

Fear of quake heightens

NURUL ALAM

About 900 ramshackle buildings are at high risk in the port city and its surrounding areas when the fears of major earthquake heightened here after series of tremors, sources in the earthquake research centre said.

Most of these dilapidated buildings already crossed over 100 years and turned useless.

Over 50 buildings including public library house, developed cracks during the last week's tremors in Chittagong.

The earthquake research centre based at the engineering university here asked the owners and residents of those buildings time and again to vacate and dismantle them as early as possible, but it could draw little attention from them, the sources said.

Research centre convenor Dr. Jahangir Alam said, "These buildings must be demolished immediately, otherwise it may cause havoc if Chittagong is jolted by a major earthquake".

"With the collapse of those

buildings during catastrophic disasters, all the inmates will surely be killed as there is no chance of survival," Jahangir said.

Mayor A.B.M. Mohiuddin Chowdhury said we would serve notices to the owners of those dilapidated buildings soon for dismantling them on their own. If they do not comply with our notices we will be bound to act according to law, the mayor said.

900 dilapidated buildings in Chittagong. CCC will serve notices to the owners and residents to demolish ramshackle buildings

"Even some people are using the dilapidated old buildings after slight renovation as kindergarten schools and clinics," Jahangir said.

"We have been trying to create awareness for the last seven years through seminars and symposiums for earmarking the risky buildings here for demolition, but who cares," he pointed out.

Meanwhile, Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) has taken

initiative to demolish the dilapidated structures, official sources said.

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Authority (CDA) Chairman Brigadier General Shariful Alam said CDA has nothing to do with the demolition of dilapidated buildings as it is duty of the city corporation and public works department.

Most of the ramshackle buildings are located at Anderkilla, Dewanbazar, Feringhabazar, Patharghat, Alkaran, Chawkbazar, Jubilee road, Teribazar, Bandel road, Miah Khan Nagar, Station road, Madarbari, Agrabad, Nalapara, Patantuli, Mogholtuli and Hazarigoli, CCC sources said.

The century old Chittagong court building was supposed to be dismantled long ago as it became risky, public works department sources said.

A project of Tk 36 crore was taken up to replace the court building situated on the top of Par Pahar (Fairy hill).

The demolition of court building was kept in abeyance in the face of protest by some local civil society groups for its preservation as a historical monument.

In reply to a question he said the old building of CCC is not risky. It has not become that much old and it doesn't need to be demolished now," he added.

But some quarters differed with the mayor's view about the old building and said it should be demolished as it could collapse in case of major tremor.

Chittagong Development



Kabiraj Building (left) and Shuktara Hotel (right), the two century-old buildings of the city, might collapse any moment as they were declared abandoned years back.

ZOBAER HOSAIN SIKDER



Agitated Amin Jute Mill workers put up barricade on Chittagong-Nazirhat rail line running through the mill premises demanding payment of arrears.

Amin Jute Mills on the verge of closure

SHAHIDUL ISLAM

Amin Jute Mills Limited, the largest jute mills in the country after closure of Adamjee Jute Mills, has long been facing manifold problems.

Amin Jute Mills is a losing concern for the past few years. The unpaid bank loans, and huge arrears in terms of wages, electricity and gas bills, municipality tax and jute procurement stand at around Tk.150 crore.

Labour leaders fear that the mills may face the same fate as Adamjee in near future unless proper measures were taken immediately. On the other hand, thousands of staff and workers are now living in fear of losing jobs, they said.

Hundreds of workers came out of the mill and staged agitation for

"We have already been in a sorry state for the last few months without any wage. Can you imagine the sufferings of our family members, especially our children!", a worker said.

Sources said the workers were not getting wages for more than four weeks that approximately amounts to Tk.1.5 crore. The mill has a total of 5,000 workers. Of them, 3400 are permanent and 1600 shifting workers. They get wages on weekly basis. Besides, it has around 1,000 officials and staff and they are also not that much better off than the workers, sources said.

Aiyub said the mill has been facing persisting financial crisis. And the authorities are unable to pay the wages regularly.

The mill is to pay Tk.90 lakh interest per month against Tk.90 crore loans from different banks, sources said. Sometime, the interest is not paid, which makes the financial burden heavier. To add further misery, the Mills owes the Power Development Board (PDB) Tk.6 crore as outstanding electricity bill. The mill pays Tk.25 lakh electricity bill monthly, sources said.

Once the mill produced a wide variety of items. Now it produces only five to six items as per a government order in recent time, sources said.

Meanwhile, the mill authorities in April sent some proposals to the finance and planning ministry to save the mill.

The workers withdrew their agitation when the authorities paid them one week's wage and assured them of giving arrears soon.

"We paid them Tk.35 lakh as per an arrangement with the Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC). The BJMC gave the amount from its emergency fund," General Manager Aiyub Hossain told this correspondent.

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theweekthatwas

Full-fledged DC Hill Park demanded

The speakers at a discussion meeting here on Friday demanded immediate upgrading of DC Hill Park as a full-fledged one.

Shataiyu Angon president Manik Debnath chaired the meeting where DC Hill Park Implementation Committee convener advocate Shanker Prashad Dey made the address of welcome.

