

# Computer prices go high before taxes come into effect

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Although the tax and duties proposed in the new budget are yet to come into effect, the price of computers and accessories has already marked an inexplicable rise in the city markets.

Nafees Ahmed, a candidate of the ongoing HSC examination, wants to buy a new personal computer and his family has a budget of around Tk 32,000. But now things look bleak for Nafees as he fears that he might have to wait much longer for the PC.

"I wanted to buy the PC before the new taxes come into effect. But the prices have already increased outrageously," said Nafees.

An average Celeron processor powered computer that was available at around Tk 24,000 last week, is now being sold at around 27,000. An Intel Pentium processor powered computer is available at around Tk 33,000 while the same computer cost around Tk 28,000 last week.

Like Nafees hundreds of computer users rushed to markets of the city to purchase computers and accessories after the budget proposals were made, but they found that the prices rose by around 10 to 15 percent from the very next day of budget announcement.

The abrupt increase took the

customers by surprise as the price hike was not supposed to affect the market before July when the proposed budget would come into effect.

Nurul Islam, a university student from Uttara went to the BCS Computer City in Agargaon on Thursday to get a new video adaptor for his computer. He wanted to buy an Nvidia 7 series graphics card that cost around Tk 14,000 only a few days back. However, Islam was taken aback after he found the same series of graphics card being sold at around Tk 18,000.

"I have been saving money for months to buy a new graphics card for my computer and I fell a few thousands of taka short that day," said Nurul Islam.

"I wonder why the authorities have imposed tax in such a booming industry especially when we, the students, consist the majority in the user base. It's the middle and lower income families who would certainly be the biggest victim," added Islam.

It is the market of Laptop computers that has been shattered after the tax proposal.

The few laptops that are available in the market are being sold at considerably higher prices. The Laptop that was available at Tk 45,000 before is now being sold at Tk



Nayeem Ahmed, a service provider who came to BCS Computer City to buy his new PC.

The abrupt increase in the prices of computer and accessories has created turmoil in the computer market. A number of businessmen have decided not to retail their products because of the future uncertainties, creating a major shortage of computer products.

"The ironic thing is that the goods that are exempted from duties would take months to mark a decrease in their prices," he added.

The experts also fear that the price hike would give rise to under-invoicing and smuggling of computer goods.

"The trickle down effect of the added tax would give rise to unethical business practices.

The same product would be available at different prices in different shops and under invoicing would increase significantly," said Ahmed Hasan, chairman of Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS).

"As almost 70 percent of the user base in the industry are the lower budget group, the high prices would discourage most of these people from buying computers and subsequently may stall the progress of this booming industry," added Hasan.

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"When you impose a tax on the import of a certain product, the tax would affect the upcoming import of goods, not the one that are already available in the market. But the prices of computers have already increased which is shocking," said an expert.

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Buyers are already paying more prices for computers at the BCS computer city.

52,000, while the Tk 87,000 Laptops are being sold at a price of around Tk 95,000.

"The personal computer I could have purchased with my budget of Tk 32,000 now costs

around Tk 40,000, which is absolutely shocking," said

STAR PHOTO

## DU's mindless

FROM PAGE 21

"We are a 86-year old institution whereas Rajuk is merely a child organisation. Why should we seek permission from Rajuk?" he replied when asked about the legal aspects of constructing a building in the city.

Prof Azad said that DU is a 'state within a state' so it has its own rules to approve plans and select sites.

"Do you think we should stop construction of a building because of trees?" he replied when asked about the trees felled due to proposed construction.

Pro-VC Prof AFM Yusuf Haidar in his turn said the university would replace the felled trees by planting more saplings.

"We have planted many ornamental trees in the median within our campus," he said.

SMA Faiz, DU's vice chancellor said, "When DU was founded in 1921, it had only 877 students and now we have 32,000 students but our area is the same as before so we have to accommodate them at some places."

"But we know that greenery and open space are also important. So from now on we have

## DMP to go

FROM PAGE 21

decided to build vertically and plan new buildings on the same place of old buildings like the DU press," he said.

"You will see that DU is greener than before as we have planted many trees over the years," he added.

The progress of making a master plan for DU is 'under process', he said.

DU is planning another 10-storey building for the social science faculty. The building is going to be constructed on the open space on the eastern side of Madhur Canteen soon, said DU sources.

The planned mathematics department building, to be erected in the vicinity of the Central Shaheed Minar, should be built with respect to the sanctity of the area.

According to sources, a senior architect of DU committee expressed doubt whether the architect of the building, a Pakistani living in Dhaka, is aware of the significance of the Shaheed Minar.

Such a planning document has to have directions on how to restore and protect social and natural characteristics of a residential area like Dhanmondi, he said at a meeting on DAP jointly organised by Dhanmondi Poribesh Unnayan Jote and Dhanmondi Abashik Malik Kalyan Samiti at Drik Gallery on June 9.

The terms of reference (ToR) of the project obliges the consultants to consult with interested parties, local communities and stakeholders at all stages of preparing DAP.

## Delay, anomalies spoil the purpose

FROM PAGE 21

For example, a private housing developer has earth-filled river, main flood flow zones and sub-flood flow zones in three moujas of Anta, Hazaribagh and Dhaleswar. Another housing developer has filled up a retention pond in Matuval mouja.

