

Unauthorised buildings near ZIA pose risk to safe air traffic

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Most of the unauthorised buildings in the landing approach of the Zia International Airport (ZIA) are yet to be demolished, posing a risk to safe air traffic.

More than a year ago Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) and the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) jointly identified 111 buildings, built in the approach surfaces of the ZIA and Tejgaon airport in violation of civil aviation rules.

Rajuk started a drive to demolish the unauthorised risky buildings in April 2005, but it had been able to demolish only eight buildings constructed within the zero-height area of the ZIA's

landing approach until October last.

"In the first phase, we wanted to remove 17 buildings but we could demolish only 8 as the owners of five buildings filed cases against the drive while two produced valid construction designs passed by Rajuk," said Shamsur Rahman, authorised officer-2 of Rajuk.

Rajuk refrained from demolishing two other buildings in the face of resistance of the locals, Rahman said adding that a good number of owners of the 111 buildings produced construction documents that have no corresponding records in the Rajuk.

The government is now making a detailed plan to deal with rest of the buildings as the demo-



STAR PHOTO

Buildings of varying heights near the airport.

lition will require compensation fund and procurement of suitable equipment.

"Pilots' repeated complaints about risky take-off and landing may prompt the ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organisation) to declare the ZIA unsafe," said a high official of Air Traffic Services and Aerodrome of the CAAB, requesting anonymity.

The then chairman of Rajuk Md Shahid Alam told the BBC radio in April last year that the International Civil Aviation Organisation issued a 'yellow warning' to the CAAB in the wake of the pilots' complaints about air traffic at ZIA.

When contacted, acting chairman of the CAAB Group Captain Shahe Alam declined to talk on the matter, asking this correspondent to contact the chairman who was abroad.

The 111 buildings mainly located in Nikunja, Khilkhet, Dalipara, Bailjhuri, Baunia and Madrasa Avenue were marked

as hazardous for safe landing and take-off of passenger and cargo planes, according to CAAB sources.

The CAAB at a meeting with the Rajuk on January 6, 2004 requested the latter to take action against the buildings built in the adjoining areas of the ZIA and Tejgaon airport.

Asked how could Rajuk approve construction plans in the zero-height area near the ZIA, Shamsur Rahman said, "It was not a prerequisite to follow height-limit until Civil Aviation Authority wrote to us in 1999 determining height specification."

But the official of Air Traffic Services of the CAAB said, "It does not matter whether we write it or not. It is binding upon the city developer to obtain height-clearance as per the aircraft rules of 1937 and civil aviation rules of 1984 before approving a construction plan."

According to CAAB, the 'Approach Surface' area is a passage for flight take-off and landing at an airport and is a zero-height zone. As per the civil aviation rules, no structure is allowed in the zero-height area, which is a 3,000-foot stretch on both end of the runway.

The permitted height of structures increases by one foot at every 50 feet distance up to the stretch of 10,500 feet beginning from the end of zero height.

Apart from the Approach Surface, there are Inner Horizontal Surface Zone, Conical Surface Zone and Outer Surface Zone in 50,000 feet radius area for flight landing and take-off.

At the end of Inner Horizontal Surface, height of building will be maximum 150 feet. Height in the next 7,000 feet stretch of Conical

"Wing of the Rajuk's authorised officers that approves construction design is a depot of corruption," said a top official of Rajuk requesting anonymity. When asked about the allegation, Shamsur Rahman said: "It is not true."

Admitting to corrupt practice in the Rajuk and pressure of the influential people who own the listed buildings, Housing and Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas said, "I did not ask Rajuk to stop demolition drive."

4x2

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