

News

Construction of confce hall at Osmany Udyan 'Govt to go ahead with its plan'

By Special Correspondent

The government will go ahead with its plan to construct the Bangabandhu Convention Centre at the Osmany Udyan, Works Minister Mosharrif Hossain said on Thursday.

The centre is being built for the Non-Aligned Summit in 2001.

He dismissed public criticisms that construction of the centre there would squeeze the only open green space between old and new Dhaka. Only three acres of the 23.2 acre park will be required for the centre, he said.

Rest of the space will be beautified with greens, artificial fountain and flower garden, he said.

Answering a question the minister said the structures including a slum on the open space on the northern side of the Udyan will be removed to expand the park. But he refused to shift the centre there although it was suggested that it could be convenient for traffic management and ensuring se-

curity.

The minister and officials failed to give a satisfactory reply to the query on the fate of the 11,000 trees which were planted by the Forest Department as part of its urban afforestation programme. Only 1609 trees are there, including 410 at the place designated for the centre, they said.

The minister said, the proposed centre has been designed in such a way that it will enhance the beauty of the garden and be congenial to environment.

Answering another question the minister said that before selecting the Osmany Udyan, the government studied three options - an 3.8 acre site beside the Prime Minister's Office, an area in the old airport adjacent to the Military Museum and the land beside the Sonargaon Hotel. Even, there was a proposal for going to Ashulia.

The 3.8 acre site near the Prime Minister's office was re-

jected as it was "too inadequate". The old airport will remain as the second airport and the proposed two storied centre will pose a problem for it. Chinese experts did not agree on the proposal to use the area adjacent to Sonargaon Hotel as it would be "too expensive", the minister and officials told news.

The minister also dismissed the suggestion that traffic management would be a problem near the Osmany Udyan. "Rickshaws and auto-rickshaws will be phased out in future".

He also promised to investigate how two high-rise markets are being built on the Railway land and construction of the Yani Market on the south eastern fringe of the Udyan area.

He sought co-operation from journalists in this regard and in straightening the Bijoy Soron by removing a high rise building blocking its expansion.



Samajtantrik Sramik Front staged a rally in front of the National Press Club on the occasion of its 4th national conference yesterday.

—Star photo

JS body backs crash programme to increase power generation

A meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry Thursday backed the government bid to cut down on procedures to increase power generation as early as possible, reports UNB.

Meeting sources said the standing committee asked the ministry to complete necessary process within two months to establish new power units and transmission lines under the crash programme.

The crash programme includes setting up of new power generation units within six months through unsolicited foreign or local offers, which is opposed by some quarters within the government and also by the donor agencies.

The meeting, chaired by standing committee chairman Chief Whip Abul Hasanat Abdulla, unanimously decided that steps would be taken immediately to set up new power units and transmission lines and to repair and modernise the old ones.

It asked the authorities concerned to submit a report at the

next meeting of the JS committee on the success of the recent action programme to save electricity.

The committee also directed them to keep the media informed about their day to day progress in implementing the action programme.

The programme, taken a month ago, includes snapping of illegal power connections, snapping the lines of the defaulted consumers and attaching Power Factor Improvement (PFI) devices at the industrial units.

However, according to sources, the Power Development Board (PDB) and the Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA) have failed miserably in the drive due to "reduction of some officials" in the two organisations.

State Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources Prof Rafiqul Islam, Imran Ahmed, AB Tajul Islam, M Zillul Hakim, Abdul Mukit Khan, Dr Khandaker Mosharrif Hossain and Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury attended the meeting.

The standing committee discussed irregularities relating to the import of defective electric meters. It was informed that cases have been filed against the suppliers of such defective meters demanding compensation.

The conference, the workers leaders also demanded immediate announcement of wage commission award, stop of privatisation and implementation of agreements signed with the government in the past.

The leaders said the government is closing down mills and industries one after another and retrenching workers in the name of the free market economy. The just rights of the workers and employees are being curbed everyday, they said.

They also demanded immediate reopening of Chittagong Steel Mills and cancellation of the planning to construct private container terminal at Chittagong Port.

The conference was addressed, among others, by Mostafa Faruque, Mahbubur Rahman Ismail, Osman Ali and Naimuddin.

A 17-member committee was formed at the conference with Abdulla Sarker and Mahbubur Rahman as president and general secretary respectively. Other office-bearers, include vice president — Mostafa Faruque, secretary — Naimuddin, organising secretary — Osman Ali, finance secretary — Nurul Islam Ranju and office secretary — Zulfiker Ali.

The keynote paper "Vote For Banana Tree" will be presented by Abdulla Sarker. A selective group of eminent persons including senior advocates, professors, politicians, retired secretaries and journalists will participate in the meeting as discussants.

The discussion meeting will be held in the auditorium of TTT, House No: 59 (N), Road No: 12A, Dhanmondi.

Experts warned that the growth of cities and industries in Asia had increased their demand for water, forcing rice farming to become "water efficient".

IRRI scientists will discuss these and other developments in a mid-term meeting in China from May 24 to 28, IRRI said.

IRRI scientists and members of various national rice research institutes will also discuss ways to use geographic information to help stabilise rice yields and alleviate poverty in Eastern India at a conference in Uttar Pradesh from May 24 to 26, IRRI added.

The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), a network to which IRRI is affiliated, has revealed the new techniques.

Water demand will rise by more than 50 percent in South-East Asia and India and by 40 percent in China, all major rice-growing areas, the institute said.

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