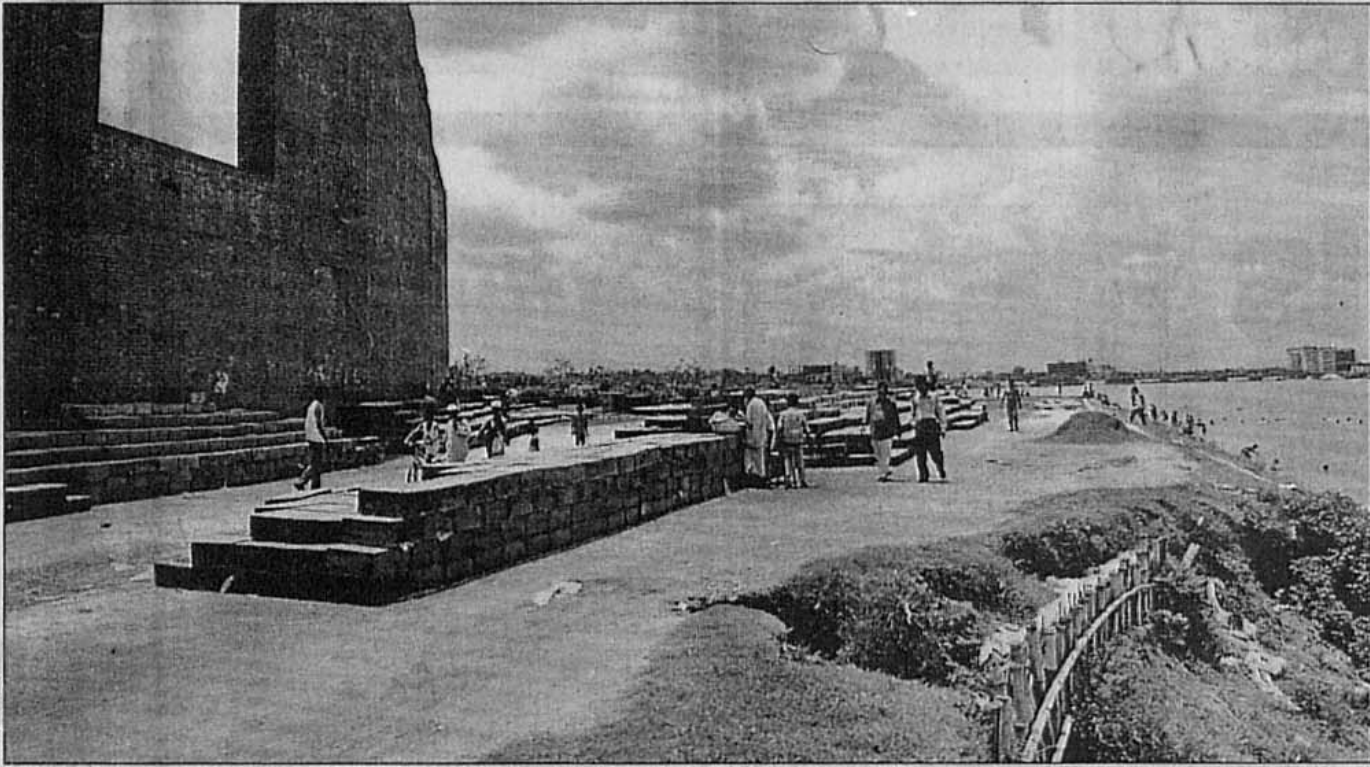




Concrete cement blocks waiting to be used to protect the slope of the Rayerbazar monument.

Living on the edge

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The Rayerbazar Martyr Monument is still under the threat of erosion as another monsoon season and floods have hit its delicate boundary on the bank of the river Buriganga.

The slow go state of the slope protection project, despite the government's approval is not helping matters also.

The Public Works Department (PWD) has built bamboo fences around the memorial area as a desperate measure to protect it from further erosion.

