

Land prices cause housing nightmare

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

At the root of the city's incessantly deteriorating housing problems are the exorbitant land prices that continue to challenge the wits of the city dwellers.

Land margin in the city seems to have shrunk with prices continuing its pursuit to exceed the purchasing power of the majority of the population, especially of the middle and lower class.

Economists and urban specialists reprehend the heavy premium on land properties for making it virtually impossible to allocate affordable houses for the underprivileged section of the

city population.

According to a survey conducted by World Bank, while median income in Dhaka is 50 to 100 times lower, Dhaka's land prices are comparable to those in suburban New York or London.

Under the current economic situation, land properties within the city come at about 20 lakh to 50 lakh for each katha. For instance, land price in Dhanmondi residential area is roughly around Tk 40 lakh per katha, which is high even in comparison with the United States where residential land values exceed this price only in the most affluent neighbourhoods.

Prices in most other

residential areas in the city are similarly high. Land properties in the city suburbs are available at relatively lower prices but not below a whopping Tk 5-10 lakh for each katha.

Urban experts blame the public sector for abandoning the housing segment of the city. The negligence of the public sector has drawn the private firms to fill the vacuum in the housing sector, but only in the most profitable housing projects aimed towards the high-income group.

"With exorbitant land prices making it virtually impossible to make housing affordable for the underprivileged section of the society, a heavy concentration of homeless people has emerged in the slum areas," he observed.

people who are the worst victims of the towering land prices.

Sadiq Ahmed, a World Bank sector director of poverty reduction and economic management in South Asia region, said the middle class landowners are being squeezed out of their housing ownership as availability of luxurious and mid-scale housing continue its growth in the residential areas.

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STAR PHOTO

Working to keep city moving

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

"I am serving the people who are celebrating Eid today and performing duty is a prayer to me," this is how a dedicated sub-inspector of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), Sharif Uddin, expressed his feelings on working on the day of Eid-ul-Azha -- a day intended for sacrifice.

Sharif told Star City that like everybody else, he also wanted to attend the Eid prayer and be with his loved ones on the Eid day, but failed to do so because of his duty. About working on the Eid day, he said he was more alert and careful than a regular day so the people could enjoy the Eid peacefully.

While the nation enjoyed long Eid holidays, thousands of professionals like Sharif had to work to keep the city moving.

Fire service and law enforcement personnel including police and Rab, nurses, doctors, cleaners, security guards and other service providers worked relentlessly to ensure that this city of ten million gets the services it deserves. Although the service personnel were paid hefty overtimes, it is worth mentioning that without their commitment to serve, the city life during the Eid holidays would be in disarray.

Above all professionals, cleaners are usually the busiest on Eid-ul-Azha. Hafiz, a cleaner at Rupnagar residential area seemed very happy despite working hard on the Eid day as

he earned more on Eid day than any other. He said his duty was to clean the neighbourhood after the sacrificial animals were slaughtered for the Eid ritual.

All the inhabitants of the area would be in a terrible mess if he or other cleaners refused to clean after the animals are sacrificed and God would not tolerate refusal of their duties, said Hafiz, adding, "I performed my duty and earned money as well and I am happy about that.

About working on the Eid day, Zaman said, "We had to be more careful this year as the 31st night (December 31) was observed just a day before the day of Eid."

