

GULSHAN LAKE

Encroachers' onslaught continues

TAWFIQUE ALI

Fresh encroachment on the Gulshan Bannai Lake at the west end of road no-6 on Friday in violation of the Wetland Protection Act of 2000 has narrowed down the water body.

In the latest spate of land grabbing, one MA Khaleque has taken possession of a part of the lake and the road too, claiming that he owns the 5-katha land there.

On a visit to the site in Friday afternoon, this correspondent found Khaleque along with his men was raising a boundary fence encroaching far into the lake and a makeshift house on the south side of the road.

Khaleque said that he along with his other relations have bought the land from one Azizul Haq following derequisition of the land.

"Rajuk (Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha) has asked us to demarcate the land and build a makeshift house so that they can easily issue the land use clearance," he said.

"Mortgaging the land we have taken loan from Phoenix Leasing Company Limited, which too has asked us to demarcate the land. We have taken possession of the land to show it to both Rajuk and the leasing company."

But a highly placed source at Rajuk said that derequisition does

not authorise one to grab water body or destroy environment.

One has to obtain clearance from the Department of Environment (DoE) under Environment Conservation Act and also as per Bangladesh National Building Code. Finally, one has to obtain the land use clearance from the Rajuk.

Rajuk's land use clearance must be preceded by the clearance from the DoE, he said.

"No Rajuk official is supposed to advise an applicant to demarcate a piece of land without clearances from other agencies," he said. "This is tantamount to law violation."

Chief Town Planner of Rajuk Zahurul Haq, when asked about Rajuk's instruction to demarcate the land in the lake, said: "The claim is blatantly false."

Issuing land use clearances particularly in the lake area is out of question, he said.

The signboard Khaleque has raised at the site reads that he has filed an application (no-5775) to Rajuk for clearance.

According to Rajuk officials, many gangs of counterfeiters who issue forged clearances have mushroomed in the city. Officials of Rajuk have recently held some counterfeiters from Gulshan.

The Wetland Protection Act of 2000 provides for protection of canals, wetlands, flood retention ponds and basins earmarked in the Dhaka Metropolitan



Fresh encroachment of Gulshan lake area.

Development Plan (DMDP) and in metropolis areas.

MA Khaleque said he has taken possession of the 'land on the lake' as per survey and layout of the land office of deputy commissioner, Dhaka.

"Usually, ownership of a wetland and lake is claimed producing a so-called original owner," said a Rajuk official.

Five to seven years back, large areas of lake and wetland were grabbed by influential people in this manner by a law that would allow derequisition of land.

But that particular provision is no longer in effect, he said.

A well-organised syndicate of land grabbers in connivance with government officials have long been active in the business of

capturing valuable lands exploiting loopholes of derequisition, said the Rajuk official.

The syndicate resorts to various illegal means to manage derequisition and transfer of land to some private owner.

Advocate Syeda Rizwana Hasan of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela) said, "A well-

organised syndicate of influential land grabbers in connivance with some government officials is active in grabbing expensive land in the city."

According to a gazette notification of 1999, government derequisitioned 0.66 acres of land in favour of one Azizul Haq on November 11 the same year.

Documents obtained by The Daily Star show that Azizul Haq sold his land to seven to eight persons just 11 days later at Gulshan sub-registrar's office.

As per documents, Azizul Haq sold 0.0825 acres or five kathas of land to one Md Khalil Shikdar of Jatrabari, Demra on November 23, 1999.

On the same date, Haq sold another five kathas of land to three brothers named Md Wahidul Islam, Hamidul Islam Talukder and Md Azharul Islam Talukder of Louhajong under Munshiganj district.

Haq sold another three kathas of land on the same date and under the same CS marks to one Md Nasir Uddin Ahmed and one Mohsina Bipasha Alam of Louhajong.

He sold another five Kathas of land on the same date to one Jesmin Shikdar. One Farida Nasir too bought land from Haq.

Now, Khaleque claims he purchased seven kathas of land from Azizul Haq at Tk 5 lakh on the same date. Khaleque claimed that Khalil Shikdar is his nephew.

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.

"Sift through the pages of the constitution till the point where you have violated it"

--Sheikh Hasina
Awami League (AL) President

Said at a ceremony at her Dhanmondi office pointing at president and Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed, on Thursday. Source: The Daily Star.

