



PHOTO: STAR
Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) forms a human chain at Meghna Ghat at Sonargaon yesterday protesting the construction of Tipaimukh Dam and demanding steps to save the Meghna river.

UP representatives demand one-third of nat'l dev budget

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Union Parishad (UP) representatives at a seminar yesterday demanded one-third of the total national development budget for a better local government.

Instead of going through the local administration, the UP should receive block allocations directly, local government experts said at the seminar.

The UP representatives pointed out that funding and manpower shortage coupled with interference of the lawmakers and administration has turned the oldest local government tier virtually ineffective.

The speakers also stressed specific policy for budgetary allocation and work area of the UPs.

The national seminar on 'Local government policy reform issues' was organised by Bangladesh Union Parishad Forum (BUPF) and supported by USAID and Pragati (Promoting Governance Accountability Transparency Integrity) at BMA Bhawan auditorium in the city.

In his keynote speech, Prof Salahuddin M Aminuzzaman said, "The Local Government (Union Parishad) Ordinance

1983 has turned UP into an administration-controlled tier."

He pointed out that as per the article 47 of the ordinance, UPs receive budgetary allocation through district commissioners (DC).

As per articles 12, 64 and 65 of the ordinance, local administration has the authority to dismiss UP chairman and members.

Articles 60, 61 and 62 of the ordinance also gave special supervising authority over UP representatives.

"These rules are contradictory to the constitution as they are elected representatives. Moreover, most of the times these rules are misused by the local administration," he said.

Aminuzzaman added, "UP turned into an ineffective institution because it went through too many structural changes."

Lawmaker Rashed Khan Menon said, "Too many haphazard changes led to many anomalies in the activities of UP and it restricted its power as well. The biggest distortion was made by the caretaker government."

Union Parishad should be the focal point of the local government as they are

closest to the people, he added.

Demanding cancellation of special authority of administration over UPs, lawmaker Hasanul Haque Inu said decentralisation of power is urgent.

Empowering the UP and making it an effective local government body is a huge challenge before the present government, he said.

Speaking as the chief guest, former adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman said UP is not a subordinate local government tier. The constitution has given specific status and work area to different levels of the government. There should be coordination between all the tiers of the local government maintaining each other's sovereignty.

Dr. Tofail Ahmed, former member of Local Government Commission; lawmaker Shawkat Momen Shahjahan, Mujahidul Islam Selim, general secretary, CPB, former lawmaker Ali Reza Raju, Prof Badiul A Majumder, global vice president of the Hunger Project, Md Mahbubur Rahman Tulu, president of BUPF and Md Ataharul Islam Bulbul, secretary general of BUPF, also spoke.

JAPANESE CYCLIST ON WORLD TOUR

Nakanishi in Dhaka to spread message of peace

AMENA KHATUN AND PANKAJ KARMAKAR

Daisuke Nakanishi, a 39-year-old traveller hailing from Osaka of Japan, arrived in Dhaka on Friday after roaming 127 countries riding on a bicycle to disseminate the messages of world peace by making friends worldwide.

In an exclusive interview with The Daily Star, Nakanishi expressed his satisfaction over the cordial greetings and helping hands offered by Bangladeshi people.

"I started my mission on July 23, 1998 and has already crossed around 146,900 kilometres on the road. I have been able to make thousands of friends and deliver the messages of lasting peace across borders," he told these correspondents.

Nakanishi shared the story behind his itch to travel. As he had the plan to travel the world, he did not get married in practical life. "I worked six years in a construction firm as a corporate and branding officer and a bulk portion of my salaries was deposited in a bank for my travel expenses."

"Earlier, touring the world by a bicycle was my curiosity, but now it is a big mission for me to deliver the messages of peace," said the itinerant.

During the travelling, I had to face a number of bitter experiences, including theft, in Brazil, Mexico, Romania and Costa Rica while bitter weather like biting cold, snowfall and

extreme hot, as I always found the weather and humidity different from one country to another.

"I faced bitter cold, strong wind and snowfall on my way. But nothing could have

hindered me," Nakanishi added.

