

INT'L CONFERENCE ON 'ROAD SAFETY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES'

'Stringent laws needed to check road accidents'

DU CORRESPONDENT

Systematic understanding of problems and implementation of pragmatic solutions are needed to address the road safety crisis in developing countries, speakers at a conference said yesterday.

The developing countries are experiencing an increase in road accidents and casualties. The situation is likely to worsen in the coming years unless the critical problem of epidemic nature is addressed with significant improvements in the relevant sectors, they said.

The Accident Research Centre (ARC), Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet), organised the three-day international conference on 'Road Safety in Developing Countries' that began on the Buet campus in the city yesterday.

Around 300 experts from home and abroad, including the USA, Canada, Sweden, Australia, Japan, Malaysia, India, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Nigeria and Thailand, are taking part in the conference.

Communications Minister Nazmul Huda, University Grants Commission (UGC) Chairman Prof

Dr M Asaduzzaman, Vice Chancellor of Buet Prof Dr Md Alee Murtuza, Communications Secretary Md Shafiqul Islam, Unicef Representative Louis-George Arsenault and ARC Director Prof Md Mazharul Hoque spoke at the inaugural ceremony.

Communications Minister Nazmul Huda said there are laws regarding road transportation, but many people, including drivers, helpers, commuters and pedestrians, are not aware of them.

The laws are also not enforced properly, he added. The government should enact

stringent laws to prevent road accidents, the minister said, adding that training and awareness campaign are also needed.

ARC Director Prof Md Mazharul Hoque said there are 1.2 million deaths from road accidents each year, with about 85 percent of them occurring in the developing world.

For every death, there are far greater numbers of injuries – four people with permanent disabilities, ten people requiring hospital admission and thirty people requiring emergency room treatment, he said.

"The developed countries have been successful in reducing both the number and the severity of road accidents and injuries through prioritised investments focusing on technical solutions as well as improvement in behavioural and organisational measures, but developing countries like Bangladesh have been slower in devising and adopting such scientific methods," Prof Hoque observed.

Unicef Representative Louis-George Arsenault said road accident is a global issue as it kills a significant number of people, including children, all around the world everyday and many survivors become permanent disable.

There are economic, social and cultural reasons for road accidents and lack of awareness about road safety among the drivers, passengers and pedestrians contribute a great deal to the road accidents, he added.

Communications Secretary Md Shafiqul Islam said Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation has a plan to introduce a driving school in the country.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia presides over a meeting of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) standing committee at her office yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Looking at all migrants with suspicion a grave mistake

Foreign secretary tells workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Looking at all migrants with suspicion and seeking their link to terrorism is a grave mistake, said Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin at a workshop yesterday.

Referring to post 9/11 situations that greatly altered the level of tolerance in respect of migrants he said, "if there is a prejudiced mindset, the global war against terror will surely suffer setback."

The foreign secretary was speaking as chief guest at the concluding session of a two-day workshop on 'Population movement: Non-traditional issues in South Asian security discourse (NTS)' at Brac Inn Centre in the city.

Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit of Dhaka University (DU) organised the workshop.

A country cannot ensure its security by keeping out its migrant workers that are meant for its enrichment, Hemayetuddin said, adding, security is not a function of isolation.

"We are safer when people around us share mutual trust, respect and tolerance. An increasingly isolated and inaccessible state, no matter how big and powerful, is unlikely to be able to address its security concerns effectively," he added.

Termining growing protectionist sentiments in many western coun-

tries 'unfortunate' the secretary said panic and xenophobia are being spread to prevent new migration instead of showing its merits.

He said migration has turned into a contentious issue and xenophobia, discrimination, uncertainty and lack of opportunities tend to make the lives of migrants unbearable.

It needs to be established that migration of unskilled and semi-skilled labour benefits the rich countries as much as it helps the poor labour supplying countries, he added.

A statement of DU Vice-chancellor Prof SMA Faiz, circulated in the workshop, said stricter

regulations to control the movement of people across national frontiers have made it extremely difficult for semi-skilled and unskilled workers to move across the border for livelihood.

Faiz, who was scheduled to chair the session but could not attend, said the absence of legal opportunities leads more people to use irregular channels which ultimately make their lives vulnerable in foreign lands.