The DMDP was initiated in 1992, completed in 1995 and officially gazetted in 1997. But it took around a decade for Rajuk to initiate framing of DAP in November 2004.

Rajuk hired four local consulting firms -- Sheltech Private Limited, Development Design Consultants Limited (DDC), Engineering and Planning Consultants Limited (EPC) and Ganibangla Limited -- for the two-year DAP project involving Tk 23.22 crore.

The entire study area -- 1,528 square kilometres -- was initially divided into five groups. Group-A covers northeast part, Group-B southeast part, Group-C central part, Group-D southwest part and Group-E northwest part.

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President of the Institute of Architect Bangladesh and a Dhanmondi resident Mubasshar

But different citizens' groups and environmentalists have raised allegation of anomalies in the way of preparing the document keeping the general people in dark.

Noted environmentalist and one of the oldest residents of Dhanmondi Prof Muzaffar Ahmad said that there has been no meaningful consultation for the plan in Dhanmondi. The consulting firm Ganibangla Limited did not hold consultation with the major stakeholders or any of the notable citizens' groups of Dhanmondi.

"Our demand is Rajuk must arrange public discourse immediately on progress of DAP before preparation of the draft plan," he said. "Moreover, the survey of DAP is flawed with various methodological defects."

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Hussain said that Ganibangla has so far done no tangible work but they are set to submit a complete interim report to the authorities.

They should have consulted with the residents with whatever findings they have, he said.

"My firm belief is that other firms too have done the job in the similar manner bypassing meaningful community participation," said Hussain. "Purpose of the DAP will never be served with such messy and deficient work."

Rajuk must make the DAP public before reaching final stage, he said adding that the consultants have to consult with cross-section of people including professionals like planners, architects, engineers and lawyers.

According to sources, five firms were inadequate for the huge task of DAP but the number was reduced to four dividing the work of group D among the consulting firms.

Moreover, DDC is the assigned consulting firm for group A but it is also working jointly with Ganibangla for group C. DDC team leader for group A Mahbubur Rahman said, "We are extending technical support to Ganibangla."

Team Leader of Ganibangla Prof Golam Rahman said, "Ganibangla is taking support from DDC because it does not have enough manpower for the job," he said.

Asked why the job of Group D was divided among the consulting firms, Project Director of DAP Nayeema Khatun said, "We had to do it because all the bidders created a chaotic situation making allegations against each other."

On the allegation of not holding adequate public consultations, Rajuk Member (Planning) Nasir Uddin said, "We consulted with the housing developers and local representatives like ward commissioners at the initial stage."

He also said that Rajuk wants to extend the deadline for DAP preparation up to December and a proposal has been prepared for it.

Nayeema Khatun said that DDC and Ganibangla could work jointly as per tender document but internal feed between the two firms have spoilt the work of group C.

"It is the duty of the consulting firms to go house-to-house and ground level people for socio-economic survey. It is their failure if they have not done so. I will ask

Ganibangla to have consultation with those who have shown interests," she said.

According to her, survey reports of all four firms have already been completed.

The firms are now working on corrections of the interim reports, as suggested by the Technical Evaluation Committee, and the draft plan.

Working simultaneously on both interim report and draft plan is not a problem, said Nayeema. "We will arrange public hearing of DAP for 60 days after the draft plan is completed."

Team leader of Ganibangla said that they are now going to consult with all the stakeholders concerned, with whatever findings they have.

According to the experts, DAP should have been completed in 1997 along with its two other components--Structural Plan and Urban Area Plan of the DMDP.

Rajuk's dubious role in preparing the DAP just facilitated the private land developers in destruction of city's topographic landscape and natural environment, wetlands, flood retention basins and open spaces within and in the periphery of the city, they said.

## health,busservices,airlines&traintiming

### OSPITALS & CLINICS

Ahsania Mission Cancer & General Hospital	8311721-25
9008919, 8051618	
Apollo Hospitals Dhaka	
9891680-4, 01713046684/85	
Emergency no. 9896623, 0171409000	
Bangladesh Medical College & Hospital	
9118202, 8115843	
Central Hospital	
9660015-19,	
China Bangla Hospital (JV) Ltd	
8913674	
Dhaka Medical College Hospital	
8626812-16	
Gana Shasthyo Kendra	
8617208, 8617383, 8620178,	
Greenland Hospital	
8912663	
Gulshan Mother & Child Clinic	
8822738, 8812992	
Rashmoni General Hospital	
8317606, 9557354, 8317819	
Holy Family Hospital	

### BUS SERVICES

Ratan's Dental Clinic	9111090
9014563	
Salimullah Medical College Hospital	7319002-6
9828855, 8827575	
Labaid Cardiac Hospital	8610793-8
Marie Stopes Clinic	8821874
Medinova Medical Services Ltd	8620353,
Monowara Hospital	8318135, 8319802
Pangal Hospital	9112150, 9113041
PG Hospital (BSMMU)	9614545-9, 9612550-4
Rashmoni General Hospital	8317606, 9557354, 8317819
Holy Family Hospital	

### AIRLINES

Drak Air	9862243, 9892862,
Emirates	9892801, 9885574-75
GMC Airlines	9349293-5, Fax: 9345300
Biman Bangladesh Airlines	8825845-9, Airport Office: 8960404, 8915699, Fax: 8826115
Air India	8611783, 8611929, Fax: 9670591
British Airways	8815111, Fax: 8815346,