



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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NOISE POLLUTION

Horn-happy motorists still play havoc

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Residents of Dhaka still have to put up with deafening noise of vehicular horns and they do not feel the difference in noise quality despite the recent clamp down on horn-happy motorists.

Last month, on February 16, DMP (Dhaka Metropolitan Police) seemed to have woken up finally and made a move to enforce an age-old law banning vehicular horns in certain areas of the city. While the general public appreciated the DMP effort, they were a bit taken aback and disappointed to notice the careless attitude of DoE (Department of Environment) over the matter.

In a bid to turn the city's noise level down in the city, DMP decided to implement the motor vehicles ordinance of 1983 that forbids honking horns within 200 yards of places of worship, educational institutes, hospitals, courts and offices.

Primarily, DMP banned honking horns on VIP road between the stretch of Sonargaon intersection and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical university intersection.

Offenders are being fined Tk 200 for each violation under clause 139 of motor vehicles act.

DMP started to file cases against offenders from February 22. As of March 20, a total of 3,184 cases were filed. During the last couple of days, they seized 719 hydraulic horns as

well.

"To end needless honking in the city, we have a plan to extend the honking restriction to other areas. We are planning to ban honking from Jahangir Gate to Shahbagh from April 1," said M Jashimuddin, joint commissioner of DMP (Traffic).

Besides the VIP road, DMP is planning to ban honking in the Gulshan area soon, added the joint commissioner.

DoE, on the contrary, have been busy for years formulating new rules to fight noise pollution. Finally in September last year, it finalised a set of rules against polluters. And to everyone's surprise, it did not incorporate the biggest polluter - vehicular horns - into the new set of rules.

The new rules were incorporated in Environment Conservation Act of 1995 and gazetted on September 3, 2006 by the Ministry of Environment and Forest.

DoE's activities and responsibilities seem to be limited to formulating rules only as there has been no sign of any effort to implement the newly gazetted rules.

When this correspondent asked Riazuddin Ahmed, acting director general of DoE, what his department was doing to curb noise pollution, he dodged the question and said, "To curb noise pollution, mass awareness is a must. We did not yet start distributing leaflets on noise pollution, but the issue of noise pollution is included in our general leaflet."



DMP seized hundreds of hydraulic horns in the last couple of days as a step to ban high decibel vehicular horns.

pollution. They responded, but they did not continue [the broadcast].

"Continuous and unnecessary honking of cars exceed the permissible level and thus cause serious pollution," said Nazmul Karim Sabuj, member secretary of Noise Pollution Control Committee.

"We need to create awareness among the motorists and after that, they will stop honking unnecessarily. It will take some time for this to happen though," said a Sergeant on duty at Sonargaon Hotel intersection.

The noise pollution is rising to a dangerous level -- especially due to a sharp rise in the number of vehicles -- exposing millions in the city to serious health hazards.

Moreover, thousands of construction sites, factories and unabated use of loud speakers are adding to the noise pollution. Exposure to high level of noise pollution can cause nausea, high blood pressure, cardiac arrests, insomnia and various other diseases, health experts said.

According to a DoE circular, noise level set for Dhaka is 50 decibels in the day and 40 decibels at night for Silent Zones with hospitals and schools. For residential areas, the allowed level is 55 decibels in daytime and 45 at nighttimes. For industrial areas, the level is 60 decibels in the daytime and 50 decibels at night.

The ideal sound level in commercial areas is 70 decibels in the day and 60 at night while in industrial areas 75 decibels during

daytime and 70 decibels at night.

"Continuous and unnecessary honking of cars exceed the permissible level and thus cause serious pollution," said Nazmul Karim Sabuj, member secretary of Noise Pollution Control Committee.

According to a World Health Organisation (WHO), Unicef and World Bank (WB) research, noise pollution is one of the 12 environmental pollutants that cause 30 serious diseases, Sabuj added.

