

source: accuweather.com

Weekly weather forecast for the city	Today High 31C Low 25C Cloudy, thunder-	Monday High 31C Low 25C Humid; morning	thunderstorms.	Tuesday High 31C Low 24C A couple of sh-	ows possible.	Wednesday High 29C	Low 24C Humid; a.m. thunderstorms.	Thursday High 30C	Low 25C Showers and t-storms possible.	Friday High 31C Low 25C Mostly cloudy and very humid.
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A van puller carrying old polythene for recycling. Markets are flooded with polythene bags again.

Banned polythene creeps back

Many blame the authorities for failing to offer alternative jute bags

SOHEL ISLAM

The use of polythene shopping bags goes unchecked despite a government ban, but law enforcers seem half-hearted in dealing with the illegal practice.

Vegetable vendors are dependent on the polybags or nylon netbags, as they sell products in them to customers at the markets like Karwan Bazaar, Krishi Market, Town Hall Bazaar, New Market and Hatirpul Bazaar.

But Director General of the Department of Environment (DoE) Omar Faruque Khan claimed, "We have always been active in enforcing the ban and seized piles of polybags several times. I went to several polybag-producing factories in the city and shut them down."

"We sincerely want to stop it, but cannot clamp down on the dishonest

manufacturers of polybags, as we are understaffed," said the director general.

"People have no alternative to polybags for shopping now. If jute bags had been available in the market, many would not have bought polybags," said Khan.

"Many factories produce polybags for garment factories. If we come to know about any factory producing polybags, we will immediately take action against them. But it's difficult for us to detect the factories operating in secret," said Khan.

Director of Jute Diversification Promotion Centre Dr Abdullah said, "There is scope for utilisation of shopping jute bags. But this is not happening here." The jute promotion centre is a government project, funded by the European Union (EU).

When the polythene bags were banned, Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) tried to sell

traditional jute bags, but the sale ran out of steam.

"Thousands of traditional shopping jute bags have long been heaped in the BJMC warehouse as they did not sell well in the market because of high price," said Abdullah.

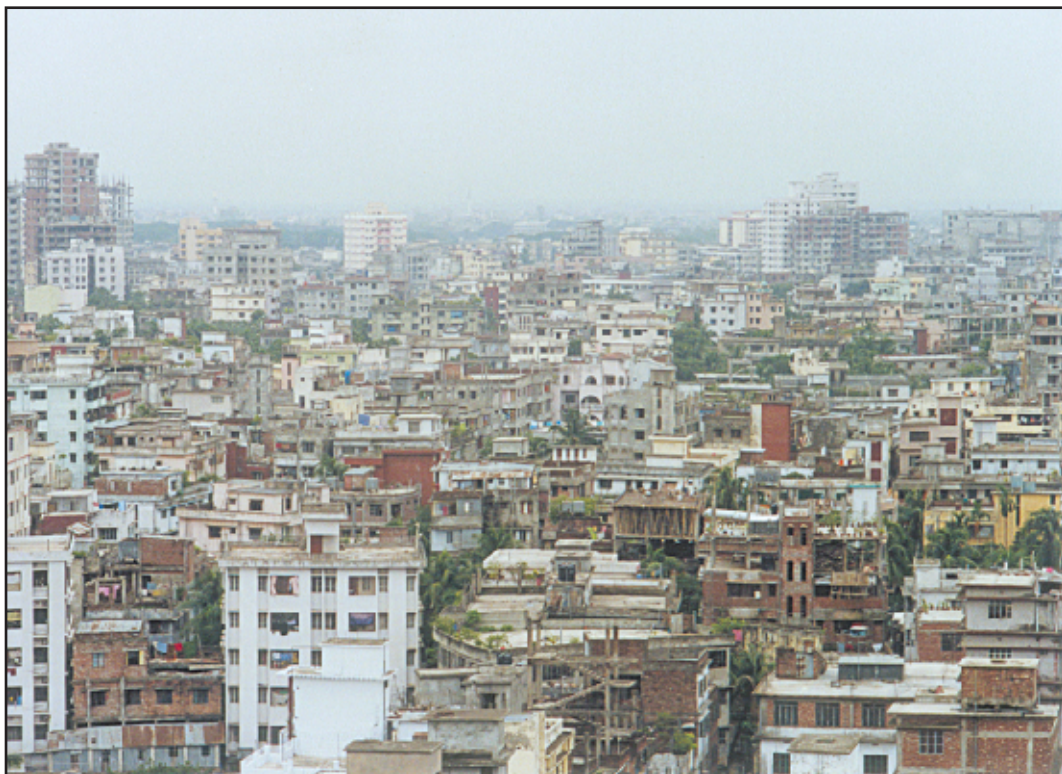
"We can still popularise jute bags if the mills replace their old equipment -- which produce thick jute yarn -- with high-end machines that can produce thin yarn. If thin yarn is abundant in the market we can sell jute bags at low price," he said.

