

CDA, CCC at loggerheads as hill cutting goes on

SHAHIDUL ISLAM

The Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) and the Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) that are supposed to take care of development of the port city and well-being of its inhabitants have developed an unusual hostility in recent time over the issue of hill cutting. While the two major organisations are at such loggerheads, the outcries of civil society and environmentalists as well as common people against the rampant plundering of exotic hills continued to go in vain. Against the backdrop of such a situation, the stark reality is that no less than 30 to 40 per cent of hills in Chittagong have completely been disappeared during the last two decades, thanks to the reckless insensibility of vested quarters, including political leaders, business tycoons, godfathers, government officials, criminal groups and musclemen. Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association (Bela), in its survey revealed that a powerful syndicate of seven-category groups -- including politicians, criminals, officials concerned, truck owners, police, musclemen and labour leaders -- are involved in the unabated destruction of scenic Chittagong hills. The survey was published about

three to four years ago when Bela officials might have not thought even in their imagination that a semi-government body like the CCC will appear as one of the major protagonists of the plundering of hills in near future. Unlike other city corporations, CCC has entered the lucrative business of real estate and apartment building at the expense of natural and lovely hills of the port city. When the CCC started flattening hills few months ago at many city areas like Khulshi, Pahartali or Bayezid Bostami and even published advertisements offering plots, the CDA mysteriously kept its eyes wide shut. Such uncanny acts of inhibition by CDA has no doubt encouraged the CCC to stretch further its so-called 'autonomous' power and influence. The CDA, however, has sometime served a cliché warning through newspaper that any organisation or individual must obtain its prior permission before cutting hills. On the other hand, whenever questions were raised about the hill cutting, the CCC officials took no time to claiming that "CCC is an autonomous body and hence it doesn't require permission from any other government organisation for hill cutting or other activities whatsoever within its territory." The concerns of the civil society as well as people here have



ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIKDER

A hill at the City Gate area in Pahartali being flattened by a housing company.

Ctg trade fair overflows with visitors



Visitors admire bangles and other items at Pakistani stall at the CITF.

NUR UDDIN ALMGIR

The Chittagong International Trade Fair (CITF) - 2007 gains momentum with a good number of visitors thronging the fair at Railway Polo Ground in the port city everyday. The month-long fair began on February 15. The participants expressed satisfaction over the turnout, sales and management of the fair. Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industries (CCCI) arranged the fair to promote local products and expand markets abroad. Participants from home and abroad have their products on display in 312 stalls -- mega stalls, pavilion and mega pavilions -- in the fair over an area of four lakh square feet. Being the partner country, Pakistan has set up a special pavilion on the fair ground. Thailand, the United States of America, Indonesia, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore, India, Iran and Korea are also participating in the fair. The participants have showcased wide variety of products, including handicrafts, consumer products, food items, home appliances, garments, leather goods, tribal garments, electrical and electronic cables and goods, ceramic, aluminium,

jute products, herbal medicine, silk goods, building materials, wooden and steel furniture, plastic goods, utensils, cosmetics, books, cellular and land phone operators, and others. SM Raquib Uddin, assistant sales officer of Otobi, said, "We have received orders that will exceed around Tk 1 crore by the end."

In the previous years, the number of visitors was much higher than that of actual buyers while this time the number of them is equal, he said. The visitors are crowding the fair in an unusual festive mood as there is no political unrest, said the participants and visitors. Salesmen of Thai Gallery that showcased ornaments, plastic flowers, showpieces, extraordinary ladies bags, hair clips and bands, were seen busy dealing with the consumers, mainly women. Faisal Islam, proprietor of the stall, said sale at his stall ranged from Tk 35,000 to Tk 40,000 everyday while the turnout is very satisfactory. "The wide variety of extraordinary items are drawing attention of the buyers here to have their items after choice," Faisal said. Several participants, however, said the turnout is a bit thinner this year. Compared to the standard and wide variety of products put on display, the fair has failed to attract expected number of visitors, they added. Blaming the organisers for this situation, they

said some stalls where ready-made garments were hanging from bamboo poles as instance of poor management of the fair. "Arrangement of a fair of international standard should have been made in much planned way," several participants said. Zakir Hossain, director of the lessee farm Impass Properties Limited, said the number of tickets sold until Monday stood at over four lakh. The number of visitors was much more higher in the weekly holidays of Friday and Saturday, he said. The fair is scheduled to be concluded on March 19. Syed Jamal Ahmed, chairman of CITF-07 and CCCI director, said the number of visitors in the fair this year has increased 25 per cent than that of previous years. He said huge participation of different local and foreign companies with various latest, eye-catching and essential products like garments, cosmetics and electronic goods within the buying capacity attract the female customers most.



