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HIGH-RISE CONSTRUCTION

Time to go vertical as land shrinks

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Construction of high-rise buildings is on the rise in Bangladesh as developers are eyeing vertical expansion to offset the decline of land in urban areas.

Soaring urban land prices, technological advancement and population growth are some of the reasons behind the growing preference for tall buildings among developers, said analysts in a seminar yesterday.

"Bangladesh is at the crossroads of urbanisation," said M Firoze, head of marketing and product development at BSRM Group.

He spoke at the seminar on tall buildings organised by the BSRM Group at the Sonargaon Hotel.

"Poor planning, inadequate infrastructure, migration of the rural poor, and sky rocketing urban land prices have all contributed to a situation where living in the city has become a nightmare experience."

"So, building vertical, taller structures is no longer a debatable proposition -- it is a need of the hour," added Firoze.

Currently, the country has a total of 14 high-rise buildings with height of more than 20 floors, of which six buildings were constructed in the past eight years, said Md Shafiqul Bari, professor of civil engineering at Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology (Buet).

The history of tall buildings in Bangladesh is only five decades old, with the

MAJOR SKYSCRAPERS IN DHAKA

SERIAL	NAME	FLOOR	HEIGHT	YEAR OF CONSTRUCTION
1	City Centre Bangladesh	37	171m	2011
2	City Bank Tower	34	109m	2006
3	Bangladesh Bank	31	100m	1985
4	Eastern Federal Credit Union Insurance	27		1992
5	Concord Grand	25		2006
6	Delta Life Insurance Company Limited	25		2004
7	Dhaka Westin	24		2006
8	Janata Bhaban	24		1985
9	Navana Tower	23		
10	Uday Tower	23		
11	BRAC University	22		
12	Bangladesh Shilpa Bank Bhaban	22		1983
13	Sena Kalyan Bhaban	21		1990
14	Basundhara City	21		2004

trend starting in 1963 with the construction of the 11-storied WAPDA building at Motijheel, according to Bari.

Later, in 1983 another remarkable tall building -- the Shilpa Bank Bhaban -- was constructed, followed by the Bangladesh Bank building that goes above 30 floors, in 1985.

It preceded the way for the City Bank Tower, a 34-storied building constructed in 2006, and the City Centre at Motijheel in 2010, which, at 37 floors, is the tallest buildings in Bangladesh, said Bari.

"The construction of high-rise buildings radically increased in Asia in recent times," Bari added.

The distribution of tall buildings has changed radically with Asia now having the largest share with 32 percent, followed by North America at 24 percent.

In 1982 the distribution used to be 49 percent in North America and 20 percent in Asia, he said.

In fact, eight of the top ten tall buildings are now in Asia and only two, the Sears Tower and the Empire State Building, are in North America.

Traditionally the tall buildings served as commercial office space, but over the years, other usages, such as residential, mixed-use, and hotel tower development, have rapidly increased.

"Construction of tall building will continue to rise due to the significant economic benefits in dense urban land use," said Bari.

The construction of tall buildings, especially 20-25 floors, are rising in Dhaka and Chittagong, said Professor Munaz Ahmed Noor of Buet.

A sustainable tall building is one whose design team has achieved a balance between environmental, economic and social issues at all stages, including design, construction and operation, said M Shahidul Ameen, a professor at the architecture department of Buet.

A sustainable tall building can also be defined as one which emits no pollution to air, considers its impact on land and water, and can contribute positively to the local community, all the while being economically occupied.

Vertical transportation is one of the most challenging aspects of tall building services as it affects the efficiency of people's movements and contributes to overall energy consumption.

The initial cost for installing the mechanical and electrical equipments in a tall building, such as lifts, is often more than 25 percent of the total construction cost, said Ameen.

Superstructure and foundations generally account for 10 percent to 20 percent of the total cost, with the building envelope costing approximately the same, and internal finishes about half of that figure, he added.

H&M chief to visit Bangladesh

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Karl-Johan Persson, chief executive officer of the Swedish retail chain H&M, is due in Bangladesh tomorrow to attend important meetings with the readymade garment manufacturers and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.



Karl-Johan Persson

Three officials from H&M, including the chief financial officer and chief of global marketing, will accompany Persson for the two-day visit, said Siddiqur Rahman, vice-president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA).

Persson will hold meetings with the BGMEA leaders and the prime minister, along with making factory tours, according to Rahman. "I cannot disclose specifics of his visit right now," Rahman added.

"But the CEO will definitely discuss issues surrounding the RMG sector of the country, as Bangladesh is an important outsourcing destination for H&M -- the company is increasing its purchase orders every year from Bangladesh," Rahman said.

Moreover, the company is now carrying out some important corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities in collaboration with the BGMEA, which the H&M officials are scheduled to discuss during the visit, he added.

