

helloworldhaka

source: accuweather.com

Weekly weather forecast for the city	Today High 31C Low 26C Mostly cloudy and humid	WEEK AHEAD	Monday High 32C Low 27C Mostly cloudy and very humid	Tuesday High 32C Low 27C Humid and rather cloudy	Wednesday High 32C Low 27C Cloudy and	humid with rain Thursday High 31C Low 27C Cloudy, chance	of rain Friday High 31C Low 27C Cloudy, few	showers Saturday High 31C Low 26C Humid, chances
	High 31C Low 26C Mostly cloudy and humid		High 32C Low 27C Mostly cloudy and very humid	High 32C Low 27C Humid and rather cloudy	High 32C Low 27C Cloudy and	High 31C Low 27C Cloudy, chance	High 31C Low 27C Cloudy, few	High 31C Low 26C Humid, chances



ALASDAIR MACDONALD

Dhaka a disaster in waiting?

Officials have warned that, "thousands of the city's buildings will collapse like sand castles in case of a moderately strong tremor" measuring about 5.2 on the Richter scale.

SULTANA RAHMAN

An earthquake on a 'moderate scale' could create devastation in Dhaka, with hundreds of buildings collapsing, and rescue workers being unable to launch any effective rescue operation due to the complete lack of supportive equipment, according to sources in the Geographical Survey of Bangladesh (GSB).

Officials of the GSB warned that up to 75 per cent of the city's population and over 80 per cent of building structures are extremely vulnerable to tremors, which they say could possibly hit Dhaka at any time.

Substandard building materials, deviations from earthquake resistant approved plans, and completely unplanned structures make the situation even more dangerous.

ATM Asaduzzaman, deputy director of the GSB said 80 per cent of all buildings in Dhaka have been constructed on weak filling materials on low-lying areas with poor foundations without any regard to the dangers that may lie ahead.

However, neither the Department of Disaster Management nor the Department of Fire Brigade and Civil Defense lack trained manpower or equipment to manage any big disaster like an earthquake.

"Dhaka is such an urban area where not even the least safety-equipment is available, which an urban area requires to keep its citizens protected during emergencies. The city has not even a single crane that can bear 100 tonnes," said the senior officials of GSB.

For years, RAJUK officials have unabatedly approved these buildings in

the most unplanned manner without any monitoring whatsoever, according to media reports. Many modern looking buildings constructed recently are visibly deviating from officially approved building rules.

Officials have warned that, "thousands of these buildings would collapse like sand castles in case of a moderately strong tremor" measuring about 5.2 on the Richter scale.

The Bangladesh National Building Code 1993 includes detailed guidelines for earthquake resistant designs for concrete and steel structures. Unfortunately, the code is yet to be officially

enforced or made mandatory.

"New structures are being hurriedly built without taking into consideration safety aspects, and this is exposing us to great danger," said Asaduzzaman.

The present expansion of the city is towards the low-lying areas, notably in depressions and flood plains. According to experts, these low-lying areas are being filled with "loose organic sediments" such as fine-grained sand, clayey silt, organic clay, even peat and garbage are being used as filling materials.

"When we want to construct a building on such a site the ideal foundation of the structure must be much deeper than

what is now being practiced in the sector," Director of GSB, Mir Fazlul Karim said.

A moderate earthquake was last felt in Dhaka on December 19, 2001. When that tremor, with a magnitude of 4.2 on the Richter scale, was felt many people rushed out from their homes and offices in panic. At the Dhaka Central Jail, the country's biggest prison, some 100 prisoners were hurt in a stampede when they tried to escape the old jail building. The duration of that tremor was just 21 seconds.

Meteorological Department sources have said that at least 34 tremors of various intensities have jolted the country in the last six months. The Met sources also claimed that some 162 tremors were felt in Bangladesh between 1996 and 2001.

Sajedur Rahman, a former director of the Meteorological Department told Star City, the history of earthquakes around the world suggests that such small tremors may be forecasts of a bigger strike. He cited the example of the disastrous earthquake in Shillong, in the Indian State of Assam, in 1876 that followed a series of smaller jolts in the region.

