

HAJJ ARRANGEMENT Negligence by agencies won't be tolerated Says state minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government would not spare anyone who plays foul with arranging travels and accommodations for Hajj pilgrims, State Minister for Religious Affairs Shahjahan Miah warned yesterday.

ES Solutions Limited, an event management company, organised the fair with support of the Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh (HAAB). Eighty agencies took part at the fair.

HAAB President Ibrahim Bahar said Saudi Arabia is a large country and changes rules and regulations sometimes and therefore some deviations may occur.

Kingfisher Airlines starts Dhaka-Kolkata flight

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Kingfisher Airlines, a private airline of India, yesterday launched its operation in Bangladesh through daily direct flights between Dhaka and Kolkata.

The flights will be operated with a 63-seat twin-turboprop ATR aircraft and will depart from Bangladesh at 4:00pm everyday.

The airline offers three classes of service - Kingfisher first (business class) Kingfisher class (premium economy) and Kingfisher red (low fare).

In Dhaka-Kolkata route the company is offering all economy tickets and the cost of the return ticket is Tk 12,600. However, it is offering return ticket at Tk 10,518 till June 30 as a promotional offer.

TRIAL OF WAR CRIMINALS Jamaat to go to int'l forums if politically victimised Says Nizami

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Matur Rahman Nizami yesterday said his party would go to international forums, including human rights organisations, to seek justice if they are "politically repressed and deprived of human rights in the name of holding trial of war criminals".

"The government is trying to use the trial as a political instrument to make us succumb. We'll face it politically and legally. Since it also involves question of human rights, we'll take the matter to international forums and human rights organisations to seek justice," he told UNB.

The Jamaat chief said the issue of war crimes was settled through general amnesty envisaged in the 1974 Delhi Declaration, which is known to the conscious world.

Asked about four specific offences killing, rape, loot and arson, which were not covered by the general amnesty, Nizami said it is a different matter if anyone is accused of such offences, but he had repeatedly challenged in parliament and outside that none of them was involved in any such crimes.

