

MOVE TO SET UP COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENT INSTEAD OF PARK

# Rajuk asks DCC to return Gulshan South parkland

TAWFIQUE ALI

In the wake of an influential private developer's alleged move to grab the Gulshan South parkland for commercial use, the Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) has asked the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) to return the land to it.

"We have categorically asked the DCC in a letter to give the parkland back to Rajuk to develop it into a beautiful park," Rajuk Chairman Md Shahid Alam told Star City.

"We have heard about a clandestine move to grab the land for commercial purpose," he said. "Any set up other than a green park will not be acceptable to Rajuk."

In case the DCC fails to develop a park at the site, Rajuk will cancel its previous order and take the parkland back, he said adding that Rajuk had handed over 42 public parks in the capital to DCC for maintenance by an order in 1982.

If the DCC has resource constraints to develop the park, Rajuk will turn the land into a park with adequate landscaping with its own resources, Alam said.

"The works minister has instructed me to ensure that noth-

ing other than a park is established at the site. He also asked me to cancel the 1982 order if need be," he said.

The 6.33-acre land in front of Gulshan Shooting Club, earmarked for a park in the original Dhaka Master Plan, had long been occupied by a settlement of 416 sweeper families of the DCC.

Despite clear and repeated directives from the Prime Minister's Office, the DCC has been dillydallying to develop a public park at the site since it was freed from a two-decade long illegal occupation six weeks ago.

The Good Governance and Development Committee formed by the PMO has time and again instructed the agencies concerned to develop a public park at the site.

"The committee at its last meeting resolved that the land must not be used as a commercial set-up anyway," said Prof Nazrul Islam, a member of the committee and vice-chairman of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa).

A meeting of the committee, chaired by Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Dr Kamal Uddin Siddiqui, on July 11, 2003 instructed the city corporation to return the lands of both Gulshan



Children protest the idea of concrete buildings in one of the few open spaces in the city.

South Park and Wonderland to Rajuk within a month. But the private developer then started lobbying for the land to set up an amusement centre.

GA Madani, the then chairman of erstwhile DIT, marked the space as a park in the layout of Gulshan model town in the 1962 Dhaka Master Plan, said General Secretary of Gulshan Society Md Anwarul Alam, also a former chairman of Rajuk.

All the maps of Dhaka City show the space as designated for a park, said Vice-president of the society Sayeeful Islam. "Developing a commercial centre at a park or open space is directly contravening to the existing environment conservation law."

Gulshan Society and a number of environmentalist organisations including Bapa formed a human chain on October 28 to protest such a move.

There should not any doubt that land grabbers are making efforts to get hold of the land in connivance with the DCC to do business, Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury, president of the society, said at the demonstration in front of the parkland.

"We lost many city parks in the

past, this time we must not lose it," he added.

"According to the PMO's Good Governance Committee decision, it should be developed as a park, but we have resource constraints," said DCC Chief Executive Officer Saifuddin Ahmed when asked about the move to grab the land.

Ahmed however denied the fact that a commercial developer might develop an amusement centre at the site.

When contacted, director of the developer in question said that his company had no plan to develop the site as an entertainment centre but assistant general manager of the company said they would consider if any agency or society comes up with proposal for such a centre.

Rajuk acquired the entire area including the parkland that formerly belonged to the Bhawal Zamindar of Joydevpur, said Alam. But a private university, a group of companies and a real estate developer have grabbed much of the area in violation of law.

"Question does not arise at all that they have got settlement of the land from the Rajuk," he said.

# Mosquitoes bite on as DCC still in holiday mood

IMRUL HASAN

Mosquitoes continue to create havoc in the lives of city dwellers as Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) fails to combat the menace that increased considerably in the last two weeks with the breeding season beginning from the first of November.

DCC's health department officials said that the mosquito combat programme was hampered with the Eid holidays and SAARC summit as more than 50 percent health workers were on vacation.

"We use larvaecide to control the mosquito menace. But long holiday weakened our efforts," said a high official of entomology section of DCC.

"Yet we requested the assistant health officials of the 10 zonal offices to keep the programme going," he added.

DCC officials have identified the city border areas including Kamrangir Char, private ponds and ditches that are beyond the corporation's control to continue drives against the mosquito menace.

"We can't enforce drives on privately owned ponds and ditches as our access is limited. The menace in the border areas is out of our control as these areas do not belong to the DCC metropolis, and thus the increase in mosquitoes" said Colonel Md. Azizul Haque DCC's chief health officer.

