

PROPERTY UNDER ILLEGAL GRABBERS' POSSESSION

Century-old Shri Shri Gouri Shankar Goshala Society in crisis

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Shri Shri Gouri Shankar Goshala Society, an integral part of the heritage of Lalmonirhat town, is shambling with the financial crisis as a portion of its properties has been illegally occupied by a local influential, while some other portion was acquired by the government around 50 years ago.



Parts of the asset of Shri Shri Gouri Shankar Goshala Society, established over a hundred year ago, are now under the possession of illegal grabbers making the society struggle to fund its regular activities.

PHOTO: STAR

This institution gave its name to the Goshala Bazar and Goshala Road in the town. Established to fund Hindu ritual activities in the locality, with the course of time, it became the epicentre for the Hindu community in the district. But now, despite owning 14 acres of property, the institution is struggling to fund regular activities.

Authorities of the Shri Shri Gouri Shankar Goshala Society are now mulling to shut its charities.

The organisation was established in 1918 in the town on an area of 14 acres of land.

Since then, it has been running different types of charities including providing educational stipends, financial assistance to the poor, and arranging marriage ceremonies of girls of marginalised communities.

Besides, the society also houses a number of temples of Hindu gods and goddesses to follow the religious programmes of the Hindu community people. In addition to this, schools and cattle shed were also set up there.

Of its properties, five acres are farmlands. Temples, schools and cattle shed are on four acres of land, said the Society authorities.

Of the rest, three acres were acquired by the erstwhile government around fifty years ago. There lies a market on the three acres of land hosting around 250 commercial shops. But all the rents

of the shops go to the national exchequer.

Another one acre of land, having at least 30 shops and five residential establishments on it, has been illegally occupied by local influential, said the Society insiders.

Only the rest of one acre of commercial land is now under the control of the Goshala. There are around 90 shops on it.

"But, we get only around Tk 15,000 of rent from the 90 shops because the rental is very poor. Each renter pays around Tk 40 to Tk 300 monthly," said Hiralal Roy, president of the Goshala Society.

"We cannot increase the rent because we have to follow the fifty-year-old agreements," he added.

"We have been continuing legal

battle with the government for around 50 years to get back the three acres of commercial land," he further said.

About the illegal land grabbers, the Society's General Secretary Subal Chandra Barman said, "We are trying to evict them but we are failing. We demand government's intervention to evict the illegal land grabbers."

"There were over 50 cows around one decade ago. But now we have only 10. We were forced to sell our cows due to financial crisis," said Sushil Chandra Roy, an employee of the Society.

Contacted, a shop renter Mandol Miah said, "My father rented the shop around 45 years ago. As per the then agreement, the rental is Tk

40. My father paid this and now I am paying the same now."

Talking to this correspondent, one of the alleged land grabbers Kayum Miah claimed that he did not grab the Society's land. Rather, he took the lease of the land from the administration as Khas land (government-owned land).

Contacted, Lalmonirhat's Deputy Commissioner (DC) Md Abu Jafor said the case over a land-related dispute with the Society remains under trial with the court.

"We will act as per the court directives," he said.

About the illegal grabbers, the DC said the district administration will provide all types of assistance to the Society authorities for evicting the illegal land grabbers.

Kaliganga crying out for help

AMANUR AMAN, Kushtia

Years of encroachment has left the Kaliganga, which used to be one of the most prominent rivers in the country, in its death throes. But the authorities seem to have turned a blind eye to the crime.

The 28-kilometre-long river emerges from the Gorai near Chheuria in Kushtia's Kumarkhali upazila before falling into the Kumar river in Kancherol area of Jhenidah's Shaillkupa upazila.

Locals said the average width of the Kaliganga used to be 100 metres whereas now its width came down to 30 metres in most areas.

The encroachment on the river began around one and a half century ago when rail tracks along with a bridge were laid across the river and a railway station was built in Kushtia. Soon enough, several hundred private and government structures started to spring up along the banks of the Kaliganga.

In recent times two projects -- one government and another private -- have drawn huge criticism as those were implemented encroaching on large parts of the riverbank.

The Lalon Academy, a government body, recently constructed a commercial complex at Chheuria by filling up around 60 feet width of the riverbank. A concrete performance stage for holding cultural

programmes was also constructed at the site.

