

Weekly weather forecast for the city		Today		Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday		Saturday			
WEEK AHEAD		High 32C	Low 25C	Humid, afternoon	High 31C	Low 24C	Humid, thunderstorms later	High 30C	Low 26C	Cloudy and humid, with rain	High 31C	Low 26C	Humid, with chance of rain	High 31C	Low 26C	Couple of showers	Couple of thunderstorms
																	source: accuweather.com

Development without direction

Lack of coordination among service providers remains the biggest obstacle to the development of the city



There have been instances in the past of a single major road being repaired and dug up four times in a period of six months.

SULTANA RAHMAN

Lack of coordination among service providers remains the biggest obstacle to the development of the city.

For years, successive governments and their leaders have talked about this pressing problem only to end up in a mess of haphazard and exhaustive development endeavors. There have been instances in the past of a single major road being repaired and dug up four times in a period of six months.

Former mayor of Dhaka City Corporation, Mohammad Hanif, not knowing how to improve the situation insisted on a 'metropolitan government', which he thought might help contain the mounting urban problems.

But the idea of a metropolitan government never saw daylight. Instead, the then government formed an 'urban coordination committee' that would involve about twenty different utility service-providing departments, with about fifteen ministries also included in its implementation.

The mayor and the Local Government and Rural Development minister jointly being in charge of the committee, it never worked. The first handful of meetings went well, but soon the minister and the mayor lost interest and began asking officials to conduct the meetings. Soon, the whole setup collapsed and the committee was officially 'abandoned'. It now exists only on paper.

Like Hanif, the serving mayor Sadek Hossain Khoka is quite

vociferous about lack of coordination and has suggested a number of steps including that of bringing the corporation under the direct supervision of the Prime Minister's office.

To solve the coordination problem, the last committee was formed in April this year under a 'good governance' scheme, led by principal secretary to Prime Minister, to coordinate all departments and organisations following the lack of coordination among them. The committee allegedly has yet to act effectively.

Fifteen departments and organisations, including DCC, WASA, DESA, Roads and Highways Department, DESCO, Titas and others, are included in the committee. "The PM's office is not the right place to coordinate these urban bodies effectively. Since April, it has not had a single success in coordination," sources claimed.

The latest crisis has taken place between DCC and the

Ministry of Communication, when the communications ministry declared the toll collection at bus terminals by private companies is totally illegal. Last week, DCC handed over the maintenance of three bus terminals to two private organisations as per the condition imposed by World Bank.

The WB had threatened to withdraw a Tk 55 crore loan to improve the city's bus terminals if the DCC did not hand over operational responsibilities to the private sector. "Tk 55 crore may be withdrawn over the communication ministry's decision, because, if we cannot collect any toll at the bus terminals we may have to cancel the contracts with the private operators" a senior official of DCC fears.

"The city's integrated development cannot go far without the effective 'metropolitan government' that has been urged by different city mayors in the past and present," urban bodies observed.

Generating business out of power loss

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

Moreover, city dwellers have lost their expectation that Dhaka Electricity Supply Authority (DESA) will help them out of this plight. "We have been hearing from DESA for a long time that the problem will be improved very soon, but 'very soon' never comes," said Nurul Huda, who lives at Mirpur.

The result is, people are finding a solution for themselves. Most businesses that sell Instant Power Supply (IPS) machines have experienced an increase in their sales over the last two years. "People who can bear the cost are opting for it as a relief from power outages," said Ashutosh Basak of Rahimafrooz.

However, candles, oil lamps or hurricane lamps are not the only

solution left for those who find an IPS unaffordable. In many areas of the city people are getting electricity supplied by privately run generators. The generator owners offer the facility to people in the neighbourhood through a monthly payment system.

Setting up in business is as simple as buying two or more generators and providing connections by cable. Tofael Gazi of Kazipara owns three 8 kilowatt generators. At least 200 shops and residences in the surrounding area receive power from these.

"The charge is Tk 150 per month to run one electric bulb during power failure," informed Hafiz Dewan, a small food shop owner near Kazipara Siddiqia

Holding tax reviewed after thirteen years

SOHEL ISLAM

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has for the first time decided to reassess holding tax in thirteen years, said sources at the DCC.

Although it is mandatory to reassess the holding tax in every five year it has not been done over the last thirteen years owing to lack of intentions and political reasons of the DCC high-ups, alleged another source of the DCC. The DCC reassessed holding tax in 1989.

The holding tax is one of major income sources of the DCC. At present, the revenue department of the DCC is working on the reassessment of holding tax and will finalise it within a short time.

Over the last ten years, the income from holding tax has not increased at the rate with the mushroom growth of new buildings erected across the city. According to the revenue department, in 1992-93, the collection from holding tax was Tk 51 crore and after ten years, in 2001-2002, it was only Tk 92 crore.

"In 1992, the population of the city was 60 lakh and in 2002, the figure stood at about one crore. Owing to increase pressure of the population, multi-storey houses, shopping malls and other structures have also increased. If we take into this increase account the DCC's income from holding tax should have been at Tk 200 till 2002," said a source at the DCC.

"Over the last these years, many one-storey buildings have been vertically increased. Despite this changing scenario, many of the house owners still pay holding tax for the one storey buildings," added the source.

According to the DCC, the number of houses in the city is about 1.8 lakh. But a competent source of the DCC said, the holding units should be more than 2.5 lakh. It is also alleged that a section of the officials of the revenue department do not carry out their responsibilities properly and do not bring many of the residential units on the list of houses in the first few years of their construction due to their ill interests.

"I have not received any bills of my house since 2000. I am really worried about it. I talked to the revenue department of the DCC and their zonal offices, and they told me that they will send my bills. But I am yet to receive it," Jalil Uddin, an owner of a house at Gulshan.

Despite repeated attempts, the Chief Revenue Officer of the DCC could not reach for his comments.

"All the anomalies of the holding tax will be resolved once its reassessment is complete," said Chief Public Relation Officer of the DCC Abdur Rahman.

Although it is mandatory to reassess the holding tax every five years it has not been done since 1990. The holding tax is one of the major income sources of the DCC



In many areas of the city people are getting electricity supplied by privately run generators.



According to the DCC, the number of houses in the city is about 1.8 lakh. But a competent source of the DCC said, the holding units should be more than 2.5 lakh.