"The jute industry has earned a bad image. Many entrepreneurs tried to replace old equipment but did not get credit from banks for replacements," said Abdullah.

"If we can provide the entrepreneurs with credit, they will surely come forward to set up modern jute mills to produce low-cost polybags," he said.

Steps to Streamline High-rises

The first-ever rule on construction of highrise buildings has been sent to the law ministry for final approval. After examining the legal aspects of the rule, the law ministry will declare it as a Statutory Regulatory Order (SRO) under which the entire construction sector of high-rise building would be regulated in the city.



Most of the city areas have grown haphazardly. The new rule might soon be introduced to bring some discipline to a sector, which has not bothered much to respect construction laws.

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Ministry of Public Works and Housing at a meeting yesterday endorsed the draft of Dhaka Metropolitan High-rise Building Construction Rules 2003, sources said.

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Representatives from Rajuk, the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB), the Institute of Architects, Bangladesh, (IAB), Bangladesh University of Engi-

neering and Technology (BUET) and Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh (REHAB) were present in the meeting. Public Works and Housing Secretary Aminur Rahman presided over the meeting.

RAJUK submitted the draft to the ministry of housing and public works in August 2002. But the ministry sat on it for about a year. Later, different professional bodies related to the sector included their opinions in the rule.

On July 21 last, the Ministry of Housing and Public Works sent a letter to the IAB, REHAB, BUET and the IEI to come up with suggestions and revisions of the draft of the rule, if any, by July 31 last.

Afterwards, a number of discussions were held and the ministry agreed in principle to include some of their suggestions.

"Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is an

addition to the draft. If one wants to construct a high-rise building one will have to keep adequate space around it depending on the FAR," said a senior official of Rajuk who attended the meeting.

"The rule has made mandatory for car parking for the buildings in a way so that the builders cannot get away without it," said the Rajuk official.

"In our preliminary examination, we had found a lot anomalies in the draft. If we had more time we would come up with more positive suggestions for the draft. Many of the clauses are not applicable to the context of our country," alleged a member of REHAB.

The Ministry also sent the initially approved Private Housing Law to the law ministry for final approval.

FOLLOW UP

SOS from Malitola mosque

Archaeology department 'can do nothing' to protect historical site

AVIK SANWAR RAHMAN

The conservation of Haji Mainuddin Mosque, built in 1896, in Malitola remains uncertain as the archaeology department lacks funds for protection.

"Because of fund constraints, the archaeology department is even unable to maintain all listed monuments declared protected by the government," said Dewan Delwar Hossain, director of the archaeology department.

"There are 355 monuments under the archaeology department, which are not maintained properly. Every year, more monuments, crossing 100 years, come under the heritage status. Only listing the monuments as archeologically protected sites will increase burden on the archaeology department. Any way we'll try to take it under the protected monuments," the director said.

Although Haji Mainuddin Mosque, built 107 years ago, is up for the heritage status as every 100-year-old mosque should be classified as part of heritage, the archaeology department failed to include the mosque on such a list.

The mosque is named after its first *mutwalli* or caretaker Haji Mainuddin, a textile merchant of nineteenth century, which he had inherited. His father Zangu Bepary and uncle Jan Mohammad had settled by the bank of Dholai Khal (now English Road) in 1890 when Malitola was predominantly a Hindu infested area and Haji Mainuddin Mosque marked the beginning of muslim civilisation in the old town.

