

# SAVE DHAKA

## URBANISATION & HOUSING: PART-6

### Lack of zoning compounds problems

By Morshed Ali Khan



The city's Motijheel area, the country's biggest commercial district.

Last year, residents of the Satmasjid Road in Dhanmondi Residential Area signed a petition asking the government to officially declare the area a commercial zone.

The Works Ministry took a cautious step and allowed the landowners to turn their premises into commercial centres provided permission was acquired by depositing 15 per cent of the total value of their plots with the government exchequer.

Unofficially, like any other residential areas in Dhaka, Dhanmondi accommodates quite a number of offices, shops, schools, clinics and restaurants.

The 'off-beat' request from the residents of Satmasjid Road to put an end to their peaceful lives came because the amenities they enjoyed were still inadequate.

So, why not they turn their 'already changed' residential area into commercial areas and improve its civic facilities?

Dhanmondi is just one example of the changing face of the city's residential areas and encroachment of commercial zones upon those.

Acute shortage of decent commercial centres in the capital has pushed many of the business activities into the residential areas. With the economic growth in the country over the years and growth of Dhaka, demand for commercial spaces has multiplied by many folds.

Government offices and autonomous bodies, private houses, multinational companies, and other commercial ventures have joined an intense competition for having their offices in centrally located areas — far from the maddening crowd, from the menacing traffic jams, heated political demonstrations and poor civic amenities.

As a result, the boundaries of the traditional so called business districts have been deleted by the dire needs of the people and commercial centres have spread from Motijheel or Dilkhusha areas to as north as Gulshan, Banani and Uttara.

This has happened due to uneven growth of the city and its commercial areas, pointed out the city planners of the Rajdhanee Unnayan Kartripakkha (RAJUK).

Traditionally, the number of commercial centres would multiply with the growth of the city, they said.

But in the case of Dhaka, the growth of residential areas have outstripped the growth of the commercial centres, the planners added.

Several places in the capital that still hold the characteristics of the commercial areas are: Motijheel, Dilkhusha, Gulistan, Purana Paltan, Circular Road, Nayapaltan, Fakirerpool, Kawranbazar and Mahakhali.

However, many other places are now identified as residential-cum-commercial areas. Some of these are:

ket or Hindi songs at the lottery stalls.

There are only seven parking lots in the Motijheel and Dilkhusha areas. Compared to the users of these parking facilities, the number is too inadequate.

The influx of cars in the areas on any given working day is much higher than the authorities have arrangements for. Hundreds of cars are thus found parked haphazardly on the already crowded streets.

But the RAJUK rule clearly stresses that every building in the city must be built with provisions for adequate parking space.

The traditional commercial areas of Dhaka has also changed over the years. Earlier, areas like Lalbagh, Mughaltully, Babubazar and Nawabpur were exclusive residential places.

Most of the landowners of these areas have later shifted to the actual residential areas, leaving their houses as shops, markets or warehouses.

Of late, the gradual inaccessibility to the commercial areas have prompted the city managers ponder over other options.

RAJUK has plans underway to build up a model commercial-cum-residential area four miles east of Baridhara, under Ruppang thana.

"Purbanchal — the name for the proposed area — will have all the necessary facilities that a residential-cum-commercial area may have," said Zakir Hossain, Chief Town Planner of RAJUK.

Besides developing commercial zones elsewhere, experts suggest that construction of high-rise buildings in the established commercial areas could also actually resolve the problems.

In a bid to cope with the increasing demand for commercial areas, RAJUK town planners has also launched the "Extension of Motijheel" project recently.

The low land between the Bangladesh Bank and the WAPDA building in the east is being filled by the agency.

"The plots will be sold on auction," said the chief town planner, "where construction of modern multi-storied structures will be encouraged."

"In addition, we are giving permission to most major road-side constructions to build markets and office premises. All the main roads in Uttara, Gulshan, Banani, Dhanmondi and Joar Sahara on the Airport Road are undergoing rapid transitions from purely residential status to commercial."

As the city of Dhaka continues to evolve, the city managers need to sit and plan out a central business district, an expert said. We have to bear in mind the need of prestigious business activities and also of the thousands of informal business sections who virtually have nowhere to turn to," he noted. (Readers' contributions solicited.)

