

## A banyan tree cries for help

Legend goes that the crown prince of Bhawal Ramendra Narayan Roy visited the place during his saintly endeavor. The Bhawal prince's wife along with her brother tried to poison the prince to death. But the prince survived the assassination attempt with the help of another mystic *sadhu*. Later Ramendra adopted the spiritual life and began to live in Buckland dam area in Dhaka

MORSHED ALI KHAN and WAHIDA MITU

The historical banyan tree in Goran Chadbari under the ownership of the National Botanical Garden in Mirpur is facing certain death due to gross negligence of the National Botanical Garden authorities.

The 165-year old banyan tree, widely known as *Achin Brikhya* attracts hundreds of visitors every day. But the sight of the tree is pathetic with its roots coming out of the ground and many of its aerial roots ripped off by vandals. With its spread out old aerial roots deeply lodged into the ground, the tree is over 200 feet in diameter. Its location by the river Turag and a vast water body stretching up to Tongi in the west and an age-old pond on its east make the Achin Brikhya an extremely attractive natural retreat within the city.

But things are changing fast. Lack of maintenance has encouraged vandals climbing the tree and inscribing messages on its

trunks and branches with sharp objects. There are picnic parties lighting fires for cooking at the roots of the tree. Some unscrupulous officials of the botanical garden have rented out the banks of the pond to small makeshift shops. The whole area is littered with discarded wastes.

The office of the botanical garden authority, under the Environment and Forest Ministry is situated hardly 100 yards away from the tree. But officials there have never taken any initiative to protect the tree.

"The Botanical Garden authority demolished the beautifully paved steps descending to the pond water but they did nothing to develop the site," said a local resident who was born in the nearby area of the garden.

Director of the National Botanical Garden Zahir Uddin Ahmed said there is a written instruction from the authority for a security guard to patrol the tree area.

"We have a plan to make a project that includes making a boundary wall surrounding the



The Achin Brikhya near botanical garden in Mirpur needs immediate attention to survive.

tree and the pond. The project proposal is now being written," he said. The Director was however unaware that a boundary wall could isolate the beautiful tree from public view from outside.

"For the sake of the tree and the maintenance of the area we need to enact a wall," he added. Legend goes that the

crown prince of Bhawal Ramendra Narayan Roy visited the place during his saintly endeavor. The Bhawal prince's wife along with her brother tried to poison the prince to death. But the prince survived the assassination attempt with the help of another mystic

*sadhu*. Later Ramendra adopted the spiritual life and began to live in Buckland dam area in Dhaka. According to hearsay he was also seen every now and then at the Achin Brikhya as this place was a monastery for *sadhus*. The Achin Brikhya was a place

of two Goddesses, Shitala and Monsha. In the past various activities took place here round the year. Hindus still worship the tree. In the past three seasonal fairs, representing winter, dry and rainy seasons, took place under the tree.

## Mosquito menace adds to people's woes

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

The sudden surge of mosquito menace in the city over the last few weeks continues to aggravate the woes of city dwellers.

The sudden increase of mosquitoes has created a fear in the minds of people who dread that a dengue epidemic might be on its way to plague their lives.

Despite the rapid increase of mosquitoes, Dhaka City Corporation (DCC)'s negligence in dealing with this menace continues to frustrate the city dwellers.

City inhabitants vented their disappointment over the authorities as they have not seen any mosquito control drives since September last.

However, DCC health officials denied any interruption in their activities. "We conduct our mosquito repelling activities every day," said Dr Ferroz Alam, an assistant health official of DCC.

Alam told Star City that fogging is not an effective mosquito eradication method. What fogging does is to shoo the bugs away for a few hours. "Fogging has similar effects as mosquito coils, they hardly kill five out of a million mosquitoes. The few mosquitoes that are knocked out regain control after a short while," he added.

But DCC health department insiders told Star City that their mosquito eradicating activities



Hundreds of gutters and abandoned pools need to be cleaned up to eradicate mosquitoes.

have virtually come to a standstill due to the Eid holidays and the following political unrest.

Reluctance of the field workers along with weak supervision is only worsening the situation.

DCC officials have identified inadequate manpower and equipment, reluctance of workers to spray larvaecides, negligence of field workers and lack of proper supervision as major reasons that

are alleviating the failure of mosquito control drives.

DCC Senior Bug Control Officer Dr Nasim-us-Siraj refuted the public criticism saying: "Just because they don't hear the

DCC health department insiders told Star City that their mosquito eradicating activities have virtually come to a standstill due to the Eid holidays and the following political unrest. Reluctance of the field workers along with weak supervision is only worsening the situation

deafening sounds of fogging doesn't mean that we are not doing our job."

"Our priority remains in preventing mosquito breeding rather than eradication measures," Siraj said.

He told this correspondent that the health department has been working in correlation with the conservancy department since October 16 to combat mosquito menace.

"We found improper supervision as a major reason for increasing mosquitoes, so about 100 supervisors of conservancy department will be working with the health department to monitor the field-level work of both the departments," he said.