Experts say that Dhaka is one of the earthquake-vulnerable places in the region, with the northwest, northeast and southeast parts of the country being the most risky zones.

In the event of a major tremor or earthquake in the capital, the dangers have risen with the skyline, as thousands of multi-storied buildings and high-rise apartments have mushroomed in and around the city, without conforming to the measures for survival in the event of any major earthquake.



Above: 75 per cent of the city's population are extremely vulnerable to serious tremors. Top: Eighty per cent of Dhaka's buildings may collapse during an earthquake. Left: The Bangladesh National Building Code 1993, is ignored throughout the city.

For more on earthquakes

Read tomorrow's Star City for our special on all you need to know about quake-safety and Dhaka's vulnerability to earthquakes, on page 19.

Computers come crashing

SYED TASHFIN

The computer market has been experiencing a slump in their sales turnover for the past one year, even when the prices of computer and computer products are at their all time low. The Dhaka computer market was experiencing a 'boom' period in aggregate sales during the five year period of 1998 till 2002. This was the period when there were computer fairs, information technology seminars and so on, getting increasing public attention. But recently, this customer enthusiasm has decreased drastically, and has

affected the computer market.

Most computer store owners of the 'Bangladesh Computer Society City,' at Shere-Bangla Nagar, blame the downfall primarily on the decrease in cash flow and therefore, a decline in the consumption by most customers. Other entrepreneurs have a number of reasons for the downward trend. Some opined that the target market of these computer stores were either 'busy' or just not interested. Mainly, the target market for the previous five year period were the teenage and school going kids, whose interest seemed to have diminished recently.

This lowered interest is resulting from the unemployment level of recent graduates from computer science departments of the private and public city universities.

"Due to the unemployment of such students, their immediate younger siblings are less motivated to learn about computers," said Mahbulul Haque, the manager of Daffodil Computers branch at BCS city.

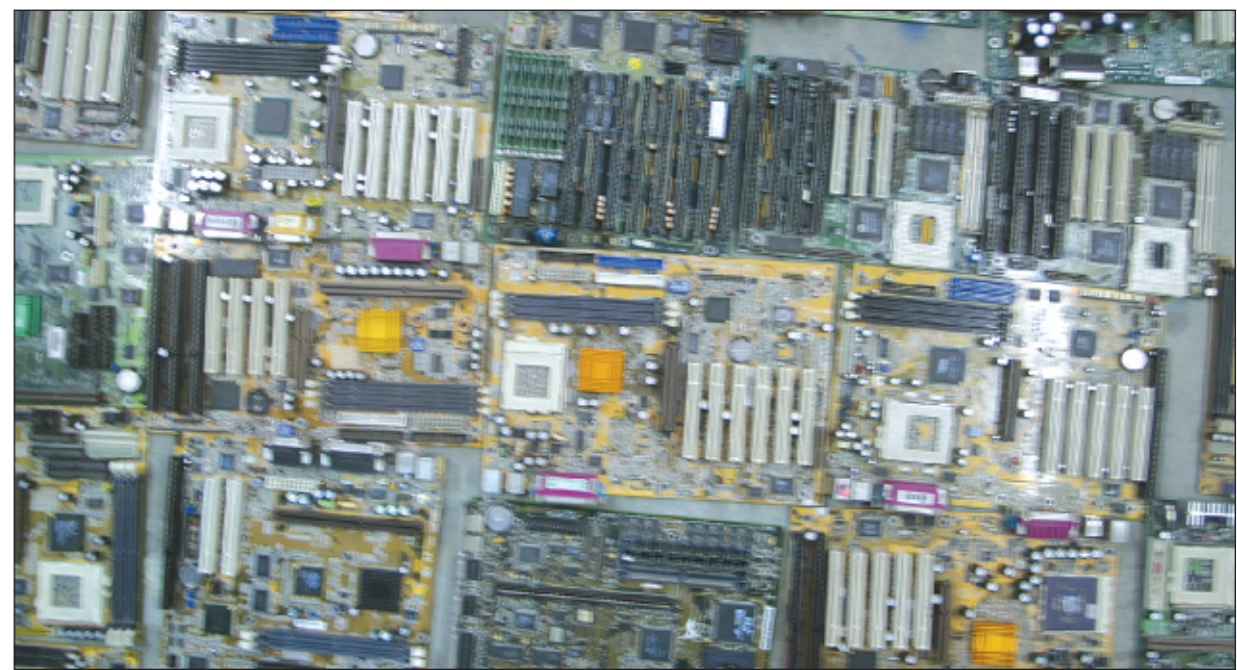
"These existing group of graduates do not even have the proper amount of information technology based jobs in the city, where they can complete their internship."

