

New building to be built in Bangabazar

Decision regarding floors, shops to be taken next week

DIPAN NANDY

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) is planning to start the construction of a multi-storey market on the Bangabazar market grounds, following the devastating fire which occurred there a month ago.

The design of the modern multi-storey market will be prepared based on the advice and recommendations of the shop owners association and various business organisations, which used to operate on the market complex.

According to the Local Government Act 2009, priority will be given to the owners of the affected shops in the fire while constructing the new market building.

The market land of Bangabazar Complex was handed over to Dhaka City Corporation from Bangladesh Railway in 1985. After the 1995 fire, the market owners' association built the three-storey Bangabazar complex -- a tin-shed market

AT A GLANCE

Total floors: 12, with two basements

Approved shops: 4,576

Car parking: 141

Total Area: 67,332.53 per floor (up to 5th floor)

-- at their own expense.

According to the Revenue Department of DSCC, there were 2,961 shops in the market. Later, in 2016, Mayor Sayeed Khokon appointed Shahidullah Associates Limited as a consultant to demolish the tin-shed market and build a multi-storey building there. The consulting firm designed the building -- intended to be a 10-storey steel structure -- up to the sixth floor.

According to the design, a total of 4,413 shops, including 726 shops on the ground floor, 754 on the first floor, 727 on the second floor, 754 on the third floor, 717 on the fourth floor, and 735 ones on the fifth floor were approved.

Each store's allocated area was around 25 to 30 square feet in the design.

The plan also included 141 parking spaces in one of the two basements and an area of around 67,332.53 square feet per floor up to the fifth floor.



Demanding that the minimum wage for RMG workers be set at Tk 23,000, Sommilito Garments Sramik Federation brought out a rally and held a human chain in front of Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

‘Emphasise women’s vulnerability’

Speakers tell event on climate change

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pointing out that women are more vulnerable to climate change, speakers at a workshop yesterday suggested emphasising women's issues to make the initiatives relating to climate change successful.

They made the remarks at a national workshop organised to develop a strategy for climate change and its impact on women in Bangladesh. Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD), International Land Coalition (ILC) and Landesa, USA, jointly organised the two-day long workshop at a hotel in the capital.

Khushi Kabir, president of ALRD and coordinator of Nijera Kari, said lots of projects are taken for women but their issues are not given importance.

“Although women are the most affected group by climate change, their issues are never discussed. But addressing climate change will not be successful without addressing the issue of women who are more than half of the total population,” said Shamsul Huda, executive director of Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD).

Lawmaker Shirin Akhter said the issue of women in climate change and adaptation should be given special importance in the national budget.

ASHIK ABDULLAH APU and SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Imdadul Haque Soofi, information and research affairs secretary of Dhaka's ward-18 unit of Awami League, is a beneficiary of the Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor's discretionary funds.

He is the editor of a newspaper, while his wife is a grade-II officer in the Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR). His elder son works in a non-government organisation as a communication specialist.

Soofi lives with his four-member family at the BCSIR staff quarters.

Despite being financially solvent, Soofi received Tk 2,00,000 from the mayor's discretionary fund in September last year.

"I had a very good relationship with the mayor. I was in a financial crisis, which is why I applied for the fund," Soofi told The Daily Star. His Facebook posts also contain photos of him with DSCC Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh.

Like him, affluent people and political leaders, including former and incumbent councillors of the city corporation, often become the beneficiaries of the Mayor's Discretionary Fund in the absence of a guideline, found this newspaper.

Besides, political activists -- mostly affiliated with the ruling party -- are receiving a larger sum than others from the fund, meant for the residents of DSCC who are in financial crisis.

For instance, in March last year, DSCC disbursed Tk 2,90,000 to three persons. Of them, Salahuddin Badal, a member of Dhaka city (south) unit Awami League, received Tk 2 lakh alone.

The city corporation distributed Tk 25 lakh to 42 people in August last year. Six AL leaders got Tk 12 lakh, nearly half of the total amount, according to the DSCC document.

Another instance of affluent political activists receiving funds is Khabir Ahmed, religion affairs secretary of AL's ward-18 unit,

If the fund has been used to ‘help’ nepotistically selected well-off persons depriving the needy, it is an example of abuse of power to serve personal interests. The alleged use of the fund to serve partisan political interest is also questionable.

IFTEKHARUZZAMAN
Executive director, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB)

The authorities have a policy that outlines the criteria for the allocation of funds. Only those who meet the requirements are eligible to receive the funds. Nobody was given the fund going beyond the policy. Those who received the funds were eligible.

ABU NASER
DSCC spokesperson

under its New Market thana unit.

He received Tk 1,52,000 from the mayor's fund in October last year, to pay his daughter's due tuition fees. He is the co-owner of a publication and owns a flat in Dhaka's Nilkhet area.

Contacted, Khabir refused to make any comment on the issue and said the matter is "between him and the DSCC mayor".

Moreover, many of the beneficiaries

are residents of the DSCC mayor's former constituency Dhaka 10. Out of the 311 persons who got the funds between January and December last year, 71 beneficiaries belong to that area.

