



# AGRABAD WATER RESERVOIR UNDER THREAT CDA, railway duet with grabbers

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Agrabad Deba, one of the rare and biggest ponds among the cities of the country, is under threat due to pollution and encroachment. The water reservoir, popularly known as Agrabad Deba, was dug for the railway and port employees as well as the city dwellers during the British period to carry out their daily chores and other activities. Bangladesh Railway is owner of the water reservoir on about 14 acres of land in the Agrabad commercial area beside Sheikh Mujib Road in the port city. A residential area of the Chittagong port is situated on the north side of the Deba. Locals alleged that a politically influential quarter is occupying the banks and its adjoining lands. Though there are houses for the railway employees on the south and east portion of the Deba, this politically influential quarter has constructed illegal slums and rented those to the poor. In the name of Chhinnomul Bastibasi Parishad, this quarter is also trying to occupy the banks and fill the pond, the locals added. This correspondent found that many illegal slums have been constructed on the southern bank of the Deba. An office of Chhinnomul Bastibasi Sangram Parishad has also been illegally constructed at the southeast corner of it. Locals said slums have been constructed in the residential area of the third and fourth class employees of Bangladesh Railway while the grabbers have started occupying the east,



Agrabad Deba, one of the biggest water reservoirs in the cities of the country.

west and north banks of the pond. The grabbers have constructed shops and other structures, including mosque, on the banks of the water body, they added. Hundreds of people take their bath and carry out their daily chores in the pond daily, they said. Shajahan, a local betel leaf shop owner, said the government and the authorities concerned can change present scenario of the water reservoir turning it into a recreational place. "It seems to me it is just negligence of the authorities concerned," he said, adding, "And it is helping the grabbers to occupy the banks through constructing illegal structures." According to detailed area plan (DAP), Chittagong Development Authority (CDA)

proposed to construct a walkway surrounding the Deba and relocate the squatters to make a recreational centre, landscaping the area for promoting tourism. Rajib, a former student of Chittagong University (CU), said a plan to construct a recreation centre and a park here by CDA is not progressing for reasons unknown. He said if a park like open space surrounding the water body is constructed there, it would attract visitors and tourists as well as help free the pond from pollution. Moreover, CDA has also proposed to allocate 60 acres of land under DAP to construct two 20-storey buildings on both the sides of the water reservoir to be used as an observation tower by visitors.



PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

CDA Chief Engineer Iqbal Hossain told The Daily Star that now they are not interested in taking any initiative about it as they are facing many obstacles. "The water bodies are preserved abroad keeping in mind the aesthetic sense and a part of modern urbanisation but here we are facing problem as owner of the water body is Bangladesh Railway," he added. Iqbal said the proposal should be implemented by both the railway and CDA to preserve the Deba. If railway hands it over to CDA, they would go ahead with their own plan to save the water body. Divisional State Officer Md Rashid of Bangladesh Railway said they lease out the water body to individuals every year without

any specific plan to preserve it. When asked about the illegal structures and slums, he said they would launch an eviction drive against the grabbers. Dr Alok Paul, chairman of Geography and Environmental Science of CU, said waterlogging is an immense environmental hazard of the port city and disappearance of a water body is a threat to the urban environment as they are part of "urban micro-climate and urban hydrology." Pointing on the aesthetic value of the water body, Dr Alok said there are very few big water bodies in the centre of a city across the world like it, so everybody, including railway and CDA, and even DoE, has to come forward to save the Deba from pollution and grabbing.

## the week that was

### Punishment for hill cutting demanded

Environmentalists at a rally here on Saturday demand exemplary punishment to the criminals involved in activities like hill cutting and deforestation. Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association (BELA) organised the rally with a slogan 'Stop hill cutting and deforestation and save the life of man' after a human chain programme at Tiger Pass intersection in the port city. The environmentalists said government should enforce the laws strongly so that the criminals do not dare to cut hills and stop other activities detrimental to environment. East Delta University Vice-Chancellor Sekandar Khan, zoologist Dr Md Shah Alam, Senior Vice President of District Lawyers Association Ranjit Kumar Mitra, Advocate Chandan Das and Bela Coordinator Anwarul Islam Chowdhury also spoke at the programme.

University (CU) on Saturday. The Rotary and Rotaract Club of Islamabad organised the workshop in the Department of Management Studies auditorium. Organisation's Past President Mohammad Abdul Awal, also Demand and Escalation Manager Region South East Asia and Oceania of Ericsson AB, presented the key-note paper at the workshop. About 200 students of different faculties and rotaractors of different clubs attended the workshop. Prof Dr Mohammad Abdullah Mamun of Management Studies, Rotarian Chowdhuri Monisrul Hasan and Mohammad Mayeen Uddin were present at the workshop.

### Relief distributed among flood-hit people

International Lions Clubs Bangladesh, Chittagong distributed relief materials among the flood affected people at Banshbaria of Shitakunda upazila on Saturday. The relief materials were distributed

among over 500 flood affected poor families. Past district Governor Lion Nazmul Huq Chowdhury was present as the chief guest at the relief distribution programme. Nazmul called upon the affluent section to come forward to stand by the down-trodden people of the society. Cabinet Secretary Lion AHM Kafiluddin and Treasurer Lion Md Elias were present as the special guest.

### Death of schoolboys condoled

Leaders of Chittagong District Bar Association (CDBA) on Saturday visited the spot where a horrific road accident claimed the lives of 40 students. They also visited Abu Torab Bahumukhi High School, Abu Torab Government Primary School and Prof Kamal Uddin Chowdhury College that lost its learners in the accident.

CDBA President Salehuddin Haidar Siddiqui and General Secretary Mahbulul Alam visited the spots. They conveyed sympathy to members of the bereaved family and prayed for eternal peace of the departed souls.

### Abacus, mental arithmetic contest held

First regional abacus and mental arithmetic competition- 2011 was held in the port city on Friday. Aloha Bangladesh, arranged the event at district Shilpakala Academy with a slogan 'Children's mentality change in touch of Aloha'. Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) Chairman Abdus Salam was present as the chief guest with Aloha Bangladesh Managing Director Ali Haidar Chowdhury in the chair at the prize giving ceremony. Salam in his speech said to develop the wisdom of the children, creative system should be followed so that they can easily understand the contents of the subjects.

Sunshine Grammar School Principal Safia Gazi Rahman, panel mayor Mohammad Gias Uddin, Osman Harun, managing director of Dynamic Landmark; Morshed Billah, managing director of GTC Term Group; were the special guests at the programme.

### Photo exhibition begins

A week-long photography exhibition on the natural beauty, culture and livelihood of Chittagong began in the port city on Friday. Photography Bangladesh organised the exhibition with a slogan "Featuring Chittagong -- the land of beauty" at district Shilpakala Academy. Premier University Vice-Chancellor Anupom Sen inaugurated the exhibition as the chief guest. A total of 150 photographs of young freelance photographers were displayed in the exhibition. Free workshops on photography, light setup and other subjects related with photography were also held at the exhibition daily.



Tirjak stages a drama titled 'Raja' written by Rabindranath Tagore at Theatre Institute, Chittagong (TIC) in the port city on July 15.

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