

Rajuk planners' delay game

Detailed Area Plan scheme remains a far cry while unplanned urbanisation flourishes

SOHEL ISLAM

The Detailed Area Plan (DAP) of Dhaka city has not seen daylight although the process of its implementation started in 1999.

The non-implementation of DAP is contributing to massive unplanned urbanisation in the capital and experts warn that if unplanned development continues at this scale, the city, like many others in the world, would become unliveable.

According to sources, DAP project is deliberately delayed to avoid detection of illegal buildings, which some Rajuk planners had approved in underhand

dealings.

Without DAP, the implementation of Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (DMDP) is facing a serious set back. DAP project was taken up to pinpoint the present status of every locality of the city.

The cost of DAP is about Tk 22 crore which Rajuk will finance from its own fund.

Approached over phone, Rajuk Chairman Iqbal Uddin Chowdhury refused to comment on the allegations.

The DAP project director and Chief Town Planner of Rajuk Kazi Golam Hafiz claimed that 'bureaucratic complications' have delayed the implementation of DAP.

"Six consultant firms almost finalised

the survey plans for the DAP but the Ministry of Housing and Public Works asked us to stop it as DAP project was not approved by the planning ministry," said Hafiz.

"DAP project was sent for approval of pre-ECNEC (Executive Committee for National Economic Council) twice. It was also sent to the ECNEC meeting in 2001 which directed the finance ministry for issuing final approval," said the project director.

"At last, a meeting has been called on October 13 to finalise DAP with representation of the finance and planning ministry and the housing and public works ministry," said Hafiz.

"DAP will never be implemented if the

incumbent authorities of the Town Planning Department continues to handle it," said an insider of Rajuk, on condition of anonymity.

"There are projects like Pubrachal and Lake Development of Gulshan and Baridhara which have not been approved by the planning ministry but they are being implemented for the sake of protecting the city. Then what really hinders the implementation of DAP remains a question worth asking," said the official source.

Due to non-implementation of DAP, a section of unscrupulous officials of the Town Planning Department are making their fortunes by approving plans of buildings in 24 areas of the city. These

approvals would have been impossible had there been DAP before the approving authority.

It is alleged that the town planning department takes between Tk 50,000 and Tk 5,00,000, depending on the project, to approve the plans of the buildings in the DAP areas.

The six areas are Mirpur to Kamarpara, Kamrangirchar, Keraniganj, Begunbari, north side of Dhaka, Narayangaj and Demra embankment and Uttarkhan. At present all these areas are notorious for unplanned urbanisation.

While Rajuk's town planners are busy dilly-dallying, the situation in many city areas is rapidly deteriorating.

DCC's bizarre marketing plans

The Dhaka City Corporation has come up with a plan to demolish seven kitchen markets in the city and build multi-storied shopping centers without regard to thousands of established traders and the local residents



Mohammadpur Town Hall market, renovated only two years ago, now faces demolition.

SULTANA RAHMAN

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) is now planning to demolish seven major kitchen markets in the city and replace them with 'modern multi-storied markets', sources in the Nagar Bhaban said.

Initially the DCC is thinking of declaring these markets 'abandoned' on the ground that these are structurally dangerous buildings, said DCC sources. At the moment DCC does not have any plan about what would happen to hundreds of shopkeepers during the time of construction of the new buildings. They also do not have any plan whatsoever how the local residents, thousands of whom depend on these markets for daily necessities, would do their shopping.

But officials and shop owners, currently doing business on these premises alleged that these structures were not in fact vulnerable to collapse but the whole project was nothing but a ploy to "make some quick money".

The listed markets are Gulshan-1, Mohammadpur Town Hall Market, Sadarghat Ladies Super Market, Sutrapur Market, Kaptan Bazar roadside market and Shah Ali market in Mirpur.

Engineering division of DCC Market Circle has already sent a notice to the chief of engineering department to declare these markets 'abandoned'. The engineering section has also been asked to demolish the structures.

"All these markets were built in the 60s by then DIT. Now they are in bad shape," said a DCC official.

DCC owns 105 markets including 36 supermarkets in the city. Most of these so-called super markets were built without any planning or approval from any authority over the last decade. According to an investigation, DCC does not have any control on rent collection from at least twelve of these super markets.

Sources said every month DCC is deprived of a revenue of Tk 7 lakh from these markets. At present, about 50 court injunctions have prevented the DCC to collect rents from these markets. Some of these injunctions have remained in force since 1984.

"We do not understand why DCC is more interested to build more markets while they are unable to collect revenue from many of the existing markets," said a member of the New Market committee. He said that the intention was clear, which is to "make money" at the cost of "our sweat", he said requesting anonymity.

