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Dhaka lost its status as a capital in 1704. Important Government establishments were shifted to Murshidabad and Dhaka became the seat of a Naeb Nazim (Deputy Governor). But the activities of traders and merchants kept increasing and the European Companies expanded their trade with Dhaka by leaps and bounds.

# Protecting the parliament complex



MORSHED ALI KHAN

The UIA (Union Internationales des Architectes) a global body of architects, has appealed to the Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia to extend her support in protecting the Parliament Complex, which the Paris based organisation said, has become a landmark of modern architecture and a symbol of Bangladesh.

The President of UIA, Jaime Lerner's recent letter to the Prime Minister coincides with the resumption of construction work on the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker's residence, which was stopped on May 23, 2003 following a High Court ruling to stop all construction work at the site of the Parliamentary Complex.

On August 18, the Appellate Division stayed the High Court ruling allowing construction work to continue for three months — enough time to complete the residential structure on a Complex regarded worldwide as an architectural marvel designed by one of the greatest architects of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Louis I Kahn.

Lerner, in his letter to the Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia expressed concern on behalf of the architects of the world regarding proposed alterations and additions to the Parliament Complex designed by Louis I Kahn. He said that the Parliament Complex, one of Kahn's greatest creations, has surpassed its own qualities as an outstanding building, as an engineering and architectural achievement, to become far more than this, an icon of a city and of a whole nation. "For this circumstance, it has become a treasure for humanity which we should protect and preserve," he said.

Lerner urged the Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia to extend her support "in protecting this unique

complex that has become a landmark of modern architecture and a symbol of your magnificent country."

Defying the original master plan of Louis I Kahn, the government took up the construction work of the residence of Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the national parliament in October 2002. Following the decision, general people, architects, historians, engineers, artists and environmentalists took to the street in protest and demanded cancellation of the three-crore-taka project. The government was forced to stop the construction work temporarily on October 31 but resumed work on the site in December. Amid regular protest rallies and appeals the defiant authorities continued work on the building claiming that the famous architect had envisaged such a structure in his original master plan.

**The Complex is regarded worldwide as an architectural marvel designed by one of the greatest architects of the 20th century, Louis I Kahn**

The Institute of Architect, Bangladesh (IAB) and the Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon filed a writ in May seeking stay order on the construction on the basis that such an unplanned intervention on such an internationally reputed Complex might jeopardise its chance to be considered as being a World Heritage site.

At the site of the construction yesterday, it was found out that the contractor had engaged 'double the manpower' to complete construction of the unplanned building within weeks rather than months.

Officials of the IAB yesterday expressed their 'grief' at the Appellate Division verdict and said justice was denied to the people of this country. Several other organisations have vowed to continue protesting the construction of the residential building.

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## A more comfortable policy for commuters

SOHEL ISLAM

Private leases of the BRTC Dhaka city bus services will be scrapped within a short time following allegations of poor services and ill maintenance of the buses.

Communications Minister Nazmul Huda recently ordered the Chairman of the Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) to cancel the lease contracts and to work out a mechanism for more qualitative services for the passengers.

"We have decided to suspend their contracts as they are not providing expected services to the passengers. I have asked the BRTC authorities to come up with a guideline on how to run the services properly," said Nazmul

Huda.

"If needed, rather than going for private contracts, the BRTC itself will run the city services. If any contractor wants to run the bus services it will have to comply with all of our terms and conditions which are under process. The BRTC will formulate a policy to ensure passenger satisfaction," said Nazmul Huda.

Following the order, Chairman of the BRTC Taimur Alam Khondokar formed a committee to formulate a policy of city bus services. "Our experts are now analysing and scrutinising every possible ways of the city bus services. Within a few days, we will be able to come up with a rational guideline for the bus services," Taimur Alam.

Now the BRTC has only 1700

employees to manage about 800 buses. "If the government cancels the lease contracts of the buses we need at least 5000 employees to run such a huge fleet of buses," said a senior official of the BRTC requesting anonymity.

As many as 400 BRTC buses ply city streets from 10 different routes.

Meanwhile, Nazmul Huda also instructed the BRTC authorities to make arrangements for its inter-district buses to operate from the three inter-district bus terminals, instead of its central bus depot at Kamlapur.

"We will not provide any extra cushion for the inter-district BRTC buses any more. They will have to face the competition from the private sector buses and operate from the three bus terminals," said

Nazmul Huda.

"We haven't received any official order about the operation of the inter-district BRTC buses. As soon as we have the order from the ministry we will relocate our inter-district services to the inter-district bus terminals of the city," said the BRTC chairman.

