

# Fear of illegal occupancy looms

*DU students worry ahead of dorm reopening; no more 'gono' rooms, say authorities*

SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

The Dhaka University (DU) administration has decided to end the crammed “gono room culture” at its dormitories, shifting students who were staying there before the pandemic to regular dorm rooms amid concerns over health safety.

The university authorities said they would first vacate seats occupied for long by former students and gradually allot those rooms to students housed in the gono (mass) rooms.

However, students fear that if the administration cannot prevent the stay of “illegal” former students at the dormitories, it will create uncertainty for those living in the mass rooms.

Wishing anonymity, a first-year student said if the administration fails to vacate seats occupied by former students on time and close the gono room, he may have to stay outside the campus to pursue his education.

The student, who is from Sylhet, said he had stayed at such a room in Shaheed Sergeant Zahurul Haque Hall for three months before the pandemic, as the hall authorities did not allot a regular room to him.

The 18 DU dormitories for students, including five for female students, were closed in March last year amid the surge in Covid-19 positive cases in the country. Besides, DU has an international dormitory for foreign students.

The DU administration is preparing to reopen the 18 dorms in a limited scale on October 5 ahead of resumption of classes.

At DU, a gono room is a makeshift accommodation, usually a four-bed room, where 30 to 35 students, mostly freshers, live in crammed conditions.

There are allegations that students who are involved in ruling party politics “control” those rooms. They take advantage of regular students by allowing them to stay there.

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Ahead of dorm reopening, DU staffers were at work putting finishing touches to the halls yesterday. Other than cleaning plaques, walls, gates, and setting up handwashing facilities, they also rearranged “gono” rooms -- which used to house up to 30-35 students -- to be suitable for four people's use.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

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# A fraudster in many guises

*CTTC arrests man who amassed crores illegally*

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and MASUK HRIDOI

Sometimes he introduced himself as an officer at the land office, sometimes as an officer in the deputy commissioner's office and at other times as an influential person in a government office.

In the last eight years, 48-year-old Abul Kalam Azad, a resident of Nabnagar area of Brahmanbaria district, played many roles to deceive people.

During this period, he embezzled at least Tk 20 crore to Tk 25 crore in name of settling property dispute and giving jobs. With the money, he now owns two buildings, a flat in Mohammadpur and multiple cars.

He also used one of his fake identities to get married multiple times. One of his wives is now working as a police sub-inspector at Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP).

He also used a part of the embezzled money to take part in the UP chairman election.

Azad contested for the chairman post from the Laur Fatehpur Union Parishad of Brahmanbaria in 2011 and 2016 from Jatiya Party. In the latest polls this year, he was campaigning to take part in the UP election for the chairman post, but this time from BNP.

He took around Tk 1 crore from a developer company by forging documents of state agencies. The developer company -- Happy Homes Limited -- then filed a case

with Shahbagh Police Station.

While investigating the case, the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit arrested Azad and two of his associates -- Mobarak and Nur Hossain -- from Dhaka on Wednesday.

Confirming the development, Tohidul Islam, additional deputy commissioner of CTTC unit, told The Daily Star on Friday that Azad has four to five members in his gang.

Azad is the ringleader, he said. There were also four to five cases filed against him and the other arrestees, added Tohidul.

A victim of Azad's scam, Sharif Hossain Chowdhury, managing director of Happy Homes Limited, said they had built a building at 25-27 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in Dhaka on a 54-katha land.

In 2005, the district commissioner's office issued a notice for compensation as some land was acquired for a road extension project. But the developer company faced indefinite delay in collecting the money, Sharif said in the complaint.

Later, the High Court ordered that Tk 17.52 crore be paid as compensation for the land. However, the developer company has not received money even after 13 years, the complaint reads.

Azad appeared at the scene to solve the problem.

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## Dengue claims two more lives

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least two more dengue patients died while 242 were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till 8am yesterday, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Of them, only 57 patients are from outside Dhaka.

With the new cases, a total of 7,001 patients were diagnosed during the running month out of a total 17,357 infected. Of the total infected, 2,126 are from outside Dhaka.

At least 7,698 persons were diagnosed in August, 2,286 were hospitalised in July, 272 in June while 43 were infected in May, according to the DGHS.

According to the DGHS, till now 61 people have died of dengue infection in the country this year. Twelve people died in July, 34 in August and 15 in September.

Among the deceased, 56 have died in Dhaka division, two in Chattogram and Khulna and one in Rajshahi division.

