

DHAKA WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 5, 2007

Strict rules to check hill cutting soon

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD

Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee (IMSC) at a meeting decided to formulate strict rules for preservation and management of hills as well as for proper development of drainage and traffic systems in the port city.

The meeting was held at the Ministry of Housing and Public Works on November 28.

The rules will allow construction of structures on 30 per cent of the damaged hills, leaving the rest 70 percent for afforestation, said the meeting sources.

Construction of buildings up to three storeys will be allowed on such hills to discourage evil practices of developing residential plots levelling hills, they said.

With construction of structure particularly on the hilltops, use of 10 per cent of such hills will be allowed, said the sources.

No structure would be allowed on the northern hills standing in between Foy's Lake and Hathazari in the northern periphery and those surviving illegal cutting in the city centres, they said.

The meeting decided to formulate the rules as per the recommendations of the draft final report prepared under the pro-

ject Preparation of Detailed Area Plan (DAP) for Chittagong Metropolitan Master Plan (CMM).

The DAP provides guidelines for proper management of hills dividing them into three categories, namely H-1, H-2 & H-3, sources said.

The hills under H-1 category will remain untouched and intact with greenery, partially damaged hills under H-2 categories to be protected with tree plantation and silt-traps at the foothills while the non-retrievable hills under H-3 category to be managed under special control for developing housing and space, they said.

Housing and Public Works Secretary ASM Rashidul Hye, also the president of Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee (IMSC), presided over the meeting.

Nazrul Islam, deputy chief of the ministry, at the meeting introduced the background and introduction CMM and different stages of preparation of DAP.

The meeting decided to allow construction of primary roads with a minimum width of 120-ft inside the built-up areas of the city and 160-ft wide roads in the growing areas outside the

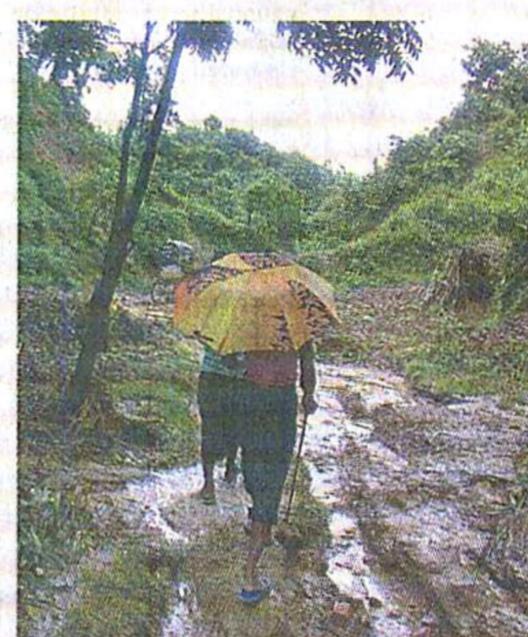
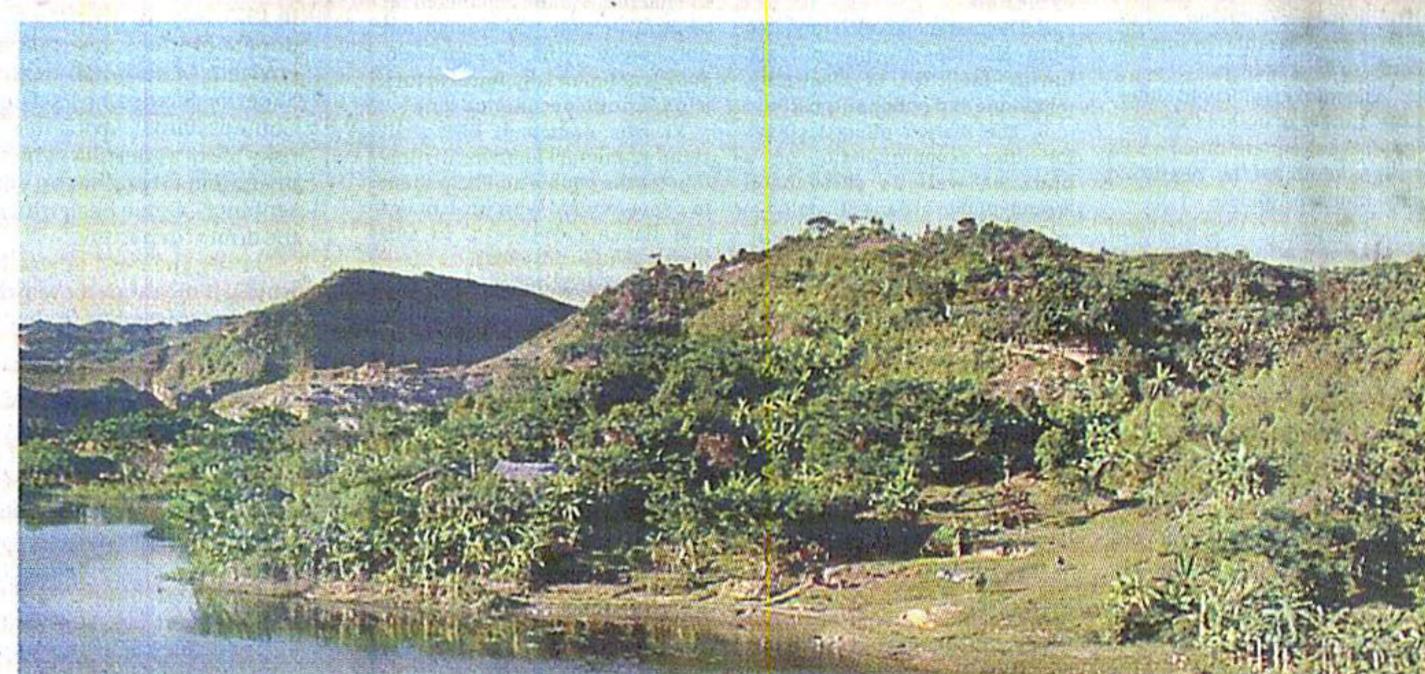
city.

