



The speakers residences built violating Kahn's master plan.

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON
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The two houses built within the parliament complex as official residences for the Speaker and his deputy that sparked controversy have been unused for more than a year, as both officials declined from residing here to avoid legal complications.

Although the past Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) led four-party Alliance government defiantly went ahead with the construction ignoring protests and requests by different national and international organisations and a number of eminent personalities.

The Public Works Department (PWD) completed the construction including interior designing by July-August last year. But these houses were not used for even a single day, as neither party was interested in residing here.

Parliament officials said the PWD has employed two cleaners to regularly clean the houses. "Sometimes a team from PWD comes to inspect the overall situation. Apart from that the buildings have no other use," said an official.

SPEAKERS' RESIDENCES

A legacy of defiance

Speaker Jamiruddin Sirkar told the media that he had not wanted to reside in a house having legal complications. Sources said that the speaker had sent a letter to the Attorney General (AG) in April this year asking if there were any legal barriers in case he wanted to reside in that house, but is yet to receive a reply.

When checked, AG Mohammad Ali said that it was an old matter and the files had to be checked. Official homes for the Speaker and Deputy Speaker were built defying Louis I Kahn's original design, where Kahn had earmarked the site as an open space.

The government constructed these buildings on five acres of land at a cost of around Tk6 crore. Besides the public, architects and environmentalists protested the move of having these buildings inside the complex defying Kahn's design since the beginning of the construction.

On 14 May 2003, Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (BAPA) and Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB) jointly filed a writ to the High Court.

Bapa and IAB in their petition said the construction of the two residential buildings on the parliament complex would greatly distort the Sangsad

Bhaban's final masterplan by world famous architect Louis I Kahn.

Considered worldwide as one of the finest examples of modern day architecture, Sangsad Bhaban complex has been subjected to repeated infringement on its designs by successive governments. The Awami League government built the NAM conference hall demolishing the Weather Building originally designed by Kahn.

The ruling coalition distorted Kahn's design by taking up a massive project to build a bridge across the Crescent Lake behind the main parliament building and converted a large area of Chandrima Udyan into a mausoleum of the late president Ziaur Rahman. The complex consists of a mosque, a seminar hall and other installation. Experts say such massive distortions of the original plan would not only destroy the beauty of Sangsad Bhaban but also hinder the international process of declaring the parliament complex a World Heritage Site.

Conservationists of Kahn's work said that their battle against such an illogical move is not over yet. They will continue their movement until the authority will have no choice but to demolish these structures and save the

heritage thereby.

"The complex, although completed does not mean it is legitimate and we will continue our protest until they are demolished. We also demand punishment of the people involved," said Saif-ul-Haque, an architect involved in the protest against the construction of Speaker and Deputy Speaker's official residences.

The chronology of events centred on construction in the parliament complex is as follows.

- The PWD started construction inside the parliament Bhaban on October 26, 2002. Following strong protest continued media coverage, construction work temporarily stopped on October 31.
- In December 2002, the construction work resumes amid protests and letters in newspapers. The protest by general people, architects, artists, and environmentalists went on.
- On March 3, 2003, President, Institute of Architects, Bangladesh sent a letter to the Prime Minister urging her intervention to stop the work.
- On May 14, 2003, writ to the High Court jointly by Bangladesh Paribesh

Andolon (BAPA) and Institute of Architects, Bangladesh (IAB).

- On May 18, 2003, court once again issued a stay order on the construction.
 - On 28 August 2003 Chamber judge vacates stay order.
 - On May 19, 2003, High Court gave a ruling to stay construction work at site.
 - On August 18, 2003, Appellate Division stays High Court ruling allowing construction to continue for three months.
 - On June 21, 2004, High Court declared the construction of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker's residences illegal. The bench also directed the government to take necessary steps to declare the parliament complex a national heritage.
 - On July 7, 2004, Appellate Division declined to pass a stay order on the June 21 High Court verdict and also brushed aside the government plea to put an embargo on media coverage on any development work at the parliament complex.
- Meanwhile PWD completed the 60 percent of the work on these two buildings while the legal battle continued. The construction was completed in 2005.

Untold suffering of the silent majority

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Ridwan, a Bangladeshi residing in USA, came to Bangladesh along with his would-be bride for wedding ceremony at home. The venue of the ceremony scheduled for October 28 was Dhaka Sheraton Hotel, but they had to shift it to his native town Tangail because of the ongoing political chaos.