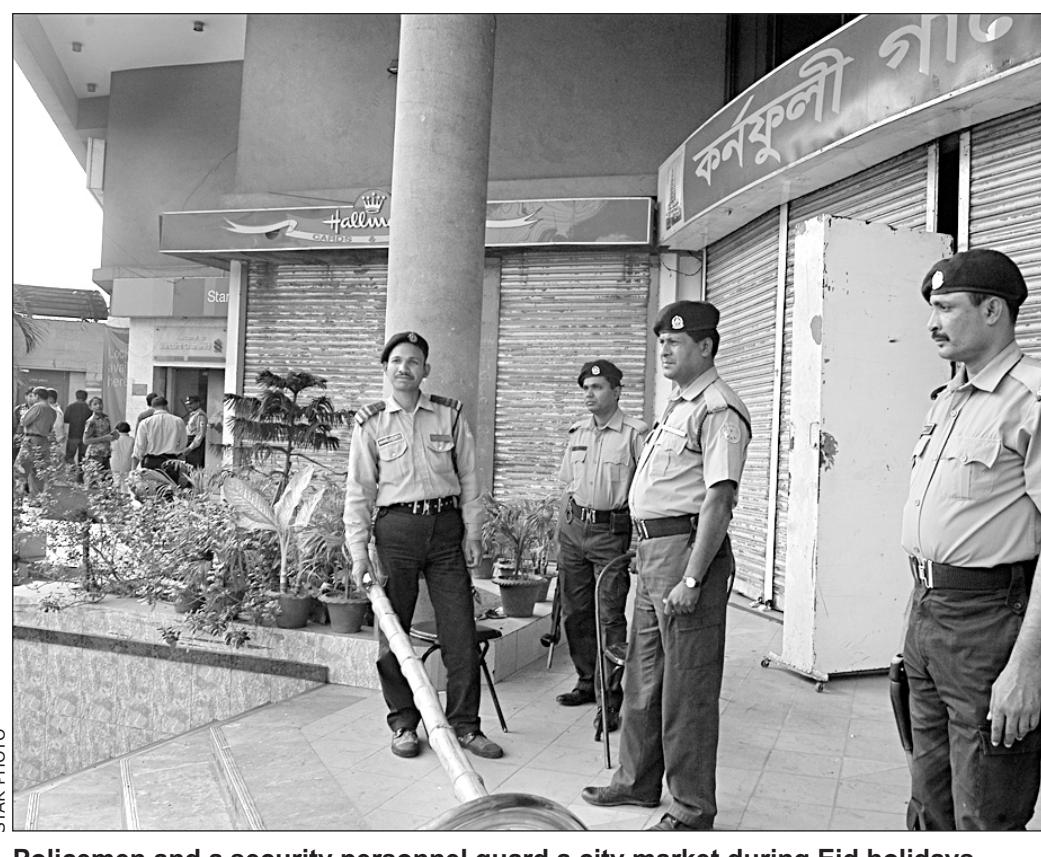
"Many professionals are working on the Eid day to pave the way for celebrations of others and these professionals are celebrating their Eid from a different perspective," Zaman added.

"Of course I wanted to be with my family members on this day but I can not neglect my duty," Zaman said.

Intern doctor Rezaul was on duty at Bangladesh Medical College and Hospital away from his friends and family on

the Eid day for the first time in his life. "How can I leave the patients for self interest?" said Rezaul when asked why he could not attend the Eid congregation.

Rezaul also said working on the day of Eid this year made him realise and appreciate those professionals who have to be on standby for 24 hours during any occasion. "It will help me better understand the dedication required in my profession."



Policemen and a security personnel guard a city market during Eid holidays.

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STAR PHOTO

Housing companies launch sales

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Conservation Act of 1995.

A top town planner of Rajuk said that any aspiring buyer must first check authenticity of a housing product with the Rajuk before going for purchase. People must not become gullible to any alluring advertisements.

The mass media in this regard, both newspapers and televisions, have a crucial role to play, said Rajuk officials, adding that they must refrain from carrying advertisements of something, which has no genuineness and legality.

Director of East West Properties Limited (Basundhara housing project) Md Abu Sufian said that they had got approval.

"I have seen the rules but I don't remember it," he said responding to a question on running advertisements without approval. "If it is illegal, why does not Rajuk say anything? They are not saying anything," Sufian said.

Vice-chairman of Islam Group (Eastern Housing) Asaduzzaman claimed that Banasree, Aftab Nagar, Pallabi and Mahanagar housing projects have been approved by Rajuk since 1987. He also said development of Mayakunja and Mayakanan projects are now stalled, as they have no approval.

"We have applied for revised approval of those projects, under the rules of 2004, approved in 1987," he said. "But our reputation is such that our housing products are sold even without advertisements."

Asaduzzaman said they have stalled running advertisements

in newspapers since they applied for revised approval but carrying on with the commercials on television channels.

A three-member committee formed in 2002 and headed by a joint secretary Mostafizur Rahman investigated whether Islam Group has any genuine permission for its Banasree and Aftab Nagar housing projects.

"The investigation committee revealed that whatever permission Islam Group obtained in 1987 was fake," said one of the members of the committee. "The permission was forged and obtained in connivance with the then town planner."

It is not true that the Islam Group got approval for any of its housing projects, said a Rajuk official, adding that they were rather served with directions from the concerned section of Rajuk regarding their unapproved projects.

General manager of Swadeshi Properties M Faizul Haq said, "We got approval for our project just before the end of immediate past government's tenure."

Despite repeated attempts, neither the chairman Mujibur Rahman nor the managing director Tanvir Islam of Swadeshi Properties could be contacted for their version.

The Rajuk scrutiny committee pointed out all the flaws and violations resorted in the proposed projects before forwarding to the national committee.

But the aspiring housing developers allegedly managed the national committee by underhand means to agree in principle for approval.

In the face of minister-level

pressure, Rajuk board had to forward the applications hurriedly to the national committee within a day, according to Rajuk sources.

Housing and Public Works Minister SM Zafrullah said, "I will look into the matter."

Traffic police

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way back home from my office at Gulistan," said Mizanur Ahsan, a resident of Dhanmondi.

"It takes almost an hour to ease the tailback as there are no traffic police available after 10:00pm," added Ahsan.