It keeps provisions for preserving land along the roads for developing drainage system and leaving at least 20-ft wide land along the drains for utility services like water, gas and power supply.

The meeting called for maintaining coordination among Chittagong Development Authority, Chittagong City Corporation, Chittagong Wasa Power Development Board, Bakharabab Gas System Limited and other organisations concerned for planned growth of the city and implementation of the DAP.

Secretaries and representatives from ministries of communication, shipping, Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD), civil aviation and tourism, environment and forest, Planning Commission, and high officials from Chittagong Development Authority (CDA), Chittagong Port Authority, Wasa and IMED were present at the meeting among others.

The team leaders and experts of Development Design Consultants Limited (DDCL) and Adhibas, consultancy firms engaged in preparing the DAP.



Firoz Shah Hill in Pahartali area, top, Cantonment Hill in Bayezid Bostami area, bottom left, and Batali Hill, bottom right.

the week that was



Poet and Resident Editor of Prothom Alo Abul Momen speaks at a discussion demanding immediate trial of the war criminals at Maulana Maniruzzaman Islamabadi auditorium on November 30. Bodhan organised the event.

Call to involve women in decision-making

Speakers at a discussion on Wednesday in the port city said the contribution of women, who constitutes nearly half of the Bangladesh's population, to the socio-economic development and other fields hardly get any recognition.

The said situation is worst particularly within the boundary of a family. Quoting a recent study, they said around 47 percent women in the country are being subjected to different kinds of repression by none other than their relatives or close ones.

They said the desired development of Bangladesh is not possible without the participation and proper recognition of women. They urged all to incorporate women in the decision-making process in every sphere of life ranging from family matters to state-level.

Young Power in Social Action (YPSA), an NGO, organised the discussion in association with the Alliance to Prevent Family Repression at a city hotel. Women rights activist Begum Mushtari Shahi chaired the meeting.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, Chittagong chapter President Noorjahan Khan, Principal of Agrabad Women College Anwara Alam, women rights activist Jasmine Sultana Paru, YPSA Chief Executive Arifur Rahman, Associate Editor of Prothom Alo Biswajit Chowdhury, Chief Reporter of Suprobandh Bangladesh M Nasirul Haq, Bhoror Kagoj Bureau Chief Omar Kaiser and advocate Mili Chowdhury spoke at the discussion.

Publication of Braille-version newspaper demanded

Visually impaired youths demanded publication of a Braille-version newspaper to help them acquire knowledge about current events of the world and enrich their faculty of education and learning.

They placed the demand at an annual review meeting of a project "Material and Capacity Development Initiatives for the Braille Users" at Chittagong Shilpakala Academy on Thursday. The project was organised by United Theatre for Social Action (UTSA), a voluntary development organisation, and conducted by its unit Chittagong Computerised Braille Production Centre (CCBPC) with assistance from Bangladesh Freedom Foundation.

