

NATIONAL HOUSING AUTHORITY

## Corruption shakes city foundation

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

A section of officials of Dhaka Urban Infrastructure Improvement Project (DUIIP) of the National Housing Authority (NHA) were allegedly involved in corruption and irregularities in allotment of plots under the project.

The government approved DUIIP in 1989 under which a total of 4,500 commercial, industrial and residential plots were allotted to lower and middle class people on 100 acres of land in the city's Mirpur area by 1993.

Sources in the DUIIP and

NHA said dishonest officials of the project have allotted a large number of plots through forgery of documents and bribery.

They alleged that Abdur Rouf, the property/financial manager of DUIIP, amassed huge amount of money by allotting plots through forged documents and favoured persons who bribed him. Rouf, however, denied the allegation.

They said two commercial plots at road number 2/1, Block Ka and Kha under section 6 in Mirpur were allotted to Rouf's father-in-law Abdul Aziz. Later, Aziz donated the land to his

daughter Taslima, wife of Rouf. When asked, Rouf admitted the fact.

The sources alleged that Rouf had tried to manage registration of plot number 58 at Block B under section 12 through forgery. One Mahtab Uddin got allotment of the plot but Rouf tried to allot the plot to another person changing the photograph.

This was discussed in the NHA meeting on April 29 but no action has been taken.

Asked about the changing of photographs, Abdur Rouf said he was not involved in such activities.

Sources in the DUIIP and NHA said dishonest officials of the project have allotted a large number of plots through forgery of documents and bribery. They alleged that Abdur Rouf, the property/financial manager of DUIIP, amassed huge amount of money

ties. "Some unscrupulous persons tried to do that. Those who are making allegations against me are themselves corrupt."

In the wake of corruption and irregularities in the project, the NHA asked the project officials to bring all the DUIIP documents

to the headquarters on April 10 but the order was cancelled on April 24 for mysterious reasons.

Sources said the corrupt officials played a key role in cancellation of the order.

Shafiqul Alam, the then chairman of NHA who was recently transferred to Rajshahi, said he had asked for the DUIIP documents after receiving lots of complaints about project management. "I wanted to make the project corruption-free," he said.

Shafiqul gave charge to Badiul Alam, member, NHA, for shifting

those documents to NHA headquarters but later Badiul informed him that the shifting would be troublesome.

"After getting Badiul's report, I cancelled the previous order," he said. In the report Badiul pointed out lack of space at the headquarters as the key problem.

Recently, as a part of urban infrastructure development, the DUIIP authority chopped down as many as 1,700 trees in a green space at block H in Mirpur for constructing a market. The space was used as children's playground.

Local people has been protesting the so-called urban improvement under the project for more than 12 years and continuing legal battle against the government decision regarding the space which was shown as a green space in the 1961 master plan.

Under the project, the authority also took decision to construct 38 shops there. Two advisors of the interim government recently intervened in the matter and stopped the construction work but no decision was made over the park or the 38 allotments.

### KHOKA'S CORNER



Part of this road in front of the National Board of Revenue office in Kakrail has turned into a mini dumping site as the locals are compelled to dump garbage on the street. Stagnant rainwater has done its part by scattering the litter all over the street. The container bin seen in the picture has been unusable for the last three days but the city corporation is yet to take any step to make it usable.

## Wasa prepares to tackle water logging

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Wasa's drainage circle will soon be equipped with modern equipment to keep the city's 250-kilometre network of underground sewerage flowing and to reduce water logging, Wasa sources said.

"Japan government is donating a range of modern equipment including excavators, cranes, vehicles and high power pressure pumps to keep the sewerage lines clean," said an official of Wasa's drainage circle.

The Japanese donation of Tk 50 crore for the purchase of equipment comes at a time when Wasa officials are struggling to handle water logging problem of the city. They said the equipment would be vital to keep the drains flowing and stop water logging.

"The works we are doing manually now taking risks of lives could then be done mechanically and much more promptly," said the official.

With the onset of the rainy season the Wasa has now taken up a cleaning program of the main storm sewerage lines stretching over an area of 10.5 kilometres in the city.

An official source in the Wasa's drainage circle said that the entirety of the sewerage lines in the city is choked with sand and solid wastes. During the months of April, May and June,

when the markets are flooded with seasonal fruits, the sewerage system almost collapses.

"Every day the DCC is able to remove 2,000 metric tons of garbage out of 4,000 tons generated in the city and hundreds of tons of this left out garbage end up in the sewerage lines," said the drainage circle official.

Wasa experts also blamed construction sites in the city for water logging. They said most sewerage lines get silted with various construction materials.

"Every year we have to spend over two crore taka to remove hundreds of tons of sand and

other construction materials from the sewerage to reduce water logging," said a Wasa official.

The biggest problem for Wasa's drainage circle to contain water logging is DCC's garbage management at the city's kitchen markets. During rainy season Wasa officials are constantly on the move to keep the sewerage lines open near the kitchen markets.

