



City landscape is rapidly changing due to construction of high-rise buildings, which the government now trying to regulate.

Highrise rules draw flak from experts

SOHEL ISLAM

The draft of Dhaka Metropolitan Highrise Construction Rules 2003, approved by the Ministry of Housing and Public Works on September 20, drew flak from experts, as they were not invited to the meeting on endorsing the rules.

Although the ministry asked the Institute of Architects, Bangladesh (IAB), Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh (REHAB), Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology and the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) to update the draft with recommendations, it did not invite them to participate in the rule-endorsement meeting.

The professional bodies now feel that the first-ever highrise construction policy was finalised without 'proper technical thoughts'.

"I have heard Rajuk prepared it. But it doesn't have that expertise to prepare such technical rules that need precise urban design and detailed area planning. I am skeptic about it," said IEB President Quamrul Islam Siddiqui.

"Rajuk is short of professionals and architects. How come Rajuk has prepared

such a vital document?" asked Siddiqui.

"We feel deprived, as we were not invited to the meeting where the ministry with the sole participation of Rajuk passed the draft and is sending it to the law ministry for the final approval," said IAB Archi-

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tect Jalal Ahmed.

"The ministry (housing and public works) sought opinions from the four institutions a few months ago, but it did

not care to sit with all the bodies of professionals and experts together. I don't know whether or not it has included any of our suggestions in the draft," Ahmed said.

"If the draft is prepared without expert opinions, the construction rules will have serious flaws," Ahmed said.

"It is not fair that the draft was passed without our participation. If the housing and public works ministry sends the draft to the law ministry for the final approval without including our suggestions in it, it will be a unilateral decision," said REHAB President Dr Toufiq M Seraj.

"We found a lot of anomalies in our preliminary examination of the draft. Many clauses of the draft are not applicable to our country," Seraj said.

Housing and Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas said yesterday, "Yes, we have finalised the draft and will send it to the law ministry soon. We have received the professionals' suggestions and some of their suggestions have been included in it."

Asked about the allegation that the experts were not invited to the meeting, Abbas said, "We did not need their presence at the meeting as their suggestions were already with us."

Water logging and rally cause city nightmare

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

A combination of water logging and a huge rally on a working day by the main opposition party created severe problems for the city dwellers last Monday.

Most of the major roads of the city were flooded due to torrential rainfall since early Monday morning. Many of the water choked major thoroughfares and link roads that have innumerable potholes became a deathtrap for those moving around the city. It became almost impossible for vehicles to move through areas such as Mouchak, Purana Paltan, Motijheel, Shantinagar.

Most of the traffic attempted alternate routes but not all of them were easily accessible. Especially hard hit was a large area of Mirpur road, which became almost off limit for vehicles due to the huge rally of main opposition party.

The rally was organised by Awami League at Kalabagan where thousands of people descended from all areas of the city. They occupied a large part of Mirpur road, which prevented the easy movement of traffic in the surrounding district. As a result of water logging and the public rally, the whole city almost came to a standstill from the early afternoon to late evening on Monday.

Confronting great inconveniences due to water logging is not an uncommon trouble for the peo-

ple of Dhaka. Rainwater tends to get stuck in most of the low-lying areas around the city. However, the situation has generally improved, most of the people now believe. Now it takes almost two hours to clear rainwater which used to take five or six hours previously they said.

However, their plight has not eased much although the duration of water logging has reduced. "Those two hours are enough to make my life hell," commented Shahnwaz

Ahmed living near Mouchak.

Water drainage system of Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) is being hampered by other government bodies such as the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) and Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP), said sources inside WASA.

WASA tries to maintain the 220 KM of surface drains as well as underground and saucer drains around the city that fall under their jurisdiction. But there is at least 2000

KM of drainage system belonging to DCC, that remains in bad shape most of the time. "It hampers the de watering system of WASA," complained an official of WASA on condition he should not be named.

Moreover, carpeting of roads by DUTP throughout the city is preventing proper drainage. DUTP has covered many of the man-holes during the road carpeting program which has caused rain water to move to catch pits, the official said.



An hour-long water logging is enough to create huge traffic jams in the city.

Eidgah in distress

Grabbers' paradise at Eidgah park in Dhanmondi

SULTANA RAHMAN

Parts of the historical Eidgah in the city's Dhanmondi area are still under the grasp of illegal shop owners, ward commissioner's office and at least two government organisations.

A large chunk of the land, situated between the Eidgah and Satmasjid road, which was initially planned for a public park, is now home to at least 18 illegal structures. Local people alleged that the Eidgah mosque committee has played the major role in encroachment, which could have become a decent public park.

The eidgah was built in 1640-41 during the reign of the Mughal. It is one of the two Eidgahs, built for eid congregation, in the sub-continent. It is also one of the 355 listed archeological monuments in the country under department of archeology. Poor maintenance has made the area a safe haven for drug edicts and local hoodlums now. This correspondent

found a number of phynsidyl bottles scattered on the ground around the historical Eidgah.

"Different types of youngsters come and stay here till late in the night, sometimes they make a lot of noise," said a local resident conditioning anonymity.

About five years ago, the eidgah mosque committee raised a wall around the green open space and put up a signboard claiming its ownership under waqf administration. The Dhanmondi office of the Public Works Department (PWD) immediately complained in writing to Dhanmondi Thana about the mosque committee's undesired step. The Engineer in charge in PWD office in his complaint to the police said that the land was selected for a park, which would greatly help the beautification of the area and the historical site.

Department of Archaeology filed also filed a complaint with the

Dhanmondi thana, expressing their concern about the encroachment on a protected site. They said that as per the law of the land now body is allowed to build any structure within 10 metres of an archaeological.

But so far nothing has been done to free the park of encroachment and give the historical site a facelift. It has on the other hand, witnessed increasing number of illegal structures.

Local ward commissioner Abul Khair Babul has taken over a chunk of the land to build his office. A guard, appointed by Babul has built his makeshift house.

"Whenever 'proper authorities' ask me to remove the structures, I will do so," said Babul.

"If the authorities plan to convert the surroundings of Eidgah into a public park, being commissioner I will co-operate with them removing my own structure first," he added.

Meanwhile, a ruling BNP club has

also been built on the same chunk of land. In addition to DESA's workshop, a contractor has built his office. Another structure is that of Dhanmondi branch office of Jatiya Party. A water pump of WASA and a Madrasa have also been built.

Half a dozen shops, which do brisk business were set up allegedly by the mosque committee. Although the secretary of the eidgah mosque committee Keramat Ali Bhuiya denied having any link with the illegal shops. Bhuiya claimed that those shops were set up by local hoodlums.

"We have informed the PWD office about the situation around the eidgah, secretary of PWD visited the area last month," Bhuiyan said.

When the Star City contacted Mirza Abbas, the minister for Public Works and Housing he assured that he would look into the matter. "We will direct the PWD to take proper action as per the law," the minister said.



The designated park in front of Eidgah is home to grabbers.