

TK 150 CRORE COMMERCIAL BLDG ON CITY CORPORATION LAND RCC defies rules to favour AL lawmaker

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) plans to let an Awami League (AL) lawmaker's real-estate company implement two multi-storied commercial building projects worth Tk 150 crore on corporation land.

The RCC does not have any rules or regulations that allow private real-estate companies to make commercial developments on RCC land, according to officials concerned. The RCC rules also do not allow it to follow instances or rules of other city corporations under any circumstances, they said.

However, RCC Mayor AHM Khairuzaman Lito has already publicly spoken about awarding the projects to Ena Properties, owned by AL lawmaker Enamul Haque of Rajshahi-4 (Bagmara) constituency, way before any tender in this regard was floated.

Ena Properties has been short-listed for the projects during the pre-qualification process. The final tender is yet to be floated.

The RCC decided to sign contract with the "tender winning" company under the rules fixed for Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) for privately-funded construction of commercial/residential buildings, long-term lease and handover, reads pre-qualification tender documents.

"As we have no such rules, ministries concerned approved our initiatives for these projects which will be done by contractual agreements under DCC rules," Rajshahi Mayor AHM Khairuzaman Lito told The Daily Star.

"The steps are being taken only to develop and beautify the long deprived north-western part of the city at private cost," he explained.

Lito said the RCC owns the pieces of land but its fund for development is inadequate for the desired development. "As well as development, the projects will open up sources of income for the corporation," he argued.

However, the RCC has not done any

assessment about what the projects will cost the corporation if it went ahead by itself.

According to pre-qualification tender documents, the developer firm will construct the multi-storied commercial buildings on RCC's land and earn profit through long-term leasing out of shops and floor space. It would then handover the buildings to RCC so that the RCC can receive monthly rents.

In one of the projects, a five-storied shopping complex will be built alongside a 12-storied tower on over two acres (around 6.5 bighas) of land at Sonadighi area at a cost of Tk 100 crore, said RCC officials.

The old city bhaban will be demolished. The water of Sonadighi will be treated and its surroundings will have recreational facilities.

In the other project, an eight-storied commercial complex will be developed on 1.55 bighas of land in Kadirganj, south-east corner of New Nagar Bhaban, at a cost of Tk 50 crore.

Locals value the pieces of land at Tk 16 crore.

Since Mayor Lito spoke in several public meetings about awarding the projects to Ena Properties, many city dwellers fear that both the projects will be given, somehow, to the MP's firm.

"The projects will never realise if they are not given to Ena Properties," said an RCC official on condition of anonymity.

The RCC is also planning several other similar projects, including one for building a multi-storied market demolishing the kitchen market next to Rajshahi New Market.

For the project in Sonadighi, all nine bidders were chosen in pre-qualifiers. Besides Ena Properties, ABC Real Estates, Mahmood Builders and Associates, Monico Ltd, Padda Associates, Iswraj Associates, N Amin and Sons, KB-Eal Joint Venture and BABL-JC JV are in the race for the job.

For the Kadirganj project, a total of 13 bidders pre-qualified, including Ena

Properties and most of the nine from Sonadighi project, also known as Rajshahi City Tower project.

The projects are being called "package projects" since they include essential electrical, water supply, sanitary works and common facility development like internal road network, community space, recreational facilities, utility services and beautification besides building the buildings.

The Daily Star obtained a CD, prepared by Ena Properties, that have a three dimensional images of the proposed Rajshahi City Tower project. RCC initiated the projects showing this CD publicly at different city points.

On contact, Shafikul Islam Bhuiyan, managing director (MD) of Monico Ltd, said, "It is too early to even guess who will win the job as the tender notice is yet to be issued."

"We took part in the pre-qualification process knowing the tender proceedings will be fair," said Asim Kumar Joarder, chief executive of ABC Real Estates JV.

Nasiruddin Mahmood, MD of Mahmood Builders and Associates, also hoped for a fair tender process.

However, lawmaker Enamul Haque, also MD of Ena Properties, while talking The Daily Star sounded more confident than the other pre-qualified companies.

