



star

chittagong

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Only a patch of the huge pond at the Engineering Department Office premises at Sholoshahar Gate No. 2 area now waits to be filled up.

Grabbers' grip on water bodies

SHAHIDUL ISLAM

The water bodies are disappearing fast from the Chittagong city, posing a threat to the environment.

The greedy land grabbers have already devoured over 150 water bodies, out of 300, and they now eye the remaining ones. They are very influential having strong political leverage and monetary might.

It would be no wonder if one fine morning you woke up, set out for a brief walk and found the nice water body adjacent to your residence is nowhere!

It is so alarming that the water bodies in Chittagong is being occupied by the land grabbers. They seemed to have gone so desperate that they bothered little about the law, city dwellers said.

Instead of checking the on-going illegal destruction of the water

bodies, the authorities here are interested in blaming each other. Taking advantage of this, the land grabbers continue their activities unabated and without any resistance.

According to the sources, there are over 300 water bodies including ponds and big dighis in and around the 41 wards of the 60-sq km city and some of which have had the identity of endeared tradition and heritage. The important water bodies are Moulvi Pukur at city's Chandgaon area, Damma Pukur at Feeringee Bazar, Raza Pukur at Dewan Bazar, Deba Pukur at Agrabad and Baluardighi at Boxirhat.

A law to preserve the natural water bodies was promulgated two years ago. The Section 5 of the law clearly prohibits any changes to the natural water bodies or its otherwise usage. The Section 8 of the new law

also recommends punitive actions such as 5-year rigorous imprisonment and fine of Tk.50 thousand against the violator.

The benefit of the law has so far remained in the paper as none of the lawbreakers had been punished yet. No effective measure or action has been taken in this connection by the two agencies concerned --the Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) and Chittagong City Corporation (CCC)-- to deter the illegal practice.

Multi-storied and multi-purpose commercial structures were constructed in recent time by filling earth on three big ponds at city's Chandgaon, Bakalia and Doublemooring areas.

While authorities engaged in shouldering blame on each other the environmental degradation and

damage of the geographical setting of Chittagong continues slowly but alarmingly.

Environmentalists and conscientious people said that continuous filling of water bodies usually causes manifold problems including environmental disaster and waterlogging.

Even moderate rain now wreaks immense trouble to the city dwellers due to non-existence of water bodies and poor sewerage system, they said. "We saw in the past that the large ponds or dighis of the city were able to absorb rain water."

"Besides, it was also seen that pond water had been used as an alternative whenever the supply system of Chittagong WASA was snapped," they added.

KOREAN EXPORT PROCESSING ZONE

KEPZ feels uncertain

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD

Korean Export Processing Zone (KEPZ) is yet to get license for installation of its industrial units here despite completion of over 50 per cent work of the infra-structural development.

On the other hand, the government's recent decision to amend Private EPZ Act before issuing license might also delay the process for installation and operation of KEPZ, sources said.

KEPZ, the first ever private export processing zone in the country, would invest 1 billion US dollar to set up industrial units, sources said. It would create some one lakh direct jobs and 50 thousand indirect jobs.

KEPZ Corporation (BD) Limited - a subsidiary of Youngone Corporation, is implementing the huge project on 2492 acres of land on the bank of the river Karnaphuli overlooking Chittagong airport. The project would involve an approximate development cost of 200 million

US dollar.

However, the project is mainly conspicuous for backward linkage industries of different sectors.

The sources in KEPZ authorities said, various backward linkage industries like those in textiles, Ready-made-garments (RMG), shoe, hi-tech, agro-based, chemical and machine manufacturing industries would be set up there apart from some 30 large scale key industries and 100 small and medium ones.

KEPZ General Manager Abu Naser Chowdhury said, "the garments sector of the country is likely to face a severe debacle by 2005 leaving some 15 lakh garments workers jobless. Keeping this in mind the KEPZ would give priority to backward linkage industries in garments sector."

"It would help create employment opportunities for the probable victims of the sector and save the country from economic disaster," he added.

Naser Chowdhury said many

local people were absorbed in its construction work and 100 people were appointed as security guards. Earlier, many of them were involved in various criminal activities, he said.

Apart from this, the project also helped the value of land in and around the site go up by several times, he said. Naser Chowdhury sought cooperation from all conscious circles for its smooth journey.

Youngone Corporation, the largest foreign investor in the country, took initiative for setting up the private EPZ back in 1995. It got permission for acquisition of project land in 1999.

