

## Fresh grabbing of Gulshan lake

### Encroacher's caretaker sues Rajuk men following eviction drive

**TAWFIQUE ALI**  
Land grabbers have again started encroaching on the Gulshan-Baridhara Lake making the ongoing walkway construction complicated with legal tangles.

The walkway and driveway are integral components of the ongoing Gulshan Lake development project undertaken by Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk).

In a recent bid, one Saifuddin Ahmed and his wife Nasrin Ahmed have embarked on earth filling into the lake and construction of unauthorised structures claiming a 20-katha private plot behind the National Shooting Complex, said Rajuk officials.

Rajuk officials led by magistrate ASM Emdadul Dastagir carried out an eviction drive on March 3 and demolished part of unauthorised structures at the site. But wife of the plot claimant's caretaker filed a case against the Rajuk officials bringing criminal charges.

Rajuk Executive Engineer Uzzal Mallik said the plot claimants have not only filled up part of the lake but also erected a one-storey concrete building, makeshift structure and boundary wall without building approval from Rajuk.

"The land grabbers have violated the Wetland Protection Act of 2000 and Building Construction Act 1952 besides occupying a piece of land acquired by the government," he said justifying the Rajuk eviction drive.

As per Rajuk records, the claimed land (CS Dag no-2852) is an acquired property of Rajuk by LA case no-138 of 1961-1962.

During a visit to the site on May 24, this correspondent saw fresh encroachment and pillars for building construction at the plot. Harunur Rashid, who identified himself as 'site manager' and the caretaker's wife Shahida Begum were found there.

Saifuddin Ahmed, who is managing director (MD) of a pharmaceutical company, said he bought the land in 2000 and 2004 -- first a 27-decimal land then less than 6 decimals. He obtained a holding number -- Ba-1/C South Badda -- from DCC, he said.

Referring to the land registration deeds of 2001 and 2004 by



Top, the concrete structure built on the plot encroaching upon the Gulshan-Baridhara Lake behind the National Shooting Complex. Below left, earth-filling by encroacher and, below right, Rajuk demolishes structures in an eviction drive.

which he claims the piece of land, Saifuddin said. "Actually, the one-bigha plot is meant for construction of the office building of the pharmaceuticals."

"I have built a tin-shed concrete structure at the site around seven years back," he said. "But none objected to my possession until beginning of this year."

Rajuk officials verbally objected to the plot development and structure only when he was

carrying a renovation work last December, Saifuddin said.

Local-level security guards employed by Rajuk filed a GD on September 12, 2006 with Gulshan Police reporting earth filling at the said site.

Following Rajuk's eviction drive, Saifuddin obtained an ad-interim injunction from the court of 2nd Senior Assistant Judge Court, Dhaka on March 5.

Replying to a question why he

started earth filling into the lake in violation of the Wetland Protection Act, Saifuddin said, "I am not aware of the act."

About not obtaining building approval as required by the Building Construction Act of 1952 and Building Construction Rules of 2007 before construction of the structure and boundary wall, he said, "Rajuk did not object to it."

Asked why he has occupied a

land acquired by the government, he said, "I am not aware of it."

Rajuk issued a public notice in newspapers on March 11, 2000 highlighting government-acquired lands for protection of the Gulshan-Banani-Baridhara Lake and forbidding earth filling and construction of structure there.

As per the notice, the entire land under CS Dag no 2852 is

acquired.

The then project director of the Gulshan-Banani-Baridhara Lake development scheme after a field visit to the disputed land submitted a report on February 19 this year, recommending filing a case under Wetland Protection Act.

Rajuk is now ready to file a case in this connection under Wetland Protection Act, Uzzal Mallik said, adding that Rajuk will produce all the relevant documents to the court to vacate the temporary injunction by the judge court.

The Wetland Protection Act of 2000 provides for protection of canals, wetlands, flood retention ponds and basins earmarked in the Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (DMDP) as storm water retention pond.

Shahida Begum meanwhile filed a criminal case against Uzzal Mallik and others with Badda Police Station bringing criminal charges against them. She alleged that the accused had demolished her landlord's (Saifuddin) residential house, shops and business house on March 6 and that they had assaulted her physically on March 7.

Uzzal has been accused as an individual, not as a Rajuk official.

Shahida has alleged that she was assaulted severely in the morning of March 7 and lost sense. According to the medical documents that she produced to the police, she went to Mitford Hospital in the afternoon of March 9 to receive outdoor treatment.

But according to Rajuk records, the eviction drive was conducted on March 3 while March 7 was weekend.

Responding to the inconsistencies in the claim of assault, Saifuddin said locals gave her first aid and then took her to Mitford Hospital two days later.

But he could not explain why she, instead of going to a nearby hospital, travelled to as far as Mitford Hospital in old town from Badda area.

Under the lake development project, Rajuk will build a walkway and driveway stretching from the UN Road in Baridhara up to National Shooting Complex along the lake bank on Badda side, according to planning section officials at Rajuk.