"Our daily sales turnover was

around Tk 5 to 8 lacs but recently it has been cut down to Tk 2 to 3 lacs," said Haque. "The government should come forward and help us in these dire times, by improvising and generating the information technology based jobs and stimulating an aggregate demand for computer as a whole."

"Most departments and offices of the city are buying computers and so on, but very few of them are actually utilising these efficiently." Said Sabur Khan, current president of Bangladesh Computer Society and member of the Information Communication Technology trust force.

The prices of computer and computer products are at their all time low, but customer enthusiasm has decreased drastically, recently, and has affected the computer market.



ALASDAIR MACDONALD

LOST SITE



Now squatted by beggars and drug addicts, the once imposing red-brick City Library, built in the style of Curzon Hall at the turn of the last century stands abandoned and with a derelict air in the Osmani Oddyian. Experts feel it should be renovated to its former glory and restored for public use.

Fresh water crisis in city

AVIK ANWAR RAHMAN

Fresh drinking water has always been a crisis for city dwellers, but these days Dhaka's denizens are being catered to by the many varieties of bottled mineral water seen in a growing number of the city's markets.

Most water is provided to the city by deep tubewells from underground water sources. Since the start of operations of the Sayedabad waste water treatment plant, in July 2002, the plant is providing 22.5 crore litres of water daily for the city which covers 18 per cent demand of the city.

This waste water treatment plant was established with Tk 586 crore, funded jointly by the Bangladesh and French governments and World Bank.

Sayedabad waste water treatment plant is using surface water from Sitalakhya, which is selected because of its easy access to the plant and quality of water as its chemical waste could be refined in

this plant.

Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) says that they are supplying pure drinking water for the city people through underground tubewells and Sayedabad waste water treatment plant. The superintendent engineer of Sayedabad plant said: "This water is 100 per cent pure as it goes under several steps of refineries and constant monitoring of its purity."

The river water drains through a lagoon built to carry raw water to the plant. Sediments and algae are left there. The raw water intake is mixed with chlorine to kill bacteria in the water. Aluminum sulfate is mixed for coagulation and flocculation of the wastes. The lime is mixed to improve the taste of the water. By this time the water of

Sitalakhya becomes 80 per cent clean. After rapid sand filter treatment, 100 per cent clean water is ready to serve the city.

"One can drink this crystal clear pure water without doubt," said the superintendent engineer.

But the fresh drinking water gets contaminated as it passes through the pipelines of WASA. WASA has a network of 2000 km pipelines around the city installed some 30 to 60 years back, of which 36 km is newly installed to supply the water of Sayedabad plant. Some pipelines are as old as 50 years. Due to leakage in the pipelines fresh water becomes infected with sewerage water.

Kazi Shish, the chief engineer of WASA said that according to the survey report 70 per cent of the water is

contaminated in the private reservoirs and 30 per cent is contaminated through the pipelines. Pipeline leakage is done by illegal connection and also from the digging of sewerage, gas and other utility works.

WASA officials are aware of fresh water contamination. "The stink in the water is caused by leakage in the pipe lines," said Ajit Abu the superintendent engineer of Sayedabad.

Engineer Shish also said, "We are aware of the situation and trying to repair the leakage in the pipes. We have also made public announcements in newspapers about how to clean the private reservoirs."

Notice

Instead of our regular 'City in frame' feature, today's Star City will carry "The Daily Star-Hallmark Friendship Day 2003" on page 20.

