

Rajuk turns Uttara Park into residential plots

Residents term the move 'cheating'

TAWFIQUE ALI

A section of Rajuk officials have started converting a designated open park into several housing plots at the end of road-12 in sector 11 of Uttara Model Town, without the knowledge of top authorities and Rajuk Estate Department.

The said stretch of parkland is earmarked in the original layout plan of the adjoining plots and lies along the Uttara Lake. The patch of land had been open but occupied by a slum settlement until a month ago.

Sources said the unscrupulous officials have already designed to create plots at the site. "Rajuk has actually cheated us by turning a designated park into housing plots," said a local resident Rashid Majumdar.

Interestingly, none of the officials of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartirakkha (Rajuk) concerned in the process could respond as to how and why the open space has been allocated.

Rajuk Chairman KAM Haroon said that it is an obligation to retain an open space if it is earmarked in a layout plan.

"If a space is earmarked as an open park or designated for greenery, it should not be turned into housing plots," he said. "But I have to look into actually what has happened."

"The park was very much marked in the original layout plans of the adjoining plots," said Zeenat Chowdhury, principal of South Breeze School. "But now Rajuk has prepared a new layout in which the park is non-existent."

The school is situated right



The designated public park, by the river Balu in Uttara, being turned into residential plots.

beside the park.

"The park was shown in the layout plan when Rajuk handed over plot for South Breeze School," she said. "The open space along the lake was designated to accommodate a green belt but suddenly the city development authorities turned it into housing plots."

It is absolutely illegal to convert a designated park into housing plots because park and green open spaces are very much integral features of any township, said a top official of Rajuk's Estate

Department, requesting anonymity.

"A section of Rajuk officials themselves want to grab the newly created plots," he said. "But we are sure that we have not issued allotment of any such plots as yet."

Rajuk Assistant Engineer Enamul Kader, officially designated for the area where the park is located, said, "The layout plan in which the area is earmarked for a park is very old. The park is not like that in the revised (present one) layout."

According to Kader, the Welfare

Association of Uttara Sector 11 has got a 5-katha plot out of the park area. There are at least three serving engineers of Rajuk involved in the welfare association.

Executive Engineer of Rajuk Jamal Akhtar said that the layout has been revised but he was not in a position to respond as to how that has been done, how many plots have been created and whether there is provision for any open space in the new layout plan.

Even the adjoining lake is being reduced to a narrow drain as a result of slow but steady earth filling of its banks over the passage of time.

The South Breeze School

authorities wrote to the Rajuk chairman expressing their concern over destroying an open space meant for greenery on July 25, 2005.

They also wrote a letter to the president of the Welfare Society of Uttara Sector 11 but they too failed to come up with any tangible response or any redressal to the issue. President of the welfare society BH Chowdhury could not be contacted, as he was out of the town.

Rajuk's Chief Town Planner Zahirul Haq said, "I have to look into the design to respond to the matter because layout plan is continuously revised. I cannot respond unless I see the initial layout."

"The public park was clearly earmarked in the layout plan when we bought plots but they have illegally revised the original layout to accommodate new plots," said another resident of the sector, seeking anonymity.

Zeenat Chowdhury observed that open space is crucial for children and older people while Rajuk seems to be mindless to that. Constant invasion on the open spaces is damaging the environment as a whole.

One must note that children in the Dhaka city are increasingly reporting with asthma due to aggressive destruction of open space and greenery, she said.

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The South Breeze School

the city that was

Binat Bibi Mosque, built in pre-Mughal times is the oldest in Dhaka. An inscription states that Bakht Binat, daughter of Marhamat, built it in 1454 during Sultan Mahmud Shah I's rule. It is a square, single domed mosque with octagonal towers. It has three arched doors on the east, north and south. Pre-Mughal features include the curved cornice, battlements and the absence of a drum supporting the dome.

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Unmarked speed breakers keep popping up

The DCC succumbs to pressure from influential quarters and keep building deadly speed breakers

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

Instead of taking action against reckless driving and speeding, Dhaka City Corporation continues to build disproportionate speed breakers on the city streets defying rules.

Most of these speed breakers are unmarked and causing accidents in different parts of the city. Unsuspecting auto-rickshaw drivers and motorcyclists are the worst victims of these treacherous constructions especially at night.

The recently erected speed breaker in front of the Asian Development Bank's Dhaka office at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar is one of the unmarked speed breakers causing accidents.

When asked, DCC Chief Traffic Engineer Faruq Aziz said that it was built on request of the ADB office to slow down speeding vehicles in front of the office.

Shopkeepers in the area said there was no speed breaker there a week ago. Commuters are frequently experiencing minor accidents and surprise bumps resulting in skidding of vehicles.

Passengers travelling in human hauliers plying on Gabtoli, Mohakhali and Mirpur 1-Mohakhali routes are the worst victims of this faulty speed breaker. As almost all the streetlights in Agargaon and Sher-e-Bangla Nagar areas are out of order and most human haulier drivers are young apprentices, the vehicles often meet accidents there.

Faruq Aziz said, "Speed breaker is not a solution to speeding. In developed world speed breaker is not a part of urban traffic management. We have to build these when influential parties request us."

"It is completely a psychological matter. Whenever there are accidents related to speeding, people



Unmarked and unplanned : A vehicle drops dead slow to cross an unmarked speed breaker on the Agargaon road.