"As I heard about Bangladeshi Nobel laureate Dr Muhammad Yunus, I am much interested to meet him to know about the country

and its people. When I asked people about his appointment, most of them advised me to go to The Daily Star office for a help to make an appointment with Dr Yunus."

"The worst experience I had in Kenya where I got fever for mosquito bites. I had two road accidents in India and Namibia," he said, adding, "I found the people of Chile and Argentina very helpful and hospitable during my world tour."

Nakanishi received a number of honorary citizenship in several countries. He is a member of Japan Adventure Cyclists Club (JACC).

Nakanishi was born in Osaka on March 6, 1970. He said, "I started riding a bicycle at age 10 while I was in elementary school. Since my junior high school days, I became much interested in cycling. My father also encouraged me. I cycled, together with my brother, to Kyoto and Nara."

"I cycled the 10 kilometres (one way) to my high school every day and I enjoyed riding and finding new routes with new landscapes and different colours in every season."

"While in university, I joined a bicycle touring club and we cycled all over Japan. I did five tours in 20 countries, mostly during vacations. But travelling during vacations is stressful due to time limit," he added.



Daisuke Nakanishi

PHOTO: STAR

Photographic book on forest launched

METRO DESK

The launching ceremony of a photographic book titled 'Images from the Wild: Travels through Five Nishorgo Forests' by young photographer Sirajul Hossain was held at Spectra Convention Centre in the city recently, says a press release.

The photographic journey through five 'Nishorgo Forests' reveals how the management of natural forest in the country is changing.

The book is an output of the partnership between the photographer and conservation programme of the USAID. The purpose of the partnership is raising awareness on the forest department's new efforts to engage local communities in conservation of the protected forests.

Denise Rollins, USAID mission director and Md Abdul Motaleb, chief conservator of forests (CCF) of the Forest Department, among others, were present at the launching ceremony.

Rabindra-Nazrul Jayanti observed in Feni

A CORRESPONDENT, Feni

Noted Rabindra Sangeet artiste Tapan Mahmud and Nazrul song exponent Ferdous Ara enthralled the audience at Feni Shilpakala Academy auditorium on Friday evening on the occasion of Rabindra-Nazrul birth anniversaries.

Secretary to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs Md Sharful Alam who was the chief guest at the function also rendered Rabindra song. Feni Deputy Commissioner Abdul Quddus Khan offered a Nazrul song.

Feni Shilpakala Academy organised a discussion and cultural function at its auditorium. Shila Das, Arup Dutta and Suborna Banik rendered songs at the programme.



PHOTO: STAR
Bank Asia officers and executives write their pledges to change themselves on a banner on its Scotia Branch premises in the city yesterday as part of the 'Bodle Jao, Bodle Dao' (Change yourself, change others) campaign of the daily Prothom Alo.

Adequate allocation a must to ensure healthcare

Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a national seminar yesterday said 6.1 percent budgetary allocation for health is not enough, rather it is important to increase the allocation to meet the people's needs.

Speaking as the chief guest at the inaugural session of the two-day seminar, Health Adviser to Prime Minister Prof Modasser Ali said besides increased allocation, it is impor-

tant to develop a health management system to ensure accountability.

At the seminar titled 'Contributing to national health policy: Towards peoples' healthcare system', he said the health policy has been made a 'musical chair', adding, "Whenever a government assumes power, it prepares a health policy."

Prof Modasser said the government's health policy would have to be similar with the people's health policy and the ruling party is committed to implementing its electoral manifesto.

Health Movement organised the seminar at IDB auditorium in the city with a view to pressurising the government to prepare a people-friendly health policy that would address 40 percent of the ultra-poor who don't have access to the mainstream health service.

Health issue is not the concern of health ministry only, rather it is a multi-sectoral issue and as the present government said that an updated health

policy would be finalised soon, it is expected that the government would make it public before finalisation for further recommendations.

At his speech as the special guest, Prof Nurul Islam, vice chancellor of University of Science and Technology Chittagong, stressed the need to form an essential drug list and increase incentives of doctors so that they do not hesitate to go for work in the rural areas.

"If at least 20 ministries can be involved in the health policy, it would merely be a treatment policy," he said, adding that cost-effectiveness, affordability and quality must be ensured in health service system.

