



Begum Bazar mosque was built by Murshid Quli Khan in 1700-1704 AD. The mosque was also known as Kortolob Khan's mosque another of Murshid Quli Khan's names. This is one of the important mosques built in Dhaka during the Mughal period.

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INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE INSTITUTE

Project remains uncertain

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Negligence of the immediate past government stalled the construction work of the International Mother Language Institute in the capital.

The construction work had been going on for the last six years since 2000 and only 22 percent of the total work has been completed so far.

"The duration of the project is extending year after year but the work is not progressing," said sources concerned. "Recently the project was extended to another year as the work could not be finished," he added.

After the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) recognized February 21 as the International Mother Language Day in 1999, the then government decided to establish an international mother institute in Dhaka for research on international mother languages.

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecnec) approved the project in August 2000.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan laid the foundation stone of the institute on March 15, 2001

work hasn't started back ever since.

The education ministry issued an order in August 2004 to restart the construction that was stopped following some 'disagreements' on the viability of the project. Then the project proposal was revised and sent to the Planning Commission for approval and the commission reduced the project's required manpower.

"The ministries of finance and planning took six months to approve and reduce the manpower. The officials concerned at finance ministry said they were 'busy with the budget' and could not do anything and thus a lot of time was wasted to get the approval. Finally the project got approval from the ministry when the work was supposed to be finished," said the official.

If the construction work restarted in April 2006, according to the revised project proposal (PP), the construction work would have been completed by December 2006. Delays in getting approval from the concerned ministry stretched the project to December 2007.

Based on the revised PP, new tender was invited under Public Works Department's (PWD) rate schedule of 2004. Afterwards, the PWD in October 2006 had announced a new rate

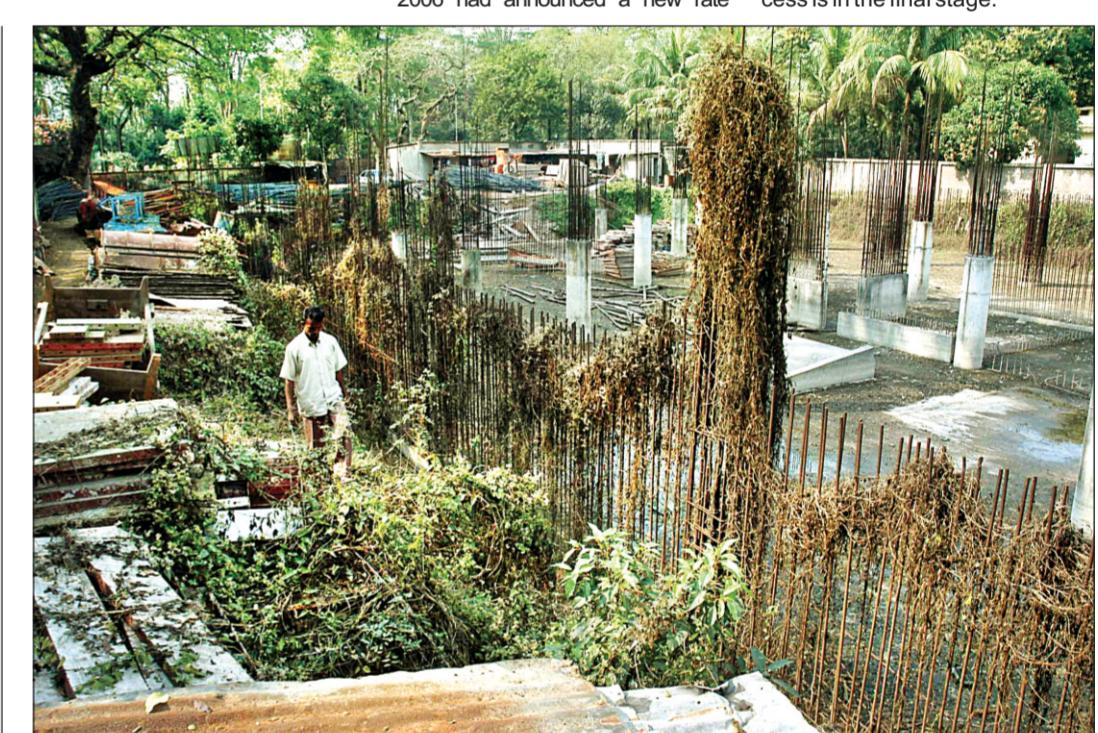
furniture and salary.

"We sent the RPP to education ministry and it is being processed. We will wait for the approval of the RPP from Ecnec," said Shirin Akhter, project director of International Mother Language Institute.

