



Bangla Jontro, Dhaka's first printing press was founded by deputy magistrate Babu Bhagoban Chandra Bose, father of scientist Jagadish Chandra Bose and other believers of Brahma Shamaj at Babur Bazaar in 1859. The first magazine of East Bengal "Mashik Monoroni" came out of this press, likewise the 'Nildarpan' of Dinobondhu Mitra. The press had helped to revolutionise the thinking of intellectuals.

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KHOKA'S CORNER

MINDLESS AND UGLY



The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has over the last few years rented out every nook and corner of the city roads and intersections for advertisements. Installation of these large billboards does not require much space on the ground as they are enacted on top of hollow steel poles. Thousands of similar billboards have been secretly authorised by the DCC. Devoid of the slightest aesthetic sense, this billboard was built recently on the culvert near the Gulshan Shooting Club. The picture was taken yesterday by our staff photographer Syed Zakir Hossain.

Eating poison with vegetables and fruits

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

People in this city of around ten million are virtually ingesting poison under the labels of organic edibles!

Indiscriminate use of toxic chemicals to grow, ripen and make fruits and vegetables appear fresher or even last longer adds to the worries of the residents of the capital on top of spiralling prices of these commodities.

Banana, everyone's favourite fruit, arrives in tonnes at the Sadarghat river terminal before dawn everyday. Piled up high in the hold, the bananas are dark green in colour and taste quite bitter. Amazingly enough, later that same afternoon, those very bananas would transform into flavoursome yellow appetisers. "We use a 'medicine' to help the bananas ripen faster and get a nice yellow colour," said a wholesaler. "I am not sure about the name of this chemical, but it works like magic. If you ask for the 'medicine' to ripe bananas, you can get it from any pharmacies around Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) and Mitford Hospital," he added.

Later, a visit at a pharmacy near DMCH revealed that the cheap and widely available chemical used to ripen bananas is in fact Calcium Carbide. It is an extremely hazardous substance for humans as it contains traces of arsenic and phosphorous.

When dissolved in water, carbide produces a substance known as acetylene gas, which manipulates and accelerates the ripening process. Greener the produce is, the more carbide is required to effectively ripen it – resulting the fruit to lose taste and turn more toxic.

Like bananas, toxic chemicals



Fruits and vegetables sold in the market are mostly sprayed with toxic substances.

are being applied on tonnes of other produce each and everyday to make them appear fresh and ripe. Almost 80 per cent of the organic produce including fruits and vegetables that flood the market and allure people with fresh looks are tainted with toxic substances posing grave danger to the public health, said health experts.

"Farmers use toxic pesticides containing Organochlorine, Mercury, Lead, Organophosphates and numerous other hazardous poisons to ensure maximum production all year long," said Golam Sarwar, public analyst of Public Health Laboratory (PHL) under Dhaka City Corporation.

"Ingestion of these poisonous chemicals through fruits or vegetables may cause various diseases including diarrhoea, dysentery, infertility, skin cancer and even death," added Dr Boru.

(BSMMU).

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According to a study by Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute (BARI), toxic chemicals are being widely used to enhance the production of vegetables.

The BARI study was conducted at Shakhipur and Ghatail in

Tangail where farmers and traders admitted of using toxic chemicals and pesticides frequently to make a quick buck without knowing that these chemicals have a negative impact on humans if scientific methods are not used and necessary precautions are not taken.

Traces of toxic chemicals and pesticides can be found in the produce even four months after

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GULSHAN LAKE

Hell-bent on grabbing a 'plot'!

TAWFIQUE ALI

ously silent.

They have recently filled up a big part of the lake along the road and erected concrete and make-shift structures without any approval from the Rajdhani Unnayan Kartirpakkha.

"These land claimants fill up

the lake at night. They are building concrete houses to establish their possession," said a resident of road-2.

A good many signboards declare ownership of land at the site. The land claimants include Monwara Begum and Ahmed

Hossain, who occupy 2.35 acres of land. Two advocates, Ayesha Khatun and Rezaul Karim, claim another eight kathas.

Ayesha Khatun, a lawyer at Dhaka Judge Court, said she and Rezaul Karim own the eight-katha plot and they have taken

possession of it. Asked how they own the plot which was created by filling up the lake, she could not reply.

But advocate Rezaul Karim, who practises at the High Court, said he alone owns an eight-katha plot there by derequisition of LA case 10. He claimed that he had bought the land from the previous owner at its present state.

"I have not filled up the lake," he said.

Abdul Jalil Mridha, professor AKM Anwarullah, Dr Shamsun Nahar and Mainul Islam claim 15 kathas of land showing various court orders. Tanha Holdings Limited claims 140 kathas or 6.99 acres of land while Fazlul Hoque and Montaz Hoque claim 82 decimals, and Saiful Halim claims a plot of 20 square feet.