"All my guests were able to see only a chaotic situation where people were chasing each other with sticks and other weapons, and burning tyres along the road," said Ridwan. "The way the country repays our contribution to its economy is very painful," the expatriate Bangladeshi added. He said he came to Bangladesh with a desire to have his wedding with his kith and kin, but his dreams were shattered because of the political situation. The political unrest centering the handover of power to the caretaker government in the country has stalled most planned programmes including weddings, conferences, meetings and even press conferences as public life has come to a virtual standstill. Dhaka Sheraton Hotel authorities said they had to cancel a number of programmes scheduled for three days amid the political unrest. Besides aforesaid wedding ceremony, a Rotary Club meeting scheduled on October 28, and two programmes scheduled for October 29 have been cancelled. "We had three programmes scheduled for October 30, but our clients did not hold these because

of political situation," said a hotel official. He also said that besides the sufferings of their clients the hotel is losing much business. Although the Eid vacation did not show much business for community centres in the city, they too were faced with reschedules or cancellations of their already had. "We had to cancel the programme that was scheduled on Saturday. The kitchen rations are not yet available, and moreover most of our employees could not return on time," said Shamsur Rahman, manager, Party Palace, a community centre in Dhanmondi. "We spent the whole day behind closed doors and windows, whereas otherwise there would have been a wedding taking place," Rahman said. On the other hand the wedding programme at Sugandha Community Centre on the Satmasjid Road on Saturday (the first day of political violence in the city during last Dhaka siege programme), was not cancelled, and the authorities were in a dilemma over shopping groceries and whether or not the number of

guests would arrive. They too suffered a lot as most guests were unable to attend the ceremony and there was much food that went waste. "The political situation has put us through a strange dilemma that we never experienced before," said Mohammad Khalilur Rahman, the manager. "There were just a handful of guests we did not know what to do with the left over food," he added. People who had to postpone or reschedule their programmes said uncertainty provoked them to take such decisions. "Most of my guests said they were not willing or unable to come out of their homes because of the political chaos and instead of making preparations I cancelled the programme," said Rafiqul Islam, a bridegroom whose reception was to take place on Saturday. Beside other losses he had to pay 20 percent of the rent to the community centre authority as per contract. "When the situation turns normal, I will have to make fresh preparations," he said. Anisul Haque, father of a bride whose wedding was to be held at Naya Paltan on Saturday was

very disappointed as he was unable to complete the programme. "I wonder why I had to choose this particular time for my daughter's wedding," he said. "I just wanted to give my daughter away in the presence of all my near and dear ones but the fighting between the political parties prompted me to postpone the wedding indefinitely, although I had made all preparations," he added. Beside the ceremonial and official programmes a number cultural programmes were cancelled. The 2nd German-Bangla Poetry Festival organised by Meghdut Aritri Sangsad and Goethe Institute, Dhaka is one such programme that has been postponed. The festival that was scheduled from October 27 to 29 will now be held from November 10 to 12, the organisers said in a press release on Saturday. Schools, colleges and universities in the city that were scheduled to be reopened this week after the Eid vacation but had to be remained closed as the authorities did not want to take any risk with the lives of their students.



Last week's violent incidents is a grim reminder of our politics.

Many of these institutes including the Dhaka University have already re-scheduled the vacation while others are likely to

be opened from next week.

health, busservices, airlines & train timing

HOSPITALS & CLINICS

- Ahsania Mission Cancer & General Hospital**
9008919, 8051618
- Apollo Hospitals Dhaka**
9891680-4, 01713046684/85
Emergency no. 9896623, 0171409000
- Bangladesh Medical College & Hospital**
9118202, 8115843
- Central Hospital**
9660015-19,
- China Bangla Hospital (JV) Ltd**
8913674
- Dhaka Medical College Hospital**
8626812-16
- Gana Shasthyo Kendra**
8617208, 8617383, 8620178,
- Greenland Hospital**
8912663
- Gulshan Mother & Child Clinic**
8822738, 8812992
- Holy Family Hospital**
8311721-25
- Islami Bank Hospital**
9333739
- Japan Bangladesh Friendship Hospital**
8828855, 8827575
- Labaid Cardiac Hospital**
8610793-8
- Marie Stopes Clinic**
8821874
- Medinova Medical Services Ltd**
8620353,
- Monowara Hospital**
8318135, 8319802
- Pangu Hospital**
9112150, 9113041
- PG Hospital (BSMMU)**
9614545-9, 9612550-4

