

## HELEMUL ALAM

Over 300 buildings including high-rises have been constructed in violation of the country's aviation rules around the Zia International Airport (ZIA) and Tejgaon Airport making take-off and landing of planes risky.

Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk) in 2007 issued notices to the owners of over 100 buildings including 45 high-rises asking them to knock down the illegal portions of the buildings.

But no further progress was made in this regard as the government formed a committee to review the list of the illegal structures the same year.

An official of Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) said they along with three other organisations - the Survey of Bangladesh, Rajuk, REHAB - and the Air Force in April 2008 identified 318 structures including high-rises that had been constructed violating CAAB rules.

Of those, 72 buildings including 10 high-rises are around ZIA and 247 around Tejgaon Airport while 20 structures are risky for both the airports, said the CAAB official.

The committee formed to review the list submitted its report to the civil aviation ministry during the tenure of the last caretaker government with suggestion for not constructing the second runway at ZIA.

The report said if the second runway is constructed, a large number of structures have to be knocked down, said an official of the housing and public works ministry.

However, the CAAB representatives in the committee disagreed, he said.

Ministry sources said another committee might be formed in this regard.

Rajuk in 2005 identified 111 structures including 46 high-rises and took initiative

## High-rises raise flying risk

318 buildings defied height limit; Rajuk asked owners in vain to knock down over 100 structures in 2007



A plane preparing to land at Zia International Airport flies over the high-rise buildings at Baunia near Uttara.

to demolish 17 buildings in August, 2005. But eight of them could not be knocked down due to legal tangles.

Rajuk could not demolish the illegal portions of the other structures as the owners of many of the 111 buildings

obtained stay order against the drive from the High Court, said a Rajuk official.

Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister GM Quader said they have already requested the authorities concerned to take necessary steps to knock down the

upper portion of the structures, that were constructed violating the CAAB rules.

Now it is their responsibility to knock down those, he said.

The minister said if the authorities concerned don't take action they would

take up the matter to the top level of the government.

State Minister for Housing and Public Works Abdul Mannan Khan said they would take necessary steps in this regard as per the rules.

"We have already given instructions to all the agencies concerned under the ministry to do their tasks following the rules strictly," he said.

According to the regulations of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), the height of structures is restricted to a certain level around the airport to prevent accidents and ensure smooth operation of flights, said CAAB officials.

They said every building in the city should be built on receipt of clearance from the CAAB. Rajuk should not approve any construction plan without its clearance.

Rajuk officials claimed that they have never approved any construction plan without CAAB's clearance.

Owners of high-rise structures often violate the Rajuk-approved plan after receiving permission. If Rajuk tries to take action against them they take up the matter to the court to delay the process, said a Rajuk official.

Illegal structures at Baunia on the northern side of the only runway at ZIA are creating problems for flight operation and spoiled the scope for constructing a parallel runway shown in ZIA's master plan, CAAB sources said.

If construction of the second runway at ZIA is taken into consideration, the number of structures non-compliant to the CAAB rules would be between 2,000 and 3,000.

According to the ICAO regulations, an area of 3,000 feet from each end of a runway should be considered 'zero-height' area and from that point only one foot of height is allowed for each 50 feet of distance till 10,500 feet from both ends of the runway.

But no structure should cross a height of 150 feet within the area, say the regulations.

## NEWSPRINT IMPORT BFUJ, DUJ concerned over duty

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) and Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) at a joint statement yesterday expressed concern over the imposition of five percent duty on import of newsprint as stated in the proposed budget.

They demanded an immediate withdrawal of the proposed tax.

President of BFUJ Ruhul Amin Gazi and its secretary general MA Aziz and president

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## Water minister plays down Tipai fear

Tells JS govt taking steps to conduct joint survey on Indian bid; Tk 1,159cr projects on the cards to dredge rivers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has a plan to implement two projects at a cost of Tk 1,159 crore for carrying out dredging in rivers including Buriganga, one of the rivers considered as lifeline of the capital city.

Replying to lawmakers' queries, Water Resources Minister Romesh Chandra Sen yesterday disclosed the government's plans in parliament.

On the lawmakers' angst over construction of Tipaimukh dam, the minister said the Tipaimukh dam project is not like the Farakka barrage and Indian government assured Bangladesh of not diverting water through the planned dam on the Borak river.

He said the government is taking steps to conduct a joint survey as per the decision of the 14th meeting of Joint Rivers Commission in 1978 to assess the possi-

ble benefits in areas, including flood control.

"It's learnt from diplomatic sources that the Tipaimukh project will be a waterpower project and also be aimed at controlling flood. India assured Bangladesh of not diverting water through this project," the minister said.

He said the government has decided to send a parliamentary delegation to visit

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## Amnesty offered 'under compulsion'

PM's adviser bats for money-whitening

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The provision for whitening undisclosed money in exchange for 10 percent tax was incorporated in the proposed budget "under compulsion" despite the government's moral stand against it, said Prime Minister's Economic Affairs Adviser Masihur Rahman yesterday.

The provision will hopefully create scopes for a lot of investments in productive and industrial sectors and generate jobs, which are needed in this time of global economic recession, Masihur said, explaining the compelling circumstances.

He was speaking as the guest of honour at the monthly luncheon meeting of Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) at Westin Hotel.

"The global economic recession affected the whole world and Bangladesh is not an exception. The government must increase demands for consumption and employment in domestic economy to face the financial meltdown," Masihur said.

By allowing whitening of black money in the budget for the fiscal year 2009-10, the government is trying to stimulate domestic economy instead of exports, he said, adding that this will also bring hidden money to the mainstream economy.

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## TERRESTRIAL FACILITY Bill seeks to give BTV exclusivity

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday placed a bill in parliament seeking to enact law to preserve terrestrial facility exclusively for the state-run Bangladesh Television (BTV) with a provision for stringent punishment for violation of the law.

Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad, who placed the bill, said in consideration of extension and development of state's mouthpiece, BTV, the terrestrial facility should be preserved only for it.

The previous BNP-led alliance government also preserved the BTV's terrestrial facility by promulgating an ordinance on October 23, 2006. But the ordinance ceased to have effect on

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## US on war trial, BDR deaths

Calls for fair trial, probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The US has urged Bangladesh to be cautious in trying war criminals of 1971, saying the issue should not be politicised.

No action should be taken that might be considered a mechanism to weaken democracy in the country, said visiting US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Robert O Blake yesterday.

About numerous custodial deaths of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) soldiers being investigated in connection with the recent

Robert O Blake

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## Govt to sue criminals after probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed yesterday told parliament that the government will file cases against the war criminals once it has necessary investigation done.

Preparations are on to form a special investigation team, appoint prosecutors and set up tribunals under the International Crimes (Tribunal) Act 1973.

He said they have already

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## War trial set to be delayed

2 more weeks needed to finalise amendment to law

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The trial of war criminals will not begin this month as the Law Commission still working to make recommendations for amending the law for the trial needs two more weeks to complete its job.

The government earlier announced that the trial would start under the International Crimes (Tribunal) Act 1973 by the end of this month.

Sources said the commission requires more time to do the job

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Fax: 8154665, Email: info@infradev.com