

Grabbers threaten Gulshan lake again

Authorities say urgent decision required to save the lake

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakha (Rajuk), the city planning authority, looks on as land grabbers once again continue to fill up the Gulshan Lake at the end of road 103.

Taking advantage of the weekend and the ongoing political disturbances, a resident of

Shahjadpur Nasu Mia and his family members started dumping concrete slabs and earth into the lake on Friday. The concrete slabs and earth were extracted from a construction site on nearby plot-12.

Nasu Mia and others claim "ownership" of an acre of "land" in the lake area. He has also built a makeshift accommodation on the bank

and set up a small tea stall there.

Executive Engineer of Rajuk's Gulshan office Uzzal Mallick rushed to the area yesterday after being informed by this correspondent. "I asked the people at the construction site to immediately remove the boulders or face stern legal action," said Mallick. He added that during winter when the lake water recedes exposing its shores, the lake becomes more vulnerable to grabbing.

"We have taken up a project to excavate parts of the lake and remove encroachments on it, hopefully it will be launched within a short time," said Mallick.

According to Rajuk official sources, Rajuk officials had been waiting to make some 'important decisions' to save the Gulshan Lake during the tenure of the caretaker government, when political pressure and interference are non-existent.

"Nearly a month has gone since the caretaker government has taken over, but we see no interest of the top level people to do anything to solve some of the pressing problems of the city," said a Rajuk official, requesting anonymity.

The engineer in-charge of plot-12 Md Shakhat said that he was not aware of the concrete slabs being dumped into the lake.

"I have asked my men to immediately remove every bit of the earth from the lake, I highly condemn filling up of the lake," Shakhat said.

In many cases the Rajuk is unable to stop or intervene in the filling up of the lake, as the area is not under its jurisdiction. Top Rajuk officials said that more than half of the lake is in the 680-acre of Batara mouza, which the government de-requisitioned in 1991.

In 1950s Rajuk acquired some 3,000 acres of land including Batara Mouza and adjacent areas to set up the Gulshan-Baridhara diplomatic zone. But in the face of strong protests and pressure from locals, who preferred to keep their old-style housing settlement intact, the government in 1991 declared Batara mouza de-requisitioned. Till now, however, the decision has yet to see a gazette notification.

According to the official map, the de-requisitioned area of Batara mouza includes the lake itself, where hundreds of acres of land has been sold, bought and resold. Many of the land-owners have even secured huge bank loans against their plots' inside the lake, said a top Rajuk official.

"Now we are just trying to protect the lake armed with the Wetland Protection Act," said the official.



Concrete slabs and earth have been dumped into the Gulshan lake at the end of road-103.

Rajuk asks JNU to stop demolition of age-old building

TAWFIQUE ALI

The Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakha (Rajuk) has officially directed the Jagannath University authorities to stop immediately the demolition of an age-old

building within its premises to build a high-rise at the site.

The Rajuk has taken the action on the basis of Building Construction Act of 1953, Bangladesh National Building Code of 1993 and Metropolitan Building Construction Rules of

2006, according to an authorised officer of the Rajuk.

"We wrote a letter on November 23 to the vice-chancellor of the university to stop the demolition work," Rajuk Chairman KAM Haroon told this correspondent. A copy of the letter

has been sent to the local police station, he added.

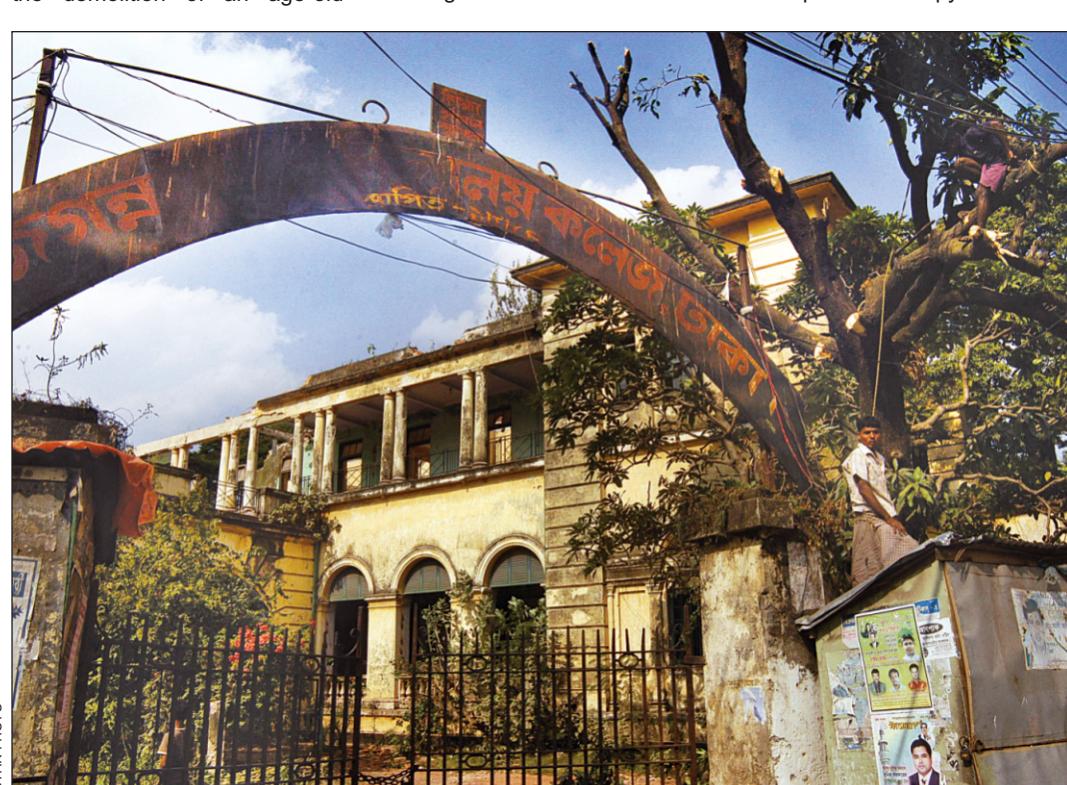
Although the VC and project director of the Establishment of Jagannath University Project (EJUP) Prof Sirajul Islam Khan is hell-bent on carrying on with the demolition of the old building, project proforma (PP) of the EJUP provides for allocation for repair and maintenance of the university's old buildings.