Executive Director of UBINIG Farhad Mazhar presided over the inaugural session which was also addressed by Dr Zafarullah Chowdhury of Gonoshasthya Kendra, Prof Dr Naila Zaman Khan of Health Movement, Prof Rashid E Mahub of Health Rights Movement and Farida Akhter of UBINIG.



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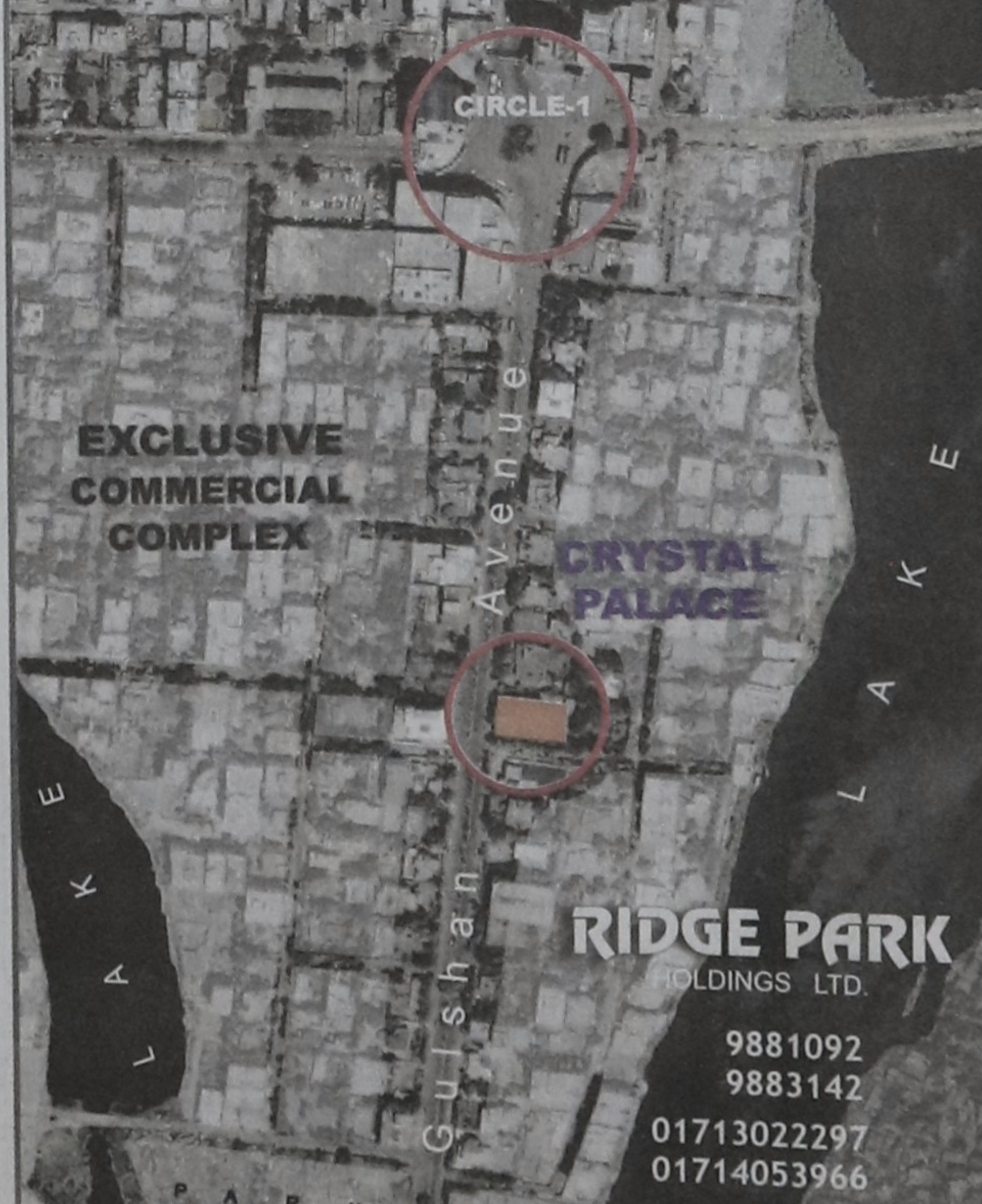
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