"I am a soldier. I am not scared of death."

--HM Ershad
Jatiya Party Chairman

Told a rally of AL-led 14-party at Pallan Maidan, on Monday. Source: The Daily Star.

"Are you the IO [investigation officer]? Why will I have to answer your queries?"

--Mirza Abbas
Former minister

Said at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity auditorium when a reporter asked him why he did not inform the police about the shooting incident at his house after seven days had been passed, on Saturday. Source: Prothom Alo.

"I feel hungry, very hungry"

--Fazlur Rahman
A destitute freedom fighter from Rangpur

Told a reporter when asked how it feels to live in an independent country, on Wednesday. Source: Prothom Alo.

"I don't know what the black dots mean."

--Tara Mia
A 10-year old trainee bookbinding worker

Told a reporter while at work, preparing pages of a Bangla grammar book at a factory in Banglabazar, on Saturday. Source: The Daily Star.

Compiled by: Durdana Ghias

MAHAKHALI FLYOVER LIGHTS KEEP BURNING

DCC wakes up to find R&HD in slumber



CITY CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) officials yesterday started a move to take control of the Mahakhali flyover from the Roads and Highways Department (R&HD) in a bid to switch off its lights, which have been burning day and night for nearly two months. Superintendent Engineer of the DCC yesterday said that the complication arose when R&HD asked DCC to take charge of the flyover just after its completion. But DCC refused to accept responsibility as half of the lights were out of order. "We asked them (R&HD) to first repair the lights and hand over the responsibility, which they never did," Ahmed said. Following series of reports in the Star City the DCC yesterday officially asked R&HD to hand over the maintenance of the flyover. Officials also went to Mahakhali to find the switches for the streetlights. "We did not have access to the switch box as the R&HD did not want to give us the keys for the switch box," said Ahmed. Meanwhile the Administrative Officer of the R&HD, Habibullah yesterday firmly maintained that the maintenance of the flyover was handed over to the DCC just after the completion of the work. "You may talk to DCC officials about the lights on the flyover," Habibullah said. Meanwhile, until yesterday the Mahakhali flyover streetlights continued to burn as usual. The picture was taken by our staff photographer yesterday at around 2:30 pm.

Merry Christmas!

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Festive vibes hit the city as the Christian Community prepares the stage for warm receptions to celebrate the Christmas Day and the birth of Jesus Christ.

About 35,000 Christians in Dhaka are celebrating the Christmas Day today, marking traditional birth date of Jesus of Nazareth with due religious fervour and a call for peace.

In Dhaka, there are 15 Churches of which eight are Catholic churches and the rest follow other denominations. All of them started celebrations from yesterday evening.

All the Catholic churches in the city including St Mary's Cathedral Church at Ramna, Holy Cross

The lessons from the Prince of Peace is tolerance, love for each other, acceptance and forgiveness. The present situation of the country needs all these,

Church at Lakshimbazar, Holy Rosary Church at Tejgaon, National Major Seminary, St Lawrence Church at Kafur, De Mazenod Church at Nayanagar, St Christians Church at Asad Gate, Mary Queen of the Apostles at Mirpur, and Mary Queen of Lourdes at Mahakhali have been decorated with candles, bulbs, and bouquets, and statues of Mother Mary, Jesus, and the magi to greet the Christmas day.

The Saint Mary's Cathedral at Kakrail is the main church for the Christian Community of Dhaka and adjacent area. But like previous years the biggest gathering is going to be held at Holy Rosary Church at Tejgaon. Christian foreigners living in the city usually join prayers at Holy Spirit Major Seminary Chapel at Banani.

Prayer sessions were arranged yesterday at the Saint Mary's Cathedral and at the Holy

Rosary Church. Three Masses will take place today at the Saint Mary's Cathedral. The first will be held at 6:30am, the second at 8:00am and the last will be at 9:30am.

Talking to Star City, Father Jyoti F Costa and Father Patrick Gomes of the Holy Rosary Church hoped that at least 12,000 people are going to join the Masses.

Father Jyoti said: "We are celebrating the birthday of the Prince of Peace. We will pray for the peace in the country and in the world."

"The lessons from the Prince of Peace is tolerance, love for each other, acceptance and forgiveness. The present situation of the country needs all these," he said.



Members of the Christian community examine a Christmas tree in front of Tejgaon church yesterday.