"We shall get the work. We hope to begin primary works within three months (from now) as we have already started designing the project," he said.

"We will construct the tower first and then we will develop the surroundings so that we can relocate the businessmen around inside the tower," he added.

Asked about RCC's benefit from the projects, Enamul said, "The matter is still in negotiations. I cannot disclose this at this stage."

"The developer that will provide the maximum benefits to the corporation will be selected," Mayor Lito told The Daily Star refuting possibilities of any unfair means in the tender process.



Vehicles stuck in a gridlock at Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in the city yesterday as traffic jam becomes a regular phenomenon.

PHOTO STAR

EC may start updating voter list in June: CEC

UNB, Dhaka

The Election Commission may start updating the countrywide voter list with photographs at the end of June, Chief Election Commissioner Dr ATM Shamsul Huda said yesterday.

"We may start updating the voter list at the end of June," he told reporters while replying to a question after attending a workshop titled 'Voter List Update Programme-2009' organised by the Commission at the National Economic Council (NEC).

"We need some time for printing the registration forms along with putting equipment in place before going on with the updating exercise," Dr Huda said.

The CEC said the Commission has not yet finalised the time when actually the updating work would be launched but the updating exercise would be completed in a span of 45 days. "We're very careful about maintaining the standard of the existing voter list."

On completion of updating the voter list, he said the registration process would be going on round the year until the election schedule for parliamentary polls is announced.

Dr Huda said the officials concerned would carefully perform their duties so that the mistakes of the past do not occur again during registration. "I hope there'll be fewer mistakes this time."

Replying to a question, he said the process of correcting mistakes in voter ID cards would continue while updating the voter list. "Correc-

tions will be made this time," he added.

Asked whether national ID card is needed for opening a bank account and other purposes, the CEC said the Commission would issue a gazette notification after properly finishing the updating task. "All organisations concerned will be informed through the gazette notification in time."

About permanent constitutions of political parties, Dr Huda said the EC has already made it clear that the timeframe for submitting the permanent party constitution would be extended if they (parties) apply to the Commission. "We want to maintain good relations with the political parties."

The CEC, while addressing the workshop, urged the officials involved in updating the task to perform their duties promptly and flawlessly as the army officials did while preparing the voter list with photographs.

"You need to be polite while working to keep up the Commission's image. You should also be careful so that people, particularly the women and the elderly ones, do not have to stand in the queues for long," he said.

About publicity, Dr Huda said a massive publicity through print and electronic media would be carried out to this end.

Election Commissioners M Sohel Hussain and Brig Gen (ret'd) M Sakawat Hossain, EC Secretary M Humayun Kabir, senior EC officials and district and upazila election officers attended the workshop.

South East Bank-Drishy Debate Competition begins in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A three-day English debate competition titled "South East Bank-Drishy Debate Competition '09" began in the port city yesterday.

Drishy, a socio-cultural organisation, is organising the competition featuring the 9th inter-school and 3rd inter-university debate competition.

The Financial Express and Star Campus, a weekly supplement of The Daily Star, are the media partners of the programme.

Principal of Sunshine Grammar School and College Safia Gazi Rahman, who is also an adviser to Drishy, presided over the inaugural ceremony held at the Theatre Institute Chittagong (TIC).

Senior Vice President of South East Bank Anwar Uddin, Assistant Professor Asrar Chowdhury of Jahangirnagar University (JU) and Assistant Professor of Pharmacy Department of University of Science and Technology Chittagong (USTC) Dr Subhash Chandra Roy also spoke.

Drishy President Masud Bakul was also present. Anwar Uddin said through involving themselves with debate clubs and taking part in the debate competitions, students can enhance their skills.

He said his bank would continue to be associated with such initiatives like community development activities as part of its corporate social responsibility.

Asrar Chowdhury thanked the organisers for giving the students of Chittagong a scope for getting involved in such a healthy practice.

A total of eight teams from seven English medium schools are participating in the 9th inter-school debate competition.

They are Radiant School and College, Sunshine Grammar School and College, Chittagong Sunshine School and College, Cantonment English School, Chittagong Grammar School, Child Heaven School and two teams from Cider International School.