"All these are happening due to lack of sincerity among DCC officials of three separate departments," said a DCC official.

"It is true that DCC owned markets are less modern compared to private markets. If the DCC wants to modernize these markets they should first ensure public convenience without favouring any individual or power," said a official of market division.

city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.



"Vested Property Act is contradictory to the country's constitution and a violation of human rights."

-- Barrister Amirul Islam
Vice President of the Bangladesh Bar Council

In a speech in Sylhet as the chief guest on Tuesday at the convention of the Vested Property Act Resistance Movement. Source: Ittefaq

"The posts of Supreme Court justices are being corrupted as a result of inexperience, dishonest and incompetent persons who are only appointed according to their loyalty to the political parties."

-- Barrister Rokon Uddin Mahmud
President of Supreme Court Lawyers Association
Speaking at a meeting after the end of strike of lawyers on October 1. Source: Prothom Alo

"No law, except privatisation of the government, could stop money laundering in this country."

-- CM Koiso Sami
Managing Director of Oriental Bank
Commenting in a seminar on "Money Laundering: Bangladesh Perspective and the Difference in Opinion" held in BIAM auditorium in the city on October 3. Source: Prothom Alo

"I have been confirmed by my trusted people and after testing all facts that Zamaluddin has been murdered and his dead body dumped."

-- ABM Mohiuddin
Mayor of Chittagong
Commenting on the fate of abducted businessman of Chittagong Zamaluddin to Prothom Alo on October 1.

"We would not now like to join the CPA conference for its beautification only,"

-- Abdul Jalil
General Secretary of Awami League
Speaking to the reporters at the Awami League office on October 3. Source: Bhoror Kagoj



"The way government is trying to colour the incident as a deliberate act of the party activists, I am in doubt whether the people who are involved in this propaganda have daughters of their own."

-- Nasima Ferdous
The victim and the vice president of Women Awami League Dhaka
Mohanagar North talking to a press conference in central office of Awami League at Bangabandhu Avenue on October 2, protesting the government's propaganda on the violence of police during picketing in last Hartal. Source : Prothom Alo

Save Malitola mosque, save our heritage

AVIK SANWAR RAHMAN

The conservation of the century old Haji Mainuddin mosque of Malitola still remains uncertain as the archaeology department under the Cultural Ministry is yet to decide on the fate of the mosque due to its waqf property status.

"Whether we will be able to declare the century old mosque a protected area or acquire the mosque for maintenance remains a question," said Dewan Delwar Hossain, the director of archaeology department.

The family members of Haji Mainuddin who inherited the status of *mutwalli* or caretaker of the mosque are in charge of maintaining the mosque for generations.

In recent years the Malitola area has become a bustling centre of trade, and particularly known for being home to a variety of wholesale markets. At prayer times, the merchants and the shop owners together with the ever-increasing local residents rush for the nearest Haji

Mainuddin mosque for prayers.

One of the grand daughters of Haji Mainuddin, Tasmia Nuzhat Khan, in a recent letter to The Daily Star that the demands of the worshippers and the pressure created by the local Panchayat made the family of Haji Mainuddin reluctantly agree to renovate it. But family members of Tasmia think that the responsibility to accommodate ever-increasing worshippers should not rest with the family alone.

"In no way it is fair to demolish an old piece of archaeology because the 'Philistine' crowd is not sensible enough to preserve its sophistication or artistic grandeur..... The conservation of this mosque of antiquity, particularly its three magnificent domes essential for keeping alive the valuable tradition and legacy of our rich past for the posterity", wrote Tasmia.

The grand daughter of Haji Mainuddin also appealed for suggestions and advice from the experts and readers of The Daily Star on how to preserve its distinctive features by

keeping the old structure intact.

Architect Rafiq Azam, an expert on urban affairs and managing partner of Shatotto said, "Archaeology department can declare the mosque as protected site so that no one is able to demolish anything without the permission of the archaeology department. A committee could be formed with representation of archaeologists, architects, journalists, the caretaker family and other people who would like to contribute to the conservation of the heritage."

The mosque is named after Haji Mauniddin, a textile merchant, who had inherited the status of its first *mutwalli*. His father Zangu Bepary and uncle Jan Mohammad had settled by the bank of Dhulai Khal (now a part of English road) in 1890. The mosque was built in 1896 on one and a half katha of land primarily to cater for their family needs. Back then, Malitola was a predominantly Hindu area and there were only two Muslim families including theirs.



Century old Malitola mosque is facing demolition.

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