The private bus owners have long been demanding that the BRTC buses be brought to the same level of private buses. "The communications ministry's decisions to withdraw the inter-district BRTC bus services from the downtown will fulfil some of our demands, said Pintu, Assistant General Secretary of the Bus and Truck Owners Association.

## Commercial suburbia

SULTANA RAHMAN

Rajuk has recently sent a draft proposal to the housing and public works ministry for allowing limited business activities in the residential areas like Gulshan, Banani and Dhanmandi, as the traditional business hubs in the city are in a crisis of space.

"With the commercialisation of these areas, the price of land will be Tk 12 lakh a *katha*, up from Tk 1,80,000 now," said a Rajuk source. "The height of a building will be limited to six storeys," he added.

According to the draft, the buildings, especially those facing roads, will be allowed commercialisation of up to six storeys.

The ministry says the government will give these residential areas a status between residential and commercial.

Many homeowners in Gulshan, Banani and Dhanmandi run business at home, violating Rajuk rules. Over the years, different types of business establishments from a small shop to a supermarket have mushroomed

**"They were given the plots only for residences but built guest-houses, restaurants, shops and other businesses later."**

in the areas.

"They were given the plots only for residences but built guest-houses, restaurants, shops and other businesses later. The same plot owners now request the public works ministry to prevent others from running business there," said an official at the ministry.

Residents fear the areas that already lost their residential character will put on a completely commercial look if the plan is implemented.

Rajuk Chairman Iqbal Uddin Chowdhury reasoned out that the city's commercial areas have run out of space to expand their businesses and the new areas, if commercialised, would ease the problem. The commercialisation of space will ensure a steady flow of revenues, he hoped.



Locals fear that areas of a residential character will be replaced by a commercial one.

## Finding a decent balance in film censoring

The film industry is at a loggerhead fighting vulgarity

AVIK SANWAR RAHMAN

Boycott and banning of the directors, producers and artists, a strike call and its subsequent withdrawal has tensed the atmosphere of the Bangladesh Film Development Corporation (BFDC).

The problem started when the Film Producers and Distributors Association (BFPDA) enforced a ban on popular actress Poppy without consulting the Artists Association of FDC. The Artists and Directors Association protested this action and consequently the BFPDA also banned Chashi Nazrul Islam and Ahmed Sharif, joint convenors of Bangladesh Film Federation and also members of the Censor Board.

Chashi Nazrul in a press briefing at the National Press Club, alleged that Ashrafuddin Ahmed Uzzal, the Secretary General of BFPDA, had asked the producers to submit films to the BFPDA instead of the Censor Board as long as Chashi Nazrul and Ahmed Sharif were in the Board.

"Because of our hard-line attitude against vulgar cinema, the producers of vulgar movies are trying to remove us from the Censor Board. The Producers Association has gone beyond all limits as they are banning artists and directors at their will without talking to the organisations concerned. They are also running a virtual parallel government within the FDC by forming a separate censor board," said Ahmed Sharif.

Bangladesh Film Federation is comprised of 17 associations of artists, directors, cameramen, editors, musicians, exhibitors and other employees of the FDC.

"Most members of the Federation have to live on daily wages. They have sacrificed their work in protest against vulgar movies. We are no longer in a state to face the public with dignity as the movie personals have lost their appeal because of vulgar films," said Chashi Nazrul.

Bangladesh Film Federation called a strike last week protesting obscene movies produced by some producers of the FDC. In a retaliatory move, the BFPDA also banned Monwar Hossain Dipzol, the General Secretary of Artists Association, as he made a list of artists and producers who were involved in these movies.

Bangladesh Film Federation decided to boycott 13 artists — Mayuri, Zhumka, Polly, Danny Raj, Mizu Ahmed, Chita, fight director Salam and 10 producers and directors like Sharfuddin Khan Dipu, Jahangir Alam, M A Rahim, Raju Chowdhury and Ramzan Ali Khan.

The Federation also alleged that Rajib, the managing director of FDC, is patronising



Bangladesh Film Federation called a strike last week protesting obscene movies produced by some producers of the FDC.

the vulgar and semi-porn movies and is taking bribe from their producers. They also demanded his resignation.

When journalists asked why many other persons, who were known to be involved with filthy films, were spared, Federation members said that the movement was a warning for others who were encouraging obscenity.

The present crisis arose just when

decent people started returning to the cinema halls with the release of a number of good, clean movies like Martir Moina, Moner Majhe Tumi, Chandra Kothea etc.

Although the strike was withdrawn on Monday, after intervention of the information ministry, the loss of respect and faith among personalities of the film industry, looks destined to linger on for the worse.