Additional Deputy Commissioner (education and general) Mahiuddin Ahmed Khan was present as the chief guest at the meeting with UTSA Executive Director Mostafa Kamal Jatra in the chair.

Noorjahan Jasmine, a visually impaired student who recently completed her masters in law from Chittagong University, and Arifur Rahman, project programme officer, presented the annual review report.

"Those of us studying in primary, secondary and higher education in different institutions used to face

immense problem in acquiring both academic and knowledge-based education for lack of proper and adequate books in Braille-version," said visually challenged students Toftul Rabbi Piyal, Farida Akther and Tania at the meeting.

They urged the affluent section of the society to help launch a Braille-version newspaper.

Rule for ship-breaking industry underscored

Participants at a meeting here on Friday underscored the need for formulating an immediate rule for the ship-breaking industry to save the sector from the risk of destruction and anarchy.

They said the industry will be at peril in near future if the government takes immediate initiative to formulate a specific rule. The sign of anarchy is already evident and it needs immediate government intervention before it lingers long, they added.

They said the rule is essential not only to protect the interest of the labourers but the environment as well as to increase revenue collection from this sector.

They also demanded a specialised zone like EPZ for the ship-breaking industry.

Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA) organised the meeting at a local hotel with Iqbal Kabir in the chair.

Prof Dr Shafique Haider Chowdhury, Prof Shah Alam and Prof Dr Shahidul Islam of Chittagong

University, Prof Md Mohiuddin Khalid of Southern University, Additional Commissioner (Export) of Chittagong Customs House Masud Al Hossain, Chief Inspector of Mercantile Marine Department (MMD) Md Jahid Hossain, Forum for Planned Chittagong (FPC) member Bidhan Barua and General Secretary of Chittagong District Bar Association Iftekharul Islam Chowdhury addressed the meeting.

Chittagong Port Corporation (CPC) on Friday underscored the need for formulating an immediate rule for the ship-breaking industry to save the sector from the risk of destruction and anarchy.

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DWAIPAYAN BARUA

CNG-run auto-rickshaws continue to ply the city roads without meters, ignoring repeated warnings from Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP).

Of 13,000 auto-rickshaws, not a single one does use meters, causing immense sufferings to the common commuters.

Of the installed meters, only around 500 now operate while the others are out of order, sources said.

CMP Commissioner Mainur Rahman Chowdhury at a meeting with journalists on November 28 asked the traffic department to find out the reasons behind the violation of rules by the drivers and owners and prepare a report in this regard.

He said CNG service in Chittagong might be suspended if the drivers and owners continue to violate the regulations.

The service, since its launching in 2003, is one of the main modes of transport for the commuters in the port city.

Though around 13,000 CNG-run auto rickshaws are registered with Bangladesh Road

Transport Authority (BRTA), the number of three-wheelers will be much more, sources said.

The government asked the three-wheelers on April 6 in 2005 to install meters and charge fare according to a price chart. The price chart was adjusted after the interim government set new regulations and price structures for the CNG-run auto-rickshaws in May, they said.

But the process of meter installing falters as the owners non-cooperated with the authorities concerned.

It took around one and a half years to install meters in most of the three-wheelers while the CMP deadline for meter installation was extended several times.

Deputy Commissioner (Traffic) Mohammad Ali Mian said the CMP action forced the defiant owners to install meters in almost all the three-wheelers.

The situation has worsened now as the drivers refuse to use their meters, forcing the commuters to pay higher fare, city dwellers said.

Mohammad Ali, a banker, said it has become impossible to travel any little distance in the city charging below Tk 40.

"It hardly costs Tk 25 to travel to my office at Jamal Khan around 4km from my residence at Pathantuly Choumohoni. But the drivers now charge Tk 40 for the journey," said Ali.

The expense has reduced remarkably after converting of the auto-rickshaws into CNG with gas worth Tk 80 to Tk 100 for the whole day while an octane-driven auto-rickshaw needs five to six litres of fuel a day, sources said.

"We are yet to reap the benefits of meter installation as they always remain switched off," said Atiqur Rahman, an official at Chittagong Export Processing Zone (CEPZ).

None of us meters now, said Jahurul Hoque, an auto-rickshaw driver. Besides, meter of his vehicle has gone out of order that was installed a year ago.

He admitted that they don't charge fare fixed by the government.

He said he is to spend Tk 100 for gas, pay Tk 510 to the owner and Tk 10 to the guard of the garage. Besides, he needs a minimum of Tk 50 as pocket money that raises his daily expenses over Tk 670.

