



PHOTO: STAR

Residents of the Centre for Rehabilitation of the Paralysed perform at a function celebrating the ongoing solo sculpture exhibition by Arham-ul-Haq Chowdhury at the Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts in the city yesterday.

## Empower city corpsns for better urban management

### Speakers tell seminar

#### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday called for empowerment of the city corporations for better urban management and environmental development.

They said lack of authority by the mayors and the ward commissioners and weak coordinating system among various departments are the key obstacles to developing urban environment.

The seminar on 'Role of City Corporations in Urban Environmental Management: Need for Collective Actions' was organised by Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) in association with Bangladesh Centre for Advance Studies (BCAS) at the WVA auditorium in the city as part of its 5-day programme marking the World Environment Day on June 5.

"The mayors and ward commissioners have very little power to deal with the urban issues," said Prof Nazrul Islam, chairman of Centre for Urban Studies of Dhaka University, regretting that the public leaders also do not have any urge for power.

Referring to the good governance

committee of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), he said the leadership of the committee is entrusted to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

But this leadership should be given to the mayor as the PMO has a lot of other works to do, he added.

Prof Nazrul, also vice-president of Bapa, said the utility service providers such as Wasa (Water and Sewerage Authority), Desa (Dhaka Electricity Supply Authority) and other departments should work under the DCC.

He recommended that the mayor should have a cabinet comprising representatives of various departments, while the ward commissioners should have a committee comprising local citizens and experts to supervise the development projects and utility services.

"If empowerment of the existing city corporations is not possible, the government can think of metropolitan government where the central government's office could be relocated," he opined.

Prof Nazrul suggested separate environment department for the city corporations.

BCAS Executive Director A Atiq Rahman laid emphasis on solving the urban problems locally.

"The committees of ward commissioners should solve all local problems under the mayor's cabinet policy," he added.

Lack of coordination among the different departments contributes to the repetition of road cutting and other problems that cause huge wastage of government money, he said while presiding over the seminar.

Atiq Rahman observed that lack of parking spaces in high rise buildings in the city is one of the major reasons for traffic congestion.

BCAS Researcher Golam Rabbani, in his keynote presentation, identified growing population, air and water quality, solid waste management, sewerage system, traffic congestion, noise and air pollution, and lack of open space as the major challenges for city administration.

Bapa General Secretary Mohidul Hoque Khan and Member Mihir Biswas also spoke at the seminar.

## Declare nat'l minimum wage

### Sramik Federation urges govt

UNB, Dhaka

Jatiya Sramik Federation Bangladesh has urged the government to immediately declare national minimum wage and rein in inflation in order to keep the prices of commodities within the purchasing capacity of workers.

The call came from an extended meeting of the Federation yesterday, with its President Abul Bashar in the chair, said a press release.

The Federation also called on the

government to provide 10 percent allocation for the industrial sector in the coming budget to protect the interest of the workers.

The meeting also criticised the government for denationalisation of the state-run enterprises as per the "dictates of the World Bank and IMF."

The Federation appealed to the government not to terminate lakhs of workers engaged in bidi and tobacco industry without creating alternative employment opportunities for them.

The labour leaders expressed

dissatisfaction over the "indifferent attitude of the government towards the Savar garments factory building collapse in which hundreds of workers were killed".

They demanded stern action against the garment owners responsible for the deaths.

Federation General Secretary Shafiuddin Ahmed, Senior Vice-President Hafizur Rahman Bhuiyan, Organising Secretary Quamrul Ahsan, ATM Nizam Uddin and Mozammel Haq addressed the meeting.

