



Fight Hunger, Walk the World: A walkathon organised by World Food Programme was held in the city yesterday. The walk began at IDB Bhaban and ended at Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

## Country's urban population will reach 50m by 2015

Study reveals at seminar

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The urban population of the country will reach 50 million by 2015 owing to migration of rural poor to urban areas.

Presently, the country has an urban population of 35 million of whom about six million are living at over 9000 slums in six divisional cities Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi, Sylhet and Barisal, said a study titled 'Slums in Urban

Bangladesh: Mapping and Census 2005'.

The Centre for Urban Studies (CUS) in collaboration with National Institute of Population Research and Training (NIPORT) and University of North Carolina, USA conducted the study financed by USAID.

The study was disseminated at a seminar at LGED auditorium in the city yesterday.

In his keynote presentation on the

study findings, CUS Chairman Prof Nazrul Islam said all the major urban centres of the country have slums, but these are proliferating fast in Dhaka and Chittagong.

He said six districts Barisal, Comilla, Faridpur, Noakhali, Mymensingh and Chittagong are the origins of 54 percent of slum dwellers with Barisal being the biggest source.

People from Rangpur also migrate to Dhaka, Sylhet and Chittagong, he added.

"In Dhaka, both the number of slum settlements and the size of slum population have doubled during the last nine years from 3007 clusters in 1996 to 4966 in 2005 and from 1.5 million slum dwellers to 3.4 millions," Prof Nazrul noted.

He said slums have extremely high density of population with an average density of 831 persons per acre in six cities, the highest 1032 in Chittagong followed by 891 in Dhaka and 272 in Rajshahi.

Such densities are normally eight to 10 times higher than average city population, the study mentioned.

The CUS chairman said because of high density of population, slums occupy comparatively smaller land in each city. Altogether slums occupy 6545 acres of land in six cities constituting four percent of the total land of the cities, but accommodate 35 percent of their population, he added.

Prof Nazrul said slums have very low quality housing with very poor drainage system.

"Most slums, especially in Dhaka and Chittagong, are flooded during monsoons," he added.

"Slum dwellers have access to water either from tap or tubewell, but most of

them have to share the sources with many families," revealed the study.

Status of access to sanitary latrines is very bad while on an average only 25 percent slum dwellers have access to sewerage or septic tanks, it added.

Over 90 percent of the slum dwellers have income below the poverty line, while 40 percent of them have income below the hardcore poverty line, the study said.

"It is however encouraging that nearly 15 percent of the slum households in Dhaka have incomes above the poverty line when some have fairly good income," it added.

Despite their living in poor quality environment, most slum dwellers do not like their settlements to be called slums (Bastees), they rather prefer to call it as 'Mahalla' or 'Abashik Elaka' (residential area), the study noted.

Niport Director General Delwar Hossain said the government should formulate a more comprehensive health policy to improve the health condition of slum dwellers.

Niport Director (Research) Dr Ahmed Al-Sabir, CUS Secretary Dr Nurul Islam Nazem, Prof Golam Mortaza of Khulna University, Qazi Saleh Ahmed, former vice-chancellor of Jahangirnagar University, Mohammad Hasnat of Coalition for Urban Poor, and Abdul Mannan of Bastibashi Unnyan Committee also spoke at the seminar.

## AL won't participate in polls without electoral reforms

Hasina tells Russian ambassador

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday told the outgoing Russian ambassador that her party would not participate in the next general election if the proposed electoral reforms are not implemented and a democratic environment for a free and fair election is returned in the country.

During an hour-long meeting with Oleg S Malginov at her Sudha Sadan residence at Dhanmondi in the capital, Hasina, also Awami League (AL) president, sought all-out assistance from Russia to make the next general election transparent.

Briefing the journalists AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil said Malginov assured the opposition leader that they would continue to help the country for its development.

The Russian ambassador hoped that a favourable environment would be established in the country to ensure a free and fair election, Jalil quoted him as saying.

Talking to journalists Malginov said they discussed different bilateral issues.

"It was a courtesy call. We have discussed prospects of development of the country and its people," he added.

Asked about the dialogue over the electoral reforms, Malginov who served as ambassador of the Russian Federation to Bangladesh for the last three years, said the main two parties should involve in dialogue for a meaningful result.

"The Russian ambassador enquired about the next general



Outgoing Russian Ambassador Oleg S Malginov calls on Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina at her Sudha Sadan residence at Dhanmondi in the city yesterday.

## ATTACK ON PARTY MEN AL demands judicial inquiry

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) yesterday demanded a judicial inquiry into the police and ruling party cadres' attack on its leaders and activists in Netrakona on May 10.

The AL men were marching to lay siege to the Deputy Commissioner's (DC) office demanding smooth water and power supply and protesting against price hike of essentials when they were attacked.

"We demand an immediate judicial inquiry into the attack and stern punishment of the people responsible," Deputy Leader of the Opposition Advocate Abdul Hamid told reporters at a press conference at the Dhanmondi AL office yesterday.

He said the police and BNP cadres attacked and ransacked houses and shops owned by AL men. They even filed false fabricated cases against hundreds of opposition men only to harass them.

"Police did not arrest anyone of the ruling party men or file cases against them even though they are the ones who ransacked houses and vehicles," he said. The speedy trial act is being misused against the opposition men, he added.

Hamid said politically appointed police, district administration loyal to the alliance government and the BNP cadres conducted the attack on their procession unprovoked on that day.

