



thecitythatwas

Human settlement in Dhaka city started from the 7th century, but the natural geomorphological setting began to be modified, probably from the 12th century. In the first phase, until 1850, only the higher grounds, especially the natural levee and Madhupur Clay units along the Buriganga River were selected for urbanisation.

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KHOKA'S CORNER



STAR PHOTO

Authorities of the Ibn Sina Trust, a leading healthcare provider in the city, has taken up two-third of a footpath in front of its under-construction Trust Bhaban on Satmasjid Road in the name of beautification. A short wall has been built on the remaining part of the footpath, the entire walkway has become unusable for pedestrians. Ibn Sina authorities said they had obtained permission from the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) to build the structure on the footpath but DCC Estate Department officials denied giving 'any permission to anyone to build anything on a city footpath'. Will our honourable mayor look into the matter.

Dhaka voters' list murkier than the rest

CITY CORRESPONDENT

There is no alternative to thorough correction of the 'updated voter list' particularly in the urban areas for a meaningful parliamentary election, according to findings of various non-government poll monitoring bodies.

Officials of various organisations working on election monitoring feared that anomalies had taken place in making the updated as well as fresh voter lists.

"Inclusion of fake voters and exclusion of eligible ones have occurred rampantly both in the fresh and updated lists particularly in the urban areas like the capital city, said Badiul Alam Majumdar, secretary of Shujan, an NGO working on issues of good governance.

"This is why there is no alternative to thorough correction of the voter list in the major city areas," said Majumdar, also global vice president of The Hunger Project.

"Above all, the common men have no trust in the updated list, as it is full of flaws. That is the fact that calls for thorough corrections of the entire list," Majumdar added.

One-third of the six percent 'excess voters' in the country are from Dhaka Division, said a survey report by Washington-based National Democratic Institute (NDI) for International Affairs.

Najia Khogyani Hashemee, project manager of NDI, said, "We are not saying that the voters are fake but there are names in the list which should not have been there. There are names which should have been there."

Dhaka had about 29 lakh voters in the existing list. The fresh voter list contains 37 lakh voters while the updated list 45.35 lakh.

As per the controversial updated list in the capital the percentage of rise in the number of voters is astounding. In

Cantonment area the number rose by 77.83 percent, in Motijheel by 74.26 percent, in Pallabi by 73.96 percent, in Dhanmondi by 72.66 percent, in Mirpur by 71.92 percent, and in Uttara by 68.96 percent. The Kotwali area, however, witnessed only 28.52 per cent rise while other areas witnessed between 45 and 61 percent rise.

The updated voter list showed at least 1.28 crore unaccounted voters or ghost voters on the basis of the 2001 census report of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) that shows 8.02 crore eligible people to be registered as voters.

Allegations of disenfranchisement and fictitious names are prompting speculations of huge number of fake voters. This vot-

ers list was prepared in a hurry in the fog end of immediate past government.

In order to make an assessment of the accuracy of the updated voter list presented on September 7, Fair Election Monitoring Association (Fema) carried out a survey of voter sampling in six constituencies of six divisional cities.

The Fema surveyed 690 dwelling houses of the Dhaka-10 constituency.

The monitors found that 241 out of 690 houses had not been visited by the enumerators of the Election Commission for collection of claims or inclusion of name, objections or deletion of names and applications or corrections.

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A survey conducted by Shujan Majumdar.

Failure to send enumerators from door to door and publish draft voter list amount to violation of the article 11.1 of the Electoral Roll Ordinance.

Senior Assistant Secretary (Election) of the Election Commission Forhad Ahmed Khan said that correction is a continuous process. Anybody can come for addition or deletion in the list.

"Some lapses might have occurred in the process of updating, which is acceptable to some extent," he said.

Anybody can have a look at the updated list with the Thana Registration Officers, District Election Officers and Union Parishads.

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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.

"There is no example of such vandalism not only in the history of Bangladesh High Court but also in the subcontinent ... My leader [Khaleda Zia] will buy me four cars"

--Shahjahan Omar
Former state minister for law

Told reporters after an angry mob torched his vehicle on the Supreme Court premises to protest chief justice's staying proceedings of three writ petitions on the legality of the president's taking charge as chief adviser, his 'unilateral' decisions and announcement of polls schedule, on Thursday.

Source: The Daily Star.

"The way the advisers have been inviting the journalists and talking to them ... It seems that they are working to stop free and fair election"

--Khaleda Zia
BNP chairperson and former premier

Said at a view exchange meeting with the leaders and workers of Bangladesh Bank Employees Federation, on Wednesday.

Source: The Daily Star.

"Either that person was just a pedestrian or it was a made-up photograph"

--Mahmudur Rahman
Former energy adviser

Told reporters when asked how the photographers got the picture showing one of his guests hiding face with his jacket after coming out of his party, on Sunday. Source: The Daily Star.

"I will not answer any of your questions. You can, if you like, write that I refused to answer any questions from you"

--Prof Sirajul Islam Khan
Vice-chancellor, Jagannath University (JNU) and project director of JNU project

Told a reporter when asked about demolition of an age-old building and new construction without approval from Rajuk, on Saturday.

Source: The Daily Star.

