

OUR RIVERS

# Grabber targets the Bangshi

TAWFIQUE ALI

An illegal occupier has taken over a large chunk of the river Bangshi at Bank Town housing colony under Savar thana.

The canal flows over Karnapara with Rajphulbaria on the south and the Bank Town on the north.

The river, also known as the Karnapara canal, actually links two rivers -- Bangshi and Turag, with a vibrant current, said AZM Sadequr Rahman Khan, one of the earliest residents of the Bank Town.

Locals alleged that retired banker Aminul Hadi's son Munir Akram-ul-Hadi alias Shilpi, a resident of the colony, has been applying various schemes for a while now to grab the bank of the canal.

He recently built a concrete

structure on the southern side of the housing complex encroaching on the north bank of the canal. He claimed that he has gotten a lease on the land from Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA), locals added.

According to sources at BIWTA Port Division that has jurisdiction over riverbanks, Shilpi applied for a lease, but the authorities did not lease the land out to him. Director of BIWTA Port Division Motahar Hossain said, "We did not lease the land out to anybody."

One of Shilpi's neighbours requesting anonymity complained that Shilpi has been causing various nuisances to the residents of the housing complex, but the housing society turned a blind eye to him. "We are under the impression that a section of office bearers of the

housing society are helping Shilpi in his unlawful activities and wrongdoings."

A resident of the housing complex, whose house overlooks the river, said they chose to buy the house considering open air would flow from the river. "We are frustrated seeing the sudden development of concrete structure on the river bank," she said requesting not to be named, "But we don't dare to protest it, as the wrongdoer is a notorious person."

"We believe they (office bearers of the housing society) have a silent approbation to what Shilpi is doing," she said.

The role of office bearers at Abashik Griha Nirman Samabay Samity (formal name of the housing society) is mysteriously silent on the matter.

A senior banker and president of the housing society Dr M

Asaduzzaman said the said land on the riverbank does not belong to the housing complex. BIWTA owns the land and it has to deal with the problem. "We have nothing to do, as it is not our concern," said Asaduzzaman.

Regarding the society's silent approbation to the illegal act, he said the allegation was not correct.

One of the earliest residents of the housing complex and a former secretary general of the society, AZM Sadequr Rahman Khan disagreed with the incumbent president that the society has nothing to do in this regard.

"The illegal act of destroying the environment and landscape of a river has a direct bearing on the immediately nearby Bank Town housing complex," said Khan, who too is a retired senior banker.

He said that he arranged tree

plantation on the riverbank for protection of the canal bank, ornamental plantation for beautification and maintenance of the banks during his two tenures in the society. Unfortunately, the land occupier (Shilpi) has destroyed everything he had done.

The society has been repeatedly making attempts to get a lease of the land since 1982 for its maintenance and protection, said Khan.

A housing project of Agrani Bank, the Bank Town is situated near the Karnapara Bridge and has at least 400 plots since 1979. When contacted, Shilpi claimed that he got a long-term lease on the land from the ministry of land in 2005, which is owned by BIWTA and Roads and Highways department. "I have got the lease on the land for development and establishment of structure like granary from the land ministry."



Unauthorised construction on the shore of the river Bangshi.

STAR ZAKIR HOSSAIN

# DCC's dirty trade with passenger sheds

Most passenger sheds in the city are used for anything but shed

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

The passenger sheds at bus stops in the city are glaring examples of mismanagement and unprofessional conduct by the authorities.

Most of these sheds authorised by Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) were built hastily to allocate shops or kiosks to the unrelenting traffic turmoil in the city.

But the sheds have turned into safe haven for hawkers and floating sex workers. Besides, the sheds contribute to the unrelenting traffic turmoil in the city.

According to DCC, there are 260 such sheds in the city.

As per the approved design, the sheds should have only one newspaper stall and seating arrangements for the bus passengers, but the private organisations engaged in maintenance of the sheds rented out space for shops.

"This is violation of our policy," said Abdur Rahman, public relations officer of DCC.

Out of the 260 sheds, 218 have been built and are now being maintained by three private organisations under a 20-year contract.

"The agreement allowed them to construct the sheds according to the approved design while they can use it for promotional and advertisement purposes," said a DCC



So-called passenger sheds in Malibagh (left) and Maghbazar.



Tk 3,000 as monthly rent to the authorities.

"Even the floating hawkers have to pay tolls regularly to the on-duty police officers to operate in the sheds," said Alam.

While commercial activities continue at the passenger sheds, buses and minibuses load and unload passengers on the streets, disregarding the traffic regulations.

Jahurul Islam, a traffic inspector of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), blamed the lack of planning and coordination between DCC and the traffic department in designating the locations for bus sheds for public transports.

Kamruzzaman Chowdhury, chief estate officer of DCC, said DCC is aware about the situation and demolishing the illegal shops along with the unauthorised sheds.

"Currently we are knocking down the illegal shops along with the unauthorised bus sheds throughout the city. In fact we have already demolished a number of bus sheds at Old Town, Mirpur and Dhanmondi," said Chowdhury.

Chowdhury said that the fact that DCC has to rely on DMP officers for eviction drives and in taking actions against the offenders, tend to slow them down. DMP often refuses to help with police forces to conduct eviction drive.

# Where is our footpath?

CITY CORRESPONDENT

A great number of hospitals, diagnostic centres, shopping complexes, office buildings in the city are on paper equipped with car parks. In reality none complies with the law of the land and continues to cause suffering to the public. Many of these new structures are either totally devoid of car park or the in-house facilities are converted into office floor or shops. Most commonly the building owners dig out the public footpath in front of its premises and convert it into a car park for its business without the slightest regard for the pedestrians' rights. Here are some glaring examples.



**Adel Plaza**  
The busy shopping complex on Mirpur Road near Asad Gate fire brigade office does not have a single car park. For years the footpath and a playground nearby serve the businesses as their car parks.



**Golden Age**  
The busy shopping complex on the main Gulshan Avenue, between section 1 and 2 also joins others to take over the footpath, sending footpath users to negotiate with danger.



**The City Hospital**  
Built recently, the in-house small parking facility of this 150-bed hospital in Satmasjid road has been reserved for other use while the footpath and the narrow street of Lalmatia residential area serve as its parking.