

Rajuk misses 4th deadline for handover of plots

HELEMUL ALAM

In a little more than a year, the city development authority has missed its own deadline for the fourth time to hand over thousands of plots to would-be homeowners in two areas of Dhaka.

Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) had promised to begin handing over the plots in Uttara Model Town Third Phase and Purbachal New Town Project located in Narayanganj and Gazipur.

Officials at Rajuk said now they will start handing over the plots by the end of this year after completing necessary development works including construction of roads in the projects areas.

"We're going to complete the works of two sectors in Uttara out of four and two sectors in Purbachal out of 17 and we will start handing over the plots by this year," said Rajuk Chairman Md Nurul Huda.

The continuing delays in handing over the plots have frustrated those who won lotteries last year to buy the

plots from the government. They have already put down money only to be left waiting.

A government official who won a plot in Uttara third phase said he deposited all the required Tk 9 lakh in 2003 for a three-katha plot but he is still waiting to receive the land.

"I have been passing my days under huge tension over the last six years as reputation of Rajuk is not good and most of its officials and employees are corrupt," said the official requesting not to be named, as he is a government official.

A total of 8115 plots on 2008 acres of land are being developed for distribution under the Uttara third phase while 26,000 plots on 6150 acres of land under Purbachal project.

Around 90 percent of earth filling has been completed in Uttara third phase area, which was a marshland. After that, the government agency will have to construct 165km roads and 13 bridges on a 9.5km lake.

On the other hand 80 percent land

development work in Purbachal has so far been completed. While the agency have to build 250km roads and 63 bridges.

The construction of 165km road and 13 bridges have been going on and it is expected to be completed by the next year, said Project Director of Uttara third phase Nurul Islam adding the roads at sector 15 and 16 will be ready by this year.

"We have a plan to connect the project area with DOHS in Mirpur Section-12 and we will sit for a discussion with armed forces division in this regard," Nurul Islam said.

A resident of the area will be able to go to Mirpur-12 and also use the under construction Mirpur-12 to Zia Colony Road easily after the link, he said.

Islam said they also have already taken initiative to start the work of 9.5km lake protection.

"It will be possible to distribute plots at sector 15 and 16 from December if everything remains under their favour and plots at sector 17 will

be distributed in the next year," said Islam adding that construction of bridges on the 9.5km long lake, which will take 16 months, will delay the plot handover of sector 17.

Project Director of Purbachal ASM Rafiqul Alam said they will start handing over of plots from December and will be able to give utility services by the next year.

Rafiqul said works of 63 bridges would also be completed by the next year.

Some 50km road construction works, out of 250km in Purbachal have so far been completed, said another official at Rajuk adding that the work of rest of the roads will be completed by the middle of the next year.

A proposal of the Purbachal project, which is scheduled to be completed by June 2010, has been waiting to be extended to 2013, said the official.

"The land survey work in Gazipur side has been going on and we will try to complete even the Gazipur side buy this time," he said.



PHOTO: STAR
Bangladesh Paribesh Andolan from a human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club in the city yesterday demanding steps to make the river Meghna free from encroachment.

Donors should align aid policy with strategies of developing countries

Says food minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh wants the development partners to align their aid policies with the strategies of developing countries to ensure food security amid price volatilities and shocks they face today.

"Now it is the development partners' turn to align their aid policy to recipient country strategies and enhance coordination in order to achieve development results," Food Minister Abdur Razzaque said yesterday.

The call came at a symposium on 'Global Agriculture and Food Security' organised by the US Department of Agriculture and World Food Programme in Washington as

part of the global initiative to frame long-term policies to face the challenges of food security through political, economic and technical cooperation.

Addressing the programme, Food and Disaster Management Minister Razzaque said from the recent global food crisis, Bangladesh learnt that increasing domestic food production and international cooperation is essential for facing emergencies.

Though Bangladesh's poverty rate has declined from 56.6 percent in 1991-92 to 37 percent in 2009, the number of poor and income inequalities are increasing, he said, adding that Bangladesh government has increased allocation to safety nets to

2.8 percent of GDP.