"So what have I rest in my

pocket after the expenses?" he questioned.

He said the government fixed fare is too little to support his expenses.

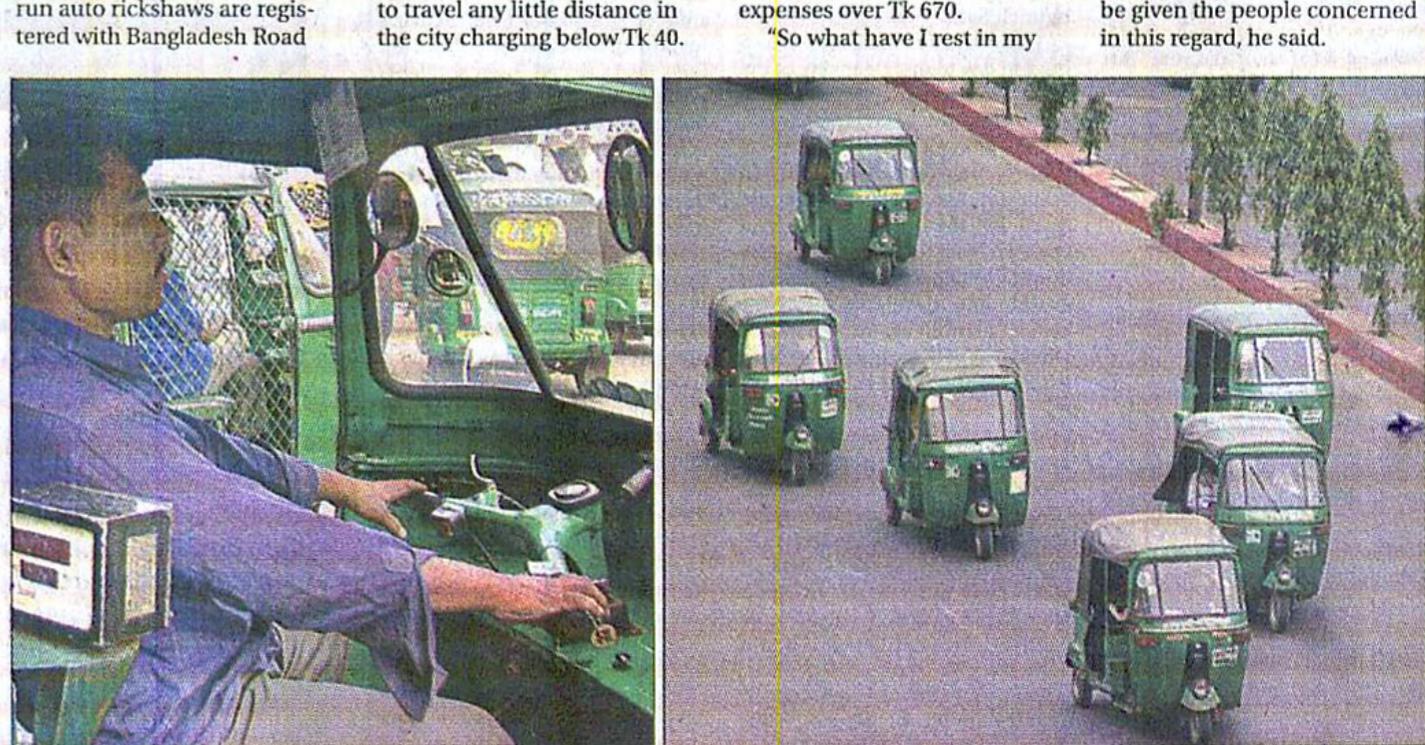
Delwar Hossain, general secretary of Chittagong Auto-rickshaw, Auto-tempo, Four-stroke and CNG Owners' Association, said the meters supplied by the BRTA-enlisted firms are of below par quality.

But the companies, responsible for installing meters, refuted the allegation, saying the drivers and owners damage the meters willingly to extract excessive fare from the passengers.

Sirajul Islam of Crystal Agencies said they had sold same kind of meter in the capital city that are still in operation and there is no scope to sell any below par quality meter here.

DC Ali said they will prepare a report after a meeting with the representatives of drivers, owners, commuters and specialists on December 5 (today) which will be sent to the communication ministry.

He said stern action will be taken against the violators of rules and a 10-day deadline to be given to the people concerned in this regard, he said.



CNG-run auto-rickshaws in the port city.