BUS SERVICES

- Rashmono General Hospital**
8317606, 9557354, 8317819
- Ratan's Dental Clinic**
9111090
- Salimullah Medical College Hospital**
7319002-6
- Samorita Hospital Ltd**
9131901
- Shahid Suhrawardy Hospital**
9122560-78
- Shishu Hospital**
8116061-2, 9119119
- Drooti**
8014563
- Eagle Paribahan**
7101504
- Green Line Paribahan**
9339623, 9342580, 8353005
- Hanif Enterprise**
9120116
- Keya Paribahan**
7101894, 7101250, 9121280
- Modern Enterprise**
9123743
- Neptune A/C Coach Service**
7101945, 7101951, 9123092
- Shohag Paribahan (Pvt) Ltd**
9334152, 8316766, 8126293
- Shoukhin Paribahan**
8014397, 9001796
- Silk Line**
7102461
- Shyamoli Paribahan**
9333803

BLOOD BANK

- Bangladesh Red Crescent Blood Bank**
9116563
- Modern Clinic & Blood Center**
9883948
- Sandhani, Dhaka Medical College**
9668690

AIRLINES

- lines**
- Aeroflot**
9559930, 9559111, Fax: 9563787
- Air India**
8617783, 8611929, Fax: 9670591
- Biman Bangladesh Airlines**
8917400-19 9560151, 9559610
Airport Office: 8917400, Fax:8913005
- British Airways**
8815111, Fax: 8815346,
- Cathay Pacific**
9557117, Fax: 9562667
- Druk Air**
9862243, 9892862,
- Emirates**
9892801, 9885574-75
- GMG Airlines**
8825845-9, Airport Office:
8960404,8915699, Fax: 8826115
- Gulf Air**
9130123-5, Airport Office: 8914573
- Indian Airlines Ltd**
9555915, 9557813,
- Kuwait Airways**
9115182, 9118829

TRAIN TIMING

- Subarna Express**
Leaves Dhaka at 4:30 pm
- Mahanagar Prabhati**
Leaves Dhaka at 7:30 am
- Mahanagar Godhuli**
Leaves Dhaka at 3-15 pm
- Turna**
Leaves Dhaka at 11-00 pm
- Parabat Express**
Leaves Dhaka at 6-40 am
- Joyantika Express**
Leaves Dhaka at 12-45 pm
- Upaban Express**
Leaves Dhaka at 9-45 pm
- Tista Express**
Leaves Dhaka at 7-00 am
- Ekata Express**
Leaves Dhaka at 5-00 pm
- Upakul Express**
Leaves Dhaka at 8-00 pm
- Agnibeena Express**
Leaves Dhaka at 9-20 pm

LIBRARY & INFO-

- Malaysia Airlines**
9888211-20
Airport Office: 8916953, Fax: 9890478
- PIA**
9349293-5, Fax: 9345300
- Singapore Airlines**
8811504-7, 9883259
Airport Office: 8911928, Fax: 8811503
- Thai Airways**
8314711-18, 8914343
- Virgin Atlantic Airways**
8816324-5, Fax: 9896481
- Libraries, Cultural and Information Centers**
- Central Public Library- 8626001-4,**
- Shishu Academy- 9564128**
- Shilpakala Academy- 8614673**
- Bangla Academy- 8619550**
- Islamic Foundation- 9550280,**
- 9556407**
- Nazrul Institute- 9114602**
- Ford Foundation- 8116133**
- Alliance Francaise- 8611557**
- Information Resource Center, The**
- American Center - 8813440-4,**
- 9886395-9**
- British Council- 8618867-8,**
- 8618905-7**
- Community Development Library-**
- 8113769, 8113604**
- Goethe Institute Int'l- Dhaka-**
- 9126525-6**
- Indian Information Centre &**
- Cultural Library- 8850141-2**
- The Russian Cultural Centre-**
- 9116314, 9118531, 9118314**
- Drik Photo Gallery- 9120125,**
- 8112954, 8123412**
- Press Institute of Bangladesh**
- (PIB) 9330081-4**