Dhaka University campus is the area where DCC regularly experiments with the shapes and designs of speed breakers. Every time there are accidents on the campus, speed breakers in the area take a new shape, said a student of Fine Art Institute.

But the experiments failed to reduce accidents.

According to DCC sources, there is an estimated 10,000 speed breakers throughout the city. The number increases every day as DCC officials add more speed breakers defying rules.

Most of the speed-breakers built in the city have improper size and heights while warning signs are missing near the speed breakers. Drivers fail to reduce the speed on time due to absence of warning signs.

These unplanned speed-breakers are also causing damage to vehicles. Instead of providing safety it is becoming hazardous for city dwellers.

Street children to march in victory parade

For the first time ever underprivileged children have been included in the Victory Day Parade

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

For the first time in nation's history, a group of underprivileged street children will participate in the national victory day parade to be held on December 16, the Victory Day at the Bangabandhu stadium.

Members of the Ansar Battalion in the city are now training a group of about 35 children to march and perform together in discipline. The children have been given proper uniforms and shoes to wear during the parade. Every day for four hours the children are training at the Fakirpool ground.

Mahmudul Hasan Momid aged 9 lives in a shelter house in Arambagh run by the Apayrajya, an NGO working with street children. Momid says he finds it extremely exciting to march in files in uniforms and shoes.

"I cannot express how good I feel during this training, it is something new to me," Momid said while rehearsing at the training ground yesterday. "I feel



Underprivileged children rehearse at the Fakirpool playground yesterday for the Victory Day parade.

Remembering our victory, our freedom fighters



Bir Pratik Habibul Alam.

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

One morning in the second week of April, 1971, a young man woke up and got ready before Fazr payers at his residence at 1/3 Dilu Road. To give the impression that he was still in his bed, he covered his side pillow with bedcover and tucked in the mosquito net. Because, he needed enough time to get out of the city in case his parents start looking for him.

The young man did not dare to inform his parents that he is going to the battlefield with the dream to make his country free from the invading Pakistani army. He feared that his parents might not allow their only living son to go to the battlefield.

Leaving a small note saying where he was going, the young man left home to join the Liberation War.

This is how Habibul Alam started his journey to become a freedom fighter. Later, he was awarded Bir Pratik, for his gallantry and contributions to the war.

First he rushed to Motinagar, the headquarters of sector-2, which included the capital.

His father Hafizul Alam would not refrain his son from joining the war if he had an inkling of his intentions. Hafizul also had great contributions to the Liberation War.

His Dilu Road house is a part of history. It was strategically a very important shelter for the freedom fighters. He gladly agreed when freedom fighters requested his help.



Habibul's house at Dilu Road, where many freedom fighters fighting in Dhaka took shelter during the Liberation War.

Hafizul built an underground storage for keeping arms, ammunition and explosives. The hatch of the ammunition dump was made in such a way that one had to remove the cooking oven before entering the underground storage facility.

He even allowed the freedom fighters to use his 'Triumph Herald' car for transportation. He himself drove the freedom fighters in his car from Dhaka to Narayanganj immediately after the first operation "Hotel Intercontinental-Hit and Run" by the guerrillas in early June.

As the war progressed, the freedom fighters became regular visitors to the shelter where many of them stayed overnight.

All the family members including three daughters of Hafizul helped the freedom fighters by all means. The three sisters -- Asma, Reshma and Shahna -- learned how to clean the barrels of guns and reload the empty magazines.

They became accustomed to all weapons and explosives. It became their regular routine job, after every operation, to clean the weapons and store them inside the underground storage.

The three sisters looked after the injured freedom fighters who took shelter at their home. They cleaned wounds and applied the dressing of the wounded freedom fighters.

Habibul entered Dhaka in May

1971 after training and stayed in the city up to August. Within this time he with other freedom fighters carried out a number of guerrilla operations in Dhaka and its outskirts that inflicted huge casualties on the invading Pakistani forces.

To name some of the successful guerrilla operations are "operation petrol pump," "operation five power substations," "operation Farigate check point" and many more.

Looking back to 1971, the Liberation War hero now feels pity as one of the three dreams of the freedom fighters remained unfulfilled.

"We fought with three goals--to get the Pakistan army out of our country, making the motherland independent and building a better Bangladesh. The first two jobs are done successfully. The third one remained unsuccessful."

Habibul believes this is the failure of the political leadership in the country.

"None of the two top political parties practise democracy in the party framework. In the name of democracy they practise hypocrisy. Then how will they uphold democracy in the country?"

He expressed his dismay over the matter that the supreme sacrifice of the nation is now used to build up the family tree only.

"BNP is trying to establish Ziaur Rahman's supremacy over Bangabandhu while Awami League considers 'Joy Bangla' as their party motto," he said.

He considers the distortion of the history a crime and feels pity to see the young minds of the country are taught wrong history.

"The history in the text book reflects what the ruling party wants. Students who studies during tenure of BNP learn one history while during the Awami League tenure it is something else. Thus we are dividing the nation," sighed Alam.

"People who write and approve such history are committing a crime and all of them should be hanged," he added.

(Reference: Brave of Heart by Habibul Alam, Bir Pratik and interview with the freedom fighter)