

FOLLOW-UP

SHANKHANIDHI HOUSE

DC to take 'step' to cancel lease

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Dhaka has said he will take steps to cancel the lease of Shankhanidhi House, a listed historical structure of the Department of Archaeology (DoA).

The DC, Kamaluddin, confirmed the receipt of a letter from DoA asking for cancellation of the lease and handing it over to DoA.

Shankhanidhi House is a building with significant architectural features on Tipu Sultan Road in the old part of the city.

Defying the law, the then ADC (Revenue) of DC office leased out two-thirds of this listed archaeological heritage building on February 2, 2002.

The place now houses an automobile workshop, lube shops and an office of workshop owners' association. Besides, two families reside there.

Present inhabitants of the house have changed its original features according to their whims. An automobile workshop rented out by the lessees



Shankhanidhi House on Tipu Sultan Road in the old part of the city.

on the ground floor has blackened the beautiful courtyard.

Following reports published in Star City, the DoA said that they would send a letter to the DC office asking them to cancel the lease.

A n a n d a G o p a l

Sankhanidhi, the successor of Sankhanidhi family who lives in India, visited Dhaka in May and urged the authorities to preserve this historical site.

According to an inscription, whitewashed at present, it was built in 1921 by two mer-

chant brothers Lal Mohan Saha and Gaur Nitai Saha.

Paribesh Bachao Andolon, an environmentalist group, urged the DoA to free the historical site from an illegal lease issued by the DC office.

Madhubazar road remains closed for days

CITY CORRESPONDENT

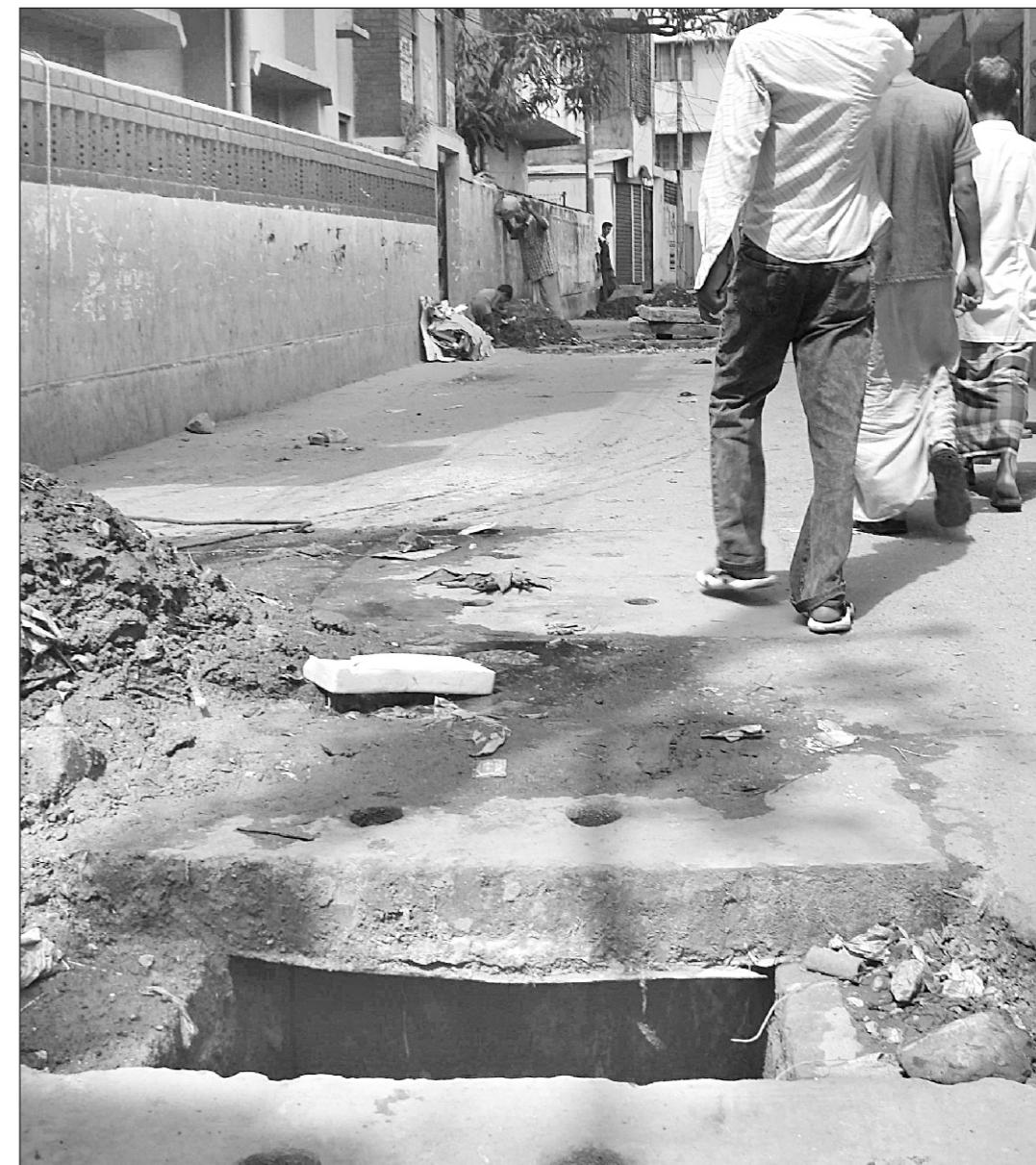
To the suffering of thousands of people, Madhubazar road, a vital link road between Dhanmondi and Rayer Bazar has remained closed for nearly week as the Dhaka City Corporation took up a program to clean underground drain.

