

Frame nat'l policy for balanced urbanisation

Experts urge govt at roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Environmentalists and urban planners at a roundtable yesterday stressed the need for formulating a national urbanisation policy that would ensure balanced growth of urban areas in the country.

The roundtable titled 'Developing Small and Medium Size Towns for Sustainable Urbanisation in Bangladesh' was organised jointly by Urban and Regional Planning Department at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) and Paribesh Bachao Andolon (Save the Environment Movement) at ITN Seminar Room on Buet campus.

In his keynote paper, Dean of Architecture and Planning Dr Sarwar Jahan said almost 55 per cent of total urban population is concentrated in four metropolitan cities Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Sylhet.

"People think that stopping rural people's onrush to urban areas is the only solution to urban problems. But the rate of urbanisation is posi-

tively related to pace of development," he added.

Citing studies, he said productivity of urban people is much more higher than the rural people.

If the pace of development is high, so would be the rate of urbanisation, he added.

Dr Sarwar said in 1974, the rate of urbanisation in Bangladesh was 8.21 per cent and now this rate is approximately 26 per cent.

Since most of the services are Dhaka-centred, people from remote areas rush towards Dhaka. But this onrush cannot be stopped forcefully, he said.

If the government and other agencies can reach their services to remote areas, people's demand would be satisfied and consequently migration from remote areas to metropolitan areas would be reduced, he added.

Dr Sarwar suggested the government to encourage urbanisation by setting up centers at upazila, district, region and metropolitan areas and ensure availability of government and non-government

services there.

Besides, the government's development budget should also be distributed evenly so that people living outside the metropolitan areas get its benefits, he added.

To gain positive effects of urbanisation, Bangladesh should frame a national policy without delay, he opined.

Speaking at the programme, Buet Vice-chancellor Prof AMM Shafiqullah said it has become a norm to address the problems of city dwellers when they arise.

But policy makers should contemplate what sort of problems city-dwellers might face in future and address those problems before any city develops at its fullest, he added.

Convener of Paribesh Bachao Andolon Abu Naser Khan moderated the programme which was also addressed by Chairman of Regional and Urban Planning Department Prof Rokhsana Hafiz and Maruf Rahman of Work for Better Bangladesh Trust.

Women's jail inaugurated

A CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Dhaka Central Jail-3 was inaugurated at Kashimpur in Gazipur yesterday with a capacity to accommodate 212 female detainees.

IG Prison Brigadier Kazi Zakir Hossain inaugurated the four-storied women's jail, first of its kind in the country, built on around eight acres of land that cost around Tk 8 crore.

Different cells have been built in the jail for general detainees and some 20 detainees who got division as per jail code. A medical centre, a school-cum-library and a daycare centre for the children of the detainees have also been built.

Deputy Commissioner of Gazipur District Syed Mizanur Rahman, DIG Prison Major Shamsul Haider Siddiqui, and Superintendent of Police Mohammad Alamgir Alam were also present during the inaugural ceremony.

Addressing the programme, the IG prison said the detainees would get trainings on weaving, sewing and others so that they can earn their bread once they are released from the jail.

Later IG prison planted two neem saplings on the jail premises.

DIG prison told The Daily Star that the jail has been set up for female detainees, as the number has increased rapidly. Currently there are 3090 female detainees at different jails across the country while they could only accommodate 1159, he added.

He said the jail has been set up for 212 female detainees but around 700 detainees could be kept there.

Child trafficker held with 11 children

UNB, Keraniganj

Locals yesterday caught a child trafficker while he was taking away 11 children from a shelter center at Aganagar in South Keraniganj on the outskirts of the city.

The trafficker was identified as Jahangir, 55.

Witnesses said Jahangir went to the center located beside the Second Buriganga Bridge at around 10:00am and tried to take away 11 children after giving them "drugged food."

As Beena, 9, one of the victims, cried for help, security guard of the center Amirul came to the spot, caught Jahangir with the help of locals and rescued the children.

On information, police rushed to the spot and arrested the child traffickers. A case was filed with South Keraniganj Police Station.

The rescued children were identified as Rabiul, 5, Kalu, 7, Alim, 8, Rony, 12, Jhony, 9, Asma, 9, Mehedi, 8, Rubel, 7, Beena, 9, Bellal, 5, and Titon, 10.

2 runaway delinquents surrender

UNB, Habiganj

Two delinquents who escaped from Tongi Child Development Centre on Sunday surrendered before a magistrate court here on Wednesday.

Shahin Miah, 14, and Moshahid, 16, hailed from Habiganj Sadar, were arrested on May 15, 2006 and May 13, 2007 respectively in connection with a murder case and were later sent to the centre.

They said they fled from the centre due to frequent torture by other delinquents.

First class magistrate M Jahurul Islam ordered to keep them in safe custody after the hearing.

