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Districts in Focus

The changing landscape of Chittagong

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Chittagong

CHITTAGONG is an encouraging place for real estate business, said Saiful Haque, manager (administration) of RF Builders Ltd.

"A good number of real estate companies are operating in the port city with a huge number of projects. They consider Chittagong as a favourable zone," he said. RF Builders kicked off operations in the port city in 2008.

He said the company currently runs three projects in the port city.

"If the government provides public utilities, the business will boom day by day," he said, adding that the government's decision to stop new gas connections for domestic use seriously hampers business.

Equity Property Management Ltd began its journey in the port city in 1999, said Sarwar Alam, the company's brand manager. He said the company has already completed 27 projects.

The size of the apartments varies between 900 and 3600 square feet, said Md Nuruddin, a senior executive of the company. The apartments are sold at a price range of Tk 5,500 to Tk 10,000 per square foot depending on the locations. The company has ten more projects in the pipeline in different areas of the city.

"We cannot offer an apartment in any of our running projects below Tk 5,500 a square foot, as we have to maintain quality," Nuruddin said. The company will try to build apartments for the middle-income people in future.

Bay Tech started business in the city in 2001, said Enamul Haque, the company's accounts manager.

In 2001 to 2006, it completed the project 'Bay Tech Green Villa' in the Khulshi area and the 'Bay Tech Roy Villa' project from 2007 to 2010 in Dewanji Pukur Par, he added.

Three more projects are currently under construction in Chittagong, he said. The apartment sizes in those projects vary between 935 and 1,800 square feet, priced at Tk 4,000 a square foot.

Mostafa Hakim Real Estate began operations in the city in January 2006, said Khairul Anam, the company's marketing manager.

"We have already completed our project 'TM Tower' in Dewan Hat area, which is a 16-storey tower," said Khairul. Five types of apartments are available in between 1,257 and 1,853 square feet at Tk 4,000 to Tk 5,000 a square foot, he said.

Four more projects in different areas are under construction at present, he added.

"We plan to provide apartments to middle income families as well. Two such projects have been undertaken in the Kumira and Salimpur areas."

Emdadul Hoq Chowdhury, chief operating officer of CPDL that began operations in the port city in 2004, said they have completed six projects and handed over all the flats to the clients. Eight more projects are now



ANURUP KANTI DAS

A view of Chittagong city. Real estate builders are zooming in on the port city in growing numbers.

under construction.

The apartment sizes vary between 2,000 and 3,500 square feet and can be bought at Tk 4,500 to Tk 6,000 a square foot depending on the location, said Chowdhury.

"We have the Clestia, SK Quadra and Paragon City projects that are 900 to 1,500 square feet in size and priced at Tk 2,800 to Tk 3,000 a square foot," he added.

Build Home Properties began operations in Chittagong in 2007 with the construction of the six-storey 'Saleh Tower' in Chatteshwari area, said Abdullah Al Mamun, its proprietor.

At present, the company has three running projects, he said, at sizes varying between 1,200 and 1,400 square feet, at Tk 3,500 a square foot.

"In Akbar Tower project, the apartment sizes vary between 600 and 650 square feet to cater to the middle income groups," Mamun said.

Aziza Sultana, a senior executive of Green Castle Properties Ltd that started work in Chittagong last year, said they have initiated two projects -- one is Rangdhanu Holding Society at Kumira and Bagan Bari at Chhoto Kumira under Sitakunda upazila.

"Rangdhanu Holding Society offers 79 plots

at Tk 4.1 lakh a katha and clients have to pay Tk 1 lakh in down payment."

Sultana said clients can pay in instalments too.

Building Technology and Ideas (BTI) started business in Chittagong in 2003 with its first project, BTI Windermere, in Khulshi.

"We have already completed three projects. We have twelve projects running at the moment with another 15 in the pipeline," said Rezaul Hoque, manager (sales).

The apartment sizes vary between 1,400 square feet and 3,000 square feet at a price of Tk 4,500-Tk 10,000 per square foot, he added.

