

'City development plan needs sustainable approach'

By Staff Correspondent

The fourth and final session of the national seminar on the Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (DMDP) stressed the need for tapping alternative surface water sources for Dhaka city as the ground water aquifer is being rapidly depleted.

The session focusing on the city's environment also felt the need for developing appropriate methods of waste collection, treatment and disposal with the involvement of the community.

Jointly organised by the government, World Bank and the UNDP, the seminar was moderated by Mahfuz Anam, Editor of The Daily, and Dr Fatemi Ali Nejadford, Chief of the International Development Programme of UNICEF.

M Anwarul Islam of IUCN and Dr Saleemul Huq jointly presented the seminar paper.

Speakers at the seminar also placed emphasis on improving the conditions of the slums and said the low-lying areas should be used for recreational activities instead of filling them up for development purposes.

A sustainable development approach for the Dhaka city's development was also seen as a must.

M Anwarul Islam said the DMDP ignores the concept of sustainable development and does not recognise various instruments like the Rio Declaration and NEMAP.

He said the plan should be preventive instead of its present curative nature regarding the environmental problems of Dhaka city.

Dr Saleemul Huq said Bangladesh can tap resources from the Global Environment Fund (GEF) and Sustainable Cities Programme to face the environmental problems of

the city. He also suggested that any area development plan must undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) as an integral part and changes in land use as the city expands, have to be carefully considered.

He also stressed on environmental awareness of the people as a way of mitigating the problems of the city. Syed A N M Wahed, Director General of the Department of Environment (DOE), said although the DMDP had encouraged community based initiative in mitigating environmental problems, it has not taken into considerations the socio-political and economic factors.

He said political decisions sometimes affect environmental issues and pointed out that the shifting of tanneries from Hazaribag which is being stalled due to lack of will.

Wahed termed the report 'not environment friendly' as it does not contain any separate document on the environmental aspects.

Dr Mohiuddin Faruque, of Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association (BELA) also charged that environment has not been given an appropriate place in the report.

He said the existing laws and regulations regarding environment protection should be examined before formulating any development plans.

He observed that laws should be made to empower the people, not to consolidate authority of agencies which is the current trend in Bangladesh.

He also pointed out that the report did not mention

anything regarding the preservation of heritage and architectural beauty of the capital city.

Dr Faruque also stressed the need for people's vigilance in improving and maintaining the environment of the city.

Prof Nigel Harris of the Development Planning Unit at the University College of London, said maintaining a healthy environment is fundamental for the city's development. He said population is the biggest wealth of a city, but as it increases so does the danger of environment depletion.

Sadeq Ahmed, Project Director of Dhaka Integrated Flood Protection Project, identified unauthorised construction on city's canals as a major cause of water logging in the capital's roads.

Zaved Hassan Mahmud of Ain-O-Shalishi Kendra said there should be some legal backing for improving the environment of slums which is now non-existent in the country.

Prof Golam Rahman of BUET suggested for involvement of the ward commissioners in creating public awareness on maintaining city's environment.

A World Bank planner, Kimura, said any plan formulated without taking the poor into consideration is bound to fail.

"We are interested to work with the NGOs along with the government to address the issues of the urban poor in long and short term," he said.

Dr Fatemi Ali of UNICEF said alternatives should be found of using underprivileged children as a way of recycling of wastes.



Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, along with party colleagues, offering Fateha after placing wreath at the mazar of Hussein Shaheed Suhrawardy yesterday on the 32nd anniversary of death of the leader. — Star photo

Security tightened around Ayodhya

AYODHYA, India Dec 5: Paramilitary troops have beefed up security as Hindus and Muslims called separate rallies tomorrow at the site of the toppled Babri Mosque on the third anniversary of the ancient shrine's razing, reports AFP.

Officials said security had been reinforced in an around Ayodhya and in the adjoining township of Faizabad in northern India to prevent possible clashes between Hindus and Muslims tomorrow.

In New Delhi, the federal parliament on Monday voiced concern and ordered the Indian government to "take adequate steps to deal with the situation in Ayodhya."

