

Dreadful disaster if hill cutting continues in Ctg

Says Save the Environment Movement report on mudslide

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a press conference yesterday warned of dreadful disaster in not-too-distant future if the ruthless hill cutting and unplanned urbanisation cannot be stopped immediately in Chittagong city and adjoining areas.

The press conference was organised by Save the Environment Movement at the National Press Club in the city to present its report on the recent mudslide in Chittagong that claimed 129 lives and damaged properties worth crores of taka.

A team of Save the Environment Movement visited the affected areas and prepared the report.

In his report, Prof ASM Maksud Kamal of geology department at Dhaka University said the destruction of natural slope of hills by cutting to an angle over 75 degrees is one of the main causes of the landslide.

He recommended that the vulnerable people who are living at the foothills should be immediately removed and the government should go for afforestation particularly with those trees, which will conserve the soil.

Abu Naser Khan, convener of Save the Environment Movement, said though 12 landslides at Lebubagan, Kachiapara, Segantorpara, Motijhorna,

Debarpar, Chittagong University and Foy's lake area caused the fatalities, over one hundred landslides occurred at various parts of the district on that day.

He observed that denuding of hills and initiating of new plantation by destroying the natural forest were also responsible for the landslide.

Prof AQM Mahbub of geography and environment department stressed on proper drainage system so that the rainwater can flow down easily from the hills.

"The canals, which were grabbed by money-mongers, should be recovered without delay," he said, adding, people

who are staying in this region must adopt the technology of indigenous people.

Giving support to this observation, Major General (Retd) Amin also said the indigenous people in Chittagong Hill Tracts use very light materials to build their houses.

"The hills which are made of sedimentary rocks, cannot endure any strong foundation," he observed.

Prof Moniruzzaman of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology termed the disaster 'revenge of nature' and insisted on bringing unplanned urbanisation to an end right now.



Prof AQM Mahbub speaks at a press conference at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his left is Abdur Rahman Khan and on his right is Abu Naser Khan.

'Promote use of mother tongue in literacy programme'

DU CORRESPONDENT

Experts at an international workshop yesterday said the use of mother tongue and national language in literacy programme must be promoted in order to reach the Millennium Development Goal of 'Education for All' (EFA) by 2015.

While learning the national language is important, numerous researches conducted all over the world have reached the same conclusion that quality education or literacy can be acquired in only mother tongue, they said.

Organised by Unesco Dhaka in collaboration with Unesco Bangkok and Unesco Institute of Lifelong Learning, the five-day workshop on 'Improving Quality of Mother Tongue/Bilingual Literacy Programmes and Activities' began in the city yesterday.

Japanese ambassador Masayuki Inoue formally inaugurated the workshop at Hotel Sarina, said a press release.

Mentioning that there is only eight years' time to achieve the target of basic education for all, he said it would take persistent and concerted efforts of all quarters involved to attain that goal.

Recalling the Bangalis' glorious sacrifice to establish their right to speak in their mother tongue, Inoue hoped that Bangladesh would accomplish the present challenge of achieving universal literacy.

Malama Meleisea, Unesco representative in Bangladesh, underscored the significance of conducting literacy programmes in mother tongue to facilitate universal access to education.

"Unesco believes in and promotes cultural diversity and when one promotes mother tongue, one is promoting cultural diversity."

Participants from Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Afghanistan, Latin America and Africa are taking part in the workshop.

Some of the main issues that featured in the workshop included 'capacity-building in designing mother tongue/bilingual literacy programmes', 'literacy teaching learning methodologies for bilingual education', 'developing strategies for establishment of interregional networks and policy dialogues'.

'Withdraw VAT, tax on private varsities'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh (APUB) yesterday called upon the government to withdraw value added tax (VAT) on tuition fees and tax on private universities as proposed in the national budget for 2007-08 considering the academic career of students.

At a press conference, the association leaders said VAT is a business-related issue and it has no conceptual linkage with non-government universities which are engaged in imparting education and developing human resources for the society.

APUB organised the press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity auditorium where vice-chancellors, founders and chairmen of different private universities termed the newly imposed VAT and tax on private universities as 'illogical'.

"The private universities have substantially reduced the burden on public exchequer. They are now enrolling around 85,000 students with no grant from the government. The proposed VAT is not only conceptually incoherent but also discriminatory because VAT has been proposed only for private universities and not for public universities," said AKashem, chairman of APUB.

He said from a statistics of the University Grants Commission, it is found that, of the total students enrolled in higher education in the country, 10 percent are admitted to public universities while six percent to non-government universities.

Prof M Shamsheer Ali, vice-chancellor of Southeast University, said VAT and tax are not imposed on universities anywhere in the world and totally unheard in Saarc countries.

"In harmony with the practice of supporting higher education institutions in the region and around the globe, the proposal for VAT and tax should be withdrawn," he added.

Abul Quasem Haider, founder chairman of Eastern University, said it will have negative impact on education as around one lakh students are now studying at private universities and their numbers are increasing day by day.

