

Wetland intrusion may flood city

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Kolkata: In a violation of a Calcutta high court order and wetland protection act, nearly 17 acres of wetland in Chowbaga Mouza is being developed for real estate. Land sharks have already erected a wall around the plot, spelling doom for a vital stretch of Bidyadhari River, which is one of the biggest outfall channels of the city. If it gets choked, Kolkata may be flooded.

“In the middle of the night on February 10, they brought JCB cranes to level the swamp, destroying its natural gradient. Next day, we raised a hue and cry and lodged a complaint at Anandapur police station. Police initially stopped the work. But the work resumed after a week and police are not intervening now,” alleged a local resident.

It’s apparent that the project is backed by influential people. Some locals who are allegedly part of it are Dhiman Mondal alias Sibani, Dipu Goldar, Prasad Baidya and Brojen Mondal.

The fragile East Kolkata Wetlands acts as a natural filter that treats the murky water draining out of the city into clean water that has been tested to be fit for drinking. But thanks to the city’s eastward



The wall around the wetland in Chowbaga mouza being raised by land sharks; (right) an earlier encroachment of a wetland in Chowbaga mouza

growth trajectory, the East Kolkata Wetlands is now a regular prey for land sharks. Every now and then, real estate developers block the water inlet channels, making it look like a regular field and not a water body, said Shankari Mondal, who filed a contempt suit in Calcutta high court.

Chowbaga Mouza is not new to encroachment attempts. The protracted legal battle against some very big industry houses has led to some landmark judgments. In view of an HC order, the additional district magistrate and district land and land reforms officer directed the OC of Tiljala police station to keep vigil

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dal, a local resident fighting to save the precious wetland.

The latest order was passed on June 12, 2014, by a division bench of former Calcutta HC chief justice Arun Kumar Mishra and Justice Joymalya Bagchi. Quoting extensively from the earlier order, the bench ordered that no further illegal construction would be permitted in the area covered under the wetland act, said Bhabes Chandra Biswas, a senior lawyer. Biswas is gear-



that the plot — 655 mouza, Chowbaga, J L No 3 in particular and the entire mouza in general which falls under East Kolkata Wetlands — is not converted without the permission of the appropriate authority.

“In December 2014, we checked with the BLLRO (block land and land reforms office) and found that the land is still recorded as ‘beel’ for fishery,” said Biswanath Mon-

ing up to file a contempt suit.

The litigations expose the unholy nexus of politicians and criminals, backed by land sharks. “We have documents to prove that a rubber factory in the mouza got licence against this address before they could buy the land. Money can buy anything here. We are small fry fighting against mighty forces,” said one of the local crusaders.