DEATH OF WAZED MIA Special milad mahfils held across country

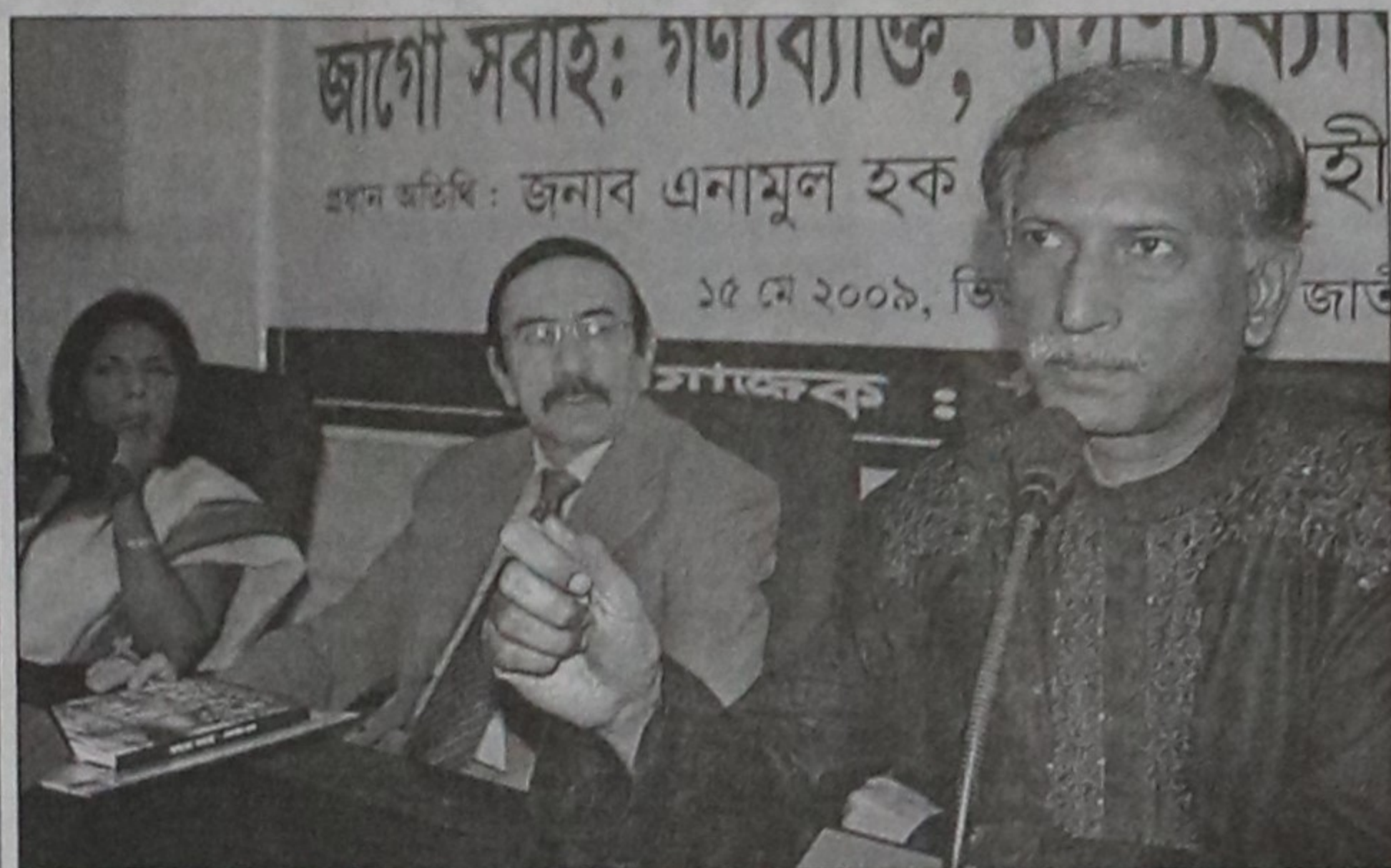
BSS, Dhaka

Ministry of Religious Affairs arranged a special milad and doa mahfil at Baitul Mukarram National Mosque yesterday after Juma prayers at the death of Dr MA Wazed Mia, an eminent nuclear scientist and husband of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

State Minister for Religious Affairs Mohammad Shahjahan Mian attended the milad and doa mahfil.

Munajat was offered for eternal peace of the departed soul of Wazed Mia. Peace, progress and prosperity of the country as well as greater unity of the people were also sought at the munajat.

Besides, similar milad mahfils were held at other mosques in the country under the auspices of Islamic Foundation Bangladesh.



Dhaka University Vice Chancellor AAMS Arefin Siddique speaks at a discussion at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his right are Sharful Alam and Sharmin Murshid.

INTERNATIONAL INSPIRATION PROJECT 1m children to benefit from quality sports by 2012

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One million children of the country would be benefited from quality sports activities by 2012 under a project titled International Inspiration.

International Inspiration, a project that forms parts of the legacy programme of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, was formally launched at a city hotel yesterday.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was also signed between the Bangladesh government and the United Kingdom (UK) and Northern Ireland at the programme this end.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid, State Minister for Youth and Sports Ahad Ali Sarker and British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Stephan Evans were present at the launching ceremony.

The project implemented jointly by British Council, UK Sports and Unicef with the ministries of youth and sports; education; and women and children affairs aims to deliver on the promise made by the London 2012 Olympic bid team in Singapore to inspire young

people around the world through the power of sports.

It aims at creating sustainable structures and systems in 20 countries, enabling at least 12 million young people to access sport and improving their lives, said the organisers.

Giving an overview of the project, British Council Bangladesh Director Charles Nuttall said as part of the initiation of the project, 41 UK secondary school teachers are now visiting their 20 partner schools for a week in Bangladesh under the international school link programme.

The teachers will be travelling to different government schools and madrasas, selected by a national steering committee under the leadership of the secretary of youth and sports ministry, to share their ideas, headed.

Training courses on youth sports leadership and young leaders are also being delivered this week to eight local tutors and 32 young people from four schools, he said, adding that the young leaders will organise a festival at Women's Sports Complex at Dhanmondi in the city today to showcase the valuable sports initiatives they

have experienced.

He also said the remaining 16 Bangladeshi schools will also be benefited from youth sports leadership training through which they will eventually reach 100,000 young children in their schools and communities.

Through the project, 200,000 children aged between four and 10 will learn swimming and 12,500 adolescents will be trained as leaders to carry out sports activities for their peers in their communities, he informed.

Charles Nuttall also said, "Through the sports activities, awareness will be created on major issues which adolescents are facing such as early marriage, dowry, HIV and AIDS, hygiene, abuse and exploitation."