City dwellers have now another burden on their shoulders additional costs to purchase aerosol, coils and other repellents to protect themselves.

But what of the slum dwellers and poorer section of the city? They suffer most as there are in no way capable of buying expensive mosquito repellents.

"I am forced to keep additional budget to buy aerosol and coils since the mosquito menace has got out of control in the last two weeks," said Md. Badrul Alamgir, a resident of Rampura-Banasree.

"I was compelled spend another extra sum of money in installing netted windows to control the situation. But this did not serve the purpose as much as I expected it to do," he added.

"I shut all the doors and windows hours before dusk to avoid mosquito invasion at night," said Dilruba Zaman, a resident of the densely populated Jurain area.

"We hardly find the DCC men in action in our area," said Moin Alamgir of the AGB colony in Motijheel.

But DCC's chief health officer denied the allegation. "Mosquito control activities are now much broader than the previous seasons," he said.

He added that from April this year, 10 rapid action teams of DCC work in 10 zonal areas of the city. Health officers and other staff monitor the situation and urge urban dwellers to keep their yards clean, avoiding any speculation for mosquito breeding.

"DCC's estimated budget to rid mosquitoes is Tk 15 crores. We tried very hard to control the situation with this small budget. We are geared with 290 fogger machines which are ready to be in the city," said Haque.

The city's drains, ponds and canals that cover over 2,000 acres low lying area have become ideal grounds for fast breeding of mosquitoes. Residents of these areas are vulnerable to the day-and-night incursion of rapidly growing mosquito bites and infestation.

DCC officials have claimed that their anti-mosquito drive is very much on after the Eid hangover and that further arrangements are being made to intensify the drive. But the ground reality is that people are suffering due to an unbridled growth of mosquito population.

"We are hopeful that the situation will be under control within a week. We have already begun special drives to control mosquito breeding," said Dr. Nasim-us-Seraj, a senior official entomology section of DCC.

However, it is alleged that DCC has failed to keep clean the city water bodies, including derelict ponds, polluted canals, and stagnant drains that serve as a safe haven for mosquito breeding.

"The city government isn't doing what needs to be done to control the mosquito population," said Mahub Hasan, a resident of Mohammadpur.

"If the areas were sprayed regularly, mosquito cannot increase as much," he said.

# Three new FM radio channels get licence

FAIZUL KHAN TANIM

The government has given permission to set up three new frequency modulation (FM) band radio channels, raising the number of such private channels to four.

A total of 10 companies applied for the permission of operating FM radio channels, three of them got the licence. Only one channel, Radio Metrowave, is now on air for the Dhaka audience.

Sources said Radio Metrowave does not broadcast news due to a government restriction, but it will not be applicable for the new companies.

The new channels are planning to cater to a different target audience by broadcasting diverse programmes to add a

new dimension to the private radio channels, the owners said.

These three radio channels are expected to start broadcasting programmes in FM band within one year of receiving permission, Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) and the Ministry of Information sources said.

Matiur Rahman Choudhury, managing director of Ayna Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), one of the three companies, said they would start operation next year.

He said high priority would be given to hourly news service, talk show, sports news and most importantly broadcasting of traffic situation in the city.

Another top official of the ABC said they are also planning to introduce programmes based

on agriculture-related information which has a huge demand throughout the country.

The owner of another private radio channel said as soon as the channel starts operation they will design programmes considering the demands of the listeners.

He said FM radio transmission has been quite successful in our neighbouring countries, especially India. Such private channels not only cater to the listeners' entertainment needs, but also address the social and political issues of public interest.

Although radio is increasingly getting unpopular with the advent of other entertainment media, especially satellite TV channels, the radio listeners in the city are enthusiastic about the new FM channels but they

expect quality programmes on diverse subjects.

Talking to Star City, a number of the listeners said broadcasting of news, talk shows and traffic information could help regain the popularity of radio.

Selina Akhter, a housewife, said programmes like musical and talk shows or anything about lifestyle could be very entertaining.

Asheque Selim, a student, said: "Radio is still popular in foreign countries. The sound quality is very good and the transmission of latest songs inspires youngsters to buy the audio tapes."

Ahmed Jahan, a businessman, said, "Radio programmes on traffic information can help drivers and commuters to save time and also reduce congestion in busy areas."



A DCC workman uses a fogger machine behind the Hotel Sonargaon in the drive against mosquitoes.



As winter approaches, the skies are filled with the fresh smell of morning dew. Our photographer caught a glimpse of pigeons in flight against the mist in the city yesterday morning.