the residents of Jobra village in Chittagong where Grameen Bank started its activities with 42 female basket weavers thirty years ago, on Sunday.

Source: The Daily Star

*"This is not true that the county was developed due to micro-credits worth Tk2,000 to 3,000 and giving mobiles phones to female beggars"*

-- Saifur Rahman  
Finance Minister

Said while inaugurating a branch of Dutch-Bangla Bank in Moulvibazar, on Thursday. Source: Prothom Alo

*"You can keep on writing whatever you want. I am doing my job"*

-- Mirza Abbas  
Minister for Public Works and Housing

Told a reporter when approached about 'any dubious deal' in approving housing projects that are set to fill up the remaining wetlands and water bodies in and around the city, on Sunday.

Source: The Daily Star

*"We could not increase power supply but we have set up power lines for thousands of kilometers"*

-- Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan  
BNP Secretary General and LGRD Minister

Told reporters at his office, on Thursday. Source: Prothom Alo

*"There will be obvious problems if journalists become politicians and businessmen and politicians become the owners of the television channels"*

-- Shah Alamgir  
News Editor, Channel i

Said at a discussion observing Media Democracy Day at the National Press Club, on Wednesday. Source: The Daily Star

*"I start walking for the town (Rajshahi city) just after taking sehri at my house and reach here in two and a half hours every day"*

-- Bachan Sheikh  
Tentulia, Pabna

Told a reporter while waiting for work at the city's Laxmipur crossing, for the last 19 days in this way, like others from the monga-affected northwestern region, on Thursday. Source: The Daily Star

*"I think this is not going to be a good decision for him"*

-- HM Ershad  
Chairman, Jatiya Party

Told reporters opposing the idea of Nobel Laureate Dr Muhammad Yunus' joining politics, on Thursday. Source: The Daily Star

Compiled by: Durdana Ghias