Nahid said the project will contribute to building a stronger relationship between two countries and will help strengthen the education system as well.

Stephan Evans, Ahad Ali Sarker, Unicef Country Representative Carel de Rooy and Women and Children Affairs Secretary Rokeya Sultana also spoke.

'Family central building block of society'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Family is the central building block of a society as well as an instrument for peace and reconciliation, said speakers at a seminar yesterday.

The United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) Dhaka, the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) and the Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) jointly organised the seminar titled 'Creating a World of Peace: One Family at a Time' at the Dhaka Business and Professional Women's Club to mark the International Day of Families.

Any problem can be solved if members of a family remain united, said Prof M Shamsur Ali, vice chancellor of Southeast University, at the seminar as the chief guest with WFWP President Zeenath Ara Bhuiyan in the chair.

Parent should share their time with their children which remove many unhappiness, said Kazi Ali Reza, office in charge of UNIC, who presented the keynote speech.

Underscoring the need for a good family, Zeenath said family is the foundation of a society. The children who love their parents will never think of committing any crime, she added.

UNIC Dhaka reference officer Md Muniruzzaman readout the message of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon at the seminar while Tetsuya Amano, director general of International Relief Friendship Foundation Inc, readout the UPF/WFWP declaration.

In the declaration of UPF and WFWP they said they acknowledge that the family is a microcosm of the global community. If the world is to finally come to an era of sustainable peace and harmony among civilisations, that peace must be founded on this basic, most intimate social unit of humankind.

The declaration also said the family is the school of love and ethics.

Marriage and family are the basis of human development and the core institutions for education in character, ethics, social relationships and citizenship.

Strong, healthy, loving families help protect society from the moral decline of its youth, increase in crime, drug abuse and corruption, as well as the spread of diseases, such as AIDS, said the declaration.

Budgetary allocation for culture demanded

BSS, Dhaka

Udichi Shilpi Gosthi yesterday demanded increasing allocation to the field of culture in the upcoming budget.

The demand was placed at a meeting of Jatiya Parishad of the organisation held at TSC cafeteria at Dhaka University.

The meeting has decided to hold the national cultural conference in December and mass song festival and competition on the birthday of Satyen Sen.

Former president of the organisation Syed Hasan Imam, Vice-Presidents Niranjan Adhikary and Mahmud Selim, General Secretary Habibur Ala, former general secretary Rezaul Karim Siddique, member and also Vice-Chancellor of Bangladesh Agricultural University Dr Abdul Mannan Akand spoke at the meeting.



Bangladesh Khetmajur Samity forms a human chain at Muktangan in the city yesterday demanding steps to continue the 100-day employment generation programme of the government.

Liberation war waged on principle of secularism

Says Prof Serajul Islam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury yesterday said the War of Liberation was fought on the principle of secularism.

He said this while he was speaking at the publication ceremony of a book titled 'Ekattur Muktijuddho: Ekjan Sector Commandar Smitikatha' by Sector Commander Col (Retd) Quazi Nooruzzaman.

The book was launched at Omni Book's outlet at Dhanmondi in the city. Prof Emeritus Serajul Islam Chowdhury also unveiled the cover of the 112-page book published by Obosher publishing house with Prof Mansur Musan in the chair.

Sector Commander CR Dutt, lawmaker Rashed Khan Menon, New Age publisher Shahidullah Khan, Holiday Editor Syed Kamaluddin and cultural personality Sara Zaker were present at the function.

Prof Chowdhury said, "Colonel Nooruzzaman is a man of integrity. His patriotism and respect for democratic values are above any question and he has never compromised with his ideology. He even had to endure imprisonment during the autocratic rule of Ershad."

"There are many books on the War of Liberation where the writers are seen to be very much interested in describing their success. But Nooruzzaman has written exactly what he witnessed during the war," he said.

The characteristics and context of the war have been lucidly described in his book, he added.

"The liberation war of 1971

was conducted in a haphazard manner as people from all walks of life joined it spontaneously through some of them did not know why they were fighting for it said.

Due to the haphazardness in waging the war, there were incidents like looting. The most important thing of the liberation war was that there was no political leadership which could prevent the chaos and looting," Prof Serajul Islam said.

"This book is the best one among the books that Nooruzzaman has written. It describes the role of the Mujib Bahini," he said. "The Mujib Bahini was engaged in preventing the possible rise of the leftists."

