

Tilted bldg: Rajuk had cancelled its plan

By Staff Correspondent
Neighbours sighed in relief as the house owner started demolishing the tilted seven-storey building at Mohammadpur in the capital yesterday.

A group of construction workers began hammering and shovelling the building that tilted Wednesday — the third such incident in Dhaka recently.

The Rajdhani Unnayan Karpakkhya (RAJUK) officials said they had earlier cancelled the design of the building at 6/21, Tajmahal Road because of its erratic construction and had instructed the owner to tear it down.

The owner, Habibur Rahman, denied allegations of having constructed the building on a faulty plan using sub-standard construction materials.

However, he admitted that the construction of the sixth and seventh floors and a huge water tank on the roof-top was illegal.

The seven-storey building tilted Wednesday afternoon and leaned against a two-storey building, creating panic in the whole neighbourhood.

The families occupying eight units of the building were all evacuated by Wednesday evening.

Neighbours alleged that Habibur Rahman's house was built without a foundation while there were many faults in construction.

They said the owner had constructed the rest of the six floors on a weak ground floor that was built during the Pakistan period.

"He kept on making the house higher and higher without ever thinking of the load

Door open for dialogue

From Page 1 Col 7
divisional cities.

The longest serving BNP secretary who was unwell and taking rest on the advice of his doctors said, "Indeed, if the Opposition's intention was to evolve a system to hold free and fair general elections then the dialogue could have succeeded."

"If they made up their mind to oust Begum Zia then the situation would get worse," Talukdar cautioned.

He said the opposition parties had rejected all the ruling party proposals as well as Sir Ninian's own plan which the Commonwealth emissary prepared after long discussions with both sides to the talks.

"If we set some basic principle and stick to it then no negotiation attempt can succeed," Talukdar said, adding, "The opposition parties failed to give any concessions for the dialogue to succeed."

One the other hand, he claimed, the ruling party shifted from its original position and agreed to include opposition members in the interim cabinet.

Accepting Sir Ninian's proposal, the BNP Secretary General said, "Any sensible man must accept the proposal."

Refuting the Opposition allegation that the interim government proposed by both the ruling party and Sir Ninian would not be "workable," Talukdar said that could have been a balanced government for the interim period of the elections and could run the country by accomplishing routine state work and supervising the elections.

He termed the present political situation as "volatile" and the opposition parties responsible for this situation.

Talukdar declined to comment on the possible future political situation by saying, "Everything depends on the Opposition's decisions and actions."

In reply to a question, Salam Talukdar said there will be two options before the ruling party if the Opposition MPs resign en masse from Parliament — holding by-elections or fresh general elections by dissolving Parliament.

Giving a lengthy background of how the opposition parties formulated the demand for a caretaker government, Talukdar said they took the Magura bypolls of last March as an issue although more than a dozen parliamentary bypolls, the municipal elections and the city corporation elections were held under Begum Khaleda Zia's government.

"How can they say the next elections will not be fair before the elections are held?" the BNP leader wondered.

He said the formula the opposition parties gave on June 27, was neither fair nor neutral. So how would they ensure free and fair elections by that formula?

The Opposition proposed formula said that the parties agitating for a caretaker government would choose a person to head the interim government.

Talukdar also described the

ground floor could take," commented Nurul Akhter Litu, a neighbour.

The owner alleged that the tilt was not his fault, rather it was because of an excavation next to his building.

"They have dug so deep that it had weakened the foundation of my building which was otherwise very strong," a nervous Habibur Rahman told The Daily Star.

People in the locality alleged that they had earlier informed RAJUK and local police of the faulty building but no action was taken until the tilting. Even the minimum safety measures were not taken.

"We submitted an application to the RAJUK back in April," said Syed Ahmed, whose plot was being excavated.

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There is no legal provision that we can supervise construction of any building or even test the foundation of any building," said a senior RAJUK official.

"There is a building construction code," he said, "However, that is hardly enforced."

"At the moment ... tearing down an investment was the only punishment an unauthorised builder could receive," he added.

The owners have to pay for approval of the building design, bear the cost of construction and even the expenses of tearing down their buildings.

During the summit, the two sides agreed to take further initiatives to encourage export of manpower including professionals from Bangladesh to the Maldives.

Begum Zia, the current Chairperson of the SAARC, and President Gayoom reaffirmed that the SAARC, as a forum of regional cooperation, could contribute significantly towards the strengthening of relations among the member states in the interest of promoting regional peace, progress and the well-being of their peoples.

They also expressed satisfaction at the steady progress in the implementation of the decisions taken in the 7th SAARC Summit held in Dhaka.

The two leaders felt the necessity to continue efforts for developing cooperation between the SAARC and other regional bodies, such as the ASEAN and the European Union. In this connection, they discussed the outcome of Begum Zia's recent visit to Malaysia, a leading member of the ASEAN.

The two leaders expressed satisfaction at the positive development in the Middle East with the recent signing of the agreements between the PLO and Israel and between Jordan and Israel. They also welcomed the establishment of a democratic, united and non-racial South Africa under the leadership of President Nelson Mandela.

The two SAARC leaders expressed deep concern at the continuing human tragedies in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rwanda and Somalia and reaffirmed their supports to all peaceful efforts in resolving the problems.

The two leaders expressed concern at the degradation of the global environment.

Begum Zia extended an invitation to the President of the Maldives to visit Bangladesh at a mutually convenient time.

They also focussed on current global economic situation and noted with concern that ever widening gap between the rich North and poor South remained the major challenge facing the international community and hoped that the developed countries would immediately adopt the special measures, promised to the least developed countries, under the Uruguay Round Agreement.

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