"Let us bury this kind of questions today. No one should ask me this question in future"

--Modabbir Hossain Chowdhury
Newly appointed election commissioner, former inspector general of police and an aspirant BNP candidate in the past

Told reporters who asked him about his political connections, on Monday.

Source: The Daily Star.

"Our duty is on the front side. We do not know who set the rooms on fire at the back-side of the office"

--Rakib
An on-duty constable at an election office in Khulna

Told reporters after unknown people set fire to the office in the presence of police, on Monday. Source: The Daily Star.

"The four-party alliance has cooked up a multilayered conspiracy like an 'onion' we are peeling off one layer only to find another layer..."

--Rashed Khan Menon
President, Workers Party of Bangladesh

Said at a commemorative meeting to mark the 19th death anniversary of Mohammad Toaha, one of the pioneers of the communist movement in Bangladesh, on Tuesday. Source: The Daily Star.

Compiled by: Durdana Ghias

Urban development watchdog comes into being

TAWFIQUE ALI

The much-awaited Urban Development Committee has finally come into being with a wide mandate of overseeing all kinds of development activities in the capital city and making recommendations on the planned growth of the city.

The high-powered committee, formed as provided in the Building Construction Rules of 2006, at its first meeting on November 16 decided that the building rules of 1996 would be annulled by December 31 and the new rules come into force by January 1, 2007.

The committee also formed a five-member subcommittee to prepare a report on the inconsistencies, lapses and drawbacks in the new building construction rules.

The public works secretary recommended an inter-ministerial

meeting later to ensure coordination in implementing the building rules.

The 12-member committee comprises three top government officials and nine private sector representatives from various professional bodies. The government officials are the works secretary, the Rajuk chairman and the DCC chief executive officer.

The committee members at the first meeting nominated the works secretary as the chairperson of the committee.

Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon and president of the Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh (Rehab) Abdul Awal have been nominated vice-chairmen and the Rajuk chairman the members secretary.

The non-government representatives include presidents (or vice-presidents or general secretaries) of Bangladesh Institute of

Planners, Bangladesh Institute of Architects and Institute of Engineers, Bangladesh, two professors from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology and three representatives from the civil society members.

Prof Nazrul Islam on behalf of the Centre for Urban Study and advocate Syeda Rizwana Hasan from Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association are committee members.

The committee will look into whether building construction is in consistency with the building rules in the Dhaka metropolitan area. It will also ensure justice and equity on enforcing the construction rules.

The Urban Development Committee will have the authority to hear appeal from aggrieved builders and to hold public hearing on receipt of complaint on any irregularities at any construction work.

One of the major terms of reference empowers the committee with comprehensive mandate to oversee overall development activities in the city and make policy recommendations for a just and planned urban growth, said Prof Islam.

The committee has the authority to take any aberration in development programme into consideration on its own and also on receipt of specific complaints, he said.

"Formation of the Urban Development Committee should have widely been publicised in the mass media," said Prof Islam. "But in fact, there were no media representatives at its first meeting, neither the public was informed of its formation."

Rajuk Chairman KAM Haroon also said, "It should have been made widely public that the much-awaited Urban Development Committee has started functioning."

Mosque architecture under threat

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

Space constraints caused by large scale land grabbing, high-rise building construction, unplanned restoration and air pollution pose constant threats to the historical mosque architectures, said historians at the launch of UNESCO's recent publication -- 'Mosque Architecture in Bangladesh'-- at the Goethe Institute.

"Most of Dhaka's mosque architectures are in appalling conditions. The mosque is a place of worship and can no longer be peaceful if it is squeezed between buildings," said Wolfgang Vollmann, UNESCO, Bangladesh's outgo-

ing country representative.

"It will be difficult to protect Dhaka's historical mosques, as the damage has already been done. The purpose of publishing this book is to document the rich heritage and enhance people's knowledge of mosque architecture," he added.

Author of the book Dr Abu Sayeed M Ahmed pointed out that Bangladesh has a rich heritage of mosque architecture dating back to the 13th century; most of which that are well known were built during the Mughal era.

A large number of these mosques still survive and they need to be properly documented, analysed, published and conserved to recall the history of art and architecture of

our glorious past. "If we study these mosques we will be able to study the history of Bangladesh," Ahmed said.

"The book offers a comprehensive thought on the evolution and influence of mosque architecture in Bangladesh. It represents 30 selected mosques classified in three phases; Early Islamic, Mughal and Colonial. It is a detail compilation of text, illustration and photographs," he further said.

Since 1987 UNESCO has been campaigning to safeguard the world heritage sites in Bangladesh. The campaign includes financial assistance, technical support for restoration, and monitoring of work. Although UNESCO is constantly promoting International

Charter for Restoration (1964), it is not satisfied with the restoration work done by the Department of Archaeology.

UNESCO officials claim that the original features of the Malitola mosque of Old Dhaka and Khan Jahan Ali mosque, Bagerhat have been lost after restoration work.

"There are hardly any guidelines for restoration in Bangladesh. Many mistakes during the course of restoration have completely altered some of these mosques," Ahmed said. "The book is designed for three types of readers. It explains the proper ways of restoration. Art historians and students of Architecture will also benefit from the book," he added.



The historical Satmasjid in Mohammadpur area has been subjected to whitewash with its adjacent landscape spoilt by mindless construction.

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