The Daily Star

AGENDA FOR URBAN CONCERN

Dhaka, Friday, January 27, 2006

Advance knowledge of an 'impending' disaster

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Earthquakes can shake the earth, cause harbour wave (Tsunami in Japanese), kill and maim people, level cities and towns, render inhabitants homeless, set off fire, destroy service lines, and above all, be a traumatic experience even if it does none of the above.

Dhaka and some other cities in Bangladesh, having been warned by experts and observers for the past several years, are presently bracing itself for a major earthquake. The concern for Dhaka is intensified by rapid urbanisation, a consequence of need, greed and haphazard construction. Violation of the minimal building construction rules has played a villain's role in the massive development works taking place in the major cities of the country. More so, many of our buildings are of brick and several decades old, and the wetness of air has primed the structure for vulnerability in a jolt of perhaps any magnitude.

History is also not on our side. A 100-year cycle brightens the ill prospects of a major earthquake striking some part of Bangladesh sometime now or in the near future. Volcanic activities of severe consequences in Bhuj (Gujarat, January 2001) and more recently in the northern Pakistan and nearby parts of India have only increased the fears.

Our piece today could not have been better timed, as our expert tries to explain in advance about an 'impending' disaster that we hope and pray will never happen.

One may easily confuse Dr. Mehedi Ahmed Ansary as a seismologist, so deep is his concern for earthquake. In fact his civil engineering background only allows him to analyse the impact of earthquake on our buildings that much better. To me he is a social worker.

We might need thousands like him should we indeed be hit.

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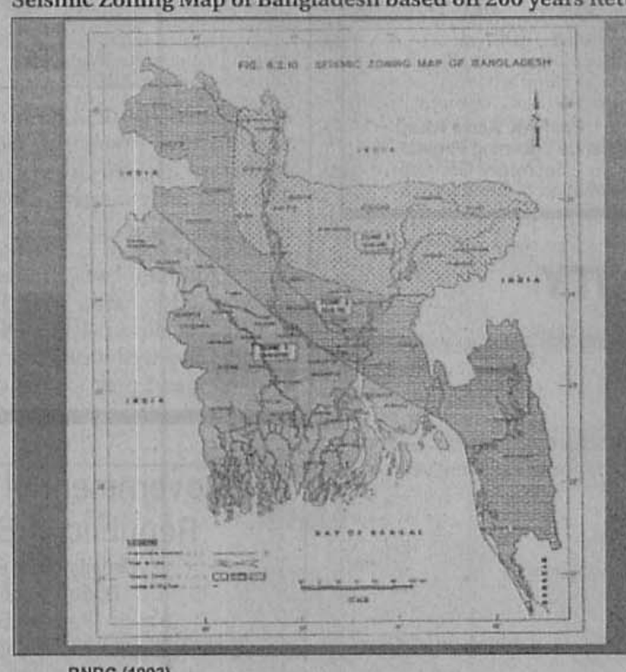
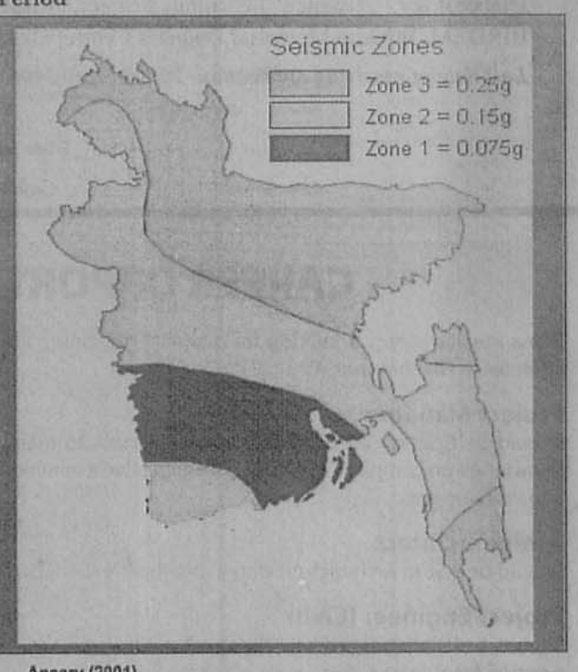
BUET

Seismic Zoning Map of Bangladesh based on 200 years Return Period



BNBC (1993)



Ansary (2001)

Seismicity and seismic design

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