

Fresh move to grab Sylhet Jalalabad Park's land

City Corporation decides to build high-rise on the site

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

Ignoring protests by citizens' groups and environmentalists and violating a High Court order, Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) has decided to construct a multistoried complex in Jalalabad Park in the heart of the city.

This is the second move to grab the park land. Earlier, in 2005, a move by some vested quarters to grab the park land in the name of rehabilitation of a group of small traders was stopped following protests by city dwellers and environmentalists.

There were repeated moves for grabbing Jalalabad Park by a powerful group, which has been eyeing the prime land since 2003. The value of the land would be at least Tk 20 crore, sources said.

The SCC plan to construct a multistoried complex was unveiled by Acting Mayor Azam Khan while announcing the city corporation's annual budget last week.

Targeted expenditure for the proposed project has been fixed at Tk 2 crore, he added. Khan announced the budget as mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran is in

jail.

In 2005, Sylhet unit of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA) issued legal notice on SCC, organised rallies and formed a human chain protesting the move. In the face of mass protest, the then mayor tried to play innocent and assured that there would not be any construction at the site.

In 2003, some vested quarters allegedly backed by some ward commissioners and SCC officials, organised some 453 traders, most of them fake, under the banner of Sylhet Janakalyan Khudra Bayboshayee Samity.

The Samity, on the plea of rehabilitation of small traders, sent a proposal to the ministry for construction of a multi-storied commercial complex there.

It also managed an order from the ministry secretly, the sources claimed. The ministry on March 7, 2003 ordered SCC for a feasibility report. The SCC on May 17 sent a report to the ministry with a positive note.

The sources also claimed that the mayor had 'tacit support' to the move but he kept himself away

apprehending protest by city dwellers.

As things came to light following protests by environmentalists, the project remained shelved. Talking to this correspondent yesterday, Field Manager of Bela in Sylhet Ayesha Chwodhury said now there is virtually no open space for city dwellers. SCC is planning to grab part of the Jalalabad Park area. City dwellers and environmentalists can not allow this.

"We protested in the past and will continue as long as the move is on", she asserted.

As Bela filed a writ petition for keeping Jalalabad Park intact, the High Court on October 22 last year asked SCC mayor to clearly demarcate the park area within three months and to take steps to retain the park as it is.

But things did not change while signboard of the Jalalabad Park was removed.

Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran at the time of placing the SCC budget for 2006-2007 denied his involvement in any move for construction of a commercial complex or shopping mall in the area and assured steps for keeping the park

intact.

When contacted acting mayor Azam Khan said, "We are not doing any thing for commercial purpose. It will not be a commercial structure. We have decided to construct some hall rooms for holding meetings".

Khan also claimed that neither the mayor nor any of the ward commissioners were involved in the alleged move for constructing a shopping mall at the park site last year.

"Rather, a powerful syndicate was active to do that, which however came to a halt at a stage", the acting mayor said.

In 1959, Hasan market was established on the land of historic Govinda Charan Park despite protests by people. The authorities at that time filled up adjoining Beka Dighi (water body) and shifted the Govinda Charan Park there. Later, it was renamed Jalalabad Park.

The then Sylhet Pourashava Chairman Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran inaugurated the Jalalabad Park in 1999.

But within years, the area became a den of drug addicts due to lack of maintenance by the then municipal authorities.



PHOTO: STAR

A view of the Jalalabad Park in Sylhet city where the city corporation plans to construct a building.

Police find fresh clues to Magura medicine scam

Arrested storekeeper of civil surgeon's office quizzed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

Police have found new clues to the May 25 medicine scam at the store of Magura Civil Surgeon's office after quizzing arrested storekeeper Lutfar Rahman.

Lutfar was quizzed by Detective Branch police for two days from Thursday. He was produced before court yesterday on expiry of two days' remand. The court sent him to jail hajaj.

Lutfar was arrested by DB police on Thursday for his alleged involvement in the medicine scam.

Police sources said, Lutfor's confessions during interrogation indicated that the then acting civil surgeon of Magura who was on charge on May 25 was aware of the scam.

On May 25, at dead of night, police intercepted an ambulance of Shalikhā Upazila Health Complex (SUHC) at Harishpur on Magura-Jessore highway and arrested its driver Zafar. The ambulance was carrying medicines worthy about Tk 50,000. The medicines included

Cotrim tablets and syrup, Erithromycin syrup and Aspectomycin injections.

Zafar told police that the medicines were being taken for dumping into a river as those were date-expired.

Sub-Inspector of Shalikhā police station Sohrab Hossain as plaintiff filed a case on May 26 under section 25(Ga) of Special Power Act.

On the following day, Zafar was produced before Shalikhā upazila cognizance court.

In his confession made before the magistrate under Section 164, Zafar said he was carrying the medicines on orders from the storekeeper of Magura civil surgeon's office.

After interrogating Zafar, police had said the date-expired medicines with new labels were being sent to Jessore for supply to medicine shops.