Visitors throng the Chittagong International Trade Fair (CITF) at Railway Polo Ground.

Contribution of Waheedul Haque recalled

Speakers at a meeting in memory of veteran journalist and Tagore song specialist Waheedul Haque said his objective journalism and fair cultural practice will be the source of inspiration for the new generation. They called on all to follow his ideals to build a better society. Chittagong Union of Journalists (CUJ) organised the meeting at its office on Thursday. CUJ General Secretary Reaz Haider Chowdhury, Chittagong Press Club President Ali Abbas, General Secretary Ezaz Yusufi, former President Obaidul Haq, CUJ former president Mohammed Yusuf, M Nasirul Haq, Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalist (BFUJ) Vice President Omar Kaiser, Joint Secretary General Asif Siraj and Member Nazim Uddin Shyamal spoke at the meeting. CUJ President Shahid Ul Alam presided. They also prayed for salvation of his departed soul.

Int'l Women's Day observed

Speakers at a discussion urged the people to create an atmosphere in every sectors of the society so that women can prove themselves efficient through competition without facing any discrimination. They emphasised establishing women's rights in society through eradicating all sorts of discrimination they face. They were addressing a discussion on the occasion of International Women's Day, organised by Nirmal Foundation, a non-government organisation, at its office on Thursday. Mahila Parishad, Chittagong chapter President Nurjahan Khan was the main speaker at the meeting with executive director of the foundation Dr Syed Didarul Mumin Rubel in the chair. Journalist Daisy Moudud, women entrepreneur and chairperson of K Mark Nasrin Sarwar Kumkum, foundation finance director Ehsanul Hoq Chowdhury, chief programme organiser Nurul Absar Talukder and programme organiser Shafiqul Azam Chowdhury spoke. The speakers said social values will not be established without removing the discrimination between man

and woman.

Slums safe haven for use of drugs

Speakers at a discussion said the slum areas in the port city have become a safe haven for production, sale and use of drugs and children in these areas are easily being addicted to the deadly drugs. They were addressing a seminar on 'Verifying the Condition of Taking Drugs by the Children', organised by Ghasful, a non-government organisation, at Chittagong Press Club on Thursday. Bureau Chief of bengali daily The Bhorer Kagaj Omar Kaiser moderated the discussion where additional director of Narcotics Control Department, Chittagong Khabir Uddin Ahmad, executive director of Elma Jesmin Sultan Paru, Advocate Rahman Jafri of Ghasful and Advocate Uttara Dev Chowdhury addressed.

Ansar-VDP rally held

Director General of Bangladesh Ansar and VDP Major General M Akbar Aktar urged all to work hard and sincerely for building a happy and prosperous Bangladesh. He was speaking as chief guest at a rally of ansars and VDP members on Foy's Lake premises on Saturday with Ansar-VDP Director (Training) Col Faruk Ahmed in the chair. Divisional Commissioner of Chittagong Md Mokhlesur Rahman, Deputy Inspector General of Police Md Amir Uddin and Police Super Md Quamrul Ahsan were present as special guests. District Adjutant SM Labur Rahman also spoke at the rally. Around 2,200 ansars and VDP members attended the rally.

CPS observes founding anniversary

Chattagram Photographic Society (CPS) observed its 24th founding anniversary on Saturday. CPS life member and veteran photographer Mortoza Toufiqul Islam was the chief guest at the

started to see a ray of hope after the non-party caretaker government led by Fakhruddin Ahmed took over power in January. The CDA this time came up with a realistic action when they stopped flattening of hills last week at Bayezid Bostami area by the CCC. Tipped off, a CDA team demolished few makeshift structures and forced the CCC contractors to withdraw their bulldozers and labourers. Sources said the CCC planned to develop a housing project titled "Lake City Housing" near Foy's Lake under Bayzid Police Station and flattened several hundred acres of hills in this connection. The CDA has started action against individuals and organisations involved in hill cutting in violation of the Building Construction Act 1952 (Amended 1990), sources said. The authority, in this regard, suspended three building inspectors on February 18 for negligence in duties and irregularities. The CDA also identified around 30 influential people and organisations, including the CCC, and filed 20 cases so far. The accused are: Lake View Housing Society, Purubi Housing, Shatabdi Housing, Mohanagar Housing, Nandan Housing, Sagorika Housing, Chowdhury Estates, Chattagram Cooperative Housing Society, Haq Bricks, Meher