According to the PP, there is an allocation of Tk 2.17 crore for 'thorough repairing and modernisation' of the old buildings under the project.

According to the architects and environmentalists who are protesting the demolition, the project authorities have deliberately bypassed the mandatory prerequisite of obtaining approval for building construction and compliance with the Building Construction Act of 1953, Metropolitan Building Construction Rules of 2006 and BNBC of 1993.

Arun Mahaldar, an engineer of ECLB, consulting firm of the EJUP, said, "We neither suggested demolition of the monumental building nor we proposed to conserve it."

"We asked about the approved plan of the construction work, but it is the VC as PD who has to apply for plan approval," he said.



Age-old JNU building where demolition continued till yesterday despite Rajuk's directive.

Muktijoddha Sangsad central commander AFM Shahzadul Islam experienced a brutal mugging attack in Dhanmondi in August. Five assailants came in a taxicab and chopped off one Islam's fingers before taking flight with his cell phone.

"The muggers operate in commercial and residential areas," said a police official. "They keep a close eye on the rich, follow them around, and attack them as soon as the opportunity arises," he added.

Zahid Molla, a businessman from Dhanmondi fell victim to a menacing robbery on last Tuesday. Dhanmondi Police officials told Star City that two unidentified assailants attacked Molla in his telecom store, severely injuring him before fleeing in their car with Molla's mobile phones and a few thousand taka.

"Six bullets hit Molla in his legs, hand and waist who had been immediately rushed to hospital," said a police official from Dhanmondi Police Station.

Dhanmondi residents voiced their concerns on the surge of such activities in the area.

"I got mugged, and lost my mobile phone and wallet last week on my way back from university," said Shahriar Alam. "The incident took place just in front of our very own house," he said.

Molla and Alam are just two victims of the intensifying mugging incidents that occur on the streets daily.

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Mugging on the rise

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

Dhaka Metropolitan Police's (DMP) claim of a downside in the city crime rate barely reflects the soaring mugging that continues to plague the streets day-in-and-day-out, resulting in added insecurities of city commuters.

DMP has marked 80 spots in the city that are prime mugging locations, 12 of which in the Dhanmondi, Gulshan, Banani, Mirpur and Bailey Road residential areas. Most crimes are committed within these affluent areas that tend to produce the worst kind of muggers.