He said building materials are getting costlier everyday and land owners demand 50 percent of the apartments. It is therefore difficult to make buildings for the middle income groups. However, we plan to do so in the future."

Keari Ltd started its first project 'Keari Elysium' at Chawk Bazar in 2001. Assistant Manager (marketing) Saifur Rahman said they have already completed four projects in the port city, with eight more under construction.

Apartment sizes vary between 1,000 square feet and 1,500 square feet, at a price of Tk 4,000 and Tk 8,000 per square feet.

He said the company is building the six-storey 'Al Islam Keari Tower' in Old DT Road for the middle income families. "Here, we will provide the 900 to 1,100 square feet apartments at Tk 3,500 per square feet."

Keari also plans to take more such projects on the outskirts of the city, he added.

Effect Builders and Housing Ltd first stepped into Chittagong in 2009 with its first project 'Effect Beacon' in Nasirabad, said Kamrul Alam, a senior marketing executive. It is near completion, he added.

The company is simultaneously running two more projects, while five more are in the pipeline, he said. It makes apartments that are between 700 and 1,600 square feet at Tk 3,000 to Tk 3,500 per square feet.

In addition, a good number of real estate firms, including Subashati Properties Ltd, Mishmak Developments Ltd, Sanmar Properties Ltd, Sky Tech Builders and Developers Ltd, SAF Holdings Ltd, Desh Properties Ltd, Jumairah Holdings Ltd, GTC Property Management Ltd, KBC Properties Ltd, Heaven Assets Ltd, Nawal Holdings Ltd and FG Development Ltd are also doing business in the port city.

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Rate the real estate players

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Chittagong

KAZI Aynul Hoque is the managing director of Equity Property Management (Pvt) Ltd. He feels the government should take initiatives to rate the real estate companies to ensure quality. He exchanges his views with The Daily Star recently.

The real estate sector first made an appearance in Chittagong in 1991 with the project 'Apon Nibash' in Nasirabad. Ideal Home Ltd had undertaken that project, says Hoque.

Next came the 'VIP Tower' in the Kazir Dewri area in 1993 and 'Mohana' at Panchlaish in 1995. Mohana was initiated by Shine Pukur Holdings Ltd.

However, these projects are still incomplete, says Hoque.

Equity Property Management Ltd stepped into the real estate sector in 1999 to build quality apartments.

"Our first project was 'Equity South Ridge' in Nasirabad in May 1999 and we handed the project to clients in 2001," he says.

"We were the first company in Chittagong to complete a project in time."

"Before we made an appearance, clients were being deprived in many ways. But we have incorporated services like full house generators, cable connections, T&T connections, PABX system, deep tube well, and iron treatment plants (in case iron is found in



Kazi Aynul Hoque

water)," Hoque adds.

He says there is a demand for apartments in the port city, but the supply of quality

apartments is limited. In Bangladesh, real estate construction takes place without much guidance and the city is not expanded

because of a lack of planning by the authorities.

"If the government develops the road network then the pressure of people in the city will be reduced," Hoque says.

If the Dohazari and Nazirhat railway service is developed in Chittagong, then the scuffle for a little piece of land among the real estate companies will not take place, he adds.

On the growth of real estate in Chittagong, he said it is not planned for a lack of planning by Chittagong Development Authority (CDA).

Moreover, the bank interest rate on loans to purchase apartments is very high, in comparison to developed countries, he added.

CDA is also developing land and selling plots, he said. "It is doing business. On one hand, it is my competitor. It is also my controlling authority on the other hand. How can that be?"

He said CDA lacks qualified professionals; it has about 5 to 6 architects.

The detail area plan is faulty too, he says. Zoning is a must in the plan, as it is a basic thing for city development, he adds.

He said CDA should plan a township on the outskirts of the city. Public private partnerships should be initiated to jump start such projects, he says.

On the standard of work, Hoque says the government should rate the companies to ensure quality. Clients will then be able to understand which companies maintains quality, he adds.

There is a demand for apartments in the port city, but the supply of quality apartments is limited. In Bangladesh, real estate construction takes place without much guidance