"But the social safety nets cover only 52 percent of the extreme poor," Razzaque said, adding that considering the government's enormous pressure on budget, the country needs development partners' support to increase the coverage.

He also said limited investment and overseas development assistance to agriculture over the years has resulted in persistent challenges like poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition.

Considering the needs for increased incentives to the farmers, more safety nets and government's capacity to respond to disasters, the government wants to increase food stock capacity from present 1.5 mil-

lion tonnes to 2.2 million tonnes in 3 to 5 years and to 3 million tonnes by 2020, the minister said.

"For this, the government needs development partners' continued support in the years to come," Razzaque said.

The leaders of the G-8 grouping last year pledged to create a 20 billion dollar fund for food security of the developing countries. US President Barack Obama pledged 100 million dollars, and Bangladesh will be given a good amount of it, food ministry officials said.

The US Agency for International Development Administrator Dr Rajiv Shah, leaders from African Union, Liberia, and development partners attended the symposium.

Zonta Club IV executives

METRO DESK

Munira Naim and Najmi Moyeen have been elected president and secretary of Zonta Club IV-Dhaka recently, says a press release.

The election was held at the annual general meeting (AGM) of the club.

Other members of the executive committee for 2010-12 are 1st vice-president Farha Lazina Sumi, 2nd vice-president Saeda Yasmeen, president-elect Imrana Shahidullah, treasurer Qamar Sultana, co-treasurer Nargis Bar Chowdhury, and co-secretary Tasnuva Arefin.

The board of directors are Zobaidda Ahmed, Najma Chisti, Shabana Omar, Jahanara Rashid Bulbul, Shaheen Haider, Zareen Zaman, Kashfia Chowdhury, Ferdous Haseen, Nurjahan Khan and Hamida Reha Kamal.

Zonta International is a global organisation of executives and professionals working together to advance the status of women worldwide.

Save Meghna from encroachment

Environmentalists urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An environmental group yesterday demanded that the government make the river Meghna in Ashuganj free from encroachment.

The leaders of the Bangladesh Paribesh Andolan (Bapa) also called for drawing boundaries of all rivers across the country and punishing the encroachers.

Speaking at a citizens' rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club in the city, they said the prime minister is very much sincere to free all the rivers from the encroachment, but her party men are encroaching those.

Bapa President ASM Shahjahan said encroachment is the main cause of destruction of the rivers. If encroachment continues, around 230 rivers across the country will disappear, he added. "The trend of encroachment is surely a threat to the very existence of riverine Bangladesh," said Shahjahan, also a former adviser to caretaker government.

Quoting from a report published in a daily newspaper, Bapa General Secretary Dr Md Abdul Matin said the Meghna was encroached near Ashuganj of Brahmanbaria where around 400 feet of the river was filled with earth.

Prof Kazi Saleh Ahmed, vice-president of the organisation, said due to the earth filling, the Meghna will change its way and three villages on the other side will be in threat of river erosion.



PHOTO: STAR
Nirapad Development Foundation and Green Mind Society stage a demonstration in front of the National Press Club in the city yesterday urging the government to raise tax on tobacco products.

'Raise tax on tobacco products'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a programme yesterday called on the government to raise tax on tobacco products and use this money to rehabilitate bidi workers through providing alternative jobs to them, as they face serious health hazards at their bidi factories.

They said the bidi workers are suffering from various diseases like cancer

and tuberculosis. The government should impose high tax on tobacco and provide alternative jobs for bidi workers.

They said around 57,000 people die from tobacco-related diseases a year and 3,82,000 people become paralysed due to tobacco use. About Tk 11,000 crore are spent on tobacco-related diseases a year.

The speakers said this at a token sit-in

programme organised by the Nirapad Development Foundation (NDF) and Green Mind Society in front of the National Press Club yesterday, said a press release.

NDF chairman Ibnul Syed Rana, Green Mind president Amir Hossain, Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) joint secretary Shahjahan Mridha Benu and Mihir Biswas, among others, were present at the programme.



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