

80pc of Monpura peasants are landless

By Masud Arif back from Monpura island

The mighty Meghna has not only eroded the small green Monpura island at the mouth of the Bay of Bengal. It has also broken the heart of Hanif Miah, a landless peasant.

Such is Hanif's misery that sometimes he loses his composure to the extent of wanting to set his small thatched hut on fire to end it all. He can't bear to see the hungry faces of wife, two sons and four young daughters.

"Hunger and poverty have driven him towards paranoia," said an emotion-choked Azimunnessa, Hanif's wife.

"The river has grabbed our abode, our land... my husband often starves and talks nonsense. He does nothing... our 14-year old son is now the only earning member of the family," Azimunnessa said as her eyes welled up with tears.

Hanif Miah is only one of thousands of landless on the 350-square kilometre Monpura island, the worst affected area during the tidal wave which struck the coasts of several lakh people of the country's southern coastal region in 1970.

Two decades since that cataclysmic nightmare of November 12, the tenants of the island are no longer afraid of cyclones. They have cyclone shelters now. What frightens them today are the caprices of the landlords and rural elite. And river erosion.

More than 55 thousand people, 80 per cent of the total population of Monpura island, a thana under Bhola district, are landless. Some local elites and outsiders own around 80 per cent of the total land of the island, local people said.

"We have to obey the rural elite, otherwise they would deprive us from our due shares for farming their lands," said Abdur Rauf, a leader of the landless.

The landless peasants of three unions — Monpura, Hajirhat and Shakuchia — live in thatched huts on the slopes of the embankment around the island. Some of them are still living in the 20-year old abandoned small box-shaped cyclone shelters.

"Our homesteads turn into ponds during the rainy season

...floods compound our misery and leave us in uncertainty," said Jhama Bibi.

Teenaged Jhama's husband lives in Dhaka. She tried to be with him in the capital, but her rickshaw-puller husband, unable to meet the expenses needed in the city, sent her back to the village.

Many of the landless of Monpura are involved in fishing and most children aged between five and twelve spend their times in the river catching shrimp fries.

"Who will send their children to school... the families are dependent on them," said Abdul Malek, a rickshaw-puller. They get Taka 35 for every hundred shrimp fries, Malek added.

Most of the land on the island was occupied by the local rich and people from the mainland — Bhola, Noakhali and Patuakhali — when the island surfaced about 40 years ago, said 77-year old Master Ali.

The newly accreted lands were registered by those privileged enough to travel all the way to Char Tajumuddin in Bhola where the land registration office was situated. For the poorer inhabitants of the island it was almost impossible to reach Char Tajumuddin in

those days, for travel was costly. Nor could they muster the necessary fees to get such land registered in their names. Even today it takes more than three hours to reach Char Tajumuddin from Monpura.

The silvery waters of the Meghna render a large number of people of the island landless every year by eroding its banks. The scale of erosion is more pronounced in the north west of the island. But the river also benefits a section of inhabitants by depositing new sand banks or chars on the south-eastern part.

Several NGOs, most notably CARITAS, have been carrying out significant efforts to improve the lot of Monpura's poor. Cyclone shelters, feeder schools and roads are being constructed while the peasants are being organised in small groups to promote cooperatives and rural credit schemes.

Community leadership is being groomed to make the poor aware of their rights and responsibilities. The focus is not just on improving the day-to-day lives of the peasants, it is more on developing human resources capable to cope with the challenges facing the people on the otherwise picturesque, palm-fringed island.



The entire Monpura coastline bears testimony to the erosion of the mighty Meghna. — Star photo

Clinton's plea

From Page 1 Col 8

stead (seek) the truth, the heart, the best that is in us all.

The breakfast is an annual interfaith gathering that brings together a Republicans and Democrats, judges, bureaucrats, soldiers and representatives of other governments.

Clinton, stung by criticism of his public and personal life, said the burgeoning information age has the ability to liberate people, but can also make it easier to traffic in hateful, harmful words.

"The very source of our liberation... the communications revolution gives words not only the power to lift up and liberate, the power to divide and destroy as never before.

"Just words — to darken our spirits and weaken our resolve, divide our hearts," Clinton said.

Quoting Paul from the Bible, Clinton said, "Repay no one evil for evil."

Clinton, a Southern Baptist, attends church regularly and often laces his speech with Biblical references.