The concrete cement (cc) blocks that were built partially to protect the historical monument are falling apart due to lack of maintenance.

"We could not put the cc blocks at the

slope of Buriganga as the monsoon had already appeared," said a PWD site engineer.

"And now we are concerned about the increase of water level because of the floods. This may cause further erosion," he added.

Although the government gave its approval for the slope protection project to save it from slipping into a ruin due to the erosion, protection work got off to a slow start after the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs received partial funding for the project this month.

"A total of Tk. 1.16 crore had been approved by the planning commission for the running fiscal and 2005. The ministry has initially received Tk.30 lakhs till June 2004 and the remaining amount is expected in the next fiscal," said Didarul Ahsan, deputy

secretary of the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs.

At an inter-ministerial meeting on August 5, 2003, the roles of the ministry and the PWD in supervising, protecting and developing the memorial were specifically decided. According to the decision the ministry will be controlling the funds for the development works and maintenance and the PWD would execute the work.

"The ministry could manage to disburse only Tk.30 lakhs to the PWD on June 30 because of bureaucratic complications," said an executive engineer of PWD.

The project proposal advocates dumping of soil beside the monument, putting geo textile and building cc blocks for protection from the erosion of the river.

Not a tilt, only a crack

FAIZUL A TANIM

The owner of the six-storey building brushed aside newspaper reports of a tilt but admitted that the building had developed a slight crack, and termed the reports a 'hoax'.

The response came after the newspaper reported fear of the collapse of the six-storey building (3/4/B) on the Aga Sadeq Road in Old Dhaka.

Jamal Uddin, the owner, however said the cracks occurred as his neighbour had dug a 13-foot sump very close to the building. He added that an engineer was on the track to 'proper renovation', but denied a collapse in the near future.

The allegations followed a pre-dawn collapse of a six-storey building at Shankhari Bazar on June 9 that killed 19 people in sleep and left many more injured. Locals fear that this building at Aga Sadeq Road also might face the same fate.

"Our neighbour, who owns holding number

3/4, Aga Sadeq Road, dug a 13 foot ditch along-

side the wall of our for a sump. This caused the

building to incline about a half an inch. Nothing

serious happened except for a slight crack that

can be seen between the two buildings".

Residents say that the two buildings are

built without any space between them violat-

ing Rajuk's construction plan.

"We don't think that the matter is serious.

Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka has visited the

site and told residents that the problem can be

fixed," said Khadem Miah, a shopkeeper.

The foundation was laid for a six-storied

building, and that is exactly what we have put

up. We have hired one of the best engineers to

look into this matter and make necessary

corrections," said the Jamal Uddin.