He also said that the authorities concerned should take effective measures to curb noise pollution. He also put emphasis on mass awareness. Mass awareness among drivers, passengers and general public is very much needed to control noise pollution. People should be aware of the rules and penalties, Sabuj explained.

"Even six months after the new rules regarding noise pollution were gazetted, no effective measures to implement the rules and to create awareness on the rules have been taken," said Sabuj.

Professor Dr M Abdulla, head of ENT department and principal of Sir Salimullah Medical College said, "Constant exposure to noise can cause different problems which include loss of hearing, cardiac problems, sleeping disorder, various psychological problems, gastro-intestinal-tract (GIT) upset and problems with unborn babies."

"It is true that we have not yet taken any measure to curb noise pollution. We are doing our regular monitoring like checking vehicles for emission of harmful

black smoke as well as use of illegal hydraulic horns. DoE also has a plan to hold workshops, symposiums in six divisions [of the country] to create mass

awareness on noise pollution," he added.

He also said the media could play a vital role in this regard and DoE alone cannot solve the

problem.

"We asked the state-run television and radio stations to broadcast bulletins containing public awareness messages on noise

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Thousands of brick kilns, burning coal are going to turn to environment friendly fuel.

DoE asks brick kiln owners to adopt new technology

Environmental clearance certificates will not be renewed if the owners do not shift to alternative fuel and bricks by 2010

SHAHZNAZ PARVEEN

The Department of Environment (DoE) is planning to replace all traditional brick kilns by the year 2010 with modern and environment friendly technologies.

"The department would not renew the environmental clearance certificates of the traditional brick kilns after 2010," said Mohammad Reazuddin, director, Air Quality Management Project (AQMP), DoE.

Experts say it is important to introduce modern technology in brick kilns for the sake of better environment but the transition will not be that easy. During eight months of each year these brick kilns operate 24 hours a day emitting toxic fumes in the atmosphere.

"Current technologies are centuries old. It is responsible for severe air pollution," Reazuddin said. "We want to introduce compressed bricks. This is a sound technology for environment as it does not need any burning."

In Dhaka there are around 4,500 brick kilns in operation, producing about 9 billion bricks per year. The largest brick-making zone is on the north of Dhaka City,

where more than one thousand brickfields are situated, causing severe air pollution.

The situation worsens during winter when the wind blows from the north. "These brickfields are one of the reasons for severe air pollution in Dhaka during winter," said Dr M Nasiruddin, director, Air Quality Management Project (AQMP), DoE.

Of the 4,500 kilns, around 4,000 are Bull's Trench type kilns which use extremely crude technology to bake bricks. Besides, there are about 400 fixed chimney kilns, 15 zigzag kilns, 25 Hoffman kilns and 5 modern tunnel-type kilns.

Most traditional brick kilns use coal with high level of sulphur and firewood. They run their production for eight months starting in the winter. The kilns around Dhaka cannot produce bricks during rest of the year due to flooding.

Traditional kilns are responsible for severe air pollution causing various diseases to people living around the brickfields. Respiratory problems, asthma and inflammation of eye are some of the very common symptoms among people living around brick

kilns.

Brick kilns also destroy fertility of the soil. Brick particles and black smoke of the kilns damage paddy, vegetables and other crops on the fields around them.

Sources said most brick kilns are set up without environment impact assessment.

In October 2002 the government made it mandatory for the brickfield owners to build 120 feet high chimneys to reduce air pollution.

Ijaz Hossain, a professor at Chemical Engineering Department, Buet, who is currently providing technical assistance to DoE, said: "The replacement of the existing technologies will result in significant reductions in greenhouse gas emission, especially if the coal-based technologies can be replaced by natural gas-based technologies."

"The existing technologies are however popular as they are simple, require low capital investment, yield very good returns and employ a large number of people."

Ijaz Hossain said there are two types of technologies that can be introduced in the country. These are Hoffman kiln and the vertical

shaft brick kiln (VSBK). "Transition to these alternative technologies requires higher initial investments. Brick industry owners cannot afford them and it will also increase the price of brick," he said.

