

Bid to ‘grab’ Tk 20 cr govt land in Sylhet city

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

An influential quarter is allegedly trying to grab prime government lands worth about Tk 20 crore in Sylhet city in the name of a housing cooperative society.

Some officials in the land ministry are involved in the process for permanent lease of the three-acre lands covering plots (dag)No. 604/605/ 606/607 and 703/704/706 in Sadipur mouja near the Shahjalal Bridge, sources said.

Several proposals for setting up government establishments on the lands were cancelled by the authorities earlier.

At present, there is a proposal for setting up a divisional stadium there.

Earlier, a proposal for setting up Jalalabad Gas Housing Complex

on the land was sent to the land ministry, but it was rejected. The ministry retained the land for government offices in future, sources said.

In 1993, the land ministry had approved a proposal to set up a truck terminal on part of the land. But, it was cancelled as the then Sylhet Pourashava failed to make the initial payment.

As per rule, approval from the Prime Minister's office is needed for leasing any land over three acres in any metropolitan city.

The sources claimed that the group has made a good progress in leasing the land, showing that some expatriates are members of the housing cooperative society.

In the petition, the chairman of the so-called cooperative society claimed that there are 240 expatri-

ates in the society and that if the land is leased to them, they would play a vital role in investments in the country.

But interestingly, the housing society was not registered with the cooperative department when the application for lease was filed on July 2 last year, the sources said.

Citing documents, the sources said the group managed registration of the housing society 25 days after filing of the lease application.

The application only mentioned that there are 240 expatriates in the housing society, but no other details. Moreover, the application lacked details on layout of the land and mode of payment, either in foreign currency or local currency, the sources said.

Ignoring all these requirements, the lease application by the hous-

ing society has been approved by officials concerned and sent to higher authorities, the sources said.

The officials has also quoted a price of Tk 52,842 per decimal for lease of the land to the housing society, which is far less than its actual price.

Official records show that in 2001, the then Deputy Commissioner of Sylhet, considering commercial importance, had fixed the price of the adjoining land at Tk 80,648 per decimal.

The present price of land in the area is about Tk 7 lakh per decimal, the sources said.

Sources feel that, if the authorities need at all to sell the land it should be disposed of through open tender, so that a proper price is paid.



PHOTO: STAR

Low water level in Kaptai Lake this year due to poor rainfall hampers natural breeding of fishes. The photo was taken recently.

JCD leader sued for ‘looting’ brickfield

A CORRESPONDENT, Kishoreganj

A JCD leader, his two brothers and 20 others were sued yesterday on charge of looting a brickfield in at Chamra Bandar in Karimganj upazila in the district for non-payment of toll.

Following an order by Kishoreganj Police Superintendent Malik Fakhru Islam, Karimganj thana OC Anisur Rahman filed the case against JCD (Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal) leader Saiful Islam Sumon, his younger brothers Saddam and Sayem and 20 others.

Police sources said the JCD leader had demanded a toll of Tk 1.5 lakh from Helal Uddin Manik, president of Kishoreganj Brick Field Owners' Association. But he declined.

On June 20, the JCD leader and about 20 people kept Manik and his workers hostage in the brickfield on gunpoint and looted bricks, sand and other goods worth Tk 1.5 lakh and took those away in boats and trawlers.

They also threatened Manik that he will have to pay them Tk 2 lakh before resuming operation of the brickfield in the coming winter season.

Members of the Brick Field Owners' Association called on SP Malik Fakhru Islam yesterday and complained against the JCD leader.

The SP immediately instructed Karimganj thana OC to record a case and to take action. The case number is 583.

Kaptai Lake braces for fall in fish production

Poor rainfall blamed: Ban on fishing extended by one month to allow natural breeding

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

The district administration yesterday extended by one more month the ban on fishing in the Kaptai Lake to allow natural breeding of fish.

Every year fishing in the lake is banned for three months from May to allow natural breeding during the monsoon. The ban ends on July 31.

This year the ban has been extended by one month due to poor rainfall in the area.