Bricks, Bengal Bricks, ASB Brick Works, Khulshi Brick Field, MB Brick Works & Begum Brick Works, Chittagong Brick Field Works Ltd, Setara Begum and other, Mohammad Abul Kalam and others, Syed Mohammad Azam Uddin, Mohammad Yusuf, Engineer Abdur Rashid and Khokon. Earlier the CDA served notices to the CCC, former president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) Amir Humayun Mahmud Chowdhury and others. Despite such actions, hill cutting is still going on, albeit at low scale, at Amin Jute Mill, Raufabad Colony, Sholoshahar and few other city areas. CDA Chairman Shah Mohammad Akhteruiddin said the CDA is determined to develop the port city in a planned way and preserve its natural beauty, especially the hills. He said no one, even the CDA employees, will be spared if they are found responsible for the hill cutting or for violation of the Building Construction Act.



STAR PHOTO

Office-bearers of Old Faujians Association (OFA) pose for photograph with the guests at its annual general meeting at the auditorium of Chittagong Club on Friday.

ceremony with its committee chairman Sheikh Mohammad Jahangir in the chair. Ansar Ali of the Fine Arts Department of Chittagong University, life member Shahidul Alam Qadery and Shah Alam Babul were present as special guests. CPS ad hoc committee co-chairman Md Shoukat Ul Islam, Member Secretary Suman Das, former president Moududul Alam, Nazimuddin Shyamal, Mukul Das, Sheikh Mohammad Musa, Rabindra Chowdhury, Shyamal Nath and Kutubuddin Chowdhury spoke at the ceremony.

OFA executives

M Saiful Islam, director of National Brokers Ltd, and Dr Mesbah Uddin Ahmed, medical officer of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC), have been elected president and general secretary of Old Faujians Association (OFA), Chittagong Chapter for 2007-2009. The new executive committee was elected at the annual general meeting of OFA at the Chittagong Club auditorium on Friday with outgoing president and Daily Purbokone Editor Md Taslim Uddin Chowdhury in the chair. Dr Mesbah and Treasurer Capt Shafiqul Islam Bhuiyan presented the annual and audit report at the AGM. OFA Central Governing Body Chairman Transcom Electronics Ltd Executive Director Obaidur Rahman Khan, OFA Chief Election Commissioner Muazzem Hossain Khan, president-elect M Saiful Islam, former president Mohammad Ali, Commodore (Retd) AZ Nizam, Dr Sarwar Ahmed and Brigadier General (Retd) Saifuddin Ahmed also addressed the function. Other office-bearers are Vice-

presidents: Capt Shafiqul Islam Bhuiyan and Prof Dr Mahtabuddin Hasan and Treasurer: Dr Sarwar Ahmed. Members are Dr M Ramiz Uddin Chowdhury, Md Meherul Karim, Yakub Chowdhury, Sohail Shakoor, Fakhru Haider and Belal Hossain. OFA is an organisation of the former students of Faujderhat Cadet College. The biennial conference of Jatiya Rabindra Sangeet Sammilan Parishad, Chittagong district chapter, and a competition were held on Thursday at the auditorium of Theatre Institute, Chittagong (TIC). Prof Anupam Sen and Tridib Chowdhury were elected president and general secretary of the new committee at the conference. Shamsul Hossain, Shipra Dastider, Advocate Rana Das Gupta and Shahrar Khaled spoke at the conference. In the Rabindra Sangeet competition, Debjyoti Bhattachariya, KomoGandha Datta and Swastika Dey won the first, second and third prizes respectively in the juvenile group while the winners in general group were Monalisa Barua (first), Purabi Barua and Piyasi Mutsuddi (jointly second) and Kanta Dey (third).