

# 'Bangladesh most vulnerable to quake'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unplanned urban growth and high density of population make Bangladesh and its capital in particular highly vulnerable to earthquake, said the experts at an international workshop yesterday.

The workshop on 'Seismic Analysis in South Asia Region' has been organised by Geological Survey of Bangladesh (GSB) at a city hotel. The United States Geological Survey and the Unesco have co-sponsored it.

"Concentrated growth and high population density have increased the vulnerability of this city to colossal damage in life and infrastructure," said Energy Secretary Nazrul Islam at the inaugural session.

Though earthquake cannot be forecast or prevented, preparatory measures on the basis of seismic analysis and mapping can bring down the volume of damage, he added.

As earthquake occurs in and around Bangladesh at certain intervals, the country is prone to such disastrous event, said GSB Director General Mizanur Rahman.

The Asam earthquake in 1897 was one of the most massive ones in the region, he said, adding that the epicentre of the Bengal earthquake in 1885 was in Bangladesh territory.

BRAC University Vice-Chancellor Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury said it is true that no major earthquake rocked Bangladesh during the past century, but none can brush aside the possibility of such disaster in future.

He said Dhaka is exposed to huge loss of lives and properties due to lack of preparedness in the event of a massive earthquake.

Any major earthquake in Bangladesh

poses a potential threat because of its very high density of population, said geologist John W Whitney of United States Geological Survey.

Calling Bangladesh a 'disaster fatigued country', Whitney said there is hardly any other country afflicted so much by disaster and diseases as Bangladesh is.

State Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources AKM Mosharraf Hossain said an understanding of the geological process and identification of seismically active zones would help the government in designing development infrastructure.

Unesco Consultant Fredrich Simon also spoke at the four-day workshop attended by geological experts from China, India, Pakistan, Nepal, the USA and the host Bangladesh.

## 1,426 more held

UNB, Dhaka

Police arrested some 1,426 people on various charges during their countrywide drive in the last 24 hours ending at 6.00am yesterday.