

'Save children's park at Khilgaon Chowdhurypara'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) and Khilgaon Samajik Sangstha (KSS) yesterday urged the caretaker government (CG) to save the children's park at Khilgaon Chowdhurypara in the city from the encroachment of Bangladesh Ansar and VDP.

At a joint press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity VIP Lounge, leaders of the two organisations blamed the previous governments in the past for their failure to save the park and open spaces.

In a written statement Hafizur Rahman Moina, general secretary of KSS, said the place, designated for children's park 47 years back, has become a target of the greed of influential quarters of the society denying the demand of the local people for maintaining it as a park.

With Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu, former national cricketer and convenor of Bapa's 'Open spaces, grounds and parks programme committee', in the chair, the press conference was also addressed by Bapa General Secretary Mohidul

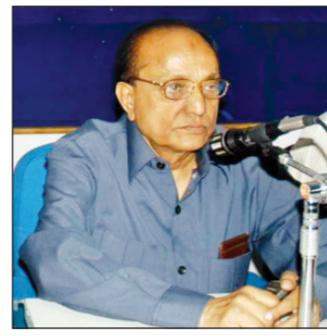


PHOTO: STAR

KSS President Monir Hossain speaks at a press conference at DRU.

Haque Khan and KSS President Monir Hossain.

They alleged that Bangladesh Ansar and VDP occupied 0.6584 acre of land designated for playground and children's park ignoring a High Court injunction on January 31 last.

The speakers said although this place was shown as children's park in the City Master Plan of 1961, the then military dictator Hossain Mohammad Ershad in 1987 allotted the land in favour of Ansar and VDP to establish

its women's hostel.

Following continuous protest from the locals, the public works ministry of the then caretaker government in 1996 cancelled the allotment and ordered to hand it over to Dhaka City Corporation for maintaining it as a park.

After Awami League government took over the power, the ministry again allotted the land to Sabuj Moti Trust (SMT) on July 12, 2000 for building a general hospital.

The owner of the trust, the then AL lawmaker Saber Hossain

Chowdhury, took over the position of the land within eight hours of the official order.

But after coming to power, the BNP-Jamaat alliance government cancelled the allotment to SMT on November 25, 2004 and issued a work order to a company for developing it as a park.

Upon a writ petition filed by SMT on January 2, 2005, the High Court Division Bench issued an injunction on the ministry and directed the Ansar not to make any construction on the land till the disposal of the

writ which is still pending.

However, Ansar made their move to occupy the land 11 years after their allotment was cancelled ignoring the injunction.

They put up boundary fences around the land and deployed armed security men.

The speakers alleged that Ansar and VDP members also beat and arrested many locals, and filed a number of false cases against them when they protested the move.

"When the entire nation is looking forward to upcoming world cup

cricket, we are fighting to save places designated as playground and children's park," Lipu lamented.

He said, "Our national cricket sensation Mohammad Ashraful, who made the country proud on several occasions, started his career in this field."

"There are only a few playgrounds in the capital, and if these are also grabbed then there will be no place for our next generation to play," feared Lipu.

CA urged not to demolish structures of Urdu-speaking people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Human rights organisations urged the chief adviser to the caretaker government not to demolish the camps and structures where the Urdu-speaking people have been living for the past several decades, as their fate is yet to be fixed.

The organisations -- RMMRU, Al-Falah Bangladesh, Coalition for the Urban Poor, Bangladesh Shishu Odhikar Forum, Unnayan Gobeshona Foundation, Nilphamary, Shamsul Haque Foundation, Nilphamary, Urduvashi Juba Projonma Association, Odhikar and Democracy Watch also expressed concern over the reports of notices for demolishing the Urdu-speaking community from the Railway.

In a letter to the Chief Adviser Dr Fakhrudin Ahmed, Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) Coordinator Dr CR Abrar said, "It is not rational to demolish the camps and structures of the Urdu-speaking people under the government's present programme."

In the agreement between The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Ministry of Public Works and Urban Development, the government promised to ensure the stability of this community in the camps, the letter said.

"We request you to direct the authorities concerned so that the agreement with the international organisation concerning the Urdu-speaking community is maintained," the letter said.