Sources said some 1,600 troops with anti-riot gear had moved onto the site reinforcing hundreds of heavily armed paramilitary soldiers who had been camped in the fenced off zone for the past three years.

Several Muslim fundamentalist groups have asked their followers to go to Ayodhya 400 kilometres from New Delhi to observe a "black day" in protest against the 17th-century mosque's razing, officials said.

We will also organise a seminar in Ayodhya to remind the federal government of its promise on the reconstruction of the Babri Mosque at its original site, said Mohuddin Siddique, leader of the Muslim Majlis fire brand group.

Siddique's statement was in reference to an assurance given by Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao three years ago that New Delhi would rebuild the three domed mosque razed on December 6, 1992 by thousands of Hindu zealots.

Wasi Khan, convenor of

the Babri Mosque Action Committee which is also spearheading a campaign for the toppled shrine's reconstruction, said the forum would observe Wednesday as a black day in Ayodhya.

Hindu-extremist Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) World Hindu Council warned that its cadres will hold separate rallies in this pilgrimage town to demand the construction of a Hindu temple on the debris of the Babri Mosque.

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The parents of the deceased alleged that the deceased disclosed the name of Joynal Hazari in his dying declaration. Deputy Attorney General Amirul Kabir Chowdhury opposed the bail prayer.

Joynal Hazari

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Joynal Hazari was arrested on October 10 last following an alleged attack on the Deputy Commissioner, Feni and thereafter he has been detained under the Special Powers Act, 1974.

Later, the petitioner was shown as an arrest in the murder case. The hearing on the detention order is supposed to be held on Thursday next.

Hasina

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Suhrawardy, who they said, fought for his whole life to uphold the causes of democracy. Hasina reiterated her appeal to the Prime Minister to step down immediately and sit for a dialogue to nominate a neutral person for heading a caretaker government.

"BNP does not want a fair election and if they did then the PM could not say that there was no neutral person in the country," she said.

She alleged that no election under the BNP government, which betrayed with the joint declaration of the three alliances, would be free and fair.

Dwelling on the current socio-economic condition of the country, she observed that "people are now totally suffering a feeling of sheer insecurity under the bad governance of BNP."

"There are murders, muggings and all sort of accidents occurring everyday. There is no peace in the life of the general mass," Hasina said.

AL leaders Abdus Samad Azad, Abdul Mannan, Zillur Rahman, Abdur Razzak, Mozaffar Hussain Poltu, Mohammad Hanif, Sayed Fazul Haq, Obaidul Kader were, among others, who took part in the discussion.

Earlier, when the discussion was on progress, over 500 leaders and workers of BNP, Jatiya Party (JP) and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) joined AL by presenting a bouquet to Sheikh Hasina.

Prominent among these who joined the party are: Abu Osman Chowdhury, Tofazzal Haq Chowdhury, industrialists Iqbal Hussain Chowdhury and M A Halm.

As part of the party's programme marking the death anniversary of Suhrawardy, Sheikh Hasina, flanked by senior party leaders, offered fateha at the grave of the late leader and the party flag was hoisted at half-mast.

The Midnight File

Major LTTE attack on two police commando bases

COLOMBO, Dec 5: Tamil Tiger guerrillas launched a major attack on two police commando bases in eastern Sri Lanka today, hours after the army raised the national flag over the rebels' former Jaffna stronghold, defence officials said, reports Reuter.

LDF for immediate resignation of BNP govt

By Staff Correspondent
The Left Democratic Front (LDF) announced in a declaration yesterday that it would bring out processions and hold rallies throughout the country on December 12 to protest the unilateral declaration of the parliamentary election schedule.

The declaration was adopted at a rally of LDF held at Nur Hussain Square in the city. It demanded immediate resignation of the present government and formation of a caretaker government to hold next general elections.

Cultural protocol signed with Russia

Bangladesh and Russia signed a protocol on cultural cooperation between the two countries in Dhaka yesterday, an official handout said, reports BSS.

The visiting Russian Minister for Cultural Affairs E Y Sidrov and Bangladesh's Minister of State for Cultural Affairs Prof Jahannara Begum signed the protocol on behalf of their respective countries.

