

Building universities

A recent advertisement for consultancy services read: "...for preparing Master Plan of the University, Administrative Academic building, Residential Halls, Library, Guest House, Teachers, Officers and Staff quarters, Vice-Chancellors residence, etc. architectural plan, design, structural design, drawing, estimate, tender documents etc. for the Shah Jalal University of Science and Technology, Sylhet." This was published in a local English Daily on Sept 3, 1986.

In the advertisement it has also been noted that "Participating firms shall have in their employ at least one graduate Civil Engineer, one graduate Ar-

chitect and one graduate Electrical Engineer each having at least 7 years experience."

I have the honour to state my views about the implication of University Building on the economy and life of people in Bangladesh; and therefore the need for adopting a rational method in the process of developing new universities in this poor country.

Universities are not merely a place for imparting academic lessons, these are also places for character building. Thus it is not a matter of one short affair for constructing one building only. The campus is a group of buildings making up a complete environment in which the student can live, learn and develop his character through the satisfaction of his various needs, physical, social, psychological, etc. On the national side,

a campus requires quite a large tract of land which is very scarce in this country. Which means that economic utilization of land is a must. Thus it is imperative that great care be taken in the process of developing new universities in this country. These facts are not new. Most of these are known to all scholars. But have we shown our awareness? If we consider cases such as that of Chittagong and Jahangir Nagar Universities, the answer comes is NO! Thus it becomes necessary for the professionals to reorder the process of University Development for the advantage of the common man to appreciate it within the context of our national problems and resources.

A standard process for a project of this size requires a Master Plan. The second step is to prepare individual Building

Reader's forum

Plans. The third step is to prepare Structural Designs for implementation.

Who prepares the Master Plan? It is to be done by a qualified and experienced Town Planner. A campus covers about 3 to 6 hundred acres of land. The economic utilization is not the only factor to be considered, but beauty and convenience are also of paramount importance for students and teachers alike.

In summing up, it is to be noted that for a project of this size and nature (i.e. University Development) team of experts should consist of Town Planners, Architects and Engineers. It is really the Town Planners

who are trained and qualified for the selection of sites for large projects. But in Bangladesh Town Planners have never been included in site selection committees, whereas people such as Civil Surgeons and Superintendents of Police have been included.

It is therefore to be reiterated that inclusion of Town Planners should be made obligatory for all consultants who are to compete for consultancy of this nature.

ABDUL HAMID
U.N. Expert (Retd.)
on Physical Planning
Dhaka.