The eight teams participating in the 3rd inter-university competition are Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology (Cuet), Stamford University, University of Science and Technology Chittagong (USTC), International Islamic University, Chittagong (IIUC), Islamic University of Technology (IUT) and three debate clubs from Chittagong University (CU) - Chittagong University Debating Society (CUDS), Bangladesh Debating School and Finance and Banking Debating Club.

Cabinet endorses Bigyan Bhaban named after Dr Wazed

UNB, Dhaka

The Cabinet yesterday adopted a resolution condoling the death of eminent nuclear scientist and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's husband Dr MA Wazed Miah.

Members of the cabinet observed one-minute's silence to pay respect to the memory of Dr Wazed.

They also offered special munajat seeking eternal peace of the departed soul. Land Minister Rejaul Karim Hira conducted the prayer.

Meanwhile, Press Secretary to the Prime Minister Abul Kalam Azad said a proposal was made in the meeting for setting up a National Bigyan Bhaban to be named after late Dr Wazed Miah.

The cabinet endorsed the proposal and recalled the contribution of Dr Wazed to the field of nuclear science, Azad said.

Born on February 16 in 1942 in a respectable Muslim family of Fatepur village in Pirganj, Rangpur, Dr Wazed through his academic excellence and knack for academic pursuit became an internationally reputed nuclear scientist.

Apart from acting as chairman of Atomic Energy Commission, Dr Wazed, during his long successful career, was researcher and fellow at scientific institutes and organisations in

different countries, including Germany and India. Dr Wazed has rich publications on scientific research and nuclear science. He also authored a number of books on social and political issues, including one on the memories of Bangabandhu.

3 criminals held in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested three criminals of a gang who were taking preparation to commit crime in Khilgaon area in the city early yesterday.

The arrestees were identified as Mohammad Khokon, Shamsu Mia, 23, of Khilgaon Railway slum and Nannu Mia, 30.

Police said they saw a yellow taxicab moving slowly on Khilgaon road in front Khilgaon police outpost and after searching it police seized two tubes of malam, chili, nails from the cab.

Police arrested the criminals while trying to escape the scene and seized the cab.

However, police could not find out yet the owner of the taxicab.



Members of the cabinet offer special munajat at the cabinet meeting at secretariat yesterday seeking eternal peace of the departed soul of eminent nuclear scientist Dr MA Wazed Miah, the husband of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

PHOTO PID

Transparency in spending public money stressed

President receives annual audit reports

UNB, Dhaka

President Zillur Rahman yesterday emphasised the importance of transparency and accountability in spending public money to achieve the 'Vision 2021'.

"It needs proper spending of government funds to achieve its expected development goals," he said when Comptroller and Auditor General of Bangladesh Ahmed Ataul Hakim submitted the annual audit reports to him at Bangabhaban.

Hakim submitted 30 various reports, including one performance audit report, one special audit report, 27 annual audit reports and one adjustment accounts.

The Comptroller and Auditor General

apprised the president of various aspects of the annual reports as well as their various ongoing activities.

He also apprised Zillur of performance audit saying that if it could be introduced in all sectors, the balance between the work and fund spending would be ensured.

President assured his all-out support to carry out his responsibilities. The Comptroller and Auditor General was accompanied by his two deputies - M Amir Khashru and Monindra Chandra Dutta. Secretary of the President's Office Mohammad Shafiq Alam, Military Secretary to the President Maj Gen Md Ehtesham Ul Haque and President's Press Secretary Abdul Awal Howlader were present on the occasion.

RAMNA BATAMUL BLAST CASE

Statements of two more PWs recorded

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday recorded statements of two more prosecution witnesses (PWs) in connection with Ramna Batamul blast case.

Judge ANM Bashir Ullah of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court recorded the statements of Omar Faruk and Mahmudul Kabir. They were later cross-examined by defence lawyers.

After recording their statements, the court fixed today for the next hearing of the case. The court also summoned several other witnesses to appear before it on the day.

On Sunday, the same court recorded the statement of officer-in-charge (OC) of Laksam Kabir Hossain, complainant of the case.