The protocol envisages exchange of visits of cultural teams and cultural personalities between the two countries.

Besides, both the countries will extend cooperation to each other in establishing libraries and educational and scientific institutions. Under the protocol Russia will also provide Bangladesh with trainers on music, ballet and other fields of fine arts.

Fire at city factory

By Staff Correspondent
Fire broke out in a paint factory at Tipu Sultan Road and at a market at Farm Gate in the city yesterday. The blaze that broke out at the factory at 47 Tipu Sultan road destroyed chemicals and other raw materials, fire service sources said.

The fire reportedly originated from a lamp and it took about half an hour to bring it under control. In the other incident, the fire broke out in the second floor of the Farmview Super Market at Farm Gate from an electric short circuit yesterday afternoon.

The fire service sources said that the local people brought the fire under control within a short time.

Drilling work

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expected to begin the actual drilling on December 15, the sources said. The companies will drill two 'pilot holes' in the exploration Block No-16, covering 881 sq km area.

The two companies — Cairn Plc of Scotland and Holland Sea Search of the Netherlands — are now seeking permission from the government for using a helicopter for the exploration work.

The well will be drilled to a depth of approximately 3,500 metres with a target drilling time of 40 days. The companies would invest 20 million US dollars for the exploration in this block.

Meanwhile, the Law Ministry cleared a revised Statutory Regulatory Order (SRO) few days ago. Under this SRO, the hydrocarbon explorers will now get total tax exemption for temporary import of equipment for hydrocarbon exploration.

In May 1994, the Cairn, together with the Holland Sea Search Bangladesh BV, which is now a Cairn subsidiary, were the first foreign companies to be awarded a Production Sharing Contract (PSC) under the current Bangladesh Petroleum Policy.

Democracy Day

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hold a rally at its central office at Bangabandhu Avenue at 3 pm today on the occasion. Party chief Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to address the rally.

The Dhaka University Central Student Union (DUCSU) has drawn up an elaborate programme to mark the day.

Vice Chancellor Prof Emajuddin Ahmed will inaugurate the programme today at 10 am at the DUCSU Bhawan. The 11-day programme includes exhibition of photographs and posters.

US to quit UNIDO

VIENNA, Dec 5: The United States on Monday announced it was pulling out of the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) saying that like UNESCO, the agency was inefficient, reports AFP.

HSC students damage vehicles

By Staff Correspondent
A group of city students yesterday damaged at least 15 vehicles near the Dhaka College protesting charges in the examination system of the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC).

The angry youths put road blockades near the over-bridge at New Market area and near Science Laboratory crossing halting the traffic movement on the Mirpur road for more than two hours at around noon, witnesses said.

Sources said that the students from Titumir College, Teigaon College, City College and Dhaka College brought out a protest procession at the time.

Dhanmondi police, however said that they did not have any information in this regard.

Opposition

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the resignation of the PM, according to the meeting sources.

The meeting decided the venues and spots for leading the procession towards the PM's Secretariat on December 7.

Details of the issues discussed could not be known. The meeting, which continued for about two hours, was attended by Tofael Ahmed, Mohammad Nasim, Suranjit Sen Gupta, Abdul Mannan, Dewan Farid Gazi besides host Samad Azad from AL, Moudud Ahmed and Anwar Hossain from Jatiya Party and Sheikh Ansar Ali and Quamruzzaman from the Jamaat-e-Islami.

UNDP opposes

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alleviation," said an UN official. They were critical of the strategy for not properly addressing the ground water management issue which, they argued, was critical for agriculture development through minor irrigation.

Sources said the UNDP, at the meeting further insisted that donors should assist Bangladesh in effectively settling the longstanding disputes over water sharing issue. But the proposal did not receive much response either from the majority donors or from the government.

ERD Secretary Lutfullah Majid told reporters Monday that the government preferred to leave the water sharing issues with the Joint River Commission.