The KEPZ Corporation (BD) Ltd. handed over Tk. 64 crore to the district administration for acquisition of land and as compensation to the affected people in May the same year.

But, the infrastructural work was hampered due to agitation by the affected families. The irregularities of the LA office in disbursement of money for land

acquisition sparked the agitation, sources said.

A clash also occurred at the project site at Shah Mirpur village that left two persons including a cop killed on December 14 last year.

Of Tk 64, with the then market price of Tk. 37 crore and over 50 per cent additional compensation money of Tk. 19.85 crore, KEPZ had to pay Tk 57 crore for the acquired land that was almost barren. Tk 7 crore was paid as compensations for establishments, business and different resources of unmovable properties of the affected families.

Meanwhile, a cabinet committee on KEPZ affairs reviewed the development of the project site at a meeting on March 5 and finalised a report with 12-point recommendations.

The report recommended that the KEPZ set up 250 industrial units with an investment of 500 million US dollar to create jobs for 40,000 people within six year.



Tribal girls perform at Sangrai, a festival of tribal people to bid adieu to 1409 Bangla year and welcome the new year, at Bandarban.

the week that was



STAR PHOTO

Students of Government Art College, Chittagong, organised an exhibition on the college premises at Chatteshwari road to protest suspension of admission into the college for the last three years.

Ispahani Public School cultural week ends

The education and cultural week of Ispahani Public School & College, Chittagong the leading Bangla medium school and college of the port city ended on Friday.

While addressing the concluding ceremony of the week, Food Minister Abdullah Al Noman called upon the students to flourish themselves as complete human being through education and sports events as well.

Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury attended the ceremony as special guest. Ispahani Group chairman Mirza Mehedi Ispahani, Chittagong Education Board chairman Prof AJM Shahid Ullah, Principal Hasina Zakaria and Mirza Salman Ispahani also spoke at the ceremony.

Contribution of Dr. Yusuf recalled

Bangladesh National Society for Blinds

(BNSB), Chittagong, at a condolence meeting here on Thursday recalled contribution of its founding member and eye hospital trusty board member late Dr. AFM Yusuf. PHP Group Chairman Mizanur Rahman donated Tk. 1 lakh for a bed at Chittagong Eye Infirmary and Training Complex (CEITC) in the name of former ambassador Dr. Yusuf. BNSB members, physicians, officials and CEITC employees attended the meeting at the CEITC auditorium with Engineer Mahmud-Ul-Islam in the chair. Dr Yusuf's fellow physicians Dr. Robiul Hossain, Dr. QM Wahidul Alam, Dr. Captain MN Aafa, Prof. Dr. ASM Fazlul Karim and Dr. Md. Shahid Ullah also spoke.

Current nets, fishing boats seized

The "Operation Safe Coast" in a drive on April 21 seized 30 fishing boats with five thousand pieces of banned current nets and Jatka (fish-fry) worth around Tk. 3 crore.

Shoeb gets international prize



Chittagong-based renowned photographer Shoeb Faruquee (inset) received gold medal for his photograph 'The hardy hands' at the 63rd International Photography Competition recently.

The world's largest circulated newspaper The Ashahi Shim Bun organised the competition. A total of 130 photographs out of 6340 from 41 countries of the globe were selected for prizes this year. Shoeb, general secretary of Chittagong Photographic Society (CPS) and director of stock photo agency 'Photo Bank', regularly takes part in different international photographic contest. He got 'Grand Prix' award in the Photo Contest-2002 organised by ACCU in Japan. Shoeb has a good repute in calendar photography also.

The joint force formed under home ministry comprising members of paramilitary BDR, Coast Guard, Cox's Bazar Headquarters and Mohesh Khali police launched the drive at Moheshkhali and Sonadia channels of the bay. During the drive led by Gazi Md. Mozammel Haq, assistant police super of Cox's Bazar headquarters circle, 200 more fishing boats managed to flee.

Workshop on money laundering

A workshop on 'Prevention of Money Laundering' for the officers of Dutch-Bangla Bank Chittagong region was held at the Chittagong Stock Exchange on Friday.

Deputy Managing Director (DMD) of the bank Abul Hashem Khan inaugurated the workshop as chief guest. Deputy General Manager (DGM) of Bangladesh Bank, Chittagong Nurul Alam Chowdhury and associate professor of Bangladesh Institute of Business Management (BIBM) Abdul Jalil Chowdhury were present as special guest and key speaker respectively.