

High-rises to replace worn-out quarters in govt colonies

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

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The government plans to build multistoried apartment complexes inside the Motijheel and Azimpur Government Staff Quarters premises to provide more accommodation for employees.

According to the Ministry of Housing and Public Works' Department of Architecture, a proposal for constructing two 16 storied housing blocks has already been sent to the Prime Minister's Office seeking approval.

Department of Architecture sources informed that there are approximately 11,000 flats and apartments spread around Motijheel, Azimpur, Mirpur, Shahjahanpur, Sher-e-bangla Nagar, Sobhanbagh and some other areas of the city for government employees. However, these quarters fulfil only 10 per cent of the actual demand.

There is unused land in government colonies and some of the buildings have become vulnerable due to age and lack of maintenance. The architecture department wants to demolish a number of worn-out structures and build new apartments there. It also plans to utilise the free land.

The proposal includes construction of a 16-storey building on 22 acres of land of the staff

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An aerial view of Motijheel colony.

quarters in Motijheel. Nine old five-storey flats will be brought down to make space. The new building will have 420 apartments.

The other apartment block will be built at the Azimpur staff quarters. The proposed location is adjacent to the Azimpur graveyard where a row of tin-shed chambers known as 'Party House' had existed earlier. There will be 90 apartments in this building.

The Motijheel government colony has 1936 flats ranging from 500 square feet to 1800 square feet in size. The nine buildings to be demolished have 360 apartments measuring 500 square feet. Built in the 1960s these are now housing class four employees. The new structure will have more floor space, as all the 420 apartments will be 800 square feet ones.

The class four employees living there will also enjoy the privileges of a community space, elevator, parking lot etc.

"As house rent deducted from the salary of class four employees is insufficient to meet the service cost of high-rises, the government has decided to bear the extra expenditure from its funds," said Selina Afroza, deputy chief architect of Department of Architecture.

Azimpur colony has 1686 apartments for first class gazetted officers. These were mostly constructed some four decades ago and have been built in the 1990s.

The fresh apartments will have 1250 square feet of floor space and will be allotted to senior first class gazetted officers. Department of Architecture sources said that there was a plan to construct the new high-rise by filling up a pond inside the colony premises. But thankfully, that controversial step didn't go ahead as it would have violated the Wetland Act informed the deputy chief architect.

She also assured that the proposed buildings have been designed in a way so that there is ample open space around. "We believe that the children of the apartments will get more chance to play and see greenery around them," said Selina Afroza.

ANANDABAZAAR SLUM

A safe haven for drug peddlers

CITY CORRESPONDENCE

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Anandabazaar slum has emerged as the safe haven for drug peddlers and addicts who were driven out of Agargaon and Bhashantek slums in an eviction.

The sales of Pathedine, heroin, Phensidyl go unchecked at Anandabazaar slum, located on railway land in Chankharpool, not far away from Babupura Police Outpost and Police Bhaban.

Chankharpool is known as a hotbed of drug subculture for the youths, including students of Dhaka University, Dhaka Medical College and Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology.

Police stand guard at the nearby crossing and frisk or harass commuters in a show of beefed-up security measures, with the peddlers selling drugs inside the slum tucked away from view. Locals said police of the outpost get a share of drug money.

"The place is protected for drug peddlers and addicts," an Anandabazaar greengrocer said.

An armed gang allegedly under transport leaders Ripon

SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

The infamous Anandabazaar slum.

and Amir is controlling the area and collecting rents from slum dwellers and shop owners, although Bangladesh Railway owns the place.

Anandabazaar slum has added speed to drug peddling in Chankharpool, as it has a labyrinth of escape routes: the drug peddlers and addicts use about 20 to 25 entries to the bazaar and slum. Shops and restaurants have surrounded the area, leaving its centre to end up in the hands of criminals.

"Drug sales are rampant in the slum. The place has become a hideout for other criminals too," said a slum dweller who works for a shop in a nearby market.

Police raided the slum several times but returned empty-handed, as the criminals fled through the maze of escape routes.

"Mugging and extortion are also on the rise. The addicts steal parts of buses at Fulbaria bus terminal and sell them for money," a bus driver said.

PRECIOUS WORKS GET NEW LEASE OF LIFE

Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy organised a 10-day long exhibition of paintings restored during the recent restoration and conservation training workshop conducted by Norwegian experts. At least 52 precious works of famous painters were mended. Held at the National Art Gallery of the Academy, the exhibition concluded yesterday.