"A high-powered Chinese business delegation, too, is now visiting Bangladesh for investing in the garment sector in the country. The business delegation has already held meetings with its Bangladeshi counterpart on this matter," Rahman said.

H&M, thanks to its annual purchases worth nearly \$1.5 billion, has overtaken Walmart, the world's largest retail chain, as the biggest buyer of Bangladeshi readymade garment products.

Founded in 1947, Hennes & Mauritz, popularly known as H&M, has approximately 2,600 stores the world over.

H&M operates under five different brands: including H&M, COS, Monki, Weekday and Cheap Monday.

Quality building materials come to the limelight



From left, M Shahidul Ameen, professor of architecture at Buet; Shamim Z Bosunia, former professor of Buet; Prof AMM Safiullah, vice chancellor of Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology; Md Shafiqul Bari, professor of civil engineering at Buet; Syed Fakhru Ameen, professor of architecture at Buet; and Munaz Ahmed Noor, professor of civil engineering at Buet, attend a seminar on tall buildings, organised by BSRM at Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka yesterday.

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The growing trend for high-rise buildings has been fuelling the demand for quality construction materials and skilled personnel, analysts said at a seminar on tall buildings yesterday.

"Skyscrapers are needed for a land-scarce and highly populated country like Bangladesh," said Professor Munaz Ahmed Noor of Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology (Buet), while raising the issue of shortage of high-quality building resources.

Although some local companies are manufacturing high-

strength steel and cement, a serious deficiency remains for quality concrete, a vital building material, according to Noor.

"Concrete for tall buildings is currently made on-site -- but they do not have the necessary skill to do so. We must produce higher quality concrete," he said.

Shamim Z Bosunia, a former Buet professor, highlighted the lack of practice among developers of high-rise buildings of undertaking concrete strength tests.

"We must have sufficient records about the strength," he said.

Noor also emphasised the importance of high-strength and high-performance steel as well.

"There is no scope to consider low strength materials for constructing tall buildings," he said, adding that local companies like BSRM are making premium quality steel.

"But challenges remain as construction of tall buildings requires bulk infrastructure and energy," he said, while bringing into view the issues regarding foundation, cost and fire safety.

They spoke at a seminar, organised by Chittagong-based steelmaker BSRM at Sonargaon Hotel, on tall buildings, attended by academics, civil and structural engineers from real estate and construction firms.

The event comes at a time when developers, owing to falling land availability in cities and rising demand for home and office space, are focusing on buildings with increased height.

"In the past eight years, some six buildings going above 20 floors were constructed in the capital," said Prof Md Shafiqul Bari of Buet's civil engineering department.

Aameer Alihussain, managing director of BSRM, said construction activities expanded fast in the past 10 years and thereby accelerating the demand for steel.

"But our production has risen several times to meet the demand."

Calls to stop interfering with Grameen Bank

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Calls for the government to withdraw the amendment to the Grameen Bank Ordinance have continued to pour in.

Nagorik Oikko, a recently launched political platform, Bangladesh Human Rights Commission and Bangladesh Rural and Human Rights Journalist Forum also urged the government to stop interfering with Grameen Bank and its founder Prof M u h a m m a d Yunus.

M a h m u d u r Rahman Manna, convener of Nagorik Oikko, said: "The government has created a complex situation about Grameen Bank, which is known as the bank of the poor."

"The specialised bank, which worked for the poor women, has earned name and fame at home and abroad for realistic reasons. Grameen Bank and its founder Prof Yunus have brightened the image of the country by winning the Nobel Peace Prize."

He said a smear campaign to vilify Grameen Bank and Prof Yunus is being run. Besides, the move to investigate the bank without any reason has created confusion.

"Grameen is a private bank. Its members own 97 percent of its stake legally. Their elected board is running the bank. Apart from one or two isolated cases, no corruption incident about Grameen Bank has come up."

Manna also said the bank's success compared to that of other banks cannot be denied.

"The government-announced amendment has worried us."

On the other hand, the mismanagement and corruption of the state-run banks is not unknown, he added.

"When the government is not properly dealing with the embezzling of more than Tk 3,000 crore from Sonali Bank in two years, the motivated dragging of Grameen Bank cannot be supported at all."

"I think Grameen Bank should be allowed to run as it is by withdrawing the ordinance on amendment," he said in a statement.

Bangladesh Human Rights Commission urged the prime minister to stop unnecessary government intervention in Grameen Bank and Prof Yunus.

READ MORE ON B3

Grameen Bank

Eurozone jobless numbers hit 18m

AFP, Brussels

Jobless numbers across the eurozone hit a record 18 million in July, the grim new high announced as recession takes grip across the debt-stricken 17-nation currency area.

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