He alleged both the police and district administration played a partisan role during the mayhem on May 10.

"That day is not far away when the people of Netrakona will revolt and give a fitting reply to the role of the police and district administration," Hamid said adding that they would file cases against BNP men and the police in court.

The CUS chairman said because of high density of population, slums occupy comparatively smaller land in each city. Altogether slums occupy 6545 acres of land in six cities constituting four percent of the total land of the cities, but accommodate 35 percent of their population, he added.

Prof Nazrul said slums have very low quality housing with very poor drainage system.

"Most slums, especially in Dhaka and Chittagong, are flooded during monsoons," he added.

"Slum dwellers have access to water either from tap or tubewell, but most of

them have to share the sources with many families," revealed the study.

Status of access to sanitary latrines is very bad while on an average only 25 percent slum dwellers have access to sewerage or septic tanks, it added.

Over 90 percent of the slum dwellers have income below the poverty line, while 40 percent of them have income below the hardcore poverty line, the study said.

"It is however encouraging that nearly 15 percent of the slum households in Dhaka have incomes above the poverty line when some have fairly good income," it added.

Despite their living in poor quality environment, most slum dwellers do not like their settlements to be called slums (Bastees), they rather prefer to call it as 'Mahalla' or 'Abashik Elaka' (residential area), the study noted.

Niport Director General Delwar Hossain said the government should formulate a more comprehensive health policy to improve the health condition of slum dwellers.

Niport Director (Research) Dr Ahmed Al-Sabir, CUS Secretary Dr Nurul Islam Nazem, Prof Golam Mortaza of Khulna University, Qazi Saleh Ahmed, former vice-chancellor of Jahangirnagar University, Mohammad Hasnat of Coalition for Urban Poor, and Abdul Mannan of Bastibashi Unnyan Committee also spoke at the seminar.

The walk also took place in Jessore, Rangpur, Rangamati and Chittagong with huge response.

John M Powel said, 'Walk the World' is an event for all who are concerned about hunger and WFP was able to reach 96 million people in more than 80 countries last year.

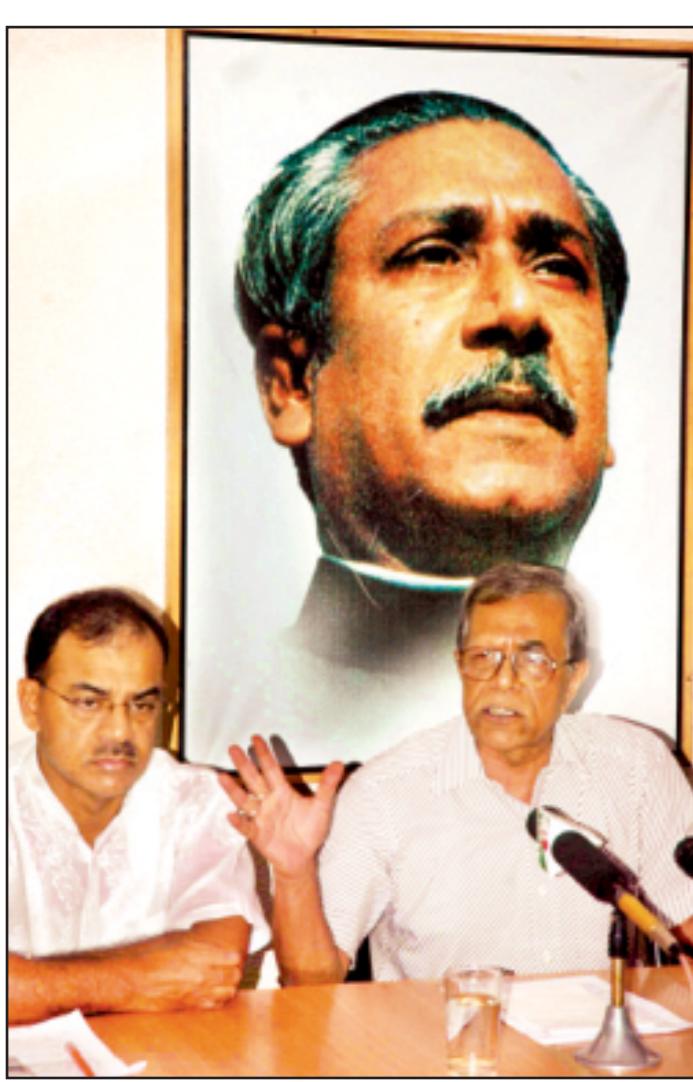
He also lauded Bangladesh's achievement saying in many ways it is ahead in food aid development activities.

"We want to make it clear that we will continue to emphasise and highlight the issue of child hunger around the world including Bangladesh," Douglas Broderick said.

In Bangladesh, about 50 per cent children under the age of five are underweight and stunted which results in a reduced mental capacity and physical development, he said adding that the walk boosted people's morale and continue the efforts to improve the quality of life of the poor school going children.

WFP provided school meals for 21.7 million children in 74 countries last year. It plans to reach 50 million school children by 2008.

More than 700,000 million people in over one hundred countries across 24 time zones have walked five kilometres to highlight the battle against child hunger. This number also includes children throughout Africa, Latin America and Asia.



Deputy Leader of the Opposition Advocate Abdul Hamid speaks at a press conference at the Dhanmondi AL office in the city yesterday.