The case was transferred to BD on July 3.

A team of DB police led by Sub-Inspector (SI) Mohsin Ali arrested Lutfar on Thursday (July 13).

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, investigation officer of the case

DB Sub Inspector Mohsin Ali said that during interrogation Lutfar gave more information which indicated that all the medicines in the ambulance were not date-expired.

Shalikhā thana police, after investigation, said that the date-expired medicines with new labels were being sent to Jessore at dead of night for supply to shops.

Earlier on June 12, the first IO of the case Sub-Inspector (SI) Shajahan of Shalikhā police station said, "Investigation revealed that the date-expired medicines were being taken towards Jessore at dead of night for marketing after labeling those with new dates and claimed that the store keeper and a leader of the pro-BNP doctors' association were the mastermind behind it.

When contacted yesterday, medical officer Dr. Alimuzzaman who was the acting civil surgeon on May 25 said, "I signed papers prepared by the storekeeper. The medicines were being sent to Shalikhā upazila health complex. It was not my duty to see whether the medicines were date-expired or not".

More 336 jute workers axed in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Axe fell on more 336 permanent workers of laid-off Crescent Jute Mill (CJM). They received their termination notices Friday night.

With them, the total number of permanent workers terminated so far now stands at 981.

In the first phase 290 permanent workers were terminated from the state owned mill on June 4 and 5. More 355 received termination notices on June 25.

On the other hand, five permanent workers of Platinum Jubilee Jute Mills also received termination notices yesterday.

CBA leader of Crescent Jute Mill Mohammad Ali yesterday alleged that the plan to terminate permanent workers of laid-off jute mills was being made at the private residence of BJMC Zonal Coordinator Shamim Ahmed. His residence has become a 'secret place' for meeting of high officials of jute mills and zonal office of BJMC where decisions are being taken, the CBA leader alleged.

Shamim Ahmed, when asked, admitted that he had no other alternative but to sit with jute mill officials in his residence after dusk, fearing attack by angry workers.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Several thousand farmers crowded Uthrail Union Parishad complex in Dinajpur Sadar upazila yesterday for fertiliser.

BCC paralysed as mayor in jail, most of his aides absconding

No utility service, no salary for staff for the last 4 months

OUR CORRESPONDENT, BARISAL

Activities at Barisal City Corporation (BCC) have come to a standstill while the public utility services to the dwellers seriously hampered following arrest of the mayor and consequent fund crisis.

BCC budget is also not announced and the day-to-day work at the BCC is now being done on credit basis.

The situation arose following arrest of Mayor Majibor Rahman Sarwar in Dhaka on May 29, said BCC chief executive officer (CEO) Mehdi Hassan and superintending engineer Khan Md Nurul Islam. Since then nobody acted for him resulting in stoppage of financial transactions at BCC, they said.

Sarwar is an accused in an arms case and investigation is going on for graft charges against him.

Moreover, most of 40 ward commissioners are absconding since declaration of the state of emergency. No meeting of different sub-committees were held since May, BCC sources said.

Officials and employees of BCC are not getting salaries for the last four months.

In the meantime, grant worth Tk 12 crore was returned to the donors as none holds financial authority equivalent to the mayor.

Because of lack of repair and maintenance, Sadar Road, Fazlul

Huq Avenue, Bazaar Road, Chawk Bazaar, Katpotty and Kawnia Road are in bad shape.

At present, stock of bulb has exhausted. The lone vehicle used for maintenance work of about 3,000 street lights is now out of order for the last six months.

Most of the health workers serve on daily wages at the rate of Tk. 65 per day. They are also not getting their wages for the last four months.

As a result, health and sanitation situation has gone beyond any standard. About 100 tons of waste are dumped at different points along the 45 square kilometre area in the city daily. This requires at least 20 garbage carrier trucks for their removal. BCC has only seven garbage carrier trucks while five of them are out of order. Two garbage carrier trucks and a few hand-trolleys are simply unable to clear waste from different dustbins and dumping points.

Because of stinks of garbage, pedestrians have to pass the areas putting handkerchief on nose. Due to lack of cleaning, roads have become dirty and drains clogged. In short, the sewerage system has collapsed.

Citizens here are also suffering due to water crisis as only a third of the required 10 million gallons of water is being supplied to them.

Load shedding and low voltage of power have aggravated the

situation. For lack of maintenance and mechanical problem, the pump houses are also not operating properly resulting in water crisis.

BCC procured a water tanker having a capacity of 5,000 gallons in May, but it was returned to the supplier within a week following detection of fault. The vehicle was not supplied as per the specification, relevant sources said.

Nagorik Parishad president Advocate Enayet Pir Khan and Nagorik Samaj member secretary Dr Mizanur Rahman reacting to the dire situation said If the elected bodies become inactive and funds not provided to run the utility services of the corporation then there is no justification to collect taxes from citizens.

3x2

5x2

4x2

4x2

1x1

1.5x1

3x3