Cairo summit

From Page 1 Col 2

But it's doubtful the four leaders can do much to stop murderous attacks by Islamic radicals that have enraged Israelis. And Rabin — politically weakened by the violence — will find it hard to meet Palestinian demands to go ahead with a withdrawal of his troops from the West Bank.

Before leaving Israel, Rabin said he would demand the Palestinians crack down on Islamic radicals who have killed 54 Israelis since October.

He told members of his Labor Party the PLO "made sure that the territory they rule — Gaza and Jericho — is not used as a shelter or a place... to execute attacks."

An Israeli Foreign Ministry official, insisting on anonymity, said he expected the meeting to form a committee of foreign ministers to implement decisions on economic problems and other issues coming out of Thursday's summit.

Taslima Nasreen wants to meet Rushdie

BONN, Feb 2: Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasreen, who has been threatened with death by Islamic extremists, said Wednesday she wanted to meet her similarly threatened British counterpart Salman Rushdie, reports AFP.

Taslima 32, was speaking after meeting Heinz Eggert, the interior minister of Saxony state in Dresden and discussing the human rights situation in Bangladesh.

The writers on Monday met Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel who assured her of the German government's support.

Russian deputy found dead

MOSCOW, Feb 2: Russian parliamentary deputy Sergei Skorochkin was found dead near Moscow today after being kidnapped, Itar-Tass news agency quoted police as saying, reports Reuter.

Siddaraju, head of the state-run Victoria Hospital in Bangalore, and another city doctor have been charged with selling kidneys to buyers in the Gulf.

Bangalore police would also investigate a parallel racket in



French Greenpeace activists aboard a motorboat sail off after they wrote 'Nuclear Dustbin' on the hull of the Japanese ship 'Pacific Crane' at Cherbourg harbour in France Wednesday. The ship left Japan with a cargo of nuclear waste and is bound for the nuclear reprocessing plant of La Hague, western France. — AFP photo

BTV urged to telecast Ekushey programme live

By DU Correspondent

The Dhaka University authorities have urged the Bangladesh Television to telecast live the Ekushey programme from the Central Shaheed Minar from 11pm on February 20 to 12am on February 21.

The call was made at a meeting of the teachers association, DUCSU representatives and others with Vice Chancellor Prof Emajuddin Ahmed Tuesday.

A high powered Amar Ekushey observance committee '95 has been formed to mark the day successfully on February 21. The committee is headed by Prof ATM Zahurul Huq and Prof SM Inamul Huq as coordinator and joint-coordinator respectively.

The meeting, however, decided that no banners or portraits would be placed at the Central Shaheed Minar.

MPs: Mosquito

From Page 1 Col 5

Prof. Badruddoza Chowdhury, Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury, State Minister for Social Welfare Fazlur Rahman Patal and Shahidullah Khan MP also took part in the brief but lively discussion on the growing mosquito menace in and around the city.

Some of the speakers criticised city Mayor Mohammad Hanif and accused him of failing to eradicate mosquitoes.

The Deputy Speaker drew attention of the Home Minister, who is chairman of the House Committee for looking after the welfare of the MPs residing in the hostels.

Abdul Matin Chowdhury said mosquito menace is the main complaint from the MPs residing in the hostels. He recently visited the hostels and ordered the authorities concerned to spray insecticide, he added.

"Possibly those are Awami-mosquitoes which menaced the city. I have also to check whether the officials sprayed the Awami-insecticide since one member complained that the insecticide had no effect," the minister said amidst laughter and banging of tables by many members.

Taking the floor Fazlur Rahman Patal said that before the last city corporation elections, a major allegation against the then mayor Mirza Abbas MP was that he failed to eradicate mosquito.

He said the Nagar Bhaban has how turned into a den of goons belonging to the Awami League. It has become a sub-office of the AL, he alleged.

Prof. Badruddoza Chowdhury expressed his concern over the consequence of mosquito bite saying it helped resurgence of malaria worldwide.

"It causes a deadly disease like cerebral malaria. I think it should be taken seriously," he added.

Kidney transplant

From Page 1 Col 6

conditions, the Hindu Daily reported.

"We will reach out to Gulf countries and record evidence against the accused," he was quoted as saying.

The decision came on the heels of last week's arrest of Siddaraju, a prominent nephrologist in the southern city of Bangalore who allegedly removed kidneys from some 1,000 unsuspecting people for transplant.