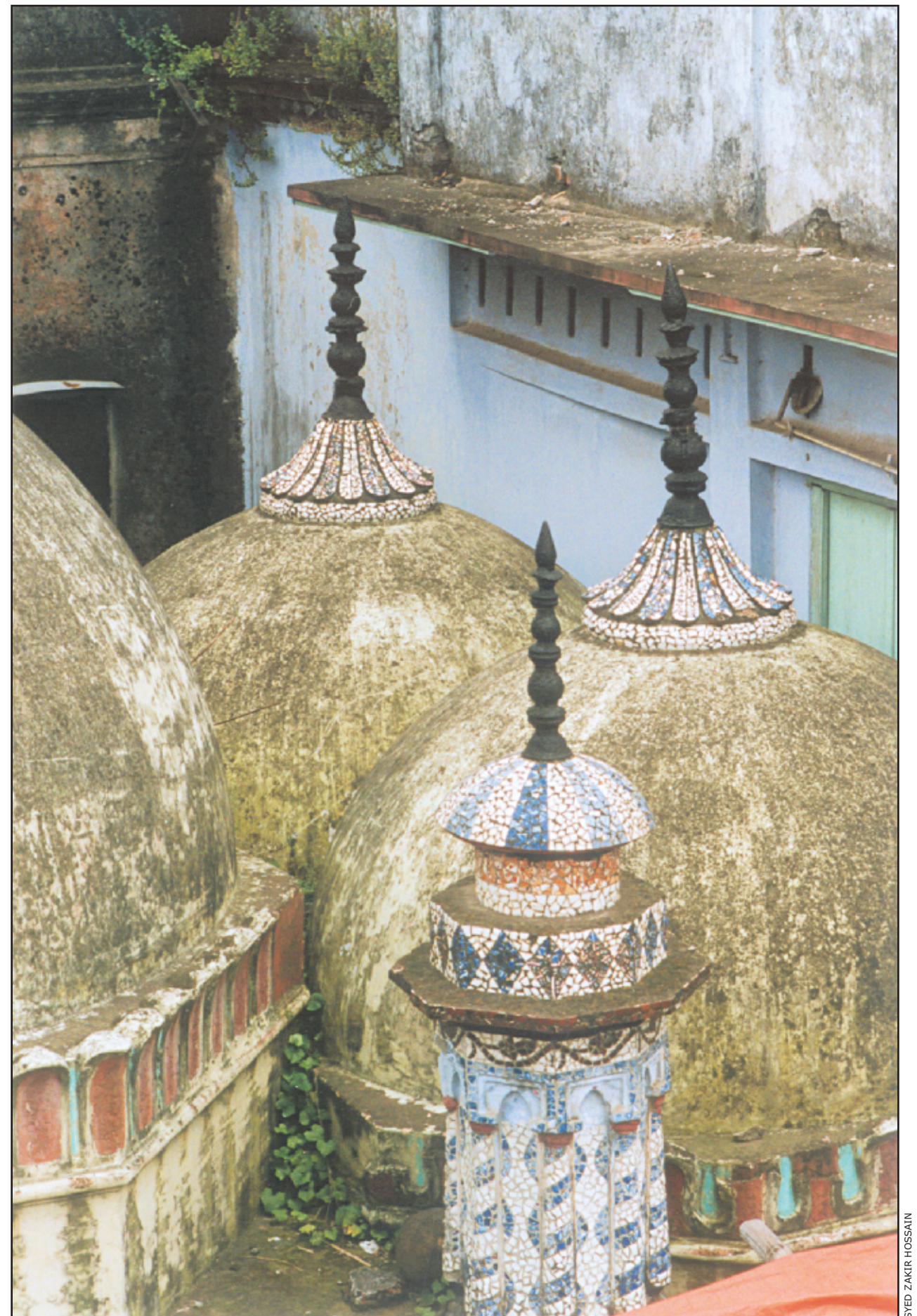
"Building a five-storey mosque in place of the old one will take at least Tk 50 lakh. Who knows how much it will cost to preserve the old structure right of the mosque," said Haji Mainuddin's grandson Anwaruddin, also member of the mosque committee.

Architect Rafiq Azam, an expert on urban affairs and Managing Partner of the Shatto, visiting the mosque, said it was possible to build a five to seven storeys mosque keeping the original part intact to accommodate more devotees if the design was done properly.

"The cost will be less than Tk 50 lakh if the original part is kept unchanged," Azam said, adding the renovation of the three lime concrete tombs is possible at a minimum cost.

The mix of terracotta dust with lime is compatible to Bangladesh's climate. It can hold moisture in summer and rainy seasons and dries up in winter, so it never cracks under fluctuation of moisture.

"The Mughal architects introduced this type of architecture. We have lost the technique of brick lime structure and it will be unwise to lose the heritage of the Mughal architects," said Azam.



More than hundred years old Malitola mosque needs protection.