Vice-chancellor of Independent University of Bangladesh Bazlul Momen Chowdhury and Vice-chancellor International University of Business Agriculture and Technology Prof M Alimullah Miyan were also present at the press conference.

Workshop owner robbed of Tk 1 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Muggers took away Tk 1 lakh from a workshop owner after stabbing him at Badda in the city yesterday.

The injured was identified as Mohammad Babul, 25, owner of Maqbul Electric and Engineering Workshop at East Badda.

He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where he is receiving treatment.

Babul told reporters at DMCH that three muggers attacked him while he was waiting for a ride outside his workshop to go to Old Dhaka in order to buy goods for his workshop.

He said the muggers stabbed him several times and ran off with the money.

Badda Police Station told that they had heard about this incident, but they could not confirm whether any mugging took place, as no one had lodged any complaint yet.

DCC ledger keeper held while taking bribe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested a Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) ledger keeper (Tax) on charges of receiving bribe from his office at Mirpur yesterday.

The arrestee was identified as AKM Humayun Kabir, 41, a ledger keeper at Zone-8, Taxation, DCC.

Rab sources said an intelligence team of Rab-4 was waiting inside Humayun's office in disguise at 12:40pm after being tipped-off and arrested him red handed while he was receiving a bribe of Tk 6000 from one Nurul Islam.

Nurul Islam went to Humayun's office to pay a holding tax of Tk 6000 but Humayun demanded Tk 6000 more in addition to his holding tax, sources added.

Nurul Islam notified Rab about the incident who instructed him to do exactly what Humayun wants him to do.

Rab members told The Daily Star quoting Humayun that the bribes are usually distributed among a number of employees.



Participants observe one minute's silence in memory of Dr Nilima Ibrahim at a discussion at Bangladesh Mahila Samity auditorium in the city yesterday. From left are Prof Hamida Akter Begum, poet Kazi Rosy, Prof Rafiqul Islam, Selina Khaleque, Rashid Haider and SR Shaheed. Bangladesh Mahila Samity held the discussion on the occasion of the fifth death anniversary of the noted educationist.

Multi-sectoral approach needed to address reproductive health issues

Experts tell consultation meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Although the country has achieved impressive successes in some fields of healthcare, a few unfavourable Reproductive Health (RH) indicators are still persisting, experts at a consultation meeting said yesterday.

The risk of a child dying before the age of 12 months or during delivery is still high in the country, said Harry Jooseery, executive director of Partners in Population and Development (PPD), at the inaugural session.

He also stressed the need to improve the quality of healthcare services and strengthen the gender-based programme.

The PPD organised the six-day meeting titled 'Consultation on capacity-building and strategic policy development' at a city hotel.

Speaking as the chief guest, Health Adviser Maj Gen (retd) ASM Matiuir Rahman said the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has been 3.2 per thousand for a long time, whereas the rate should be reduced to less than 2 per thousand.

"At present, the contraceptive prevalence rate is 57 percent, but the figure should go up to 72 percent," he said, stressing the need to strengthen the public-private partnership and adopt multi-sectoral approach to this end.

Bangladesh is a unique example of public-private partnership and collaboration, especially in the health, nutrition and population sector programmes, he added.

Health and Family Welfare Secretary AKM Zafarullah Khan said Bangladesh has been a partner of PPD for the last 12 years and is working to build capacity to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

Harry Jooseery said it is unfortunate that investment by developed countries in international family planning has fallen by 13 percent of the target set by International

Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).

PPD wants to alert the whole world, particularly the developing countries, on the need to adopt concerted efforts to address the reproductive issues, he added.

Senior Technical Advisor (Population and Development) of UNFPA Rabbi Royan also spoke at the inaugural session attended by

delegates from foreign embassies and high commissions.

PPD, an intergovernmental alliance of 21 developing countries, was established with a mission to expand and improve South-South collaboration in the fields of family planning and reproductive health.

Tk 67.77cr CU budget approved

CU CORRESPONDENT

Chittagong University (CU) Finance Committee (FC) and Syndicate yesterday approved the proposed budget of Tk 67.77 crore for the financial year 2007-08 with a deficit of Tk 2.66 crore.

Of the total amount, Tk 59.61 crore will be provided by University Grants Commission

while the rest Tk 5.50 crore will come from internal resources of the university, sources said.

The budget will be placed before the Senate meeting scheduled for June 30.

Yesterday's joint meeting also approved a revised budget of Tk 64.73 crore for the financial year 2006-07.



Prof M Shamsheer Ali, vice-chancellor of Southeast University, addresses a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity auditorium in the city yesterday. On his right are GA Siddiqui, Dr Abul Kalam and Prof M Alimullah Miyan.

1,298 more held

UNB, Dhaka

Police arrested 1,298 people on various charges in countrywide drives in last 24 hours ending at 6:00am yesterday.

During the drive, they also recovered 11 firearms, 17 bombs and 39 bullets. Six cases were filed under Arms Act.

Besides, they seized 49 motor-bikes for not having registration and valid documents.