Convener of Dhanmondi thana unit Krishak League Liton Mollah got Tk 2 lakh for his daughter's wedding.

Sabina Pervin is a councillor in the reserved seat of ward-9 under DSCC. She received Tk 2 lakh for treatment purposes in August last year.

In her electoral affidavit, she mentioned owning a six-storey building on 1.5 katha land in Kamrangirchar and 30 tola gold.

Contacted, she told this newspaper that she applied for the fund as she was sick and needed it for treatment.

WHAT THE LAW SAYS

There are no rules that specify the criteria for those receiving the funds.

Section 75 of the Local Government (City Corporation) Act (2009) mentions that on special purposes -- upon the sanction of allocation by the government -- a mayor could carry out emergency work in the public interest without causing hindrance to the city corporation's regular activities and spend from the funds allocated for the corporation.

Section 11 of the sixth schedule says rules can be formed on the "Custody, investment, operation, regulation and application of corporation fund; establishment and maintenance of sinking funds [a special fund to pay off loans] and other special funds".

But no rules have been formulated on the Mayor's Discretionary Fund.

The current DSCC mayor took the initiative to formulate a policy on the fund on October 27 last year. A draft was placed at a board meeting, but it was not finalised, said officials of the Social Welfare and Slum Development Department of DSCC.

This newspaper could not reach the mayor over the phone. He did not respond to this newspaper's messages as well.

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WDB sues NGO for filling portion of the Karatoya

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

Water Development Board (WDB) filed a case against non-government organisation Thengamara Mahila Sabuj Sangha (TMSS) for filling a portion of the Karatoya river and blocking the water flow in Bogura's Sadar upazila, following an executive magistrate's order.

Md Hasanuzzaman, deputy assistant engineer of Bogura WDB, filed the case with Sadar Police Station on Thursday night, OC Noor-E-Alam Siddiqui said yesterday.

Earlier on May 2, an executive magistrate, WDB executive engineer, and a police team conducted a raid in TMSS Eco park area. During the raid, Executive Magistrate Md Nurul Islam found that TMSS was filling the river with five drum trucks. The mobile court then seized the trucks but failed to detain anyone from the spot.

Later, the magistrate issued a written order to Bogura WDB to file a case against TMSS.

On April 20, WBD issued a notice to the surveyors of WDB, upazila land office, and the municipality that a joint survey to mark the banks of the Karatoya was ongoing.

Therefore, all concerned parties were specifically requested to stop filling, excavating, or building any structure on the river.

However, the TMSS authorities continued to fill the river, according to the case statement.

As per the section 4 of the prevailing Balumahal and Soil Management Act, 2010, it is a punishable offence to obstruct the flow of a river.

On May 3, after the mobile court drive, this correspondent asked Hosne Ara Begum, executive director of TMSS, about the filling of the river and seizure of the trucks.

"On March 23, WDB and Sadar Upazila Land Office finalised the boundary of the Karatoya and separated my [NGO] land from river. Since then, I started dumping soil on this land. That part of the river is my [NGO's] property," she said.

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Electrocuted youth dies in Gazipur

UNB, Gazipur

A 30-year-old man died after being electrocuted in Gazipur's Tongi yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Sadekul Islam, hailing from Netrokona's Durgapur upazila and a resident of Tongi.

Police and locals said the electrocution occurred at noon when Sadekul, a day labourer by profession, was hanging banners of a madrasa on the seventh floor of Firoz Khan

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A car closely moves past a gaping hole with protruding rods on the North Jurain road. The entire stretch of the road is covered with holes as such, making it extremely risky for commuters to use the road. Locals informed that the road has been in this state for the last four months, and the authorities are yet to act on this matter. This photo was taken in Shyampur area recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Georgia Senate lauds Bangladesh’s socio-economic dev

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen has expressed his gratitude for passing a resolution in the Georgia State Senate praising Bangladesh's economic development and contribution to regional peace for more than a decade.

During his official visit to Washington, DC on Tuesday, Momen was handed over an official copy of the resolution on behalf of Georgian Senator Sheikh Rahman, according to a press release of the foreign ministry.

On the occasion of Bangladesh's Independence Day, the

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‘Karl Marx still relevant’

Speakers tell seminar on his 205th birth anniv

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Marx's philosophies cannot be denied if we are to pursue the emancipation of people and establish an egalitarian world for all, said speakers at an international seminar held on the occasion of Karl Marx's 205th birth anniversary.

Shantanu Dey, a theoretician of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), said that Marx is still relevant, pointing out that the philosopher had a deep understanding of the crises that we are facing today, despite having identified them over 200 years ago.

The event was organised by the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) on its 75th founding anniversary, which was held at the Sirajul Islam Chowdhury Lecture Hall at Dhaka University.

Dey cited various surveys and research to argue that capitalism has been widely rejected by well-informed people around the world due to its adverse impact.

According to Prof Sobhanlal Dattagupta, a renowned Marxist social scientist in India, Marx and Marxism are constantly being rediscovered

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PRAYER TIMING

MAY 6

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 4-15 12-45 5-00 6-34 8-00

JAMAA 4-50 1-15 5-15 6-38 8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION