

Stop hill cutting, settlement in foothills to avoid disaster

Experts tell govt in their report



RECKLESS HILL CUTTING: The photo was taken from Lake City Residential project in the Foy's Lake area on Sunday.

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD

The technical and expert committee in its report has suggested introduction of a separate and complete rule for preservation and development of hills in Chittagong to avert casualties and damages of properties during landslides.

The committee sent the report to cabinet division on April 21 suggesting measures to stop hill cutting and not to allow housing in foothills, said Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) Md Zafar Alam, also member secretary of the committee.

The 11-member committee

headed by divisional commissioner of Chittagong also recommended formation of strong vigilance teams comprising experts and representatives from government, non-government organisations and civil society. It also underscored the need for creating mass awareness to check new settlements in the vulnerable foothill areas.

To discourage settlements in such areas it is suggested to allow 30 percent of the land recovered through illegal levelling of hills for raising buildings having maximum three storeys and no structure on hills with slopes measuring 30 degree or more,

said the sources in the committee.

The report also recommended that the people from vulnerable areas be evacuated in phases and rehabilitated keeping their employments in mind.

The cabinet division formed the expert and technical committee on August 26 last year seeking recommendations to avert landslides that cause huge casualties and damages to properties in the hilly areas every year.

The technical committee was formed after a 14-member probe committee submitted report on the rain-induced landslide that claimed 127 lives

in the port city and its suburbs on June 11 last year.

Over 70 other people were also killed in landslides here since 1998.

Around 12 percent of the country's landscape is hilly while most of them are situated in Chittagong, Chittagong Hill Tracts and Sylhet, said the sources.

The report said seven of the 12 planning zones under CDA master plan have more or less hills. The hills are divided into four categories: untouched hills of H0 category, slightly changed hills of H1 category, hills of H2 category that witnessed massive levelling and seriously damaged

hills of H3 categories where brick kilns were set up.

In line with the Detailed Area Plan of CDA master plan the technical committee emphasised on preserving the hills of H0 and H1 categories, allowing low density residential area on the levelled portion of H2 category hills and closing down the brick kilns at the H3 category hills to bring the damaged areas under immediate plantation programme.

It suggested developing buffer zone of 100m wide plantation along the bottom of hills to separate the hilly areas.

To stop illegal growth of brick kilns the report suggested that no brick kilns should be allowed inside the city area, amid the hills or within 500 meters of the bottoms of hills. The ditches created by the existing brick kilns should be turned into water reservoirs or forestland in a planned way.

The committee suggested identifying areas for brick kilns activities outside the city and legal measures against those who have already caused massive destruction of landscape with brick kilns.

For proper and safe management of hills the committee recommended for coordinated land-use plan and watershed management through development, renovation and preservation of canals and springs.

It suggested development of drainage system as per the master plan, developing water reservoirs in the foothills and slip-traps at regular intervals at the bottom of hills.

It also suggested giving rights to every citizen to lodge case against hill cutting.

The report has given guidelines and suggestions for introducing short-term, mid-term and long-term plans to be implemented in the current year, two years and three years respectively.

Commuters suffer as CNG drivers ignore new fare structure

DWAIPAYAN BARUA

Drivers of the autorickshaws are forcing the passengers to pay additional fares in the port city following the doubling of the price of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG).

They are not following the new fare structure fixed by the government on April 26.

The traffic department of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) succeeded to force the drivers use meters in their vehicles and charge the government-fixed fare since January 1.

But the commuters could enjoy the benefit only for four months as the drivers stopped using the meters and increased the fare on the pretext of price hike of CNG.

The government raised the price of a cubic meter of CNG to Tk 16.75 from Tk 8.50 on April 24, asking the owners and drivers of the CNG-driven transports not to increase the fares until the new rates are settled. But, the drivers made no waste of time to stop using meters and hike

the fares by 50 per cent blaming the price hike of CNG.

Although the government promptly raised fares for CNG-run autorickshaws and other transports to adjust with the new price of CNG, but the drivers continue to realise extra fare.

Under the new fare structure, initial charge has been fixed at Tk 18 for any distance up to two kilometres as against Tk 13.50 previously. Fare for each extra kilometre has been raised to Tk 6 from Tk 5.50.

But the drivers are charging higher than the government fixed fare, causing sufferings to the commuters in the port city.

Sharfuddin, a passenger, said according to the new fare structure it might take not more than Tk 36 to reach Anderkilla from Choumuhani, a distance of five kilometres, but the drivers charge Tk 50 and on some occasions more than that.

Passengers said the meters have neither been calibrated according to the new fare structure nor the drivers have hung any chart of fares in their vehicles.

No meter was found calibrated in the autorickshaws in the city on Sunday. Besides, the drivers did not hang any price chart in their vehicles.

The autorickshaw owners and drivers said they have yet to get new price chart from Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) to hang it in their vehicles.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) CMP (traffic) Mohammad Ali Mia said they still did not get new price chart from the BRTA. He, however, said they will take steps in this regard immediately after getting the price chart.

Additional Director (AD) of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) Chittagong Sheikh Md Ataulah Chowdhury said they have taken steps to publish advertisement on the new fare list in the newspapers. He said they have sent letters to the leaders of CNG-autorickshaw owners association and the meter installation companies to start calibration of meters immediately according to the new chart.



Drivers of CNG-autorickshaws stop using meter following price hike of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG).

theweekthatwas



STAR PHOTO

Members of Prama Abritti Sangathan recite at a function marking the May Day organised by different cultural organisations at the open stage of DC Hill on Thursday.

Hadi made CPA member

Md Hadi Hussain took the office of Member (Admin and Planning), one of the four posts of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA).

He is the first person to be appointed to the new post of member proposed in 1995.

Hadi, former chief of planning of CPA, started his career as a first class officer in 1977.

Hadi participated in courses, workshops and international seminars on port management and port planning in different countries like the USA, the UK, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and India.

Hadi, freedom fighter, was conferred honorary citizenship by the Mayor of Orleans city in the USA for his outstanding performance in 1997. He is also a life member of Bangladesh Statistical Association.

FFs demand allowance

Freedom fighters at a meeting on Thursday demanded allowance for them and extension of the age limit to 65 years for retirement.

They said only some of the distressed freedom fighters are getting honorarium, but around 9,000 employee freedom fighters do not get any honorarium or recognition from the state.

The demands were made at a meeting of Chittagong Port Institutional Command Muktiyoddha Sangsad at Bandar Thana Command Office.

The Chittagong Divisional Institutional Command Samannaya Parishad Convener Fazal Ahmed was the chief guest at the meeting with Joyal Abedin in the chair.

The Parishad Member Secretary Abul Kashem Bhuiyan and freedom fighters Harunur Rashid, Mohammad

Abu Zafar Azad, Humayun Kabir, Syed Mahmudul Haque, Mohammad Ali Mintu, Abdur Razzak, Abdul Quddus Patwari, Rabbani Mian and Kalu Mian spoke at the meeting.

Community police launched

Speakers on Sunday called upon all to come forward and wage a social movement alongside the police force to build a modern society.

They made the call at the inaugural ceremony of the "Community Policing Activities" in city's Fishery Ghat area.

Sonali Jantrik Samabaya Samity organised the ceremony where Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) Deputy Commissioner Mostafa Kamal was present as the chief guest.

Speakers said fish traders have a great contribution to country's economy and police have to ensure their security.

CMP Kotwali Zone Assistant Commissioner Babul Akter, organisations' leaders Prof Kazi Mohammad Saif Rahman, Mohammad Ali Sawdagar, Babul Sarkar and Mohammad Selim also spoke at the function.

Later, Mostafa Kamal handed over uniforms, batons and whistles to 14 members of the community police.

Trust Bank naval branch opens

A new branch of Trust Bank Limited was inaugurated at the BNS Issa Khan Naval Base in the port city on Sunday.

Bangladesh Navy Chief Vice Admiral Sarwar Jahan Nizam inaugurated the branch.

Navy chief hoped that the new branch would help social and economic development of the area.

The Bank Managing Director Iqbal U Ahmed, other bank and naval officials

were present at the function.

Scholarship giving ceremony held

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Acting Mayor M Manjur Alam said kindergarten schools have been playing a vital role in expanding the primary education in the country.

"If the pace can be kept uninterrupted we would be able to achieve our ultimate goals," he said.

He was addressing the prize and scholarship giving ceremony of Bangladesh Kindergarten Association Chittagong Divisional Unit at Chittagong Zila Parishad auditorium on Wednesday.

The unit President Mohammad Didarul Islam presided over the cere-

mony while the association Central Secretary General Iskandar Ali Hawlader was the key speaker.

World Press Freedom Day observed

Speakers on Saturday emphasised the need for press freedom as it helps ensure transparency, accountability and good governance in a country.

"Though right to expression is a fundamental right but all the governments always tried to control the media in different ways," they said.

They were addressing a discussion organised marking the World Press Freedom Day at Chittagong Academy auditorium. Sushasoner Jonney

Procharavijan (Campaign for Good Governance) Chittagong chapter organised the discussion.

Local Daily Suprabhat Bangladesh Chief Reporter M Nasirul Haque presided over the discussion while the organisation Assistant Secretary Mohammad Harun presented the keynote paper.

Speakers said journalists have been providing objective news to the people risking their lives and right to information is badly needed to ensure the access to the government information.

They underscored the need for taking steps from the government to ensure security of the newsmen.

Chittagong Union of Journalists' (CUJ) General Secretary Nazimuddin Shyamal, Daily Sangbad Chittagong Bureau Chief Hasan Ferdous, organisation member Dr Syed Didarul Munir Rubel, Advocate Jane Alam and Prof

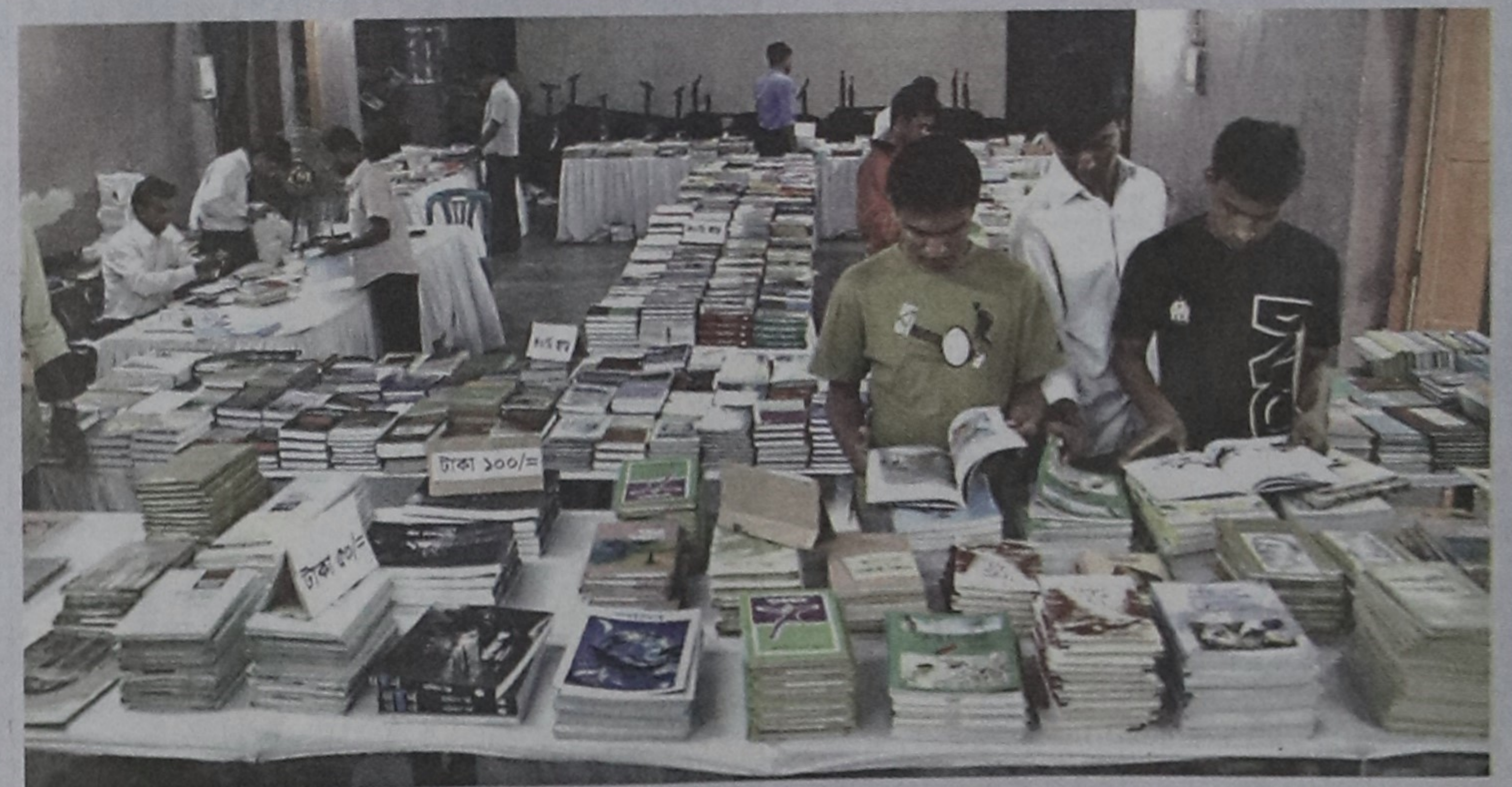
Mohammad Jahangir spoke at the discussion.

6 tubewells set up

Bangladesh Muslim Welfare Society and Hazi Abdur Razzak Foundation jointly set up six tubewells at city's Pathar Ghata ward.

The initiative aimed at addressing the ongoing water crisis that has been experiencing by the city dwellers since the beginning of the summer.

Founder of the Society M Nazim Uddin launched the project on Friday while the Society Vice Chairman Ismail Bali, Abu Mohammad Jamal, Abdul Ahad Azad, Mohammad Manhur Mian, Didarul Alam Diadar and Abul Hasnat Manik were present.



STAR PHOTO

Visitors flip through the books at a book fair organised by University Press Limited at Studio Theatre in the port city on Sunday.