

No let-up in sublet culture

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Nearly half of the flats for officers and employees in government colonies in the city have been remodelled and rented out illegally.

Employees have remodelled their flats to sublet one or two rooms to others, a practice is going on for years in violation of government rules.

Official sources said there are 11,585 flats in different colonies for government staff working in Dhaka.

Sublet of government staff quarters is available in almost all the colonies including Motijheel AGB colony, Azimpur Public and Works Department (PWD) staff quarters, and the colonies in Jigatola, Mirpur and Khilgaon.

Each of these three-storey buildings has 24 flats and on average 10 flats have been rented out to tenants after remodelling.

At Azimpur Colony, many government employees have turned

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the kitchens into rooms shifting the stove and other appliances to dining space.

When asked, a government employee who lives in an A-type building in the PWD staff quarters in Azimpur said: "The kitchen of this flat has been turned into a room -- there is no major structural change in the building."

"I haven't done this. When I got allotment of this flat from the government in 2000, it was already remodelled," he added.

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these flats for additional income. Some others remodelled the flats to create more rooms for their children or guests.

"It's very difficult to live with the poor salary we draw. A significant portion of our salaries is taken as house rent," said an employee.

"I have a seven-member family. We had to remodel the flat to create space for our family members," said another employee at Azimpur Colony.

University students and bachelors who are in service or

seeking jobs hire the rooms of the government flats available at cheaper rent.

"We have been living here for one year. The monthly rent of one room is Tk 2,000," said Rabiul Islam (not his real name), who has rented a room along with his friend in an A-type building in Azimpur Colony.

"During inspection I pretend to be a brother of the government employee who rented out the room to me," he said.

Contacted, a high official of PWD said, "Sometimes the employees

threaten us when we ask them to stop the malpractice."

"We often visit these colonies and take action against the employees who rent their rooms illegally. But they continue the practice after we leave the place," said Ashraful Haque Bhuiyan, the director-in-charge of the Directorate of the Government Accommodation.

"When we get specific complaint we investigate the matter," he added.

Asked about monitoring, Ashraful said, "We try our best to maintain regular monitoring. Sometimes we cannot do it due to a lack of manpower."

But an employee said on condition of anonymity that he pays a portion of the rent regularly to some 'people'.

"This is an open-secret and this has been continuing for years. So how can we do it keeping them totally in the dark," he said.

Sources said that most of the colonies were built in early 60s.



STAR PHOTO

A section of government flats at AGB colony, Motijheel.

6x3

4x2

10x2

8x3

15x3