

## TEXTBOOKS

# Privatisation of printing, marketing can solve crisis

Publishers tell nat'l expert body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Privatisation of printing and marketing of textbooks and making an arrangement to buy papers through open tenders can resolve textbook crisis, proprietors and representatives of textbook publishing and printing bodies have proposed this to the national textbook expert committee to ensure textbooks in time.

The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) should not publish book any more, rather it should act like a guardian and curriculum expert, they added.

The expert body formed on March 9 to ensure textbooks in time at the lower secondary and secondary levels yesterday sat with the representatives of printing and publishing organisations at a view exchange meeting in the city.

The speakers mentioned that giving subsidy on papers, fixing the number of

books according to old books instead of demands, scheduling of NCTB and problems in distribution system are few reasons behind the textbook crisis.

They said the NCTB has to give up the trading mentality and let the private publishers publish the supplementary books.

Buying papers from only Karnaphuli Mill should be cancelled and there should be an arrangement to buy papers through open tenders, they said, adding that there should be a mechanism to examine quality of the publishing and printing bodies.

Stressing the need for developing professionalism in NCTB, University Press Limited Managing Director Mahiuddin Ahmed said NCTB should stop publishing books, rather it should help the independent textbook evaluation committee (ITEC) and other publishers.

He said some publishers tend to push notebooks, though it is banned, adding

that this practice is a hindrance to distribution of books.

Convener of the expert body Prof Akhtaruzzaman said the problem has been prevailing in the country for years which needs a permanent solution.

"We are taking suggestions from different sections of the people who have stakes in it. We held meetings with senior academicians and reporters as such," he said, adding that the committee will take all the suggestions into consideration and will give a recommendation to the government in this regard.

Committee members Moyjuddin Ahmed, joint secretary (secondary) of education ministry; Prof Khan Habibur Rahman, NCTB chairman; Prof Shafiqur Rahman, member secretary of the committee; SM Omar Faruk, managing director of Globe Library Ltd; and Osman Gani, proprietor of Agami Prokashoni, spoke at the meeting.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presides over the meeting of Council of Ministers at the cabinet division room at Secretariat yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

## DAP fails to frame pro-people plan to make Dhaka liveable

Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Detailed Area Plan (DAP) for Dhaka city was completed in a hurry and failed to put forward a pro-people strategy to make the city liveable for all, speakers at a seminar said yesterday.

### Dhaka seeks help from UAE to set up oil refinery

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has sought assistance of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to set up another crude oil refinery and the UAE has responded positively in this regard.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Hasan Mahmud sought the assistance when UAE Ambassador in Dhaka Khalaf Battal Ali Al Monsouri met him at the foreign ministry yesterday, says a press release.

Dr Hasan told the envoy that Bangladesh imports huge amount of crude petroleum from the UAE. He said the country's only oil refinery at Chittagong meets only 30 percent of Bangladesh's demand of refining oil.

He said the UAE can invest in development of tourism at Cox's Bazar and other locations in Bangladesh.

"We get more than one billion dollar remittance from the Gulf state while the UAE has investments worth \$2.5 billion in Bangladesh," he told newsmen following the meeting.

Replying to a question, he said the number of Bangladeshi labourers is unlikely to be reduced; rather it will increase day by day.

### 30 shanties gutted in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 30 shanties were gutted in a fire at a slum in the city's West Rayerbazar yesterday.

Fire brigade sources said the fire originated from a candle light at a shanty in the slum around 3:50am and engulfed the adjacent shanties, leaving the shanties damaged.

On information, four units from Mohammadpur and Palashi fire units rushed to the spot and doused the fire with the help of locals after an effort of one hour around 4:50am.

Fire service and police sources said as most of the dwellers of the shanties were asleep, they could not save their longings.

The approach taken in DAP mainly focused on improving facilities for the wealthy ignoring the demands of the poor, they added.

They stressed the need for establishing social institutions within walking distance of residences. With locality-based facilities, people will find everything in their own neighbourhood without having to travel long distance inside the city, they said.

Titled 'Pro-people sustainable urban planning and recent steps', the seminar was jointly organised by Urban and Regional Planning (URP) department of Buet and Work for a Better Bangladesh (WBB) Trust at the National Press Club

in the city. Presenting a keynote paper, Dr Mahbubul Bari, international urban and transport specialist, said DAP failed to address the housing requirements of the poor and middle-class people who provide enormous services to the city.

Instead, DAP advocates segregation of the poor by encouraging development of high-income residential area. This would eventually lead to social discrimination.

Though a large segment of the population are pedestrians and dependent on non-motorised transports, no specific programmes have been proposed to develop as well as improve these facilities, Bari

added. The vital need for parks and open space was also largely ignored. The proposed allocation in DAP is only 0.13 acres of parks and open space for 1,000 persons in the main Dhaka city, he pointed out.