Ijaz however said for the sake of a better environment, the government should come up with a premium policy for the existing brickfields so that they can convert easily.

Mizanur Rahman Babul, president, Bangladesh Brick Manufacturers Association, said: "We also want better environment. We would also like to save foreign exchange spent to import coal. But the government cannot just shut down the kilns this way."

"They have to give us a little more time. We are discussing with association members about how to deal with this transition," he added.

The kiln owners want bank loans for the transition. "Traditional brick kilns are not considered as an industry. So we cannot apply for industrial loans from banks. If the government helps us, the transition will be easier," Rahman said.

DCC move to build high-rises without approval

Building Rules of 2006 and the Bangladesh National Building Code (BNBC).

"They have neither consulted with Rajuk nor have they sought approval," Emdad said. "Even the three-storey Banani Super Market is illegal, as the entire land is clearly earmarked as a car park in the layout of Rajuk's Banani Township."

DCC is supposed to maintain it in its present state, the chief engineer said adding that any construction or development work requires prior approval. DCC can no way share the ownership of the land as it doesn't have land ownership.

Emdad said Rajuk has not handed over the land to DCC for any construction work, neither there has been any lease deal in this regard.

Chairman of Rajuk KAM Haroon said no high-rise building is supposed to get approval if the land is designated for car park and as open space.

Chief Town Planner of DCC Sirajul Islam said there are many high-rise buildings in the vicinity of Gulshan and Banani without approval from Rajdhani Unnayan Karpakha (Rajuk).

The project includes Banani Super Market along with a housing complex, 16-storey City Trade Centre, a super market and housing complex in Gulshan-1, and a 26-storey super market and housing complex in Gulshan-2.

DCC has signed contracts with four commercial builders to develop the three markets on shared basis. Under the contracts, the builders will get more than 70 percent ownership of the total saleable floor area and proportionate ownership of the land.

Chief Engineer of Rajuk Emdad Islam confirmed that the buildings do not have approval from Rajuk. Rajuk handed over the lands to DCC in 1984-85 only for maintenance as car parking and open spaces but now they are building high-rises, he said.

"All these constructions will be just illegal," Emdad said adding that DCC has violated the Town Improvement Act 1953 by altering the type of land use. "This is a clear violation of the nature of land use criteria."

The DCC project is also violation of the Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (DMDP),

Ali Khan said, "We ourselves approve designs of our buildings. Why should we go to Rajuk?"

Rajuk has handed over the land to DCC not only for maintenance but also for development, Khan claimed.

Amin Associate Overseas Ltd will implement the 16-storey Gulshan-1 project; Borak Real Estate will build the 14-storey Banani project while Basundhara City Development Ltd and United City Twin Tower Development Ltd have got the contract for the 26-storey Gulshan-2 project jointly, according to contract documents.

The 16-storey City Trade Centre will be built demolishing the present two-storey DCC Super Market in Gulshan-1. The high-rise will cover the existing car parking lot in front of it and a 3-layer underground car park, said the DCC executive engineer.

The total floor area of the building will be 13,22,766 square feet out of which 10,14,821 square feet will be saleable area with the rest as common space. The builder Amin Associates will get 73 percent ownership of the saleable area.

The 26-storey high-rise in Gulshan-2 will have a total of 8,66,691 square feet of floor areas out of which 5,07,333 square feet will be saleable area.

The high-rise will also occupy the existing 16-katha open space now being used as car parking lot in front of Banani Super Market.

"The builder will turn the surrounding footpaths into car parking lot in addition to a one-layer underground parking," said DCC Executive Engineer Syed Mozaffar Hossain.

President of the Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB) Mubashar Hussain said DCC is not supposed to develop the sites in this manner. DCC has to obtain approval for building construction from Rajuk.

Asked why DCC has not obtained approval for construction of these buildings, Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka said this will be done as per DCC's present policy. "The practice has been like this for long. Rajuk has never stopped us."



DCC embarks on constructing three high-rise buildings with self-approved designs.

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