Engineer Shahidullah of Shahidullah Associ-

ates said: "The constructed building had

some minor foundation defects but not dan-

gerous. The digging, however, has enhanced

the defects. After a proper renovation, cur-

rently in progress, the foundation problem will

be solved. There will be therefore no further

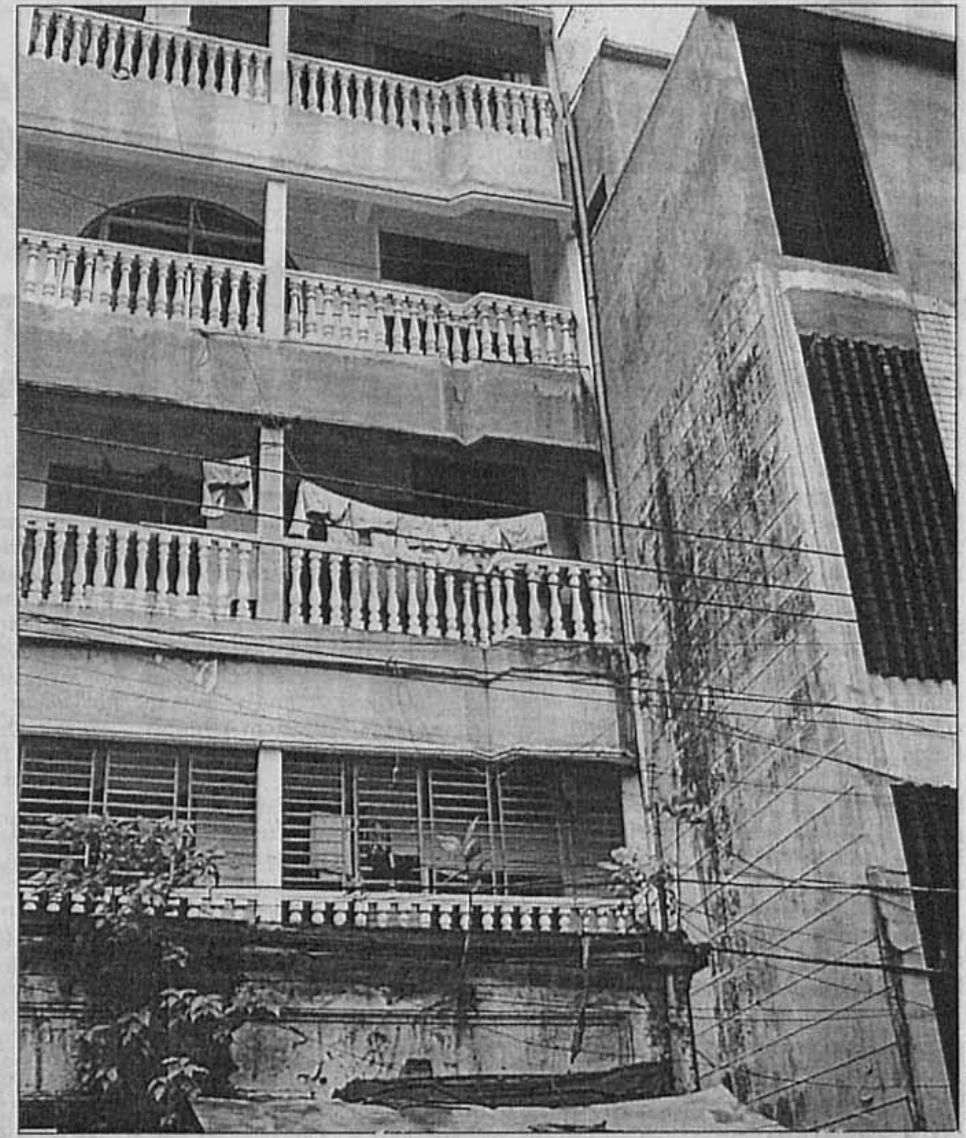
complications."

An engineer from DCC on condition of

anonymity said that a letter has been issued to

the owner of the building according to DCC

ordinance 1983 section 111, subsection 2,



giving a month's ultimatum for proper renovations and safe housing.

The report on the building came up in the wake of Shankhari Bazar tragedy leading the authorities to identify around 165 buildings as unfit for housing.

"The building in question is not in our list of 165 buildings that should be broken down

immediately," says the DCC engineer.

"We are relying on Engineer Shahidullah to remedy the faults. We will monitor the private work done and submit a report to the higher officials," the DCC engineer added.

But why Rajuk permitted the construction of two buildings with no space in between remains a question.

Garment workers unready for post-MFA era

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

Surprise and shock was evident in Fahima's eyes. "What are you talking about? Why would the garment factories get closed?" the 15-year-old inquired with a tense tone.

Like Fahima, many others working in the garments sector have never heard of preferential export quota and do not have any idea of how it may influence their future once the quota is abolished. Fahima had just started a job in a garment factory after coming to Dhaka around six months ago with her family.

"My mother is deaf and dumb and there is no one else to support our family of six. I can't imagine what would happen if I lose this job," she said.

At present Bangladesh enjoys preferential export quota in the US garment market, one of the key points of the world's textile and apparel business. It also gets concessions in European Union markets due to the Generalized System of Preference (GSP). However, the Multi Fibre Arrangement (MFA), under which Bangladesh and other least developed nations had expe-

rienced certain privileges in the developed world, would be over by this year.