He said, "The liberation war in 1971 was waged on the principle of secularism. "I never thought that my experience and feelings about the War of Liberation, that what I had written in my own diary, would be published as a book," said Nooruzzaman, commander of Sector-7.

While describing his memories, he said, "Many had suggested that I drop the issue of the proclamation of the liberation war. But I cannot betray my memory. I heard Ziaur Rahman proclaiming the independence of the country on March 26 in 1971," said Nooruzzaman.

Prof Mansur Musa, however, did not agree with Nooruzzaman, saying "Ziaur Rahman was out of Chittagong on March 26 and there was a curfew on the day, so most of us remained indoors."

The book launching ceremony was concluded with a musical soiree where noted singers performed.

'ACI Pure Salt Deshke Jano' to go to varsity campuses

METRO DESK

ACI Pure Salt Deshke Jano, the biggest ever online quiz competition in Bangladesh, will be going to the major university campuses in and around Dhaka city.

A van equipped with laptops and internet facilities will give the students the opportunity to get registered and play the first round inside the van, says a press release.

The van is covering areas around Dhaka University, IBA, Buet, North South University (NSU), AIUB, Brac University, East West University, Asian University, Primeasia University, Stamford University, Asia Pacific University, United International University, Daffodil University, Jahangirnagar University, Islamic University of Technology (IUT) and other prime universities of the city.

Another registration and information booth has been set up at the Bashundhara City. ACI Pure Salt and the first-ever gaming portal of the country www.2funmail.com are jointly organising this competition.

The first and second phases of the competition will continue till May 25 while the third and final phase will take place with the top 100 contestants at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre on May 30. The programme will be aired live on Channel 1.

Any Bangladeshi citizen above 14 years of age can take part in ACI Pure Salt Deshke Jano through www.2funmail.com. Each of the top ten scorers will win Tk 100,000 in cash from ACI Pure Salt.

NSU convocation tomorrow

BSS, Dhaka

The 12th convocation of North South University (NSU) will be held tomorrow on its own campus at Bashundhara in the city.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid will chair the convocation on behalf of President Zillur Rahman, says a press release.

WEATHER TODAY Rain likely UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at one or two places over all the six divisions in next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may rise slightly over the country during the period, Met Office said.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:34pm today and rises at 5:15am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 35.4 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 22.0 degrees Celsius at Kutubdia.

Table with 4 columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius (Max, Min), Humidity in percentage (Morning, Evening). Rows include Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar.

DHAKA TODAY Discussion Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad organises a discussion on 'Towards MDGs in Bangladesh' particular focus on education, health and gender.

Conference Bangladesh Centre for International Studies organises a two-day regional conference on 'Peace and development in South Asia: Opportunities and concerns'.

Award giving The award giving ceremony of journalists Monajaluddin Memorial Award 2007 will be held.

Roundtable South Asia Mobile Forum organises a roundtable on protection for children in cyber world.

SGFL cancels third re-tender process

FROM PAGE 1

The SGFL plant would produce daily 16 barrels of natural gas liquid (NGL) and about nine barrels of associated condensate using 45 million cubic feet per day (mmcf/d) gas.

NGL will then be used in an existing fractionation plant to manufacture Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), motor spirit and diesel. LPG is widely used in the country for cooking and other domestic purposes.

The SGFL has been floating tender for Kaillastila Molecular Sieve Turbo Expander (MSTE) Processing Plant since April 2005. But the tender was repeatedly cancelled under undue influence of various lobbies that failed to bag the deal or to have favourable terms.

Earlier in February, the SGFL board--then headed by another Petrobranga chairman-- had cancelled the third tender for installation of the highly technical gas processing plant. The board had asked the SGFL authorities to set a stringent criterion to ensure that the contract goes only to genuine competent

bidder. Under this criterion, the bidder must have minimum five years' experience in supply, design, engineering aspects, procurement and commissioning of this particular type of at least one natural gas MSTE plant having a minimum capacity of 45 mmcf/d, or Natural Gas Molecular Sieve Dehydration Plant through an international competitive bidding (ICB) outside the bidder's home country. This should eliminate the entry of less competent bidders for this high-tech job, sources said.

But the SGFL refrained from modifying its tender criterion accordingly. Then in March, the GTCL bowed down to energy ministry's strong reminder to incorporate the change.

After this a couple of Chinese companies, which were trying hard to bag the deal in the past, automatically dropped out of the race.