The job of cleaning the small underground drain over an area of hardly 150 meters, could be completed within a day. Local residents said that negligence of the authorities had to be blamed for the delay. Meanwhile diverted traffic mostly consisting of rickshaws is now choking other roads in the area.

"This is the only road that directly links Rayerbazar with Dhanmondi and it is mostly used by the people who do not have private cars so the authorities do not care much for the non-VIPs," said Kamrul, a resident of Madhubazar.

"We understand that the cleaning is being done to reduce waterlogging in the area but this simple work could never take so long to finish," Kamrul added.

DCC's conservative officials said that they would immediately look into the matter and take steps to open the road.



Madhubazar Road remains closed for DCC's delay in cleaning underground drains.

Experts demand immediate scrutiny

FROM PAGE 21

All present at Saturday's meeting expressed grave concern over what will happen to Dhaka's cityscape when 16,000 buildings will come in place, said the president of Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh (Rehab) Abdul Awal.

"But Rajuk has to at least make sure that building rules of 1996 is enforced properly in those cases," said Awal, who is a vice-chairman of Urban Development Committee.

Director of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela) Syeda Rizwana Hasan said that consequence of putting so many more buildings approved under old rules would surely worsen the present environmental situation in the city.

Such approval of buildings is contrary to three foremost objectives of the new build-

ing rules, including percolation of groundwater level, creating green and open spaces and addressing neighbourhood concerns, she said demanding immediate implementation of the new rules.

The plans were submitted with a lot of flaws and anomalies, said an engineer who attended the meeting. Such anomalous plans were submitted and approved in connivance with a section of dishonest Rajuk officials.

The anomalies include suppression of information regarding road width and land ownership disputes.

"I think all the building plans approved hurriedly under old rules should be cancelled and now reviewed under the new rules," he said. "Plans were approved without the surveyors and building inspectors visiting the sites."

Architect Iqbal Habib, member secretary of the

environmentalist group Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa), said that his organisation has all along been against hurried approval of so many plans under the old rules.

"The approvals were made despite uncounted flaws and the act has been unfair," he said.

Iqbal underscored that a properly drawn up Detailed Area Plan (DAP) is crucially complimentary to the building rules.

An environmentalist and vice-chairman of Urban Development Committee, Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed said that the hurriedly approved plans could be reviewed if the government intends to do so.

He said the new building rules are beneficial in all respects particularly in conservation of urban environment.

But some unscrupulous quarters, including some

Rajuk staff, spread a rumour that a builder would lose half of the plot under the new rules and created hindrance to its implementation.

"Some sections at Rajuk are unhappy with the building rules of 2006," said Prof Sayeed.

Chairman of Rajuk KAM Haroon said, "There is no scope for plan approval with deficiency in the applications."

He said that anyone interested can visit Rajuk website, see the gazette and buy copy of the rules from market.

After 20 days of gazette notification of Metropolitan Building Construction Rules of 2006, the government by an order on June 4 extended effectiveness of the old building construction rules of 1996 until June 30.

The chance prompted the builders, both commercial and private, to indulge in a rat race of plan-pass exploiting

the interim opportunity.

In a similar order, the government further extended the effectiveness of the building rules of 1996 for next six months until December 31.

Rehab President Awal said, "It was not appropriate on the part of the government to extend the effectiveness of the building rules of 1996 by six months."

But the then public works secretary Iqbal Uddin Chowdhury said publicly at a meeting at a city hotel that the government extended the old rules in the face of tremendous pressure from an association of commercial builders.

By December 2006, Rajuk received a backlog of 16,200 applications for approval within January 31, 2007. Rajuk approved around 10,000 plans in one month and 13,500 by end of May with unspecified number of high-rises (above six-storey).

regular passenger.

A

large

passenger

launch

usually

starts

at

5pm

and

reaches

my

home

terminal

at

around

6

next

morning.

Imagine

the

suffering

of

a

13-hour

journey

without

water,"

said

Mridha.

"I

have

been

coming

to

Dhaka

for

the

last

20

years.

I

am

a

regular

deck

passenger

on

the

deck

of

a

boat

and

it

is

mostly

used

by

the

people

who

do

not

have

private

cars

so

the

authorities

do

not

care

much

for

the

non

VIPs,"

said

Kamrul,

a

resident

of

Madhubazar.

"

This

is

the

only

road

that

directly

links

Rayerbazar

with

Dhanmondi

and

it

is

mostly

used

by

the

people

who

do

not

have

private

cars

so

the

authorities

do

not

care

much

for

the

non