Siddaraju, head of the state-run Victoria Hospital in Bangalore, and another city doctor have been charged with selling kidneys to buyers in the Gulf.

Bangalore police would also investigate a parallel racket in

which kidneys of poor labourers were being transplanted into beneficiaries from South Asian nations including Malaysia and Singapore, Srinivasulu said.

The Asian Age said the victims, mostly illiterate and poverty-stricken, were promised employment in the Gulf if they donated blood, and were given 5,000 rupees (166 dollars).

The recipients were wealthy people who paid huge amounts for the kidneys," the Pioneer newspaper added.

Meanwhile, four Singaporeans who came to India for kidney transplants have been infected with the AIDS virus, a news report said.

The Midnight File

4 Russian ministers may lose jobs

MOSCOW, Feb 2: Four senior Russian ministers could soon lose their jobs because of their roles in the protracted and bungled military campaign to crush Chechnya separatism, a Russian newspaper said today. Izvestia quoted competent sources as saying the likely victims would be Defence Minister Pavel Grachev, Federal counterintelligence chief Sergei Stepanin and two unnamed deputy prime ministers, reports Reuter.

A different boi mela

From Page 1 Col 4

have been allowed to be featured or sold in any form in any of the stalls. Keeping a check on that might prove to be difficult given the fact there are 303 stalls outside the Bangla Academy gates and 300 more inside. The CID should take responsibility of controlling pirated editions of books and arresting stall owners who are selling those. Stopping piracy is an intrinsic part of stopping erosion of culture and should be on top of the CID's priority list.

There are less new books this year because of the hike in the price of paper. Prices have been generally kept under Tk 60 lest people should shy away from buying them. As a consequence publishers have kept the number of publications this year much lower than usual. All the new books are displayed at a Bangla Academy book display centre, which is a new addition to the mela and an ingenious one at that.

Each year, at least ten new books about 1971 and the War of Independence are unveiled at the mela. This year is no exception. It is actually at book fairs such as these that we can keep our history alive for the post-Liberation generations who learn nothing from their school books and must rely on

novels and fictions to piece together the heroic story of Bangladesh's bloody birth.

There is forever a demand for new books on the Liberation War. According to Dineeb, 18, an HSC student, "Books about 1971 are always picked up like hot cakes. My generation is very interested in that genre. We are hungry to learn more. We know that we must never forget."

A stall to visit is that of the Bangladesh Lekhika Sangha (Women Writers Guild). Here the writers themselves take turns at keeping shop. The boi mela is the only time of the year that women writers of the guild come out with their books. So, it is a crucial time for them.

According to Raushan Ara Hafeez, an authoress, "More people buy the books when they see the writer herself sitting there. The personal touch does wonders for sales."

Mumtaz Begum adds that for the writers themselves it is a wonderful way to get feedback on what the public actually think of their books. "People come up to me and say, Oh, so you are the writer of that book: that was really an enjoyable reading."

Another women writers' corner is the Prabartana stall where there are a variety of literature on women and other development issues.

The Ekushey Boi Mela is not one that needs much advertising. Regardless of Ramadan or the crowds, people who go to the mela have been going there for years and will always go. Books, our cultural heritage and the spirit of Ekushey February are kept alive at the mela. It is the testimony of a nation that has suffered and that relives the memories each year. This year, be a part of the Ekushey Boi Mela, keep the memory alive.

Hajj provisions

From Page 1 Col 7

of the Moallem, transportation, charges and tent-rent in Saudi Arabia.

They should also have an endorsement of 600 US dollars in their passport to meet their cost of living and food charges there.

Each hajj must have a return ticket and only one passport. None should possess more than one passport, the handout added.

The non-government agencies or groups will arrange visas for the pilgrims from Saudi embassy in Dhaka and should arrange for their accommodation and transportation in Makka and Medina.

The pilgrims will also require to have 12 copies of his photograph of 3"x 4" size for their identity. Besides, each pilgrim should have a plastic arm band and an umbrella.

The plastic arm band will bear the name of hajj nationality, passport number, Maktab number, and blood group.

The pilgrims must take meningitis and virus hepatitis injection and medical certificates on the diseases are required to be produced at Jeddah airport on demand.