Kalyan Bhaban is Tk 18 a month, according to the sources.

The office rent varies on which particular place or on which floor it is located, how far it is from the main road, how the utilities are etc.

The rental tariff increase by an average of 10 per cent every year, business sources said.

"Now-a-days, a good number of local business houses have some kind of link with foreign firms," commented Syed Jahangir, director of a private jute product exporting house at Motijheel.

"We have buyers coming from around the world and we need peaceful places to do business quietly," he said. "Motijheel has already become too crowded. So we are planning to move elsewhere... may be to Gulshan."

Asked where the problems were with Motijheel, businessmen there said these were notorious traffic jams, lack of modern communication facilities like telephones, faxes and mail, hotels and restaurants, recreation facilities, lack of utilities, parking lots. More-over many multi-storied buildings do have lifts as they were built in the earlier days, they said.

The whole area is filled with cars honking hydraulic horns, smoke emitting from the automobiles, processions yelling about their strong demands, loudspeakers blaring for a new product in the mar-

Dhanmondi, Lalmatia, Muhamadpur, Banani and Gulshan.

Since the creation of the Dhaka Improvement Trust in 1956, predecessor of the present RAJUK, only seven commercial areas have been developed in Dhaka by the agency at Paribagh, Yusuf Market, Naya Bazar, New Market, Kawran Bazar and Gulshan.

However, since then, the population of Dhaka shot up to 33 lakh in 1994 from a mere five lakh in 1961.

In 1961, Dhaka's approximate area was only 45 square km and now the city covers an area of more than 225 square km.

Motijheel and Dilkhusha, the oldest planned commercial areas, have already reached its saturating point in terms of location, land use, communication, transport and utilities.

The price of land per katha at Motijheel and Dilkhusha has increased 24 times from Taka 50,000 in 1970s, according to a rough calculation. So has the rent of the commercial buildings.

The monthly rent for every square-foot of Motijheel's offices ranged between Tk three and Tk seven during the 1960s.

Now, each sq-foot of the area is now charged between Tk 10 and Tk 18, according to a rough estimate based on information from businessmen.

The rent for every square foot at the impressive Sena



British Queen Mother speaks to veteran holder of Victoria Cross, Subedar Major Umrao Singh from India, who won his medal during the Burma campaign at the VE Day commemorations taking place in London's Hyde Park yesterday. — AFP photo

# The Midnight File

## Dead heat seen in French polls

PARIS, May 6: After last-minute appeals to a deeply divided French electorate, conservative Jacques Chirac and Socialist Lionel Jospin headed into Sunday's presidential election that polls saw as a virtual dead heat. Unemployment of 12.2 per cent is the key issue after 14 years under Socialist President Francois Mitterrand and after two years of a conservative government. Many French voters were uncertain which side of the mainstream to choose, reports AP.

## Nor'wester hits SHERPUR

SHERPUR, May 6: A severe nor'wester accompanied by hailstorm swept over sadar and Nokla thanas of the district this evening. Witnesses said thousands of kucha houses were destroyed in the 15 minutes tempest. The nor'wester also damaged standing crops, uprooted trees and grounded electric poles in the areas, reports UNB.

## EC to float tender

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included in the technical body. Justice Sadeque said.

"We will also seek suggestions from those in the Bangladesh Computer Society. After compilation and careful evaluation of every opinion and detail competent companies would be enlisted as pre-qualified," said a high official of the EC Secretariat.

When his attention was drawn to a recent newspaper report regarding attempts at manipulation of the selection process, the official said there was no question of choosing any particular company before the actual floating of the tender.

About a recent statement by a local software trader the ID cards could be prepared at the cost of only Tk one crore, the official said. "We shall also invite him to give us his ideas and we shall be only too ready to accept his proposals if those are found feasible."

The government has estimated that about Tk 300 crore would be needed for the preparation of ID cards.

The CEC will brief journalists tomorrow at his office to discuss the progress of work on the ID cards.

Following the passage of the

EC Bill in Parliament last year, the EC took up, on a priority basis, a project to issue voters ID cards and the creation of an electoral database before the next general elections, due in a few months.