Near the academy, an oxygen refilling plant was also set up on nearly 50 feet width of the river's bank by a leader of the ruling Awami League (AL) party.

Contacted, Tajjal AL Khan, general secretary of the Lalon Academy, claimed that the then government in 1998 made the decision to build the commercial complex on the bank of the river and they only implemented the decision.

Mihr Hossain, owner of the oxygen refilling facility and also a vice-president of the AL's Kushtia town unit, could not be reached for his comments as his cell phone was found turned off during repeated calls by this correspondent.

Local green activist Gautam Kumar Roy said the indiscriminate encroachment over the years has constricted the Kaliganga and obstructed its natural flow.

Not too long ago, large vessels had no trouble plying the river that used to be teeming with all sorts of fish, he said adding that now even small boats face difficulty navigating in it while it has lost almost all its biodiversity.

Contacted, Kushtia Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Saidul Islam said the district administration remains vigilant to try to combat the problem. "We often conduct drives to evict illegal grabbers and the drives will continue."



The oxygen refilling plant that was built encroaching on the bank of the Kaliganga river near Chheuria in Kushtia's Kumarkhali upazila.

PHOTO: STAR



Students of Rabindra University in Sirajganj's Shahjadpur upazila boycotted their exams and stage demonstration in front of the administrative building of the university yesterday, protesting the forced haircut of a first-year student who attempted suicide from the humiliation.

PHOTO: STAR

Office of the Project Director Bangladesh Regional Connectivity Project-1 (BRCP-1) Bangladesh Land Port Authority Ministry of Shipping TCB Bhaban (12th Floor), 1, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215 Memo No. 18.15.0000.023.11.089.21-789 Date: 27 September 2021 Request for Expression of Interest (EOI) for Selection of Individual Consultants: (1) Senior Structural Engineer (National) and (2) Senior Architect (National) The People's Republic of Bangladesh has received a credit from the World Bank toward the cost of the Bangladesh Regional Connectivity Project-1 (BRCP-1) and intends to apply part of the proceeds toward payments for consulting services to be procured under the project. 2. The following consultants (National) will be recruited on the basis of individual capacity:

বেগম রোকেয়া বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, রংপুর BEGUM ROKEYA UNIVERSITY, RANGPUR আরক নং- বেগম/বি/ক/স/স/নিয়োগ/বিজ্ঞা/২০২১/১২৭১ তারিখ: ১২ অশ্বিন ১৪২৮ বঙ্গাব্দ ২৭ সেপ্টেম্বর, ২০২১ খ্রিস্টাব্দ নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি বেগম রোকেয়া বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, রংপুর-এ নিম্নবর্ণিত শূন্য পদসমূহ পূরণের জন্য প্রকৃত বাসোদ্দেশী নাগরিকদের নিকট থেকে দরখাস্ত আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে। ক. পদের বিবরণ:

Road collapse disrupts communication



Portion of this newly built road at Ghargram village in Sirajganj's Tarash upazila collapsed in a roadside pond within 2 months of its construction.

PHOTO: STAR

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Palna

Local people have been suffering a lot since a portion of a newly built concrete road in Sirajganj's Tarash upazila collapsed in a roadside pond.

Besides, vehicular movement has been completely stopped after the important road at Ghargram village under Magura Binod union collapsed early this month, within two months of its construction.

While talking to The Daily Star, Tarash Upazila Engineer of Local Government and Engineering Department (LGED) Mohammad Abu Sayed said LGED constructed the 1150-metre-long road spending Tk 85 lakh this year.

Construction of the road started in May last year and finished in June this year, Sayed said.

"Due to heavy rain in the last couple of months, suddenly about 50-metre portion of the newly built road collapsed in a roadside pond early this month. As there is no guide wall alongside the road rain water eroded the newly built road," Sayed said, adding that soon after the incident they ordered the construction firm to repair the road and build a guide wall beside the pond.

Locals said as movements of goods carrying vehicles remain suspended due to the road collapse they have been facing trouble in carrying their produce to nearby markets. They also alleged that the newly built road eroded due to poor construction work.

Contacted, MA Baki, contractor of the construction work, said there was no lacking in the construction work, there are several ponds alongside the road that caused the collapse.