The instructions also said the pilgrims travelling by Biman should not take any food items with them as their luggage would be checked through scanning machines in the immigration lounge of the airport.

Hatkhola

From Page 1 Col 2

Avenue and Lalmitia.

A copy of the survey report made available to The Daily Star, however, said test results from all these areas showed that the air quality was below the standard set for Bangladesh.

The report said that at Hatkhola, the rate of suspended particle matter in every cubic meter of air was 1946.47 micro-gram which was the highest in all the areas tested.

At Lalmitia, the rate of suspended particle matter was 113.96 in every cubic meter; the report said.

Meanwhile, the DOE in a drive against automobiles using hydraulic horn and belching out black smoke filed cases against 101 automobiles.

Foreign airlines

From Page 1 Col 5

they believe "This is clearly an indication of a well-established monopoly trading position, a situation that remains unchanged."

In the letter they mentioned two options for free and fair competition. The first one is that "airlines be permitted to self-handle at least in the check-in area to maintain their own standards and reduce handling costs accordingly."

The other one is "to permit another handling agent to operate at ZIA as permitted in other countries to provide competition and improved services and Commitment to the customers."

The FAREPCO said that to encourage foreign carriers to operate in Bangladesh and develop ZIA as a high quality transit airport, the services to the passengers must be improved.

DCC drive

From Page 1 Col 7

city drains, a management system effectively developed in Calcutta.

Pointing at the fund constraints, Kamal Chowdhury said, "We were unable to procure the required 450 fogging machines for the 90 wards of the vast capital."

He blamed the Finance Ministry for not providing support and holding of a Tk 3.7 crore Japanese fund provided for environment protection and mosquito control of the metropolis.

"There was no special budget allocation for the on-going crash programme and things have been had to accommodate within the annual budget of the Corporation," Kamal said.

Saifur

From Page 1 Col 4

Michalo Pinto in Rome, President of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chamber of Deputies Mirko Tremaglia and President of the Progressive Parliamentary Group of Italy Luigi Berlinguer.

Illegal immigration

From Page 1 Col 5

to discuss the issue along with other matters that stem from having common borders.

On reports in a section of Indian media on illegal migration, Osmany attributed this to the tendency of turning 'non-issues' into issues that could be potentially used to bedevil the good neighbourliness.

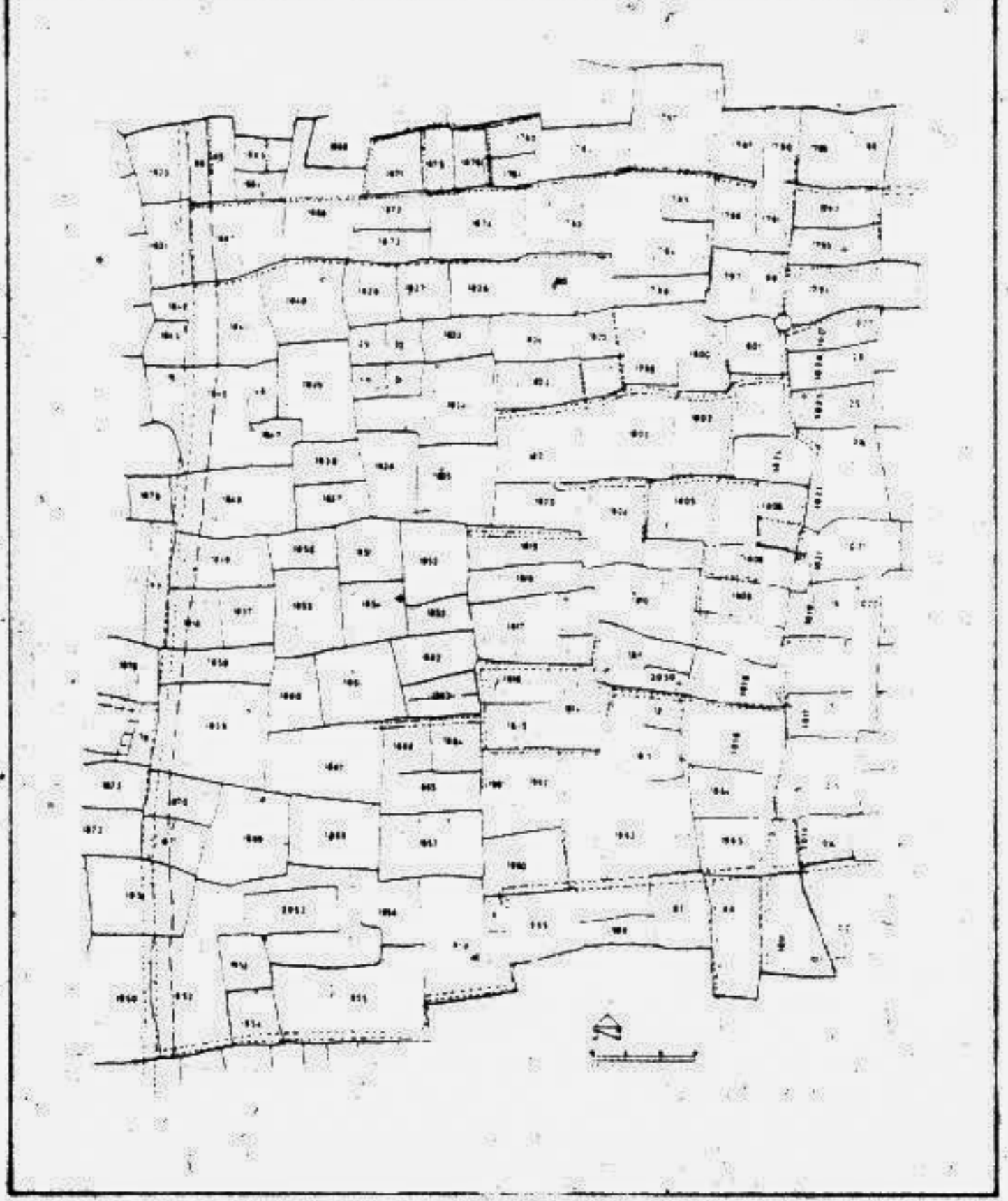
Osmany, who relinquishes his office soon to take up the new assignment as high commissioner to Canada, spoke on different issues covering country's foreign policy.