Two dacoits arrested

UNB, Sirajganj

Police in separate raids arrested two leaders of an inter-district dacoit gang from Jatrabari in the city and Ullapara in Sirajganj on Wednesday.

The arrestees were identified as Joynal, 28, of Ishpani village in Narayanganj Bandar thana and Kalu, 25, of Borokura village at Kamarkhanda in Sirajganj.

Police said, on information, they arrested Joynal from Jatrabari area and Kalu from Guchchhagram of Ullapara upazila of the district.

Another report from Jhalakati adds: Rab arrested a man along with a gun and two rounds of bullets from Binoykati area of Jhalakati Sadar on Wednesday.

Rab sources said on information, they arrested Al Shahriar Milon alias Milon Mallik.

He was wanted in a number of cases, they added.



Members of Nari Moitree prepare oral saline at its Maghbar health centre in the city yesterday. Urban Primary Healthcare Programme of Dhaka City Corporation initiated the project to make 1 lakh packets of oral saline.

'Good governance, respect for HR can help fight terrorism'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Killing of innocent civilians can never be accepted values and norms in the fight for independence or political or ideological rights, said Lt Gen Jahangir Alam Chowdhury yesterday.

"Such activists defy all the commonly accepted values and norms of social behaviour. It is a crime against humanity and poses a threat to the civilised way of life," he said at the closing ceremony of weeklong seminar on developing rules of engagement and combating terrorism.

Bangladesh Army and Defence Institute of International Legal Studies (DILLS) of US Department of Defence organised the seminar at Station Officers' Mess of Dhaka Cantonment.

Speaking as the chief guest, Lt Gen Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said the growing rise of terrorism across the globe has become a serious concern for all.

"Developed and under-developed, rich and poor, Muslims or Christians or people of any other religious, political or ideological belief are affected by the menace of

terrorism."

Political pressure and provocations from the extremists can pose added challenge in planning and conducting operations against terrorism, he said.

He said members of the law enforcing agencies must remember that their operation will have better result in combating terrorism provided they take the population along and respect human rights and the rule of law.

"We must remember that good governance and respect for human rights are very important tools to effectively combating terrorism," Lt Gen Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said.

Equipped with sophisticated weapons, wealth and training facilities, the terrorists operate in a more organised way possibly with a network of international connections, he said.

They also use modern technology for creating public opinion, transferring money and coordinating their evil design for such act of violence, he said.

"We should all remain guarded against any attempt of the terrorists trying to exploit our religious and

ideological belief through their heinous acts of killing the innocents," he noted.

Referring to the serial bomb attacks in the country, he said, "We are proud to say that the whole population stood against such attempt by the misguided miscreants using the banner of religion and we have been able to prosecute them at the shortest possible time."

Talking to reporters, Lt Gen Jahangir Alam Chowdhury termed the bomb blasts in the country as "small incidents".

He also said the law enforcers, especially the Rab (Rapid Action Battalion), played a very important role in tracking down the terrorists. The people, with the help of media, also remain vigilant.

Col John Atkinson of DILLS said the challenge of terrorism is global in nature, which is increasing day by day.

Lauding Bangladesh's efforts to prosecute the terrorists, he said it needs more and more collaboration among the countries working against the menace. "Collaboration between the USA and Bangladesh will enrich each other in fighting against terrorism."

SC extends Hasina's bail

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order to Hasina asking her to submit wealth statement

The SC bench also extended its stay order on Hasina's bail in an extortion case filed by businessmen Azam J Chowdhury till August 26.

Earlier this month, the SC stayed till August 14 the HC's interim order granting bail to Hasina in the case filed by businessmen Azam J Chowdhury. The SC on August 14 extended its stay order on Hasina's bail in this case till August 16.

Hearing on government's appeal against HC's order granting bail to Abdul Awal Minto will also be held on August 26 as the court adjourned hearing of the case for the same period.

Earlier, the SC on August 14 rejected government's prayer for staying the HC's August 7 interim orders granting bail to AL chief Sheikh Hasina in an extortion case filed by businessman Noor Ali, and staying operation of the ACC order to Hasina for submitting her wealth statement.

On the same day the SC also rejected a government prayer for staying the HC's bail order for detained businessman Abdul Awal Minto.

A division bench of the HC on August 7 granted bail to Hasina in the case filed by Noor Ali and ordered the government not to have her tried under the Emergency Power Rules, 2007.

The same day, the HC also stayed operation of the ACC order to Hasina for submitting her wealth statement.

Besides, it declared the confinement of former FBCCI president Minto illegal and granted him bail.

Earlier on August 9, the government filed appeals with the Chamber Judge's court of the SC, seeking stay on the HC orders in response to two writ petitions filed by Hasina and one by Minto.