In the second re-tender in September 21 last year, Chinese companies like China Tianchen Engineering Corp and Hanian Hairan Hi-Tech Energy Co participated alongside better

experienced Hyundai Engineering of Korea, PT Istana of Indonesia and Kudoz Consulting of the Netherlands.

But the third re-tender floated on February 19 attracted a different set of bidders. Eight bidders including Chinese Shengli Engineering & Consulting Co, Shanghai Engineering, Korea Hyundai and Daewoo and Indonesian PT Istana purchased bid documents.

The SGFL held the pre-bid meeting on March 30, and tender dropping date was set on April 27. But this time limit was extended by one month under pressure from the vested interest lobby.

On May 11, following a board meeting chaired by the Petrobranga chairman-in-charge, the SGFL notified that the bidding process has been cancelled due to unavoidable circumstances.

"These actions are certainly not in the interest of the nation. The country's gas system is suffering tremendously due to past inactions and corruption. We are seeing a repetition of the bad practices of the past gov-

ernment," said an official. The first tender for this fractionation plant was floated in May 2005 but it fell flat.

The re-tender for it in January 2006 drew offers from Sinopec, Thermo Designs and Astra-Evangelista. The project consultant had disqualified both Astra-Evangelista and Sinopec as non-responsive and recommended Thermo Designs of Canada.

The project consultant had identified 50 major deviations in Sinopec's offer and categorically said this company technically does not qualify for such a complex project. Oddly enough, the SGFL awarded the project contract involving Tk 113 crore to Sinopec, represented by Sahco International, in December 2007.

But the deal ultimately fell flat as the company demanded an increase of project cost and a host of other legal benefits.

Smelling foul play in the bidder selection process, the SGFL board cancelled the third tender in which some incompetent companies were being entertained.

Pedestrians worst victims of road crashes

FROM PAGE 1

at all aware of road safety issues, he added. Most accidents occur during rush hours at intersections when people hurry to work or return home and compete for boarding a vehicle amid the chaotic traffic management system," he said.

"Dhaka city dwellers also take comparatively long trips to go to work, take children to school or run errands. Local facilities should be developed so that everything is available within walking distance," he said.

It will curtail length of trips and reduce the volume of traffic on streets, he added. According to an ARI survey conducted in 2008, there are 54 accident-prone spots in Dhaka city among which the ARI identified Jatrabari intersection as the most dangerous city intersection.

Jatrabari is a junction of two roads and three major highways--Chittagong, Sylhet and Mawa. This makes the intersection extremely risky for pedestrians, he said.

Farmgate, Kakoli, Bijoy Sarani, Shanir Akhra intersection, Shapla Chattar in Motijheel and Purana Paltan intersection are also dangerous

places. Prof Shamsul mentioned high concentration of industries, especially garment factories, at the core of the capital, next to the main arterial roads, as one of the reasons behind pedestrian vulnerability.

Thousands of workers cross the busy roads during rush hour every day to get to work, he said.

Dr Mahabubul Bari, an expert on transportation infrastructure, said, "Street planning and design in Dhaka city has always been based on motor vehicles. Pedestrians are not valued as road users. Since pedestrians are not only the majority of road users but also the most efficient, in terms of space requirement, energy use and pollution rating, they should be given the highest priority."

Government policy clearly neglects pedestrians' need. Out of \$5 billion budget, the Strategic Transport Plan (STP) only allocated 0.22 percent for pedestrian facilities, he pointed out.

Under the current planning, pedestrians are compelled to take long uncomfortable detours to cross streets. It prevents pedestrians from

crossing streets at various spots throughout the city by installing concrete barriers, grilles, barbed wire fences and other obstacles. However it has not worked so far.

Since pedestrians do not feel comfortable using 25-foot-high footbridges, there should be street-level crossings for them, he added.

The existing facilities are very poor. Walking facilities compared to the number of pedestrians are minuscule. Existing pavements are a little more than two metres wide. Underpass and footbridges also pose an obvious risk to safety.

Moreover, around 70 percent of the sidewalks in the city have become unusable. The rest remain occupied by construction materials, hawkers, parked cars and encroachers.

He suggested that existing sidewalks be repaired and widened, trees along sidewalks be planted to provide shade, and all other space occupying things removed from pavements. Buildings and billboards often obstruct line of sight at intersections. Letting pedestrians see and to be seen is very important, he noted.