



Awami League President Sheikh Hasina speaks at the Awami League Central Working Committee (ALCWC) meeting at the party's Dhanmondi office in the city yesterday.

Form metro govt for ideal urbanisation

Experts suggest at Bapa seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Environmentalists, engineers and urban experts at a seminar yesterday suggested formation of metropolitan government for ideal urbanisation in the country.

They also suggested formulation of comprehensive urbanisation policy involving people's participation as well as accurate implementation of it in order to overcome the current urban problems, including lack of good governance.

The seminar titled "What types of towns do we want?" was organised by Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) in association with several voluntary organisations at the WVA auditorium in the city.

It was the first session of Bapa's five-day seminar on the occasion of World Environment Day on June 5.

Presenting the keynote paper, Professor Nazrul Islam of Centre for Urban Studies said Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has very minimum power regarding the urban issues.

Terming it as a setback for good governance, he said the city mayor and the ward commissioners should be given the responsibilities to look into the urban problems. "The government, however, has to set an overall policy in that regard."

The speedy rate of urbanisation suggests that about 12 crore people of the country will live in the urban areas

within 2030-35, Prof Islam, also the vice president of Bapa, said adding, the country will have to suffer unless the government takes immediate steps.

Presiding over the seminar, Professor Muzaffer Ahmed said Rajuk, DCC and related ministries are dominated by some influential people and that seriously affects good governance.

He regretted that the building code is hardly carried out in the country where there is no guideline on the location of the schools or commercial complexes.

Bapa President Prof Ahmed underscored the need for immediate steps to save the district towns, which are yet to be spoiled, under a national urbanisation policy.

Citing the recent death of a Dhaka University student in a bus accident at the Shahbagh intersection, Ahmed said, "These happen due to absence of the government's integrated decision, and changes in traffic management system in line with the changes of governments."

Engineer Quadiruzzaman, a Bapa member, opined for formation of smaller towns terming them easily manageable.

He suggested the development of district and upazila level towns with educational, health, administrative and other facilities. "This is crucial to resist the pressure of people on Dhaka

and other big cities."

Architect Iqbal Habib said the buildings in the city occupy only 36 percent of its total land, but those were not built under proper plans. "Double the present number of people can easily live in the city provided that buildings are constructed under proper plans."

The structural plan made in the early 1990's suggested relocation of Cantonment, BDR Head Quarter and the Central Jail elsewhere, but no initiative has been taken up so far, he noted.

He said that the government organisations, involved in providing utility services, have no accountability. Surprisingly enough, rainy seasons are their best time for road construction and fencing sewerage, water and other pipes.

"All they care about is making more money out of the projects, they rarely care about the convenience of the people," he said, noting that 54 acres of government land have been encroached at Gulshan, Banani and Uttara areas of the city during the last four years.

He also demanded of the government to save the 302 acres of open space of Public Works Department and 156 acres of the DCC. He recommended that the government set a specific deadline for dredging the 41 canals of greater Dhaka.

City BNP leader, construction worker shot

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unknown criminals shot and injured a BNP leader and a construction worker in two separate incidents in the city's Mirpur area early yesterday.

Helal Uddin, 38, organising secretary of ruling BNP's ward No. 12 unit, was walking in front of his house at Shah Alibagh when four youths were going through the way at 8:00am.

Helal, also a contractor and owner of a market in the area, called the 'arrogant looking' youths and asked their whereabouts and reason for roaming around the area in the morning.

The youths, while talking with Helal, shot two rounds in his back and fled the scene. Helal was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) and later shifted to Chest Disease Hospital.

Saiful Islam, 40, a construction worker, along with several other co-workers, was working at an under-construction building site at Mirpur section No 1 when four youths, aged between 18 and 20, went inside the Janata Housing premises at 7:45am.

Being refused to get information on the whereabouts of the owner of the building Hazi Abdul Majid, they shot a bullet in the left thigh of Saiful and shot several rounds in the air to create panic, Saiful said.

Ordering the construction workers to stop work, the youths asked them to inform their employer to contact the youths and fled the scene, he added.

Saiful was rushed to the DMCH and later doctors referred him to Orthopaedics hospital after providing preliminary treatment.

Khaleda greets French counterpart

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has congratulated Dominique de Villepin on his appointment as the Prime Minister of the Republic of France.

"I look forward to closely working with you in matters of common interest and hope that the traditionally close bilateral relations which so happily exists between our two friendly countries will be further strengthened and deepened in the years ahead," said the PM in a message to her French counterpart.

She wished him success and continued peace, progress and prosperity of the people of France.