He called for the recent times as "eventful" for the nation as evidenced by a flurry of activities in the bilateral and multi-lateral plans.

He mentioned such events like two important SAARC ministerial meetings including the first-ever SAARC conference of finance ministers, the visits of the Prime Minister To Japan, Malaysia and to attend the OIC summit, and said all these bore ample testimony for the "active" foreign policy in the year 1994.

The foreign secretary said

New technique to check unplanned urbanisation



Existing road layout at Donia

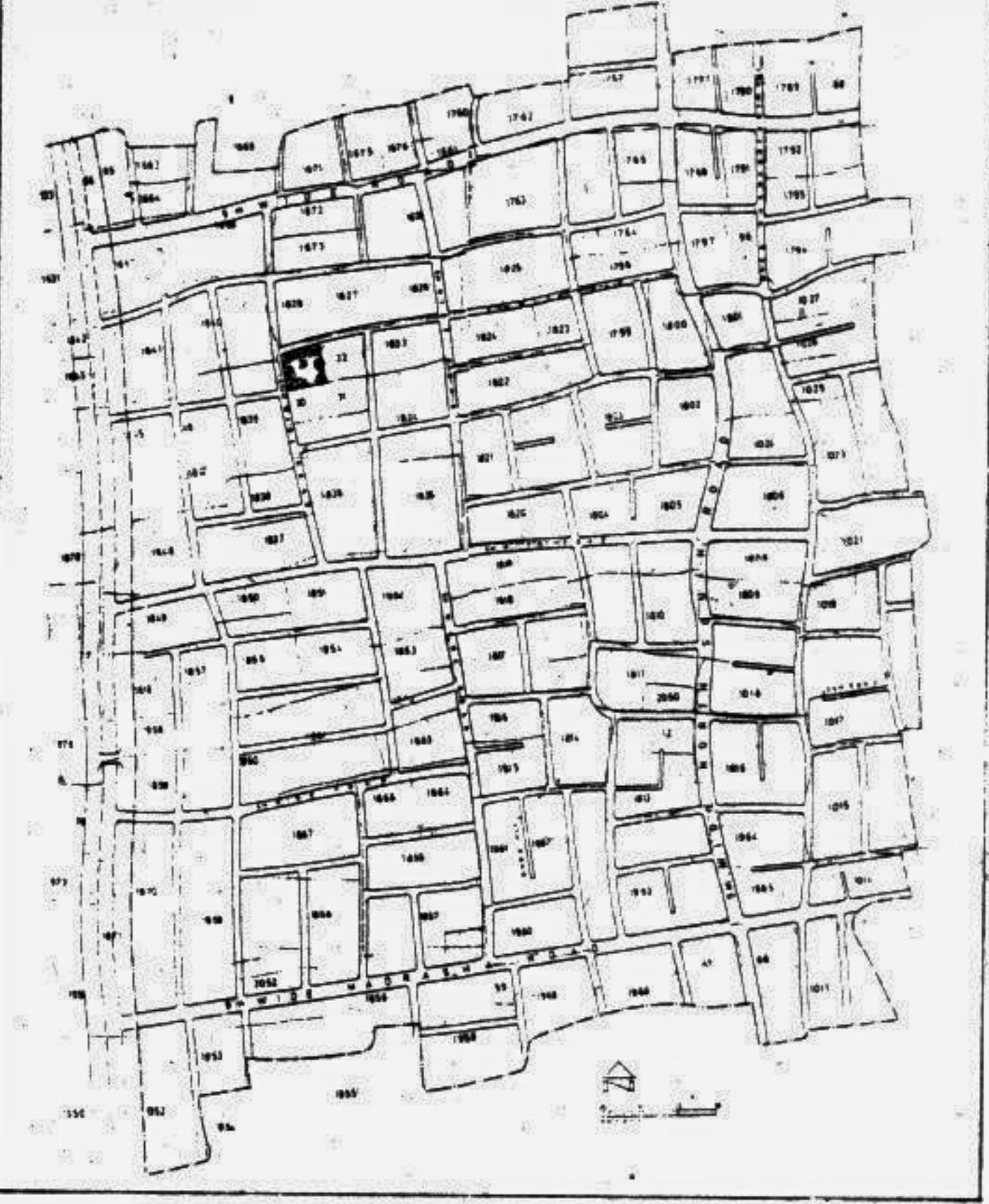
From Page 1 Col 8

parcels are consolidated and then sub-divided and developed with the necessary infrastructure and services, said a DMDP consultant.

The consultant, Mrs Afroza Ahmed, conducted a feasibility study in Donia last year to introduce the LR technique there. The local community is encouraged to have such development process and they already have some sort of development organisations, she said.

Regarding her selection of Donia to demonstrate the feasibility of LR technique there, she said a principal reason for selecting the Donia site is the role already played by the local people for having new roads, primary school and mosque.

The pilot project area is located on the south-eastern fringe of the city, within the DND (Dhaka-Narayanganj-Demra) triangle having around 82 acres of land. Presently, the area is sub-



Proposed road layout at Donia

ject to rapid urban growth in an unplanned manner. Since it has now been selected as the proposed pilot project site, there is scope for ensuring planned growth by applying the LR technique, Mrs Afroza said.