Experts in the country's business sector fear that Bangladesh could face stiff competition to survive in the international textile market in a quota-free era. Exports may fall as buyers in the US would no longer be obliged to take products from Bangladesh.

With the end of the MFA nearing, China is turning out to be the biggest worry for Bangladesh and other apparel exporting countries. According to a study report titled 'The China Threat to World Textile and Apparel Trade' of the National Council of Trade Organisation (NCTO), a US-based coalition of trade bodies, China is expected to claim 75 percent market share in the US.

The report also said that Chinese stake in the US ready-made garment (RMG) market had increased by 794 percent over the past 27 months even with the MFA in effect.

Bangladesh's RMG export to the US on the other hand fell from seven percent in 2001 to only two percent by the end of March 2004, says the NCTO market analysis. If Bangladesh's market in the US is



lost, most of the RMG factories, especially the small ones that depend on sub-contracts from larger houses, will struggle to continue, according to local analysts.

The National Garment Workers Federation estimates that the country has at least 3,600 garment factories with Dhaka alone having about 2000. There are some 10,00,000 people directly working in the industry.

A large section of these workers, especially women, could be severely affected if factories lose business. A study conducted by 'Sromo Bikash Kendra' of Nari Grontho Probertona, an NGO, said that at least 4,50,000 women employees had lost their jobs in different sectors over the last couple of years and the majority of them had worked in garment factories. 25 percent of them went back to their villages but experienced difficulties in adjusting to a new life.

"Who will offer me a job as I do not know any other skills," said a concerned Rexona who has been a garment worker for the last six years. Sania Begum, Nurjahan and Shyamoli work at Debonair Fashions Limited in Mirpur. They have

only recently started hearing about the possibility of factory shutdowns.

"If that happens, we would move back to our village homes as we do not know what else to do," said Shyamoli.

A fellow employee Safina Khatun sounded confused as she said that she would try to go abroad in the worst case scenario.

Entrepreneurs in the RMG business however feel that factories can survive if they increase the quality of their products.

"If we can improve the quality, buyers would be inclined to purchase our products as we are able to make them with cheap labour," said Tyeabur Rahman who is the managing director of a factory.

Md. Sirajul Islam, general manager of Debonair Fashions admitted that most of the workers do not know about the danger ahead. "Most of them have little education and are unaware of the impending threat. Moreover, these people do not have much expectation in life and try to fit in anywhere under any circumstances," said Islam adding said his management often warns the workers to prepare for possible hardship in the near future.

healthouting, taxicab & train timing

HEALTH

Hospitals

Heart
National Institute of Cardio Vascular Diseases (NICVD),
- 9130800, 9122560-59

Burn
Dhaka Medical College Hospital
Burn Unit-8626812-6

Cancer
National Cancer Institute-8014914,
8826561-65
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib
Medical University-8612550-4,
861455-9

Diabetes
Diabetic Research Hospital
(BIRDEM)- 9661551-5,
8616641-50

Mother & Child Care
Shishu Hospital- 9119119,
8116061-62
Azimur Mother & Child Health

Training Institute- 8624827, 8624980

Eye

Islamia Eye Hospital-9110794,
9119315
National Eye Hospital- 8117202,
8114807

Dental

Dental College -9002035

Orthopaedics

National Orthopaedics (Pangu)
Hospital- 9114075, 9112150

General

Dhaka Medical College Hospital-
8626812-6
Rushmono General Hospital-
8317819
Holy Family Hospital-
83111731-25
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib
Medical University Hospital-
8612550-4, 8614545-9
Bangladesh Medical College &
Hospital- 8115443, 9118202,

Shamarita Hospital- 9131901
Suhrawardy Hospital -- 9130800,
9122560-69
Salimullah Medical College
Hospital -- 7310061-4, 7319002-6
Cholera Research Hospital
(ICDDR)- 8811751-60
Monowra Hospital 8319802, 8318135