The blast had taken place at Ramna Batamul during Pahela Baishakh celebrations on April 14 in 2001, leaving 10 people killed and scores injured. Following the carnage, two cases -- one for murder and another for possession and use of explosive substances -- were filed with Ramna Police Station.

In their statements, Faruq and Kabir told the

court that they went to Ramna Batamul on April 14, 2001 where Pahela Baishakh celebrations were being held. At about 8:15am, a bomb exploded around 15 to 20 yards away from the stage. Another bomb went off ten minutes later.

Both of them were injured in the blasts and lost consciousness. When they came round, they found themselves at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH).

During yesterday's hearing, Harkatul Jihad (Huji) chief Mufti Abdul Hannan and four others, now in jail custody, were produced before the court. Another accused Maulana Akbar Hossain, now on a High Court bail, was also present in the court.

Maulana Tajuddin, younger brother of former deputy minister and BNP leader Abdus Salam Pintu, and seven other accused have been at large since the filing of the cases.

Metropolitan Public Prosecutor (PP) Abdullah Abu and additional PP Shah Alam Talukder appeared for the state while advocates Sheikh Fazlur Rahman, Aminul Goni Titu and Mahbubur Rahman Siddiqui defended the accused.



Rakhaing Women's Union stages a demonstration in front of the National Eidgah in the city yesterday demanding immediate release of Myanmar democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

PHOTO STAR

Release of Suu Kyi demanded

UNB, Dhaka

Several dozens of Rakhaing supporters of Myanmar's long incarcerated democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi staged a demonstration in front of National Eidgah in the city yesterday morning demanding her immediate release.

Rakhaing Women Union (RWU) organised the hour-long programme and later placed four-point demand at a press a briefing.

RWU Chairperson Saw Mra Raza Linn at the press briefing demanded immediate release of Suu Kyi.

Linn also demanded release of other political prisoners, saying that political prisoners in Myanmar (Burma) are "routinely subjected to torture and often denied medical treatment."

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Human Rights Commission has condemned sending of Suu Kyi from house arrest to prison for trial as she met with a foreign national.

A correspondent from Cox's Bazar adds: Buddhist monks under the banner of International Burma (Myanmar) Bhikkhu Sangathan' staged a demonstration on the Shaheed Minar premises in Cox's Bazar town yesterday demanding release of Suu Kyi.

Police informer stabbed to death in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gang of unidentified criminals stabbed a police informer to death early yesterday near Tejgaon Railway Station in the city.

The dead was identified as Pichchi Monir, 20, son of late Anwar Hossain of Tejgaon rail

gateslum.

Government Railway Police of Kamalapur Railway Station recovered his body with stab injuries lying on the rail track near Tejgaon Railway Station and sent it to Dhaka Medical College Morgue for autopsy.

Morgue sources said the body had marks of several stab injuries in head, arms and chest. Monir's brother Faruque at DMC morgue said Monir, who worked as police informer, was involved in drug peddling in the area.

Few days back Monir was locked in quarrels with drug peddlers Galkata Selim and Ershad over drug, Faruque said, adding that he might have been killed over the feud.

NCC Bank debate competition begins May 21

BSS, Dhaka

The 2nd NCC Bank Inter-Club Debate Competition will begin at Zahurul Haque Hall of Dhaka University (DU) from May 21.

A total of 32 teams from 10 different public and private universities will participate in the competition to be organised by House of Debaters of DU Zahurul Haque Hall.

"With the most logical and brightest minds from all over the country participating this competition will serve as platform to exchange knowledge, culture, and tradition and forge a bridge of trust and friendship between the young debaters and the future leaders of the nation," said M Islam, president of the House of Debaters.

Femina
HEALTH & BEAUTY CARE
THE ART OF BEAUTY

We are introducing Thai Herbal Treatment & Spa by Thai experts on 20th May for free demonstration by appointment only from 3pm - 9 pm. limited clients only.
Contact: 8125798, 9111650
8/10, Block-A, Lalmitia, Dhaka. E-mail: feminacare360@yahoo.com