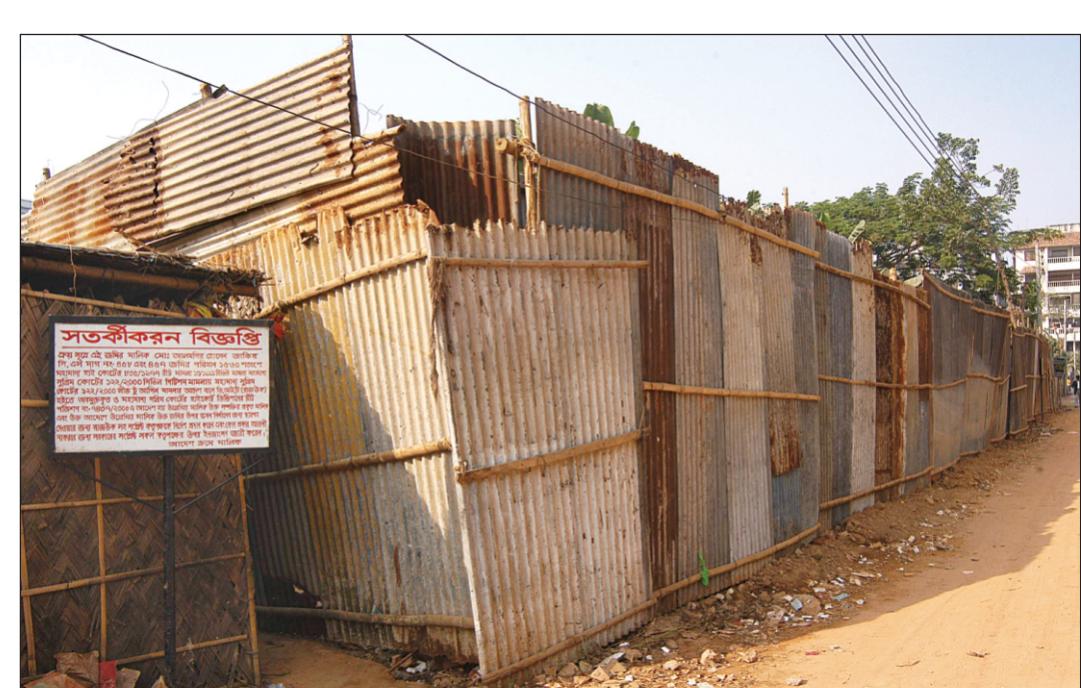
Locals said even a year ago there were no such settlements at the site.

On a visit to the site yesterday, this correspondent found the entire stretch of the lake bank occupied with fresh earth-filling and under-construction structures behind a boundary fence of iron sheet. The lake grabbers were dumping earth into the lake.

All the representatives and caretakers employed by the lake grabbers were found very secretive in their behaviour. Most of them declined to say anything about their job.

A number of workers, known to have been employed by Ayesha Khatun, identified themselves as masons but they said they do not know who is the owner of the land.

One Badal identified himself as a security guard employed by Abdul Jalil Mridha but refused to



give any contact of his employer.

According to sources, a magistrate of Rajuk is backing the grabbers in occupying the lake. As some of his relations are involved with the grabbers, he once asked the Rajuk officials to go soft on the grabbers.

Rajuk has so far filed a general diary with Gulshan police in this connection.

Architect Iqbal Habib of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolok (BAPA) said: "Land grabbers have grabbed parts of the Gulshan-Banani-Baridhara Lake with at least three to four layers infringing upon the lake's periphery set by Rajuk."

According to highly placed sources at Rajuk, the layout of

the Gulshan-Banani-Baridhara Lake, approved by the High Court, is seriously flawed.

The HC asked for a freshly drawn updated map of the lake but the town-planning department of Rajuk produced a superimposed map based on 1996 drawings with an ulterior motive to legalise hundreds of plots created illegally encroaching on the lake.

The HC approved layout is not a strong instrument to protect the lake, said Director of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association (BELA) Syeda Rizwana Hasan.

She said: "A well-organised syndicate of influential land grabbers in connivance with

some government officials is active in grabbing expensive land across the city."

Chairman of Rajuk KAM Haroon said, "We will go for eviction drive from tomorrow (Wednesday) to demolish illegal settlements encroaching upon lake and occupying the lake bank in Gulshan and Banani areas."

Announcement

The Star City will publish a four-part story on Shortage of Skilled Manpower beginning from Saturday, January 20. Durdana Ghias looks into Dhaka-based Medical, Garment and Education sectors and explores how acute shortage of skilled manpower is pulling these sectors back.



On the rear of the plot banana trees were piled in the lake to create a wall. Inside, earth filling continues on what is called at Road 1 A near Niketon housing project.