Political situation

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rate. Pierre Landell-Mills said, the economic reforms carried out over the years, have shown some achievements like poverty alleviation and domestic resource mobilisation. However, he called for more effective measure to attract more Direct Foreign Investment (DFI) in the country.

Talking to The Daily Star later, Landell-Mills said, air cargo should be opened to the international airlines, port congestion removed and telecommunication developed to attract more DFI in the country.

Deputy Governor of the Bangladesh Bank Mahbubur Rahman Khan said, the central bank was trying to sustain the macroeconomic stability by taking various measures. He said 30 per cent Letter of Credit (LC) margin has been fixed for import of consumer goods, 15 per cent for the intermediary goods and 10 per cent for capital goods, to discourage import of consumer goods.

He said the value of Taka against US dollar has not depreciated in the secondary market which proves that the value of Taka is competitive and stable.

Later talking to this correspondent he said, in the neighbouring countries' inflation rates were much higher than that in Bangladesh. "Pakistan has a 19 per cent inflation while India is experiencing a double digit inflation."

Jatrabari bus fire

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were stated to be critical last night.

Injured Zahurul Islam, who appeared at the Honours examination this year from Dhaka College, said the bus was stopped by a group of unidentified people before it caught fire making a big noise. He said that the gang also asked the passengers to get down from the bus before it was on fire.

His attendant at the DMCH, Mashhud, a resident of Jatrabari area told this correspondent that Zahurul informed him that the bus came under attack by a group of gangsters who hurled petrol bomb in it.

Nuruz Zaman who could hardly speak informed this correspondent that he heard a noise before the bus caught fire. Few drops of liquid substance also fell on him at that time, he added.

Nurul Alam, a mason by profession, said that he also felt some liquid substance on his body moments before the bus caught fire followed by a bang.

The driver of the bus Shamsu could not be traced till last night, police said. Meanwhile, another driver of the company, Green Star Za-

hirul Islam, 30, who was travelling in the bus could not say how the fire broke out.

"I heard a nose like burst of a tyre," said a policeman of Demra thana who was in a nearby area at the time of the accident.

UNB adds: Bahar, helper of the bus, said he was sitting on engine cover when the bus started from Syedabad bus terminal and then moved on to the rear of the bus to check tickets of the passengers.

All on a sudden, he said, he heard a big bang outside as the bus was stuck up in a traffic jam near Jatrabari. At that time four or five people got into the bus and caught hold of the collar of the driver.

In a moment, the bus helper added, he felt that some liquid substance was poured inside the bus that soon caught flame.

A survivor, Sohrab Hossain, hailing from Sonaimuri of Chatkhill thana in Noakhali, said he jumped out through the window as soon as he saw flames at the front of the bus near the driver's seat.

"I could only hear a big sound and then saw the flame," Sohrab said.

Public sector overtakes

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The balance of payment, during the first quarter, showed a deficit of 216 million dollars as against a surplus of 241 million dollars during the corresponding period of the previous fiscal year.

According to Bangladesh Bank, the trade gap during this period registered a deficit of 678 million dollars as against a deficit of 268 million dollars during the corresponding period of 1994-95.

The quantum of imports jumped to 1739 million dollars during the July-September period of the current fiscal year which is 47.65 per cent higher than that of the corresponding period of the previous year.

The amount of the Letters of Credit (LCs) worth 1.8 billion dollars was opened during the first quarter which is 24.42 per cent higher than that of the corresponding period of the last year.

The government, in its bid to contain inflationary pressure, has raised interest rate twice.

Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud, Chairman of the Economics Department at Dhaka University, said, "Some preliminary estimate for fiscal year 1994-95 suggests that their

might have already taken place a decline in the domestic savings rate in the year. If so, the recent turn of events is already taking its toll on the macro-economic gains achieved since the early 1990s."

"The apparent strains in the current macroeconomic situation can be attributed in part to the continuing agricultural stagnation and the shortfall in rice production. The deterioration in the supply-demand balance for rice bears upon the rate of inflation, the trade deficit and the size of the governments food budget," he said.

Mahmud said that despite an acceleration in manufacturing output in recent years, there has not been any improvement in the overall growth performance of the economy because of decline in agricultural growth.