"Within a few days, we will float the tender and will start the construction work using Tk 16 crore according to the previous PP. We hope that within few months, the RPP will get approval and we will be able to finish the project," she added.

Previously, this correspondent published two reports about the institute on February 05 and August 16 in 2006 after talking with various officials concerned, but the construction work did not start again.

The process of restarting the construction has seen a very little progress. When this correspondent had talked to the officials of project implementation unit of the education ministry in January last year, they said that the formalities were "in progress" and the construction would restart soon. Later, when contacted in August of the same year, one of the concerned officials expressed the same view saying, "The construction will restart soon as the process is in the final stage."



The under-construction building of International Mother Language gathers rust.

on 1.03 acres of land at Segun Bagicha in Dhaka.

"But land acquisition, registration, architectural design and floating of tender for the project took two years to start the work," said another official.

Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Department (IMED) recommend to extend the project to 2008 and to amend the revised project proposal (RPP) and fix new cost schedule for all expenses of the project including the construction, office and laboratory accessories.

A year has gone by and the construction work still remains suspended.

According to the original project proposal, a building with a 6,972-square metre floor space would be constructed. The building will have a lounge, a reception space, four VIP meeting rooms, a 500-seat hall room, two green rooms, research cells, a computer lab, a canteen, a library, a classroom, a language laboratory, an archive and a museum.

HOUSING LAND DEVELOPMENT RULES 2004

No housing project authorised yet: Rajuk Chairman

TAWFIQUE ALI

None of the existing private housing (land development) projects has approval as per the Private Housing Land Development Rules of 2004, according to several top officials of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartirakkha (Rajuk).

Rajuk officials could not specify the exact number of such projects but scores of such projects are being advertised with new names in clear violation of the said rules.

Chairman of Rajuk KAM Haroon said, "None of the ongoing private housing projects has so far obtained approval under the Private Housing Land Development Rules of 2004."

Only one or two such projects obtained partial approval before the rules of 2004 were framed, he said. The rules provide that any extension or continuation of a project, apart from the new ones, has to obtain approval under the said rules.

Commercial advertisement of such unauthorised housing projects in any manner is a punishable offence as per the rules of 2004, the Rajuk officials said.

Meanwhile, a number of private developers are making frantic attempts to manage exemption of their illegal housing projects from a list of private housing projects launched without approval.

More than ten developers in Keraniganj and Savar areas have removed signboards from their projects following the cases filed and notices served by Rajuk, said Rajuk's Chief Town Planner Jahurul Hoque, who is also member secretary of the national approval committee on the private housing project development.

"But it is not the job of Rajuk alone to prevent illegal housing projects," said Hoque. "There are agencies like Department of Environment, Water Development Board, Wasa and Dhaka City Corporation who have to play their respective roles."

Illegal housing projects have

been destroying the wetlands and flood plains earmarked in the Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (DMD) for over one decade, said experts.

The housing and public works ministry has asked the Rajuk to prepare a detailed report on the status of illegal private housing projects and unregistered developers.

Interestingly, the same ministry in October last year tried to approve projects of several top real estate developers through dubious deals allowing them to fill up thousands of acres of flood flow zones, wetlands and retention ponds in and around the city.

Some developers are now desperate to manage the officials concerned of Rajuk and the local police station to have their names dropped from the

report on unauthorised developers and projects, said a source at the ministry.

Rajuk authorities have so far filed more than 30 cases with the police stations concerned to take legal action against the illegal housing projects. But the police have taken no tangible actions against any project developer, said Rajuk officials.

Though Rajuk filed case against an unauthorised project Kopotakkha Valley located near Amin Bazar, of Kopotakkha Real Estate, the police remained inactive saying the developer is not filling earth any more, said Hoque.

Land filling of the wetlands and flood plains by real estate developers is not only threatening an environmental disaster but also consistently choking the capital city with perennial waterlogging and mess in

the impediments to bringing them to book.

Severe waterlogging occurs as a result of earth filling of wetlands and floodplains and mindless obstruction in the city's canals and lakes, said executive member of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) architect Iqbal Habib at a discussion in the city Saturday.

Many of the ongoing housing projects could not obtain permission on grounds of violations of the Wetland Protection Act 2000, Environment Conservation Act of 1995, Private Housing Land Development Rules of 2004, Building Construction Act of 2006, Town Improvement Act of 1953 and the DMDP.

Report on the status of illegal housing projects and unregistered developers is to be submitted to the ministry by the end of this month.

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