Advisor on NTS issues Dr Iftekharuzzaman said migrants in most developed countries are viewed as a security threat.

Migration, therefore, needs to be seen from a development per-

spective, which, in reality strengthens global peace and security, he noted.

Dr Mahendra P Lama, professor of South Asian Economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, Professor Jagannath Adhikari of Nepal Institute of Development Studies, Dr Tasneem Siddiqui and Dr CR Abrar of Dhaka University, and Professor ST Hettige of University of Sri Lanka presented briefs of their studies on NTS.



Unicef Representative Louis-George Arsenault speaks at an international conference on 'Road Safety in Developing Countries' on the Buet campus in the city yesterday. Sitting from right are Communications Minister Nazmul Huda, Buet Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Md Alee Murtuza and ARC Director Prof Md Mazharul Hoque.

PHOTO: STAR

CPA to set up port park to expand space

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) would set up a port park to expand the space and speed up the container handling capacity at the premier port.

CPA Chairman AMM Shahadat Hossain said this at a meeting with the port users at Bandar Bhaban here on Monday evening.

The port park would provide a space for 9300 containers at a time, he said.

The leaders of Chittagong Port Users Forum led by forum Chairman Saifuzzaman Chowdhury met the CPA chairman and other high officials of CPA to discuss different issues including the one

deriving from the Chittagong Port Congestion Surcharge imposed by some feeder vessel operators.

Forum Chairman Saifuzzaman, also the president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry, at the meeting resented over the imposition of congestion surcharge that caused immense financial loss to the port users.

He called for steps for withdrawal of the surcharge and effective measures to improve the service of the port further.

The port chairman at the meeting observed that some changes were must to improve the service of the port. All CPA officials have to make all out efforts where assistance from the foreign experts would also be

required, he added.

The Forum Vice-Chairman Tareq Anis Ahmed, Bangladesh Master Stevedores Association Chairman AHM Monzoor Alam, Tareq Kamal, Executive Committee Member Hasan Mahmud Chowdhury, Chittagong Customs Clearing and Forwarding Agents Association President AKM Akter Hossain and General Secretary Altaf Hossain Chowdhury were present at the meeting.

Among the CPA officials CPA Member (Finance) Ahmad Abul Kashem, Member (Engineering) Dr Safayet Hossain Khan and Member (Operations) Captian Quamrul Hasan spoke at the meeting.

Valuables worth Tk 4.41 lakh looted in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Robbers looted valuables worth Tk 4.41 lakh from a house at Prem Bazaar in the city's Dakkhin Khan area on Monday night.

Police yesterday arrested four youths of the area as suspects but could not recover any looted goods until 7:00pm. Names of the arrestees could not be known immediately.

Police said a gang of four, aged between 25 and 30, entered the house of Gazi Rezaul Haq at around 7:45pm pressing the doorbell.

"The robbers held all family members at gunpoint and confined them into a room," duty officer of Dakkhin Khan Police Station said yesterday quoting the First Information Report (FIR).

The criminals then forced the inmates to hand over the keys of almirahs and looted Tk 25,000 in cash, 20 tolas of gold ornaments, four mobile sets and other goods.

The robbers left the place safely after half an hour.

13 ancient trees being felled in Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

An influential figure was felling some 13 large, ancient and precious trees at the government property at the Rajshahi Town Protection Embankment area yesterday.

The trees include 12 Babla, 3 Shimul, 2 Mehgani and a Koroi tree. The trees offered a solace for tourists visiting the left bank of the river Padma.

Felling of these trees might have an impact on the environment and cause havoc to the embankment, said experts at Water Development Board (WDB).

Khandakar Jinal Abedin Dulal claimed the trees belong to him and that he does not need the permission of the government because he also owns the land.

The place is usually treated as VIP zone as it is near the residences of Rajshahi divisional commissioner, deputy commissioner, police superintendent, civil surgeon and Rajshahi divisional DIG prison.

However, no resistance from police or WDB was seen at the scene, local people said.

The labourers involved in felling of the trees told that police came but returned as Jinal Abedin intervened.

WDB sources said, the matter is out of their control as ruling party men are involved in it.

Jinal Abedin Dulal said, he inherited the land and so he possesses the right to fell the trees.

