

Nowhere

The Dhaka Metropolitan Development plan (1995-2015), approved on 3-8-1997 and published in the Bangladesh Gazette on August 4, 1997, was the work of an American company -- Mott MacDonald Ltd. They were awarded the subcontract in 1992, and the plan saw its completion in 1996. Although the plan includes a Master Plan and even Detailed Area Plans and Structure Plan, the issue of 'density control' remains a blurry area. The bulk of construction, according to the plan, has to be consistent with the demand that the area will place on its infrastructure including roads and utility supplies. Even if this phrase were taken into account the residential

areas of Dhaka would look different today.

"The plan is an incomplete one and a poorly detailed-out project, many things are open to different interpretations," says Haque. "If you plan for one crore people, you have to decide where they will reside. Residences of the rich, the middle class and the other classes have to be located. The areas they will go to work and how they will even travel to their respective work places, these things are addressed in a master plan for any city," adds Haque. He believes that one cannot expect a residential area to remain untouched by other developments and can include conveniences such as schools and market places provided that they do not encroach upon the residential ambience of the localities.

He looks back to the early days of Dhanmondi, when it was acquired by the Pakistan government, he remembers, "The entire area was a stretch of land for cultivation-- *dhan* (Paddy) and *mondi*, the two words stand proof of that." And Haque is emphatic about one thing, which has to do with purity of a residential area.

Dhanmondi now has too many schools, colleges and even universities, all of them are private, and they cater to the recruits that come from a much wider radius. And one of the unusual features of this vast development area is that there were no allocated zones for community centres and market areas in the real plan. At present they are sprouting like mushrooms. As for the residential buildings, since Rajuk had withdrawn the restriction on vertical growth, (which was regulated to three stories before the time when six stories were declared as the limit) residential areas like Dhanmondi and Gulshan saw a rapid growth in large apartment buildings courtesy of the private developers. "It was in the late '80s, during the Ershad regime that the limit was set to six stories," explains Haque.

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III maintained roads and indiscriminate construction characterise Dhanmondi.



Extensions from buildings to accommodate shops spilling over the pavements are a common sight in Dhanmondi.