Speaking as the chief guest, Buet Vice Chancellor AMM Shafiqur Rahman said main characteristics of the city changed with the disappearance of water bodies.

High concentration of people is a major problem. A fast exit from the city is urgent, he added.

The speakers suggested removing rail stations, rail crossing, bus terminal, cantonment from the main city, decentralisation of important infrastructures, business hubs, promoting mass transit instead of smaller vehicle, protection of retention ponds, recovery of open spaces, pedestrian-friendly streets, etc.

Dr Rukhsana Hafiz, chairman of URP department at Buet, AKM Abul Kalam, chairman of URP department at Jahangirnagar University, urban planner Khaleda Rashid, Shakil-bin-Quasem, lecture of URP department at Buet, Project Director of DAP Tapan Kumar Nath and Project Officer of WBB Trust Maruf Rahman also spoke on the occasion.

### BEAUTY OF BANGLADESH

## 3 Britons start bicycle tour from Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three British citizens, including two of Bangladeshi origin, started a bicycle tour from Sobhanighat in Sylhet to Cox's Bazar yesterday with a view to introducing the scenic beauty of Bangladesh to the world and raise awareness about cancer.

They are London-born Bangladeshi Abdul Salam, 33, Sylhet-born Azmol Khan, 32, and British citizen Phil Buckley, 61.

They reached Habiganj town yesterday afternoon and will start for Brahmanbaria from Habiganj this morning.

Crossing 400 kilometers, they will reach Cox's Bazar on April 15 and end their seven-day journey at Teknaf.

A backup vehicle will follow the cyclists all the way to Cox's Bazar carrying food, backpack and emergency medicines.

During his last visit to Bangladesh in 2004, Abdul

Salam drove all the way from London to Sylhet along with two other Bangladeshi youths to raise funds for Marie Curie Cancer Care Hospital in London.

Salam's mother died of cancer six years ago. Before the beginning of the tour, Abdul Salam told local journalists that Bangladesh is a beautiful country but the beauty is not yet fully revealed before the eyes of the foreigners.

"Expatriates who are living in the UK permanently have to uphold the positive images of the country. So we started this initiative along with a foreigner," he said.

Phil Buckley, a resident of Manchester, is visiting Bangladesh for the sixth time.

Buckley, who loves Bangladesh for its beauty and the hospitality of her people, learned Sylheti dialect just to express his love for this country.



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Speaker M Abdul Hamid Advocate administers the oath to members of parliament elected in the April 2 by-elections at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan yesterday. (story on Page 1)

## Road crashes claim 12000 every year: Experts

METRO DESK

Bangladesh is one of the worst sufferers of road accident with at least 12,000 deaths a year, experts said at a meeting on Monday.

Road accidents claim lives on the same scale as malaria and tuberculosis, and the loss is at least 2 percent of the GDP, they added.

The Society for Road Safety Professionals, an independent body of professionals involved in the promotion of road safety in Bangladesh, held the meeting at the Centre of Injury

Prevention and Research, Bangladesh (CIPRB).

About 1.3 million people are killed in road accidents across the globe each year, a toll set to increase to 2.4 million by 2030 while around 85 percent of the fatalities occur in low and middle-income countries, according to a World Health Organisation study.

Prof MQK Talukder, eminent child specialist, chaired the discussion while National Professor Dr MR Khan was the chief guest.

Prof ANM Saleh, Dr Md Siraj-ul-Islam, Engineer Md

Hasan Reza, Engineer Habibur Rahman, Prof Dr Md Mazharul Hoque, Rafiqul Islam Sarkar, Maj General Md Anwar Hossain, Dr AKM Fazlur Rahman and actor Ilias Kanchan were present on the occasion.

S Ipsahani from the FIA Foundation, UK was also present to integrate the country programme with the global road safety initiatives.

The speakers said the problem of road traffic injury is a global epidemic and needs a global solution. They emphasised the significance of the first Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety, which will be held in Moscow in November this year.

Make Roads Safe, a global road safety campaign that was instrumental in securing the Ministerial Conference, is calling upon the governments to commit to the 'Decade of Action for Road Safety' (2010-2020). The action plan targets a 50 percent reduction in deaths in road accidents globally by 2020.

The conference in Moscow, requested by the UN General Assembly, represents a historic opportunity for Bangladesh to make progress on this important public health problem, the speakers added.