The LR technique have been widely used in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, also in some cities in Australia and Canada and recently Indonesia and Nepal are introducing this technique, according to a DMDP planner.

The technique could be used in tackling many of the problems faced in the process of urbanisation, said the DMDP planner. But he alleged that Rajuk, the implementing authority, is showing less interest in this technique where community participation is ensured.

A senior town planner of Rajuk said he heard about the technique, but expressed his ignorance about the study

which was carried out in Donia.

When contacted, AB Chowdhury, Member (planning) of Rajuk, said LR concept is useful for the fringe areas of a city like Dhaka. He could not say what the Rajuk is thinking about the technique since he did not study the project concept.

DMDP sources said under this technique, the cost of the planned sub-division and service facilities is recovered from the sale of a portion of new serviced land with the remainder redistributed or reallocated to the original land owners.

The LR-technique gives equal share of land value gains to the land owners from the servicing and planned sub-division of this land, they added.

Under this technique, the land owners in the project area lose a small portion of their lands by sacrificing areas for standard roads and other

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

Printed & Published by A. S. Mahmud, Managing Director, on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd, 52, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000, from City Publishing House Ltd, 90 Kakrai, Dhaka-1000. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: House No: 11, Road No: 3, Dhanmandi R/A, Dhaka-1205. PABX: 500092-4, Commercial: 500091 (Direct), Fax No: 88-02-863035, GPO Box No: 3257, Cable: DAILYSTAR, DHAKA.