"Problem with polythene is almost gone but now we have kitchen market wastes and construction materials causing havoc during monsoon," the official said.



A Wasa box culvert on Panthapath kept open after cleaning.

## Drugging victims to rob

Incidents of mugging by drugging people is increasing sharply

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

Incidents of mugging by drugging commuters or pedestrians have been rising sharply in the city.

The muggers under the guise of food vendors or fellow commuters sell drugged food or trick their victims into sniffing soporifics. As their victims turn unconscious, the crooks rob them of their belongings and disappear.

Though this technique of mugging is not entirely new to the city residents, the sudden spate of such shrewd and innovative techniques adopted by the muggers are gripping them with worries more than ever.

Giussuddin Ahmed, a resident from Manikganj, came to Dhaka for business purposes. On May 2, Tk 50,000 was mugged from him at Gabtoli bus terminal. He was found unconscious on the street before he was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

According to sources, over

100 people fell victims to drugged-mugging during the past week. City hospitals also saw a sharp increase in the number of admitted unconscious patients.

Sources at DMCH told this correspondent that they have been receiving eight to ten victims on daily basis who were found unconscious on the streets after being drugged by unidentified assailants.

"Although we do receive this sort of patients quite regularly, things have been more hectic in the past few weeks as larger numbers of such patients have been pouring in," said Arifur Rahman, an intern doctor at DMCH.

"The victims are usually drugged through food items such as green coconuts, pickles, soft drinks, juice or biscuits. The muggers use soporific tablets and other chemicals that are seriously injurious to health to make their victims unconscious for hours and even days," added Rahman.

Although victims usually tend to regain consciousness within 12 to 24 hours after they were drugged, a number of the victims were reported to have been dead.

Moktar Hossain is another victim of drugged-mugging. He was found unconscious by police at Uttara in the city.

Hossain was deported from Saudi Arabia for and sent back to Bangladesh. His family members were not aware of his arrival.

Moktar Hossain died a day after he was brought to DMCH. His wife Reena Begum had to come to the hospital only to identify and receive her dead husband.

According to DMCH officials, chemicals used to drug the

The muggers under the guise of food vendors or fellow commuters sell drugged food or trick their victims into sniffing soporifics. As their victims turn unconscious, the crooks rob them of their belongings and disappear

mugging victims could not be identified as the authorities lack necessary equipment.

"It is difficult for us to identify the chemicals that are used to drug the victims as we don't have the necessary equipment," said a medical officer at DMCH.

However, according to unofficial sources, the chemical used in drugged-muggings is a substance known as 'Rohypnol' or 'roofies', which is a recognised date-rape drug. This drug is known to be easily found in the markets around the Mitford Hospital.

According to experts, this chemical contains more alcohol than most other drugs and can be easily added to the food items without the victim being suspicious. If applied large doses, this drug can sedate and even result in loss of memory.

"After regaining consciousness, they [the victims] seem more content on being out of harm's way and don't really seem to be much worried about filing a police case or getting their belongings back," he added.

Mixed in the crowd as pedestrians or fellow passengers in a public transport, these criminals are everywhere in the city waiting to drug and rob a naïve commuter in the city. The usually target their prey at public places such as airports, railway

stations and bus stands.

Fresh visitors arriving from abroad or outer regions of the city are usually preferred victims of these muggers, as these visitors tend to carry a larger amount of money and other valuable possessions with them.

Disguised as fellow pedestrians, food vendors, or even fellow passengers, these muggers gain trust of the victim by mingling with them with small talks. They later drug the victims with tampered foodstuff and make off with the victims' belongings.

Abu Sufian, 35, an expatriate in Kuwait, was found unconscious near Rapa Plaza, Dhanmondi at around 11:30 am last week. Locals brought him to DMCH and managed to inform his family members about his whereabouts after finding his contact information in his wallet.

According to his family members, Sufian was supposed to have Tk 3 lakh on him and the money could not be found in his possession.

According to public bus owners, the recent rise in the drugged-muggings has put them in a difficult situation as well.

"We find a number of people unconscious in our buses everyday and it's a big nuisance for us as the police don't seem

care to take any action even after they are informed," said Mahbab, operator of Duranto bus service from Uttara.

Naive CNG cab and auto rickshaw drivers were also reported to have fallen victims to these muggers and lost their vehicles to the muggers after being unconscious. A CNG auto rickshaw driver named Kibria was recently found unconscious in Moghbazar. After he

was taken to the hospital, he said that his passengers had drugged him.

"Two guys asked me to take them to Gulshan and on the way, they offered me a smoke. Few minutes after smoking, my head felt heavy. I don't remember anything after that," Kibria told police.

According to Abdul Jalil, joint commissioner of Detective Branch of DMP, the police are

aware of the ongoing assault of such muggings and are taking special actions.

"We have two different teams of police detectives working to track down these specific muggers," said Jalil.

"We have already apprehended around 14 suspects. Now we are trying to identify the specific spots where they operate and trace the gangs connected to the incidents," he added.



A CNG driver, drugged by unidentified people, being rushed to hospital.