Registration of voters will start all over the country on May 25. The information collectors and identifiers will make house-to-house visits to collect data until May 31.

Following this, supervisors will make similar visits to compare and cross-check the work of the enumerators from June 1. Then the assistant registration officers will begin spot comparisons from June 15.

For every 200 voters there will be one information collector while a supervisor will oversee the work of four information collectors.

Each rural union will have one assistant registration officer. In the urban areas his responsibilities will be limited to each ward. The Thana Election Officers will coordinate the entire work.

The EC secretariat, in the meantime, has advised all the District Election Commission offices to exercise utmost caution in the appointment of the information collectors so that no controversy arises, sources said.

The draft voters' list will be published on June 25. EC officials said, adding that work for actual preparation of ID cards will have begun by that date.

## Four killed in city incidents

By DMCH Correspondent

Four people including two teenagers were killed and four others injured in separate incidents in the city yesterday.

Tanja Sultana, 15, succumbed to her burn injuries at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) early yesterday.

Sources said that Tanja, daughter of Yusuf Khandaker of Kaptanbazar, reportedly tried to commit suicide by setting herself on fire Friday afternoon.

Her brother Saïdur Rahman, 25, also received burn injuries when he tried to save Tanja. Both were admitted to the DMCH.

Meanwhile, Dolly Akhter, 18, a garments worker, succumbed to her injuries at the DMCH. She received serious injuries after falling from the sixth floor of the Orchid Garments in Gulshan Circle 1 yesterday afternoon.

Shahabuddin, 35, took insecticide following a quarrel with his father at Bangshinagar, Sarulla, in the old part of the city. Shahabuddin died at the DMCH.

Suratunnessa, 45, was killed on the spot when a speeding bus ran over her near Sonargaon hotel.

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## 51.6m absolute poor

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veyed in each PSU with the average size of a household placed at over five persons.

The average monthly income per household was placed at Tk 3,341 with an expenditure level of Tk 2,944 and consumption level of Tk 2,904 per household per month. During 1988-89, the corresponding figures were Tk 2,865, Tk 2,592 and Tk 2,554 per month respectively.

The survey revealed that the share of food and beverage in total consumption increased from 65.45 per cent in 1988-89 to 66.58 per cent in 1991-92. Expenditure on food increased by 1.6 per cent in the rural areas while it declined minutely in the urban areas.

The increase in food expenditure while the per capita income level has gone up is a paradox as the share of food is expected to decline when income rises, the survey report acknowledged.

"Apparent increase in overall food share in the face of rising per capita income appears to be somewhat inconsistent," the report said.

"One explanation is the coverage of non-food items in the survey) is relatively poorer compared to coverage of food items." Nationally, the average consumption expenditure of Tk 2,904 consists of: 66.58 per cent for food items; 4.7 per cent for clothing and footwear; 10.43 per cent for fuel and lighting; 0.92 per cent for household effect; and 11.75 per cent of miscellaneous items including personal care items, education, health, transportation and other costs.

The survey found that the national average per capita daily rice intake increased

from 441.7 grams in 1988-89 to 472.8 grams in 1991-92 while average consumption of major food items during the period increased from 868.8 grams to 886.2 grams per person per day respectively.

The consumption of some major food items, however, recorded a decline including wheat, pulses, eggs, milk, fish and sugar. Per capita daily wheat consumption declined from 58.1 grams in 1988-89 to 36.3 grams in 1991-92 while fish intake during the same period slid from 34.8 grams to 34.5 grams, eggs from 5.9 grams to 4.7 grams and milk from 22 grams to 19.1 grams respectively.

The average per capita calorie intake increased from 2,215.3 kilo calories in 1988-89 to 2,265.6 kilo calorie during the latest survey year with the rural intake recorded at 50 kilo calories higher and the urban intake increasing by 74.9 kilo calories.

But the average daily intake of protein declined from 63.66 grams per cent per person in 1988-89 to 62.72 grams in 1991-92.

The report noted that the income ratios accruing to the bottom and top five per cent of the household remained the same at 1:19 during the 1981-92 period while the bottom 40 per cent received 17.4 per cent of the income and the top 10 per cent of the household received 29.2 per cent in 1991-92.