### BCL campaign urging Hasina to change decision

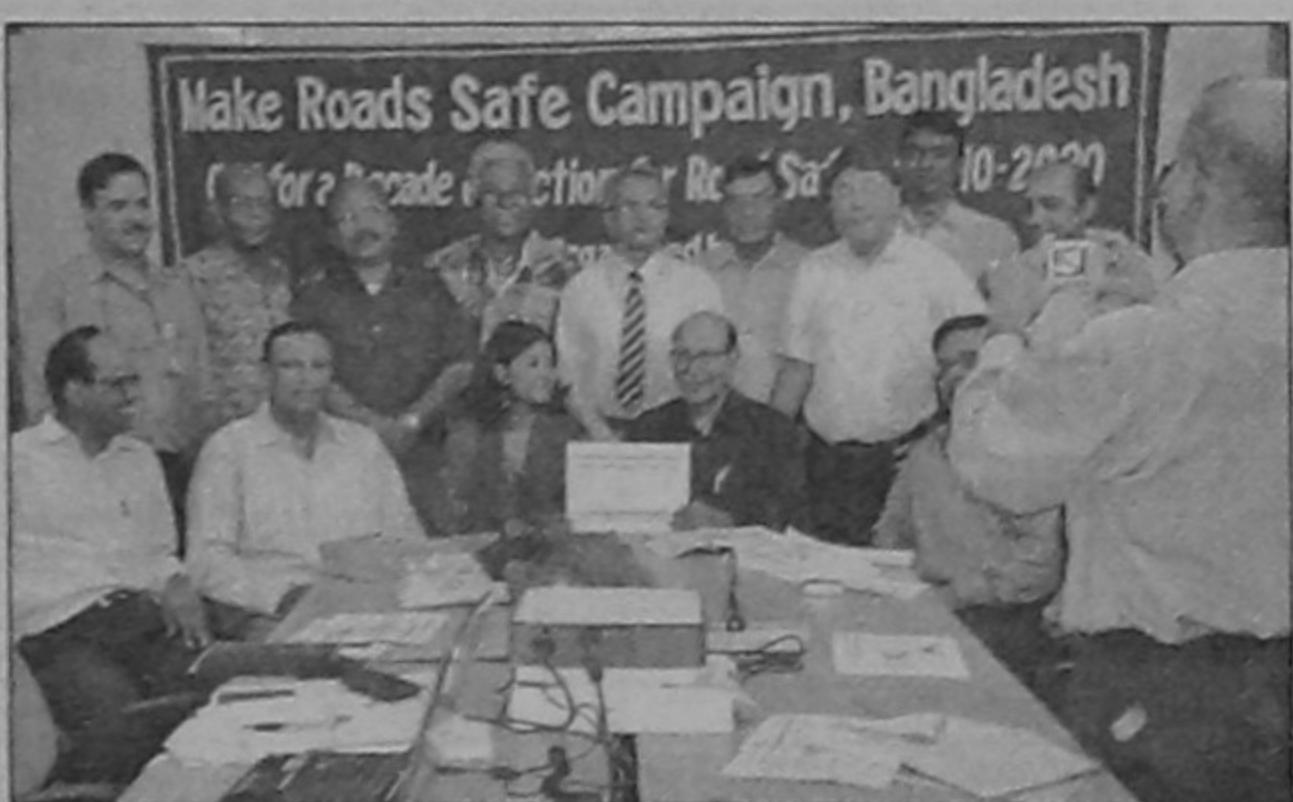
DU CORRESPONDENT

A group of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) activists yesterday launched a signature collection campaign on Dhaka University (DU) campus with a view to urging Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to reconsider her decision of withdrawing herself as the organisational chief of the student body.

They started the campaign near the Ducus building in the morning, and urged the BCL leaders and activists across the country to launch the similar programme and send the signatures to collection centre at Ducus.

Sohag Mahmud, a BCL activist of Kobi Jasim Uddin Hall, said they would continue signature collection campaign alongside other programmes on the campus.

Hasina, also Awami League (AL) president, decided not to remain organisational chief of BCL on Saturday following continuous campus unrest involving BCL men at different educational institutions since the AL assumed power.



Guests at a meeting of Society for Road Safety Professionals, an independent body of professionals involved in the promotion of road safety, at the Centre of Injury Prevention and Research, Bangladesh (CIPRB) in the city on Monday.

## Open pit mining can solve power crisis, check desertification

Says Khandker Mosharraf

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Labour and Expatriates' Welfare Minister Khandker Mosharraf Hossain yesterday said open pit mining in the North Bengal's coal mines would help solve not only power problems, but also check desertification in that region.

"In underground mining method, you can get only 10 to 12 percent coal, but in open mining you get 70 to 80 percent," he said, expressing annoyance over too much debates among the intellectuals over the methods of mining when the country goes power hungry for years.

The minister was addressing a discussion on local industries and employments organised by Bangladesh Chamber of Industries at its office in the city. He, however, said it was his personal opinion,

not of the government.

Intellectuals are concerned over environment and agriculture in the case of open pit method, but it has good aspects too, because the open space created after coal extraction can retain a lot of water that can help recharge underground water in the northern areas which run the risk of desertification now, he noted.

Besides, tourists can go there, he said, adding that fish production there could also help solve nutrition problem in the country.

"If we leave the coal unused and yell, saying shortage and shortage, it will not do. If we cannot generate power, no development of industry nor of agriculture is possible," the ministers said.

"Our future energy is coal. It has no alternatives," he added.

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