"Of course, neither the decline in foreign reserves nor the devaluation of taka is necessarily a sign of macroeconomic weakness. The import boom can also be a healthy development, if it is driven by higher levels of domestic investment and economic activity," says Mahmud in a review of the current macroeconomic trends, prepared for Bangladesh Economic Association.

Gano Forum

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rum alleged.

"The Prime Minister herself used huge resource of the state in her train campaign. She is using the state-run Radio-TV for her party's campaign but denying those to the Opposition. These are not favourable for holding a free, fair and neutral election," said Dr. Kamal Hossain at a press conference in the city after the meeting.

He observed that law and order is deteriorating while people having black money are becoming more and more powerful in the politics. He demanded immediate steps for improvement of law and order and for limiting a candidate's campaign expenditure to Tk three lakh, as per the code of conduct. The law enforcing agencies should be placed under the Election Commission during the election period, he suggested.

The press conference was also addressed by Advocate Jahurul Islam, Pankaj Bhat-tacharya, Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, Mofizul Islam and Mostafa Mohsin Mantu.

Khaleda

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Kurshid Jahan Huq known as 'Chocolate Apa' also collected application form yesterday.

Some 1430 forms were sold yesterday. More than 95 forms were submitted by the nomination seekers till 9 pm. Major General (Rtd) Mahmudul Hasan, former minister of the Ershad government, procured forms to seek BNP ticket.

Two former MPs elected on Awami League and Jamaat tickets in 1991, also procured nomination forms from the BNP. They are: Nazibul Bashar Maizbhandari and Moulana Md Sakawat Hossain.

S A Khaleque, elected MP in 1986 and 88 on Jatiya Party ticket, yesterday submitted his form seeking BNP's nomination from Mirpur seat.

Khaleque's son Md Mohsin was elected MP on BNP ticket through controversial election in Mirpur.

Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali, Deputy Speaker Humayun Khan Panni, Finance Minister Saifur Rahman, Livestock Minister Abdullah Al Noman, Forest Minister Col (Rtd) Akbar Hossain, Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mia, Energy Minister Dr. Khondaker Mosharrar Hossain, T & T Minister Tariqul Islam, State Minister for Civil Aviation Major (Rtd) Abdul Mannan also collected the nomination forms yesterday.

Application forms were also procured by former Air Force Chief Air Vice-Marshal (Rtd) Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, former ambassador Rezaul Karim, Prime Minister's Assistant Private Secretary Salauddin Ahmed, DUCSU General Secretary Khairul Kabir Khokan and student leader Ilyas Ali.



The Peer of Charmonai collecting money from his followers in a meeting at the north gate of the Baitul Mukarram Mosque yesterday to collect fund for his party, Islamic Shashantantra Andolon. — Star photo

EC on campaign materials

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ported, violators can be arrested without any warrant and their bail petitions will not be acceptable.

The EC has appealed to all concerned to remove the banned materials immediately if they have used them for election campaign. Otherwise, EC will take stern action against them.

Meanwhile, The Election Commission (EC) yesterday held a meeting with the divisional commissioners, deputy commissioners (DC) and top police officials to take measures for conducting the forthcoming general elections in a favourable law and order situation. The meeting was held at the NEC seminar

hall in the city. Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Justice AKM Sadeque appealed to the police officials to discharge their duties neutrally, honestly and without fear. He said that the EC was determined to hold the upcoming general elections in a free and fair way.

The CEC also asked the law enforcing authorities to seize all illegal arms, arrest the wanted criminals and resist terrorists. He also asked them not to be influenced by any political party and individual's opinion.

All the officials who are working in the election process after the election

schedule was declared, will be considered on deputation. They cannot be transferred without the permission of the EC, he said.

The EC also assured all the workforce of appreciation for their good jobs and warned that any kind of irregularity in duty would be severely dealt with.

The Inspector General of Police, Secretary of the Home Ministry, Election Commissioner Justice Abdul Jalil were among others present in the meeting.

Meanwhile, an EC source said that the formation of the district level Electoral Committee was still awaiting its approval.