Chamber Judge Hasan Ameen heard government's appeals on August 12 and refrained from giving any orders. He referred the matters for hearing to a regular bench of the SC on August 14. On the same day a SC full bench fixed yesterday for hearing on the cases.

The court sat at 9:25am yesterday with the hearing on the government's appeal against the HC order regarding the case filed by Azam J Chowdhury. A large number of lawyers were also present at the court. The court continued the hearing till 1:10pm with a half-an-hour break.

During the hearing, Attorney General (AG) Fida M Kamal said the case filed by Azam J Chowdhury was brought under emergency power rules (EPR) correctly as the country is under a state of emergency now.

The state of emergency was imposed considering the necessity of the nation and we are passing a critical time now, he added.

GP introduces mobile medical camps in Dhaka, Sirajganj

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Grameenphone Ltd introduced mobile camps in Dhaka and Sirajganj yesterday to provide immediate medical assistance to the flood victims, says a press release.

As soon as the floating medical camp from Dhaka reached Rugganj yesterday noon, people from nearby villages thronged the area in groups. Canoes with three to six people on board started to reach the area where people queued up to consult the camp doctors about various physical problems they are suffering from.

"As the flood water is receding, we have introduced floating medical camps to attend the immediate problems of the flood-hit people. We are carrying out the job with the assistance of our partners and joint forces," said Syed Yamin Bakht, general manager, Grameenphone Ltd.

The medication being given to the flood-affected people include water purification tablets, oral saline and capsules and tablets to prevent water-borne diseases. Medication was also given to those who have already been affected by skin diseases.

The mobile medical camp left for Rugganj from Beraid in Badda yesterday morning and will provide treatment around the area till August 22. Another mobile medical camp was also floating in Sirajganj.

Five members of family sustained bullet injuries when robbers opened fire on them at Gilabad village in Mathbaria upazila early yesterday.

Police said a gang of armed bandits, numbering 20, stormed into the house of Akram Hossain alias Doha Shikder and looted valuables from the house at about 2:00am.

As they were fleeing with the booty, Doha Shikder caught one of the dacoits.

Hearing his cry for help, other bandits opened fire leaving five family members critically injured and fled away along with their man.

Local people rushed the injured family members to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College and Hospital.

Police said that the constitution is the highest law of the country and there can be no law above it.

Citing two examples from Britain's Privy Council (1942 and 1980), the defence lawyer said the constitution of a state is above all whether the country is in a state of war or at peace.

He argued that a case put under EPR must have public interest. A case involving two individuals' interest would not be a case of public importance, he added.

Redwan submits wealth statement

BSS, Dhaka

Former state minister and LDP leader Redwan Ahmed yesterday submitted his wealth statement and of his wife Momtaz Ahmed to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

Redwan, now detained in Dhaka Central Jail, submitted the wealth statement through jail authorities.

According to the statement, Redwan and his wife have moveable properties of around Tk 2.41 crore and immovable properties of Tk 1.15 crore.

In the statement, Redwan said he has a building on 1512.46 decimal land at Chandina in Comilla. His wife Momtaz also has a building on 631.75 decimal land there.

Redwan has 12 accounts with different banks while his wife has 17. However, they did not give any information about the balance of the accounts.

Redwan and his wife use two jeeps worth about Tk 57.88 lakh, have ornaments worth Tk 3.10 lakh, one shot gun and one pistol.

Graft charges pressed against Minu's friend

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday pressed charges against a Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) official and his wife for possessing illegal wealth worth Tk 24 lakh.

Monirul Haque, Rajshahi regional ACC deputy director and Khondoker Khalilur Rahman, ACC assistant director and also investigation officer (IO) jointly submitted the charge sheet to a metropolitan magistrate's court against RCC budget-cum-accounts officer Luffar Rahman and his wife Nazma Rahman.

Monirul Haque told The Daily Star that Luffar and his wife possessed wealth of about Tk 35 lakh. He legally earned Tk 11 lakh while his wife does not have any income source.

Joint forces arrested Luffar, who had close links with RCC Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu, from his Baliaipukur house on February 21.

They seized documents including nine deeds of landed properties and papers of seven bank accounts from his house.

Three bank accounts were found after his name at Rajshahi branches of Al Baraka, Uttara and Al Arafah Banks while three other accounts with Janata, IFIC, and Islami Bank were found after his wife's name.

Another account with Oriental Bank was found after their daughter's name.

The deeds of landed properties showed that Luffar owns seven pieces of land in Rajshahi city and two in Natore.

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Death anniversary

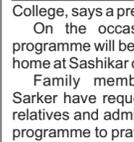


Today is the first death anniversary of Prof Bazlur Rahman Khan, an eminent historian, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at his residence.

His friends, relatives and admirers have been requested to pray for the salvation of the departed soul.