This has been done following a proposal by the Bangladesh Fisheries Development Corporation (BFDC), which leases the lake to fishermen.

BFDC sources said if the drought-

like situation continues for a week or two, natural breeding of fishes and their production will be greatly hampered.

"We extended the ban due to less rainfall this year", said BFDC official Md. Shueb Ahmad.

Each year, the BFDC earns about Tk 2.5 crore from 5,000 to 6,000 tonnes of fishes sold from the lake.

Like in previous years, BFDC had a plan to release 32 tonnes of fish fries in the lake this year. It started releasing fries in the first week of June.

"But, we stopped after releasing only seven tonnes on June 8 due to the drought-like situation", Shueb told this correspondent."

The prospect of releasing fries any more is bleak as the monsoon is nearing an end, he said.

The lake is usually filled up with water from the Lushai hills in neighboring India. But this year the flow from the hills is lesser, he said.

"We are afraid that the natural breeding of fishes in the lake will be greatly affected this year due to less water in the lake", said Senior Scientific Officer Md. Alamgir of River Research Institute.

He said that there were two natural sanctuaries for fishes-- one in Longdu and another near the BFDC office. But these can not be called sanctuaries now due to deposit of silt for years, he said.

Schoolgirl rape in Gaibandha: Punishment to culprits demanded

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

A meeting held at Bharatkhal Ullah Girls' High School ground in Shaghata upazila on Saturday demanded immediate arrest and punishment to the culprits who allegedly raped a schoolgirl.

Organised by Social Entrepreneur Group, an NGO, the meeting was presided over by Bharatkhal Union Parishad (UP) chairman Saidur Rahman.

Criticising police for inaction, the organisers warned that they will form a human chain from Shaghata to Tulshighat on August 6, if their demand goes unheeded.

Four youths allegedly raped a girl student of class nine of Ullah Girls' High School inside a local photo studio and attempted to strangle her on July 23. The victim is now undergoing treatment at Rangpur Medical College Hospital (RMCH).

Among others, headmaster Babor Ali, Awami League (AL) leader Shamsuzzoha, Jatiya Party (JP) leader Jahedul Islam, and NGO workers Abdullah Akanda, Rehana Begum and Jahanara Begum addressed the meeting.



PHOTO: STAR

The Awami Sechchashebak League in Comilla organised a dawn to dusk token hunger strike as part of its country-wide programme yesterday to press for execution of the death penalty in the Bangabndhu Murder Case.

Janajuddho kills 89 in southwestern region in a year

Victims include political leaders, journalists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The Janajuddho faction of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) murdered 89 people including political leaders and journalists in the south-western region of the country from January to November last year.

This was mentioned in bulletins recovered from the possession of top outlaw Sakhawat Hossain, arrested by Rab on Thursday from Jhenaidah. The bulletins, each having 52 pages, also contain the names of the victims.

Journalists Manik Saha and Humayun Kabir Balu are among the victims as mentioned in the bulletins seized by Jhenaidah police when outlaw Sakhawat was handed over by Rab on Friday night.

The bulletins also mentioned how and where the 89 people including the two Khulna journalists were murdered.

The first victim of murder on

January 6 was Kitab Ali of Hemayetpur village in Damurhuda upazilla of Chuadanga district. The latest victim was Badsha of Natidanga village in Alamdanga upazila of the same district. He was murdered on November 11 last year.

Although Shakawat was an FIR-named accused in several murder cases filed with different thanas in the area, he was released on bail six months ago from Chuadanga district Jail under political influence, police said.

Rab recovered five firearms, four powerful bombs and over 50 rounds of ammunition from Sakhawat.

Sakhawat told police during interrogation that he read up to class three. Police said he was involved in underworld activities since 1990 and responsible mainly for supplying arms, ammunition and bombs to party cadres assigned to hit a target.



Greenery and Livelihood development Society, an NGO, held a discussion meeting on Basic Non-formal Education at Aricha in Manikganj on Saturday. After the discussion, the NGO distributed books among students from poor families.