## city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.

*"Those who do not have the chances to win the election are talking about forming the national government."*

-- Fazle Hasan Abed  
Chief, BRAC

Told New York news agency ENA, on Tuesday. Source: Janakantha

*"Each of you read the constitution three times and work accordingly. Then there will be no chaos in the country."*

-- Golam Rabbani  
Former Justice

Said at a seminar seeking attention of the chief adviser and all advisers, on Friday. Source: Bhorer Kagoj

*"Doing crime with impunity is now the characteristic of present world."*

-- Irene Khan  
Chief, Amnesty International (AI)

Said after the publication of AI's annual report, on Wednesday. Source: Prothom Alo

*"Many big fishes are being released because they have money. Love and money can never be hidden."*

-- Sheikh Hasina  
Awami League (AL) Chief

Told her counsels before the start of the trial proceedings of Barge-mounted power plant graft case, on Tuesday. Source: The Daily Star

*"It is not true that people are doing corruption at a large scale in Bangladesh."*

-- JF Moriarty  
US Ambassador to Dhaka

Told reporters, on Sunday. Source: Jugantor

*"If somebody is 'liked', he does not face any case, but if somebody is 'disliked', he faces case. Such double application of law cannot go on in a country."*

-- Totail Ahmed  
AL leader

Said at a press briefing at his Banani residence after the Anti-Corruption Commission filed a case against his wife and daughter along with him for corruption, on Thursday. Source: The Daily Star

Compiled by Durdana Ghias

## Tailback at the foot of Mohakhali flyover

**CITY CORRESPONDENT**

It was 9:30 on Thursday morning. The left lane of the Mohakhali flyover leading to Jahangir Gate intersection was devoid of any traffic save some pedestrians strolling on the scant pavement.

With eyes on the empty flyover that lay before him, a grey haired driver of CNG three-wheeler hurled curses at the bus blocking his path. The yellow, hulking, roaring mass of metal had its head directed towards the street leading to Mohakhali rail crossing, and its rear barely a couple of feet away from the road divider.

"How stupid," bellowed Sultan, the three-wheeler driver. "Even a two wheeler cannot squeeze through that space."

"Someone opting for the street towards Mohakhali is supposed to take the left lane. But the bus driver overtook the cars and blocked the whole right side of the street. This is not fair," he said.

Behind Sultan's three-wheeler hundreds of buses, private cars, covered lorries, three wheelers and taxis are stuck, most of which are bound for the flyover. The impatient motorists honked incessantly, while many turned off their engines and helplessly looked around. Some frustrated passengers even got off the buses and started walking.

For anyone traversing the Mohakhali Flyover on regular occasion, this sort of experience is anything but rare.

"It sometimes takes around 30 minutes to reach the flyover from Kakoli point," said Shujon Ahmed, a resident of Banani.

Mohakhali almost always occupy most of the street space, blocking the vehicles bound for the flyover. This tailback often stretches up to the Kakoli intersection," he said.

"I am surprised why traffic officers have not divided the lane leading to Mohakhali rail crossing after all the everyday chaos. This would have kept the vehicles bound for Mohakhali to stay left without straying into the right," said Sharmeen Akter, an undergraduate student who passes through the flyover everyday to reach her university.

"Of course they would need to deploy traffic police there to make sure that vehicles follow

their lane accordingly, otherwise the lane divider will be of little use," she said.

On-duty traffic officers at Kakoli intersection told this correspondent they are aware of the problem.

"Sometimes some cars and buses stray into the left and block the path of vehicles going to the flyover. Some buses also drop of passengers at the entrance to the flyover and block the flow of traffic," said an on-duty sergeant who was monitoring the traffic near Cantonment.

"We are considering putting a lane divider on that stretch of the street. Hopefully, this will be implemented pretty soon," he said.

The Mohakhali Flyover, constructed earlier in 2004 to reduce traffic congestion in one of the city's most busiest intersections, has been providing little relief to commuters using the flyover or the road beside it.

The situation sometimes becomes unbearable for those traversing the flyover, especially during peak hours. At most instances, the entrance and exit of the flyover are jammed with vehicles blocking road space at the landings.

"What a blunder I made by taking this trip! It is going to take more than two hours to reach Dhanmondi. I will have barely enough time today to take other

trips and recover the loss from this trip," said S M Manik, a CNG taxicab driver who was stuck at a tailback near the entrance to the flyover while coming from Banani.

"And what about me! The meter is still ticking while the taxicab is stuck in jam. Do you people think we have a money-making machine?" was the reply from the passenger to Manik's grumbles.

This sort of conversation is anything but rare especially during the rush hours when heavy traffic from the north, especially from Uttara, streams towards the south creating tailbacks near the flyover.

Conversely, northbound traffic remains fairly empty during the morning rush hour, only to get reversed in the evening when those commuters return from work.

"Crossing through that area has been a bane for me," said Nazmul Ahsan, a resident of Uttara. "Just the other day, it took more than two hours to reach my office in Motijheel."

To ease traffic congestion in this part of the city, construction of a new link road through Tejgaon old airport in parallel to Rokeya Sarani will be soon underway. The road will stretch to Agargaon to connect Rokeya Sarani and Mirpur Road. It is expected to reduce pressure on the road between Mohakhali flyover and Farmgate, sources said.

Commuters from Mirpur, Shyamali, Kalyanpur and Mohammadpur areas will be able to save at least 20 minutes by using it to go to Mohakhali, Gulshan, Zia International Airport and Uttara, they said.



CAUSE OF TAILBACK: Buses and other vehicles stray into the other lane blocking the foot of the Mohakhali flyover.



The photograph itself is enough to tell the tale of this lane at Rahmatganj under Ward 65. It remains waterlogged for most parts of the year due to faulty drainage system in the area. The water stands knee-deep just after a downpour. The situation did not change for the last five years despite the residents' repeated calls for rescue.