Priyalal Sarker



Today is the first death anniversary of Priyalal Sarker, a freedom fighter and former vice principal of Shariatpur Government College, says a press release.

On the occasion, a religious programme will be held at his village home at Sashikar on September 5.

Family members of Priyalal Sarker have requested his friends, relatives and admirers to attend the programme to pray for the salvation of the departed soul.

Obituary

Fatema Khatun, 80, mother of Abdul Matin, finance director of IPSSL Group, died of old age complications at Bangladesh Medical College at Uttara in the city on August 11, says a press release.

IPSSL Group Chairman M Haider Uzzaman expressed deep shock at the death of Fatema Khatun and conveyed sympathy to the bereaved family members.

Qulkhwani

UNB, Dhaka

Qulkhwani of Manima Ashraf, wife of Ashraf Hossain, former lawmaker and joint secretary of BNP, will be held at the NAM apartment (building 6) on Manik Mia Avenue after Asr prayers today.

His relatives, friends and admirers are requested to attend the ceremony.

Manima died of renal failure early Monday at the age of 63.



Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University Prof SMA Faiz speaks at the inaugural ceremony of a resource centre, set up for the visually impaired students with the assistance of Sightsavers International, at DU Central Library yesterday.

British HC issued 30000 visas last yr

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

The British High Commission in Bangladesh last year issued a total of 30000 visas against 45000 applications, said Jonathan Verney, first secretary and head of immigration, Bangladesh yesterday.

"We maintain a process for issuing visas that is the most transparent and fair in the world. Besides, we continue to improve our efficiency and strive for the convenience of the visa applicants," he said at a press conference at Chittagong Guest House.

As a result of the simple process, the number of visitors to the UK, specially businessmen and students, have remarkably been increased, he added.

"Of the 30,000 visas that were issued last year, 8000 were student visas and 5000 were settlement visas," said Verney.

He also explained the new system of collecting biometric information from applicants by scanning fingerprints electronically and taking a digital photograph.

"The new system will immensely help the genuine Bangladeshi applicants. It will protect them from identity fraud and help us to recognise genuine applicants so that we can facilitate their legitimate travel to the UK more easily," he added.

He, however, regretted that the number of visitors to the UK from the port city has not increased comparing to some other districts, namely Sylhet and Dhaka, and urged the Chittagong-people to grab the advantage of the customer-friendly services delivered by the High Commission.

Stuart Scrase, entry clearance manager, and Syeda Nazneen Ferdousi, press and public affairs officer of the High Commission, also spoke at the briefing and gave replies to different queries of the journalists.

Later, the High Commission organised a seminar on 'UK Visas' at the auditorium of Chittagong Club in the afternoon.

Verney in the seminar explained the procedures for UK visa applicants in details.

He depicted the pros and cons of the UK Immigration Rules and how they can obtain information from the website of the High Commission (www.ukinbangladesh.org). He advised them to submit a good visa application without using third party agents or presenting wrong or fraudulent documents.

Advisory committee for reviving economy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The advisory committee on law and order has stressed the need for reviving the economy already affected by floods for providing employment to flood victims.

"It is necessary to create employment after the flood as unemployment has a link to law and order," said Law Adviser Barrister Mainul Hosen at a press briefing after a meeting of the advisory committee on law and order at the home ministry yesterday.

He said unrest created by garment workers were also discussed in the meeting and they are actively thinking to contain the unrest by enhancing direct talks among the authorities, workers and owners.

The meeting decided that after the flood, demolition of slums on Wasa canals at Sarulia in Mirpur and two other places will start again. It discussed about the rehabilitation of around 15,000 people who would be rendered homeless due to demolition drive.

Harassment of innocent people through arrest was also discussed in the meeting.

Sources said after observing some more days the committee will decide on how to stop such arrest.

The meeting decided that like Dhaka, a committee dubbed as 'hotline' will be formed comprising representatives from police, garment owners and worker-leaders

and Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association to contain workers' unrest in Chittagong.

Commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police will lead the hotline in the metropolitan area while the deputy inspector general of police in Chittagong range will lead the hotline outside the CMP.

The adviser stressed the need for implementing the tripartite agreement among the garment workers, owners and the government to resolve the problem.

The meeting discussed an Awami League application seeking permission to hold a discussion meeting at Bangabandhu Avenue where the deadly grenade attack was carried out on August 21 in 2004.

It decided to allow placing of wreaths at the place of grenade attack.

The meeting also decided to give permission for holding election to managing committees of different schools and colleges.

It expressed satisfaction over the present law and order situation.

Communications Adviser MA Matin, Education Adviser Ayub Quadri, cabinet secretary, home secretary, health secretary, inspector general of police, and director generals of Rab, BDR and Ansar attended the meeting.



Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at many places over the six divisions in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.