



## Planning goes haywire

Rajuk bends rules to upset quiet living in Gulshan, Banani

TAWFIQUE ALI

Rajuk is approving commercial buildings in the residential areas of Gulshan and Banani with virtually no height limits and experts are calling it illegal and a recipe for disaster.

The Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk), the authority for ensuring the capital's planned development, has so far approved nearly a dozen such buildings on residential plots, owned by influential businessmen, on Gulshan Avenue and Kemal Ataturk Avenue, according to officials concerned.

Now, each plot owner would gain additional commercial floor space worth over an estimated Tk 100 crore, a precedence that would allure others to try and obtain such permits and pave the way for ruining the residential neighbourhoods, experts said.

On top of this, a Rajuk survey found that owners of about 84 percent buildings in the areas concerned have flouted their approved designs, often at the cost of safety.

"Converting residential plots into commercial ones and then giving the benefit of non-restricted Floor Area Ratio [the ratio of gross floor area to the size of the land or the permissible built-up floor area for a particular piece of land] for buildings is a blatant violation of Dhaka's detailed area plan and building rules," said Jalal Ahmed, president of Institute of Architects Bangladesh.

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A mother of six, who was allegedly gang-raped in Noakhali's Subarnachar upazila on Sunday evening, talks to police and journalists at Noakhali General Hospital yesterday. The victim accused some supporters of an upazila vice chairman candidate of committing the crime.

## 'Gang rape' again at Subarnachar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

A mother of six, aged about 48, was allegedly gang-raped in Noakhali's Subarnachar upazila on Sunday evening over "campaigning for an upazila vice chairman candidate".

The incident happened barely three months after a mother of four was gang-raped by 10-12 people in the same area allegedly for voting for "sheaf of paddy" in the December 30 national election.

Police arrested two people yesterday after the victim's husband had filed a case with Char Jabbar Police Station, accusing 12 people, including four unnamed. The arrestees are Abul Basher and Bechu Majhi, both accused in the case.

Talking to The Daily Star at Noakhali General Hospital, the woman said,

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## Introduce annual fire safety clearance

PM issues a set of directives for fire service about high rises

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the fire department to inspect high-rises, and commercial buildings every year and issue fire safety certificates.

Industrial units are already required to obtain such certificates from Fire Service and Civil Defence Department.

The directives came at a cabinet meeting as the nation is still recovering from the shock of Thursday's devastating fire at 23-storey FR Tower that killed 26 people and injured 70.

Public attention has been directed towards fire safety measures at high-rise buildings.

At yesterday's cabinet meeting, Hasina asked the authorities concerned to review whether firefighters should inspect high-

rise buildings and issue clearance certificates accordingly.

During the recent devastating fires, firefighters could not work properly due to water shortage. This is why, water reservoirs and water bodies should be created and Dhaka's lakes should be preserved, she said.

Meanwhile, Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk) started a survey in the capital to identify the buildings that were constructed flouting building codes.

Twenty-four Rajuk teams will visit buildings higher than 10 stories in eight zones, said Ananda Kumar Biswas, director (law) at Rajuk.

After yesterday's meeting, Cabinet Secretary Shafiqul Alam said the PM had presented a set of instructions to reduce risks of fire.

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## 1 killed, 5 hurt in fire incidents

STAR REPORT

A man died and five others, including two fire fighters, were injured in separate fire incidents in three districts since Sunday night.

The dead was identified as Ismail Hossain, 30, from Noakhali's Sadar upazila.

The fire started at Pushpita Plastic and Ribbon factory in Mohammadpur union around 11:00pm and continued for two hours.

Ismail, who worked there, was sleeping inside the factory and died in the fire, locals said.

On information, fire fighters from Chowmohoni Fire Service and Civil Defence rushed to the spot and doused the fire.

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## Vital project sees slow execution

EQUIPMENT PURCHASE FOR FIRE SERVICE  
 REJAUUL KARIM BYRON and SOHEL PARVEZ

Due to delays in procurement, firemen are yet to get the modern equipment they need for faster response to fires, fight blazes with efficiency, and reduce risks.

Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defence (BFSCD) in 2014 took up a Tk 226 crore project to buy various modern equipment.

Those include two remote controlled robots that can fight fires in excessive heat, two articulated flatbed lorries for carrying necessary materials to the scene, 50 light tow trucks, 30 generators with light masts and an excavator with a demolition hammer for rescue operations, two turntable ladders that can go up to 10-storey high, and various fire and rescue tenders.

Officials said they got the two turntable ladders and some fire engines so far even though the project is supposed to end this July.

So far, the BFSCD could spend only 54 percent (Tk 123.78 crore) of the money. The project is the agency's biggest ever in terms of equipment purchase.

Lt Col Siddique Mohammad Zulfiker Rahman, director planning, development and training of BFSCD, said various factors, including floating fresh tenders, caused delays in procurement.

"We did not get bids in line with our first tender. Then, we changed the specifications and floated another tender and got only one bid, so we had to go for a fresh tender..." he said.

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## Khaleda taken to BSMMU

Being treated for arthritis, high blood sugar



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Imprisoned BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia was shifted to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University yesterday with high blood sugar level and pain in joints due to arthritis, the medical conditions she has been suffering from over the years.

"...She walks with support. She cannot walk well without help," BSMMU Director

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Rajuk officials scrutinise the design of Praasad Trade Centre, a commercial high rise on Kemal Ataturk Avenue, yesterday during a survey to identify buildings built in violation of the national building code. Bottom, an official inspects fire safety provisions.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN



## Probe bodies visit FR Tower

Focus on possible deviation from approved building plan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The probe body formed by the housing and public works ministry yesterday visited the fire-ravaged FR Tower to assess if the building plan submitted by the owners differs with the one approved by the Rajuk.

However, the eight-member committee inspected the Banani high rise without having the plan that the Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk) authorised, saying the city development authority is yet to provide a copy.

"We have been able to collect the owners' copy of the building plan for the FR Tower but Rajuk is yet to give us its copy," Kazi Golam Nasir, chief architect of the architecture department under the ministry, told reporters

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**Congratulations Marketing Superstar**

Channel i in collaboration with Bangladesh Brand Forum has acknowledged Mr. Syed Alamgir as the "Marketing Superstar" for his invaluable contribution to marketing in Bangladesh.

**Our heartfelt congratulations for achieving this special recognition.**

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