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A graphic impression of Baisakhi market

MARKET MAKEOVER

With shopkeepers being shifted to temporary stalls tomorrow, AG Block can look forward to a new supermarket, says Sucheta Chakraborty

Come April 19 and residents of AG Block will have a designated market in the form of a cluster of newly built stalls. And soon after, the foundation will be laid to a glitzy super market at the same site where the earlier market used to be.

Bidhannagar Municipality has decided to do away with the old markets. "We would be building such malls that

would make City Centre a run for its money," said Nandagopal Bhattacharya, chairman-in-council in charge of markets. The market at BD Block in Ward 7 is next under the scanner.

The Baisakhi market cum commercial complex would come up on 41.2 cots under public-private partnership. Fifty per cent of the building would be utilised by the civic body while the pri-

ivate partner — Tavarya Maheria Consortium — would use the rest for commercial purposes.

"The project cost is pegged at Rs 30 crore. It will take another two years for the market to open," said Supriyo Maity, executive engineer in charge of markets, Bidhannagar Municipality.

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Doubts and delight

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The building would be nine-storeyed with 21.5 sq ft on each floor. There would be two basements. "The top basement would be utilised for parking and as a cold storage. The second basement would be used exclusively as a parking lot where we are expecting to accommodate 300 cars," said Maity.

The first floor would rehabilitate the 210 shopkeepers of the old Baisakhi market. The rest of the area would be utilised for retail.

The second floor would house a



Temporary stalls that will be handed over to shop-keepers on April 19. Pictures by Sarat Kumar Sinha

community centre and a library. The third floor would have a banquet hall, a restaurant and a food court. The other floors would be rented out as office space. "We have not decided on the distribution of the retail space yet," said an official of Tavarya Maheria Consortium.

The makeshift market in AG Block had come up in 1978 and has served those living in the adjacent blocks. "I am visiting the market right from the start. Earlier, we had to depend on markets in Kestopur or Ultadanga," said Ashit Dhar, a resident of AG Block.

To cater to the local buyers till the super market comes up, the developer has built 210 temporary stalls on a field close by. Situated adjacent to the Kestopur Canal in AG Block, they will be inaugurated by Bidhannagar Municipality chairman Biswajiban Majumdar on April 19. "The civic chief will hand over the stalls to the shop-owners," said Bhattacharya.

TALE OF TWO MORE MARKETS

- **Name:** FB MARKET (Falguni)
- **Started in:** Early 2007
- **Plan:** A five-storeyed building behind the existing market. Around 90 shop-



keepers from the open-air market in front of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan will be rehabilitated on the ground floor and the first floor. The other shops will be sold out. There is provision for a community hall. The rest of the area would be rented as office space. It is scheduled to open in 2009.

● **On-ground reality:** Though construction is on, progress is slow. The civic body is considering constructing the market under public-private

partnership due to financial constraints. Talks are on with Mackintosh Burn.

● **Shopownerspeak:** "We have already paid Rs 10,000 to the municipality for the construction of the market. We are hopeful that we will be rehabilitated there," said Prabhat Sikdar, a tailor at the Falguni makeshift market.

● **Residentspeak:** "I am looking forward to the new market. The open-air market is just behind my building. The obnoxious smell that emanates from the vats is too much to bear," said Krishna Das, a resident of FB Block. "We would welcome a community hall in the new market," said Gorachand Dey, a retired government employee of FC Block.

- **Name:** KARUNAMOYEE COMMUNITY CENTRE
- **Started in:** Early 2005
- **Plan:** Four-storeyed building. The ground floor has been allotted for 24 shops.

Electrification will start next week and the floor will open to the public within six months. The community centre will house a hall along with a library and a banquet hall.

● **On-ground reality:** Work for the second floor is about to begin. The ground floor is almost complete. "Once the power lines are in place, we would be able to hand over the space to the shop-owners," said an official of the civic body.

● **Residentspeak:** "We had heard that the market would start after the Puja. Now we hear that it will take another three months. I doubt if the market will ever operate. Something else might come up in its place," said Subir Dey, a resident of Karunamoyee. "The market will solve our problems since we had to depend on either CK Market or EE Market," said neighbour Kamallata Duttagupta.

but the shop-keepers are not impressed. "Four years ago, when a market was constructed near Tank no. 7, the authorities had promised that we would be shifted there. But in the end, we didn't get any space. So though the authorities are saying that we would be rehabilitated, we are doubtful," says a newspaper vendor sitting on the fringes of the old market space.

The vendors at Baisakhi market are not having to pay for rehabilitation. "We would be shifting to the temporary market after which construction of the new market will start," said Atanu Mondal, a hotel owner.

The residents are divided in their views. "The open-air market is an eye sore and does not fit into the planned character of our township. The new shopping complex will add glamour to our sleepy block," said Ashis Mitra, a resident of Baisakhi in his twenties.

But Debabrata Banerjee, a senior citizen of AH Block, has a different take. "A shopping mall is for the young generation. It will change the character of our area and will have more outsiders trooping in and disturbing our peace," he said.