Another official blamed the general people's indifference towards cleanliness of their premises to be a major reason of the increase in mosquitoes. "If they continue to depend on us to

eradicate mosquitoes and don't keep their premises clean, then they are bound to be disappointed," he said.

He also blamed wetlands, ponds and canals located in the fringes of city to be the major breeding grounds of mosquitoes. "We urge our field workers to cover up an addition of one kilometre area beyond our accounted vicinity to prevent mosquitoes from migrating."

With a budget of Tk 16.5 crore to eradicate mosquitoes, DCC has about 1,200 hand sprays, 625 fogging machines, 90 wheel-mounted machines and 18 ultra low volume machines for spraying adulticides and larvaecides.

Although 377 members of the mosquito control team are said to have been operating in the 90 wards, city inhabitants complained that they hardly find them in their localities.

## Legal notices served on real estate developers

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Certain organisations of environmentalists, lawyers and human right activists yesterday served three different legal notices on the country's three prominent real estate developers for developing projects in flood flow zones and natural wetlands in and around the capital.

Legal notices were served on Amin Mohammad Foundation Ltd, East West Property Development Ltd and Eastern Housing Ltd for filling up flood flow zones and retention ponds earmarked in the Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (DMDP) in the name of developing housing projects.

The projects that have been served with legal notices include New Model Town of Amin

Mohammad Land Development Ltd, Basundhara Baridhara and Basundhara Riverview of East West Property Development Ltd and Maya Kanan Lake City and Rampura Extensions (Mahanagar-Mayakunja) of Eastern Housing Ltd.

They have also served notice on government agencies concerned including secretaries to Housing and Public Works ministry, Environment and

Forest ministry and Land ministry and all the members of the national committee for approving these projects, under the private housing project land development rules of 2004.

Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela), Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD), Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (Blast), Centre

for Sustainable Development (CFSD), Nijera Kori and Odhikar yesterday served the notices.

The notices sought legal action against the project developers as per Building Construction Act of 1953, private housing land development rules of 2004 and the wetland protection act of 2000 and immediate cancellation of any approval given in the meantime.

The applicants also sought action to recover the flood flow zones and retention ponds from illegal earth filling.

Just before handing over power, the public works ministry authorised top real estate developers to fill up thousands of acres of flood flow zones, wetlands, retention ponds and natural canals setting a stage for environmental disaster.

### 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.

"Is it fair that a person should resign only for a comment?"

-- Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan  
BNP Secretary General

Told reporters when asked about the controversial comment of Adviser Fazlul Haque after placing wreath at the National Memorial at Savar, on Friday.  
Source: The Daily Star

"If you want to shout slogans then say 'Saifur bhai Saifur bhai'"

-- Saifur Rahman  
Former finance minister

Said in a speech at Sylhet when his party men were giving slogans for other party leaders, on Friday.  
Source: Prothom Alo

"I am 100 percent confident -- absolutely confident -- that Insha Allah there will be an election and everybody will participate in it"

-- MA Aziz  
Chief Election Commissioner (CEC)

Told reporters in his office, on Thursday.  
Source: The Daily Star

"It seems she [Sheikh Hasina] loves me a lot, that's why she says so many things about me"

-- Tarique Rahman  
Senior Secretary General, BNP

Told reporters at Hawa Bhaban, on Saturday.  
Source: Prothom Alo

"Watch BTV"

-- A senior official at Bangabhaban

Told a reporter when journalists were trying to contact Bangabhaban and press information department, on Tuesday night.  
Source: The Daily Star

"It will be considered as a betrayal if I don't join the BNP-led alliance as I was benefited by them"

-- HM Ershad  
Chairman, Jatiya Party (JP-Ershad)

Told reporters after an emergency meeting of the presidium members of JP held in it's Banani office, on Friday.  
Source: The Daily Star

"He [President and Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed] is doing a wonderful job, I will give him an A+ for what he has done"

-- Prof Muhammad Yunus  
Nobel laureate and founder of Grameen Bank

Said while talking to the diplomats of four European countries, on Wednesday.  
Source: The Daily Star

Compiled by: Durdana Ghias

## HC bench stays forced retirement of Rajuk chief engineer

CITY CORRESPONDENT

A High Court bench yesterday issued a rule nisi on the Ministry of Housing and Public Works to show cause as to why an order for forced retirement of the Rajuk chief engineer Emdadul Islam should not be declared without lawful authority.

The bench comprising Justices Syed Md Dastagir Hussain and Mamnoon Rahman stayed the ministerial order for forced retirement of the engineer pending disposal of the rule.

The bench also directed the government to refrain from withdrawing the facilities and amenities of the petitioner. The petition was moved by Barrister Moudud Ahmed and Barrister Imranul Kabir with him.

Just before handing over power, the minister for Housing and Public Works Mirza Abbas forced the Rajuk Chief Engineer Emdadul Islam into retirement for the 'greater interest of the people'. The chief engineer was notified

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.

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.