BCS edn body submits memo to PM today

BCS General Education Association will submit a memorandum to the Prime Minister today demanding implementation of its eight-point demand, says a press release.

Their demands include upholding the Assimilation Act 2000, repayment of all arrears, repealing the provision of exemption, granting earned leaves and granting selection grades to the lecturers from the date of their completion of four years in service.

To press their demand they will lay siege to Shikkha Bhabhan at 11:00am and then submit the memorandum to the PM. They will also form a human chain in every district on August 28 and abstain from taking classes from September 2 to 7.

The Association leaders also threatened to go for indefinite strike from the moment the exemption rule is proclaimed.

'Ban Jamaat-Shibir politics'

DU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra Union (BCU), a left wing student body, yesterday demanded a ban on politics of Jamaat-e-Islami and its student front Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS).

Speaking at a rally, BCU leaders said Jamaat and Shibir have been spreading 'fanaticism' across the country using religion as a weapon.

They have been creating anarchy at educational institutes across the country by killing leaders and activists of progressive organisations, leaders said.

The BCU organised the rally at the Central Shaheed Minar to mark the 8th death anniversary of its Chittagong University leader Sanjoy Tolapatro, who was allegedly killed by ICS men on August 22 in 1998.

They demanded arrest and trial of killers of Sanjoy.

Central President Shamsul Alam Sazzan, and General Secretary Khan Assaduzzaman Masum spoke.

WITHDRAWAL OF CASE AGAINST GOYESHWAR, MIRZA KHOKON

Court re-fixes date for order

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday did not pass the order on the government petition for withdrawal of the bomb blast case filed against BNP Joint Secretary General Goyeshwar Chandra Roy, DCC Ward Commissioner Mirza Khokon and five others.

The judge could not pass any order on the issue, as two accused—Tipu Sultan and Abu Bakar alias Babul—were absent from the court yesterday.

Judge Mohammad Aman Ullah of the Fifth Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, fixed September 25 for order on the issue filed by the government on July 17.

Five other accused are Khokon's cousin Yusuf Bin Kalu, Abdul Khaleq, Abu Syed Khan Khokon, Tipu Sulatan and Abu Bakar alias Babul. Of them, Tipu and Babul are absconding.

The Judge in its order mentioned that Goyeshwar and four others were absent from the court yesterday without taking any steps. The prosecution did not take any steps and two more accused have been absconding for long time after getting bails from the court. So, the order on the issue will be passed on the next fixed date in presence of the two accused, the judge added.

Earlier on July 25, the same court had heard the government petition for withdrawal of the bomb blast case and fixed yesterday for order on the issue.

According to the prosecution, a group of BNP and Jubo Dal leaders led by Goyeshwar and Mirza Khokon hurled indiscriminate bombs on the on-duty policemen at the BNP's central office at Nayapalitan about 5:30pm on December 24, 1996 when the policemen tried to rescue a man from their custody.

Later, a case was filed against Goyeshwar, Mirza Khokon and 11

others under the Explosive Substances Act. The investigation officer pressed charges against them on December 30, 1999.

The home ministry in a letter on June 19 this year informed the district magistrate of Dhaka that it had decided to withdraw charges against Goyeshwar and six others as the charges were "politically motivated".

The ministry asked the district magistrate to hand over the matter to the metropolitan public prosecutor (PP), who will arrange withdrawal of the case with the permission from an appropriate court.

Following order, the PP Abdullah Mahmud Hassan submitted the petition for withdrawal of the case on July 17.

RAJNATH SINGH'S COMMENT

Rajshahi NGOs to lay siege to Indian HC today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Coalition for Local NGOs in Bangladesh (CLNB), a body of small NGOs, will lay siege to the Assistant High Commission of India in Rajshahi today.

CLNB activists will start their agitation programme from Rajshahi Engineers' Institute at 11:00am.

CLNB called the demonstration programme in protest against the comment of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) President Rajnath Singh on 'Bangladesh', said CLNB Chairman Harun Ur Rashid.



A worker cuts down an ancient tree in Rajshahi Town Protection Embankment area yesterday. An influential person is behind the felling of a number of trees, an act that poses a threat to the embankment.

PHOTO: STAR