Blood Bank

Red Crescent Centre- 9116563
Sandhani (DMCH)- 8624040
Sandhani (SMCH)- 7310061,
7310061, 7319022
Dhaka Medical College Hospital-
8626812-9

Eye Bank

Sandhani International Eye Bank-
8614040

Ambulances For Dead Body

Anzuman Matulul Islam (Kakrail)
9336611, Gandaria 7319808,
7318166,
Al-Markajul Islam 9127867,

MARKET CLOSED

Gulshan 1, 2 markets-Friday
Elephant Road-Friday
Bishal Center-Friday
Baitual Mukarram Market-Friday
Polwell Market-Friday
BCS Computer City-Friday
Isha Khan Shopping Complex-Friday.
Rajlaxmi Complex-Friday
Stadium Market-Friday
Bangabazar Market-Friday
National Museum-Thursdays
Ahsan Manzil--Thursdays.
New Market-Tuesday
Gausia Market-Tuesday
Mouchak Market-Sunday
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
Eastern Plaza-Sunday
Farmview Super Market-Sunday
Muktijuddha Jadughar-Sunday
Dhaka Zoo-Sunday
Shishu Jadughar-Sunday

TAXI CAB

Yellow Cab

Navana 9558065
Salida 9344477, 0171620881
Cosmo 9112959 and 8127191
Cab One 7113282-3
Nihon 8624741-2
Orion 9347277
Anudip 8125285 and 8127611
Capital 9352847

Union 8130485

Kool 0171826731

Black Cab

Cab Ex 9358401
Cabline 8321162
JBS Cab 019364575
Sajan 018126036
Anudip -- 8125285 and 8127611

Cab One 7113282-3

Palki 0171052500
Cab I 7113282
Jatri 0171540074
Nipun 9572277
R-Cab 8914782
Star Cab 9571919
Shihab 018202477 & 018228675
KGN 8620011

LIBRARY & INFO

Libraries, Cultural and Information Centers

Central Public Library- 8626001-4,
Shishu Academy- 9564128
Shilpakala Academy- 8614673
Bangla Academy- 8619550
Islamic Foundation- 9550280,
9556407
Nazrul Institute- 9114602
Ford Foundation- 8116133
Alliance Francaise- 8611557
Information Resource Center, The
American Center - 8813440-4,
9886395-9
British Council- 8618867-8,
8618905-7
Community Development Library-
8113769, 8113604
Goethe Institute Int'l- Dhaka-
9126525-6
Indian Information Centre &
Cultural Library- 8615096
The Russian Cultural Centre-
9116314, 9118531, 9118314
Drik Photo Gallery- 9120125,
8112954, 8123412

TRAIN TIMING

Subarna Express
Mahanagar Prabhati
Mahanagar Godhuli
Turna
Parabat Express
Joyantika Express
Upaban Express
Tista Express
Ekata Express
Upakul Express
Agnibeena Express

Leaves Dhaka at 4:30 pm
Leaves Dhaka at 7:30 am
Leaves Dhaka at 3:15 pm
Leaves Dhaka at 11:00 pm
Leaves Dhaka at 6:40 am
Leaves Dhaka at 12:45 pm
Leaves Dhaka at 9:45 pm
Leaves Dhaka at 7:00 am
Leaves Dhaka at 5:00 pm
Leaves Dhaka at 8:00 pm
Leaves Dhaka at 9:20 pm

Reaches Chittagong at 10:35 pm
Reaches Chittagong at 1:55 pm
Reaches Chittagong at 10:55 pm
Reaches Chittagong at 6:40 am
Reaches Sylhet at 2:30 pm
Reaches Sylhet at 9:20 pm
Reaches Sylhet at 6:40 am
Reaches Bahadurabad at 1:05 pm
Reaches Bahadurabad at 11:15
Reaches Noakhali at 5:00 am
Reaches Jagannath at 2:30 pm