



Such traffic congestion has become a regular phenomenon in the city. The picture was taken from Purana Paltan yesterday.

# Solve traffic jam thru' integrated way

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Inefficient traffic administration in the city causes severe traffic congestion which must be solved in an integrated way, said the speakers at a roundtable yesterday.

They identified lack of proper planning, absence of decentralisation, lack of integration between urban and transport plan, dearth of public transport service and increase of private cars as the main causes for traffic congestion in the capital.

The roundtable, organised by Save the Environment Movement at the National Press Club, was moderated by its Convener Abu

Naser Khan.

The speakers said to ease the traffic jam use of private cars has been discouraged in different countries by raising parking and zoning charge and imposing strict regulations in providing licenses.

"But in Bangladesh the number of private cars has been increasing day by day. Even in the Strategic Transport Plan (STP), flyover, tunnel and elevated expressway have been encouraged, which would promote private cars," said Prof Jobayer Bin Alam of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet).

"We are yet to be careful after

the failure of Mohakhali flyover to ease traffic congestion," he said, adding that the transport problem needs to be solved in an integrated way and considering the characteristics of urban structure.

"Around 80 percent of the total vehicles are concentrated in the capital. At the same time, inefficient traffic administration, faulty road design and planning and defective signalling system and traffic police without proper training creates unbearable traffic jam in the city," said Dean of Stamford University Prof ATM Zahurul Haque.

He stressed the need for increasing public transport service and making it more attractive.

Prof AQM Mahbub of Dhaka University said most of the city roads are yet to be widened in such a way that a fire fighting vehicle can enter there easily.

He said navigability of the canals and rivers around the city should also be increased.

The speakers laid emphasis on creating suitable atmosphere for pedestrians, non-motorised vehicles and public transport for the development of transport system in the city.

Urging not to halt plying of rickshaws, they said a network for non-motorised vehicles should be created through a separate lane across the city and the rickshaws should also be remodelled.

Prof Moniruzzaman of Buet and Dr Selina Hayat Ivy, chairperson of Narayanganj Pourashabha were present on the occasion.



Save the Environment Movement Convener Abu Naser Khan speaks at a roundtable at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his left is Prof AQM Mahbub and on his right is Prof Moniruzzaman.

# Court order ends 4 months' virtual jail life of Jharna

BSS, Chittagong

At long last, a court allowed private custodian for Jharna, a poor child, recently ending her four months' virtual jail life in the name of safe custody.

She was in Chittagong central jail for the last four months following a court order over a legal dispute on who is her mother.

With the legal assistance of Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights (BSEHR), Chittagong Metropolitan Chapter, the Additional Metropolitan Magistrate Court in an order on Wednesday allowed Abdul Matin of Nandankanon area in the port city as the private custodian of Jharna, a BSEHR press release said yesterday.

According to the press release, Nilu of South Halishahar area identified herself as the mother of Jharna.

She handed over Jharna in 2004 to Abdul Matin for taking care of her and since then the child had been growing up under his guidance.

But the dispute arose when Selina, wife of Khorshed Ali of Kubdail area in Netrokona Sadar Police Station, filed a general diary (GD) with Kotwali Police Station claiming herself as Jharna's mother.

Following the GD, Kotwali police brought Jharna to their custody and produced before the court here. The court asked the police to arrange DNA test for determining the real mother of the child and to keep her into safe custody inside the jail until the settlement of the legal dispute.

The Additional Metropolitan Magistrate granted the private custodian of Jharna on the basis of a petition filed by Abdul Matin with the help of BSEHR, the press release said.

# Concern over Ittefaq situation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sangbadik-Sramik-Karmochari Oikya Parishad (SSKOP) has expressed deep concern over the situation prevailing in The Daily Ittefaq, says a press release.

Parishad leaders at an emergency meeting at the National Press Club on Saturday said the authorities have behaved inhumanely by retrenching its 72 journalists, workers and employees without giving any prior notice and showing any reason in last month.

The leaders also demanded withdrawal of retrenchment notices saying that the authorities are trying to create chaotic situation showing the excuse of the state of emergency.

Parishad Co-conveners Monjurul Hsan Bulbul and Fazle Imam, Member-Secretary Ruhul Amin Gazi, and Joint Member-Secretaries Matiur Rahman Talukdar and Abdul Jalil Bhuyian were present at the meeting presided over by Co-convenor Mozammel Haque.

# Authorise local govt bodies to realise taxes

Experts urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Local government experts and leaders at a workshop yesterday urged the government to authorise the local government institutions to realise taxes and prepare village-based development planning.

They said lack of fund and central government's too much intervention are the major hurdles to strengthening the local government.

The workshop on 'Financing of local government: Perception at grassroots level' was organised by Khan Foundation at the National Press Club in association with RTI International, Democratic Local Governance Programme and USAID. "There should be a list of resources at local level and a plan on how to expand those for local development," said Prof Muzaffer Ahmad referring to a study on a union parishad where he showed that only small efforts and investment could add four to five times the existing resources.

He suggested the UP and municipality chairmen not to depend on bureaucracy and the central government, rather utilise the power of their people's unity in strengthening the local institutions.

Speaking as chief guest, Prof Muzaffer said politicisation of local government institutions is a real problem and therefore the local leaders should be aware of it and work neutrally for the welfare of people.

There are union parishads or municipalities where the ratio of people and area are not proportionate, he said, adding that this problem needs to be addressed.

At the workshop, recommendations collected from six divisional seminars of Khan Foundation were placed.

These recommendations said increasing land transfer fees from one percent to five percent, authorising the local government bodies to use jetties, water bodies and khas land and imposing tax on electric poles, mobile phone towers and bill boards will significantly increase the income of the local government bodies.

They said at least 40 percent of Annual Development Programme (ADP) should be allocated for the

local government at the beginning of the fiscal year on the basis of the area and population, and not on political consideration.

The divisional workshops recommended that the budget of the

local government bodies should be made public and the accounting system be made modern and transparent.

The suggestions also include appointment of an assistant secre-

tary, deputy assistant engineer, computer operator, tax assessor and collector in a union parishad council, authorising the local government bodies to construct roads, culverts and bridges in their respec-

tive areas, increase the honorarium of elected chairmen and members and create an environment so that honest and competent people could be elected.

President of Municipal Association of Bangladesh Advocate Mohammad Azmat Ullah Khan said the union parishad should pay for its staffs to check the domination of the central government on the local bodies.

"The MPs (members of parliament) should have no role in the development activities of the local government bodies," he said, adding that a mechanism may also be considered so that the government will not issue any circular or executive orders that violate the local government laws.

Gazipur Municipality Chairman Mozammel Haque said the government should form an independent local government commission, which will decide distribution of the resources to the local government institutions considering their needs.

Prof Dalim Chandra Barman of Dhaka University (DU), Dr Saifullah of RTI International, and Khan Foundation Programme Officer Mahmuda Khatun also spoke at the workshop moderated by DU Prof Salahuddin Aminuzzaman.



PHOTO: STAR

Prof Muzaffer Ahmad addresses a workshop on 'Financing of local government: Perception at grassroots level' at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.