It also pointed out that the percentage of female headed households increased from 4.4 per cent in 1988-89 to 7.5 per cent in 1991-92 while in urban areas the figure went up from 4.1 per cent to 6.6 per cent respectively during the same period.

## Fear still haunts Narsingdi

Abdul Ali Mridha, reportedly well connected with the BNP central committee and powerful cabinet members supported the nomination of one Tarek Ahmed Tarek as the BNP candidate for the post of chairman of the local municipality without Shamsuddin's consent.

Shamsuddin who reportedly enjoyed popular support in the area protested the nomination of Tarek and sided with the Awami League candidate for the post.

The AL candidate, Abdul Malin Sarkar, won the election with active support of Shamsuddin.

Sources said that ever since, Shamsuddin has been boycotted by his fellow partymen as well as the local administration.

"If I telephone the police for any help, they are reluctant," said Shamsuddin. "The district administration as a whole has been acting against me and my supporters."

Look, nobody from the BNP has even rung me to say 'sorry' after my son's killing, he added.

"Right now I can't say which political party I belong to," he said.

Abdul Ali Mridha, who is now staying at the government Circuit House, guarded by a young party activists, said that he was going to demand the dismissal of Shamsuddin from the party.

He denied any involvement in killing of Masud and said that the real killers must be arrested and tried.

Sources in the district administration said that Mridha's family was now living with the acting Superintendent of Police of the district. The SP declined to talk to this correspondent.

Later, when asked about the whereabouts of his family Mridha said that they were staying with a friend.

## Jahanara Imam awards distributed

By Staff Correspondent

Begum Sofia Kamal and the Samilita Sangskritik Jote were awarded the Jahanara Imam Gold Medal for their contributions to the cause of the Nirmul Committee stood for.

Sufia Kamal could not attend the function due to ill health. Her daughter, Syeda Kamal accepted the medal on her behalf.

Earlier, a conference of the city unit of the committee was held at the TSC, where a new committee was formed and programme for 1995 declared. The conference was followed by a citizen's rally.

## Foreign Ministry, FBCCI meet held

Foreign Secretary, Farooq Sobhan, yesterday, said the newly created Trade and Investment Promotion wing of the Foreign Ministry is aimed at ensuring constant and sustained attention on economic activities by Bangladesh's missions abroad, reports UNB.

Speaking at a joint meeting of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sobhan assured full support to the private sector for the cause of economic activities.

FBCCI President Salman F Rahman, members of the federation and senior officials of the ministry attended the meeting at the FBCCI conference room.

## Tk 60cr BSB loans for 7 industries

The Bangladesh Shilpa Bank (BSB) yesterday sanctioned Tk 59.70 crore for setting up two new industries and extension and rehabilitation of five units, reports UNB.

The loan was sanctioned at a meeting of the BSB Board of Directors with its Chairman, ATM Alamgir MP in the chair, officials said.

According to the Akmal Committee recommendations, a total of 410 sick industries will be rehabilitated on group basis. Of the sick units, 45 were financed by the Shilpa Bank, 154 by Sonali Bank, 52 by Agrani Bank, 37 by Janata Bank, 105 by Krishi Bank and 52 by Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank.

The banks altogether will get Tk 314.60 crore from the 410 sick units according to the December 1993 estimate. Of the two new projects, the bank sanctioned Tk 4.26,80,000 for an export-oriented shoe factory at Savar while Tk 12.92 crore was sanctioned for a cement factory at Chhatak in Sunamganj with annual production capacity of 99,000 metric tons.

## SAARC budget

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In its implementation, sources attending the moot said.

The members of the Bangladesh delegation including Latifur Rahman, Immediate Past President, MCCCI and EC Member, SCCI and AKM Shamsuddoha, President of BIAA and EC member SCCI.

Leaders and activists are now leaving the 40-year-old party and joining the 18-year-old BNP to integrate themselves with development activities and serve the nation," she added.

## Indian press

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where the member countries differ like the views to cover bilateral issues within the SAARC parameter and said care should be taken so that the SAARC can move ahead.

## SHIFTING OF CORPORATE OFFICE

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