Massive reforms in education on

Massive reforms in education are on to introduce productive and updated method in educational institutes. Kindergarten schools are playing an important role to achieve this goal.

Food Minister Abdullah Al Noman said this while he was addressing the



Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury and Justice KM Sobhan inaugurate a photo exhibition at Chittagong Press Club auditorium on July 30. Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee, Chittagong, organised the exhibition in memory of those killed during a protest against pub-

Amendment to labour law underscored

Speakers at a workshop titled, "Workplace Development Plan" here on Thursday stressed the need for amendment to the labour laws to introduce updated and practical labour laws.

The four-day workshop was held at Chittagong regional office of Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) under a BGMEA-ILO-GoB Partnership Project.

At the certificate giving ceremony on the concluding day, the speakers also called for proper implementation of compliance in the garments sector through workplace development plans.

ILO Chief Technical advisor Senji Lee was the chief guest chaired by BGMEA-ILO-GoB Partnership Project co-chairman ANM Saifuddin, BGMEA director Shamsul Alam, MA Salam, and AZM Tabarak Ullah were present.

Raise Ct-g Jeddah Hajj flights

Hajj (Pilgrimage) Agencies Association of Bangladesh (HAAB), Chittagong zonal committee, in a meeting here on Friday demanded increased number of Chittagong Jeddah direct flights and fixation of equal ticket price for both ballot and non-ballot intended pilgrims.

The meeting also urged the intended Hajj pilgrims not to make any transaction of money with any person or caravan other than Hajj agents having approval from the ministry concerned and Saudi Embassy.

HAAB, Ctg zonal chairman ABM Mahbubul Haq presided over the meeting where Alhaj Emdad Ullah, Md. Shah Alam, Md. Abu Kashem, Alhaj Shariyat Ullah Shahid, Md. Solaiman, AKM Anwar, Mohammad Enamul Islam and Ali Ahamad Munir also spoke.

Educational directory soon

An educational directory will be published as booklet and on the Website soon at the initiative of a private firm of Wisdom Pink Pages (WPP).

The WPP officials disclosed at a press conference at Rangamati Press Club on Thursday. Schools, colleges, universities and academic institutions of all categories can register their names in the Educational Directory free of cost, they said.

At the conference WPP Chairman Mahbubul Karim and Chief Executive Asif Mahbub further informed that side by side with Wisdom Pink pages, green pages would appear as the second edition.

CDC activities lauded

A five-member delegation working in Bangladesh under a French Project - Aid Medical and Development, visited Centre for Disabilities Concern (CDC), a private welfare organisation, in the port city on Sunday.

The delegation led by the founding general secretary of Social Assistance and Rehabilitation for Physically Vulnerable (SARPV) Shahidul Haq, went round CDC's device unit, RCDB treatment centre for disabled children, and Mobility Workshop. They lauded CDC activities in Chittagong.



Artistes of Swaralipi Sangskritik Forum perform at a cultural function on the occasion of the Rabindra-Nazrul Jayanti at Muslim Institute on Saturday.

STAR PHOTO

delegation assured all out support and assistance for further expansion of its activities.

The delegation members Perry Ila, Miss Ensopi and Quazi Md. Muhit talked to disabled children, CDC professionals, physiotherapists, technicians and other officials.

Form for intended Hindu pilgrims

Form distribution for Chittagong City Mayor patronised pilgrimage to different sacred places of India started here on Sunday.

Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, chief patron of the Hindu Pilgrimage Service Committee, launched distribution of forms among the intended pilgrims at his office.

Fifty persons would go on the 23-day pilgrimage this year under the initiative and patronisation of the committee. The pilgrims would visit different sacred places and temples of south

India including Puri, Mohishur, Otti, Madurai, Kanyakumari, Minaxi Mandir (temple), Trichi Padicheri, Bangalore, Kovalum, Rameshwaram and Chinnai.

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Emphasis on technical education

Importance needs to be attached to technical education for survival in the present age of Information Technology.

Speakers at certificate giving ceremony of ILO-NORAD financed AK Khan UCEP Technical School at Kalurghat said this here on Wednesday.

They urged all private donor agencies of national and international level to come forward in this respect. Facing the challenges of twenty-first century by the government alone was not possible, they said.

ILO, Bangladesh director Gopal Bhattacharya was the chief guest at

the ceremony where former industry and planning minister AM Zahir Uddin Khan and Chittagong chamber vice-president Monzoor-Ul-Amin Chowdhury were special guests.

Salah Uddin Kashem Khan chairman, advisory committee of AK Khan UCEP Technical School, presided.

'Check marine pollution'

Minister for Environment and Forest Shahjahan Siraj called upon all concerned with ship breaking industry at all possible measures to check pollution of water from ship breaking yards.

He visited the ship breaking yards at Bhatiary here on Saturday. The minister also stressed technical assistance from countries like China and India to run and manage the ship breaking yards in modern method.

Siraj also directed the department of environment and local yards owners to hold a joint meeting for identifying the areas of pollution and envisaging ways and means to check pollution.