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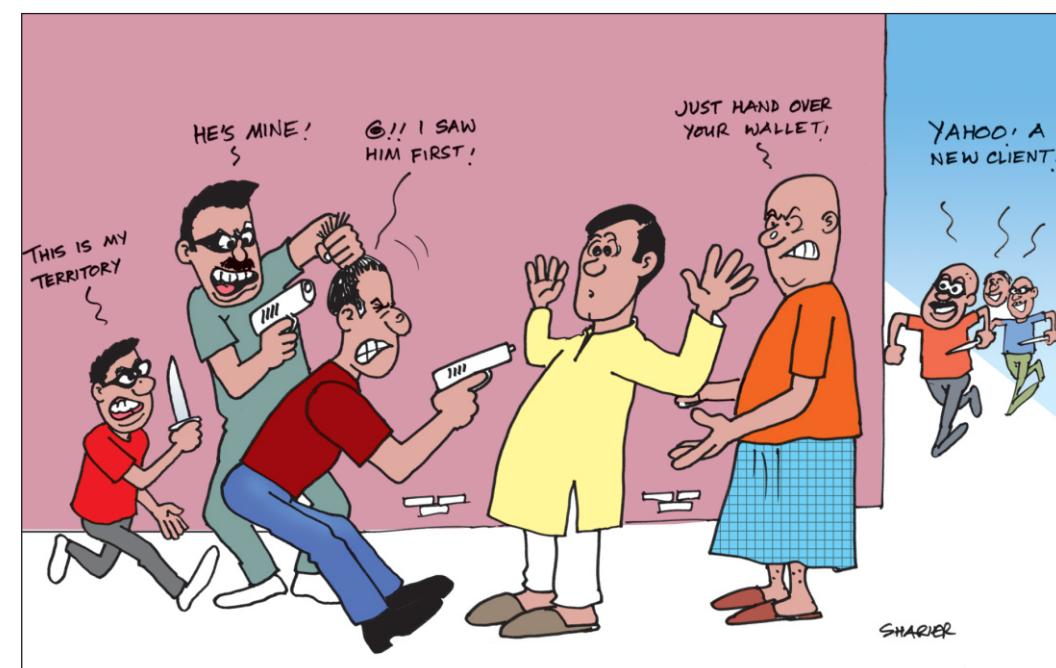
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muggers operating in cars and similar vehicles come from influential families and use weapons belonging to their parents or relatives.

"They usually use rented cars or fake number plates to deceive the police," the official said. "Also the fact that most of them come from influential families and use licensed weapons make them all the more harder to trace," he added.

Most of these car-based muggers are from influential families and found drunk and tend to be reckless, posing more danger to city commuters and policemen. The muggers use taxicabs or rented cars with fake number plates for their crimes, making it harder for law enforcers to trace or apprehend them.

There are four categories of mugging and street robbing, and those criminals operating in automobiles are the most menacing of the four," said a DMP police official.

Police sources alleged that

goes on in the city actually makes its way to the police logbook," said a retired military official. "With the number of police officers negotiating the street demonstrations and blockades, I wonder how many are there to subdue criminal activities," he added.

An administrator from Democracy Watch, an NGO striving to promote awareness among the general public told Star City that police policies are tainted by the corrupt from deep within. "Not every offence earns its place in the police logbooks," he said.

The reports registered are usually perturbed by the partiality and corruption that has tainted the department from within," he added.

"I doubt if half the crime that

Weekly weather forecast for the city		hellodhaka	
WEEK AHEAD	Today	Monday	Tuesday
	Low: 18 °C High: 27 °C Partly sunny and beautiful	Low: 17 °C High: 26 °C Pleasant with lots of sun	Low: 16 °C High: 22 °C Mostly sunny and nice
	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	Low: 15 °C High: 22 °C Mostly sunny and nice	Low: 14 °C High: 22 °C Mostly sunny and pleasant	Low: 14 °C High: 23 °C Nice with plenty of sunshine
	Saturday	Sunday	Saturday

source: accuweather.com
e-mail: starcity@thecitystar.net

BPC yet to declare Shankhari Bazar a tourist lane



The bustling Shankhari Bazar is always a tourist attraction of the city.

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

declaration of the site a national heritage by the Department of Archaeology, its conservation will remain a mere dream, said BPC general manager (GM) Major (Retd) Keramat Ali Khan. 'Without its conservation tourism will not flourish properly,' he said.

However, the Department of Archaeology (DoA) is not ready to declare the site a national heritage because of what it said lack of funds and manpower shortage for its maintenance.

The DoA director Dr Shafiqul Islam said although they feel it necessary to conserve the historical site, but they are helpless and unable to do it right now.

He, however, said if they get assurance of fund from any organisation, individual or group, they would try to overcome the problem of manpower shortage.

On the other hand, the BPC officials said locals too are not much interested to turn their area into a tourist lane.

"We called the Panchayet Committee (local governing

body) members several times to discuss ways to turn the area into a tourist lane but they did not cooperate with us," the BPC GM said.

On contact, Shankhari Bazar Panchayet Committee convenor Advocate Bhola Nath Dutta said they are not ready to allow the BPC to declare it a tourist spot until the organisation convinced them about local people's benefits from the declaration.

He said the BPC has undertaken the project without informing them anything or an opinion poll.

"They formed the committee without discussing anything with us and after making their decision final on this regard they called us for discussion, not for our opinion. So, we did not respond to their call," said Bhola Nath Dutta.

Taimur Islam, an architect and the team leader of the Urban Study Group (UGS), an organisation launched to campaign for conservation of Shankhari

Bazar, believes that without declaring the area a national heritage site, conservation of its historic buildings will not be possible.

'If the Department of Archaeology declares it a national heritage, all the government organisations and individuals will be compelled to protect the area and maintain it properly,' he said.

'Otherwise, the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) could walk in anytime to demolish the structures and Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakha (Rajuk) would permit high-rise buildings while the building owners would demolish those whenever they wish causing extinction of rich heritage,' Islam added.

He urged proper preservation of the buildings as historical icons of the city for presentation of our rich culture before the world.

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