Though most of the patients who were hospitalised have so far been released, 1,043 are still undergoing treatment at hospitals in Dhaka, and 229 in other divisions of the country, the DGHS data showed.

# Project that never ends...

*In 8yrs, Ruet-Kharkhari road expansion work in Rajshahi sees multiple redesigns, cost increases and revised deadlines*



PHOTO: STAFF

Left unfinished for 8 years, the project area has turned into a cattle grazing field. Lead into and out of the fields under the flyover daily, the herds have made a mess of the surrounding roads with their droppings too. These photos were taken recently.

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

Even after eight years, Rajshahi Development Authority (RDA) could not complete a 5km road expansion and construction work of the city's first ever flyover.

Throughout the years, the design has been changed multiple times and new features added, increasing project implementation cost by Tk 119 crore.

“We want to complete the works in a way that is beneficial for people. This is why we're taking our time with it,” project director Md Abdullah Al Tariq told The Daily Star recently.

Beside the cost increase, and its toll on people's coffers, people are also the victim of the delay as commuters of a traffic-logged city.

According to documents and officials, RDA took up the project in February, 2013.

They planned expanding the five-kilometre Ruet to Kharkhari road (15.85

## AT A GLANCE

### EXPANSION OF 5KM RUET TO KHARKHARI ROAD

- Project initiated Feb 2013
- Initial Cost Tk 87.36cr
- 1st Deadline June 2016
- New cost Tk 159cr
- 2nd Deadline June 2018
- Updated cost Tk 206.63cr
- 3rd deadline June 2021
- 4th Deadline June 2022

metres wide), at a cost of Tk 87.36 crore.

The project was scheduled to end in three years, by June, 2016.

By 2016, it was already half-way there. But then the RDA authorities decided to

add an 810-metre flyover over a railway track on the road, increasing the total cost to Tk 159 crore.

The project was rescheduled to end by June of 2018, officials said.

But the works remained incomplete till 2019, when the authorities redesigned the flyover into a double-lane one and planned the road into four lanes.

The authorities also increased the height of the flyover to nine metres from seven, following a requirement by the railway authorities, the officials said.

New plans were also taken up for constructing drain and footpath on both sides of the road, raising the project cost to Tk 206.63 crore.

This time, it was rescheduled to end by June of 2021.

But it still could not be completed in time, and was further extended till June, 2022. But again, perplexingly, the works have remained suspended since July this year.

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## We see no outcome from PM's New York trip: Fakhru

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir yesterday said he saw “no outcome” of the prime minister's visit to New York, to attend the UN General Assembly.

“She could not even bring back a solution to the Rohingya crisis. We think that so far the prime minister and this government have not played a positive role in the Rohingya issue,” he said.

The BNP leader came up with the remarks while talking to reporters after paying homage at the grave of BNP founder Ziaur Rahman at Dhaka's Chandrima Udyan.

“You will notice from her entire speech that there is no democracy in the country. The rights of the people have been taken away, the Election Commission has been completely destroyed... All the elements needed to build a democratic state have been destroyed,” he alleged.

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At its peak, the mercury reached 35°C in the capital yesterday. This meant the usual hustle and bustle at the Kamalapur Railway Station took twice the toll on commuters. Soon after their arrival at the station, people rushed to its drinking fountains and splashed water on their faces. Inset, a father helping a child drink water out of a bottle.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## HC annoyed at failure to form land appellate tribunal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday expressed annoyance and disappointment at the government's failure to form the Land Survey Appellate Tribunal in the last 17 years after formulation of the law to this effect and even after this court had directed for doing so.

“The government could not form the Land Survey Appellate Tribunal in last 17 years after formulation of the law. But, why? It is disturbing for the court. Talk to the land secretary to know the reasons and inform this court what step has been taken to establish the tribunal.”

“If no step is taken, the land secretary will be summoned to know his explanation,” the HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman told Deputy Attorney General Bepul Bagmar while hearing a writ petition.

DAG Bagmar told the HC bench that the Land Survey Appellate Tribunal has been formed in 2013 but appointment of its judge is under process.

The bench expressed the dissatisfaction while hearing a petition filed by 10 people of Demra area in Dhaka challenging two verdicts of the Land Survey Tribunal over a four katha of land.

The HC bench issued status quo on the Land Survey Tribunal verdicts about the land and also issued a rule on the authorities concerned to explain why the verdicts

The government could not form the Land Survey Appellate Tribunal in last 17 years after formulation of the law. But, why? It is disturbing.

HC BENCH OBSERVES

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