Heavy lorries, buses and pickups were seen heedlessly running along the Airport Road leading to Tongi and beyond, and the road to Aricha at breakneck speed without any concern towards the traffic signals and what they are leaving behind in their wake.

Traffic officials blamed the policy of allowing trucks and other heavy transport vehicles to enter the city before 8:00pm for the unruly traffic situations after nightfall.

"Hundreds of trucks wait at the city's entry points for hours and enter the city at the same time, creating an chaotic rush of traffic," said Jahurul Haque, traffic inspector of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP).

According to Haque, an effective solution to this problem could be the construction of bypass roads to ease pressure from the key entry points of the city.

"Bypass roads would certainly make things better by easing the flow of traffic at the entry points.

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In the face of minister-level

health,busservices,airlines&traintiming

HOSPITALS & CLINICS

Ahsania Mission Cancer & General Hospital	Islami Bank Hospital	9111090
9008919, 8051618	9333739	
Apollo Hospitals Dhaka	Japan Bangladesh Friendship Hospital	7319002-6
9891680-4, 01713046684/85	8828855, 8827575	
Emergency no. 9896623, 0171409000		
Bangladesh Medical College & Hospital	Labaid Cardiac Hospital	910793-8
9118202, 8115843	9131901	
Central Hospital	Marie Stopes Clinic	8821874
9660015-19,	8820353,	
China Bangla Hospital (JV) Ltd	Medinova Medical Services Ltd	8318135, 8319802
8913674		
Dhaka Medical College Hospital	Monowara Hospital	9112150, 9113041
8626812-16	Pangu Hospital	9116563
Gana Shasthyo Kendra	PG Hospital (BSMMU)	9614545-9, 9612550-4
8617208, 8617383, 8620178,	96181945-9, 9612550-4	
Greenland Hospital	Rashmoni General Hospital	8317606, 9557354, 8317819
8912663	Ratan's Dental Clinic	8311721-25

BUS SERVICES

Drooti	lines	Druk Air	Malaysia Airlines
8014563	Aeroflot	9862243, 9892862,	9888211-20
9559930, 9559111, Fax: 9563787	Air India	9892801, 9885574-75	Airport Office: 8916953, Fax: 9890478
7101504	Green Line Paribahan	9817783, 8611929, Fax: 9670591	PIA
9339623, 9342580, 8353005	Hanif Enterprise	8825845-9, Airport Office: 8960404, 8915699, Fax: 8826115	9349293-5, Fax: 9345300
9122560-78	Keya Paribahan	917400-19, 9560151, 9559610	Singapore Airlines
9116061-2, 9119119	Modern Enterprise	Airport Office: 8917400, Fax: 8913005	8811504-7, 9883259
8836444, 0194001234	Neptune A/C Coach Service	9130123-5, Airport Office: 8914573	Gulf Air
7101945, 7101951, 9123092	Shohag Paribahan (Pvt) Ltd	8815111, Fax: 8815346,	8811928, Fax: 8811503
9334152, 8316766, 8126293	Shoukhan Paribahan	9557117, Fax: 9562667	Thai Airways
8014397, 9001796	Silk Line	9557117, Fax: 9562667	8314711-18, 8914343
9883948	Shyamoli Paribahan	9115182, 9118829	Virgin Atlantic Airways
96668690	Subarna Express	9886324-5, Fax: 9896481	8816324-5, Fax: 9896481
	Mahanagar Prabhati	Leaves Dhaka at 4:30 pm	Reaches Chittagong at 10:35 pm
	Mahanagar Godhuli	Leaves Dhaka at 7:30 am	Reaches Chittagong at 1:55 pm
	Turna	Leaves Dhaka at 3:15 pm	Reaches Chittagong at 10:55 pm
	Parabat Express	Leaves Dhaka at 11:00 pm	Reaches Chittagong at 6:40 am
	Joyantika Express	Leaves Dhaka at 12:45 pm	Reaches Sylhet at 2:30 pm
	Upaban Express	Leaves Dhaka at 9:45 pm	Reaches Sylhet at 9:20 pm
	Tista Express	Leaves Dhaka at 7:00 am	Reaches Sylhet at 4:40 pm
	Ekata Express	Leaves Dhaka at 5:00 pm	Reaches Bahadurabad at 1:05 pm
	Upakul Express	Leaves Dhaka at 8:00 pm	Reaches Noakhali at 5:00 am
	Agnibeena Express	Leaves Dhaka at 9:20 pm	Reaches Jagannath at 2:30 pm

AIRLINES

Subarna Express	Leaves Dhaka at 4:30 pm	Reaches Chittagong at 10:35 pm
Mahanagar Prabhati	Leaves Dhaka at 7:30 am	Reaches Chittagong at 1:55 pm
Mahanagar Godhuli	Leaves Dhaka at 3:15 pm	Reaches Chittagong at 10:55 pm
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Parabat Express	Leaves	