

'Take up medium-, long-term plans to address urban problems'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government must undertake medium- and long-term plans to address urban problems such as traffic congestion, high population growth and lack of utility facilities, noted economist Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud said at a discussion yesterday.

He also suggested developing sub-urban points across the country to provide urban facilities to the people.

Onneshan, an NGO, with support from Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), organised the discussion on 'The role of grassroots organisations to establish the rights of the urban poor' in the city.

At the discussion, development experts observed that the urban poor, especially slum-dwellers, are deprived of most urban facilities like housing, water, sewerage and power, while traffic jam made city life horrible.

"Due to lack of long-term planning, we are not finding out solutions to Dhaka's problems," said Prof



PHOTO: STAR

Shireen Sharmin Chowdhury speaks at a discussion at Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday. On her right is Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud and on her left is Shegufta Yasmin Emily.

Wahiduddin Mahmud.

The rate of population growth in the capital city is the highest in the world, he said. According to experts, the population of Dhaka is around 1.3 crore, which will be 2.2 crore by 2035.

"We have to mobilise people socially so that they can claim their rights from local government institutions," said Prof Wahiduddin.

Speaking as the chief guest, State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Shireen

Sharmin Chowdhury said the issue of urban poverty must be addressed on the priority basis, because the urban poor are the ones serving others but are deprived of basic facilities.

Improving rural economy can encourage rural people not to migrate, but those who

are already in the urban points must not be deprived, she said.

Whip Shegufta Yasmin Emily said natural disasters and lack of economic activities force rural people to migrate to urban points.

"Our main problem is the huge gap between the rich and

the poor," she said and called for helping the rural poor with land and capital to improve their living standards.

MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam said Dhaka's problems could not be resolved without a long-term and comprehensive plan.

There are city governments

in many countries to address urban issues, she said, adding that "But we could not implement any plan of decentralisation until now."

She also observed that Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) cannot properly address city problems due to lack of coordination among

the utility service providers.

Shaheeda Tareq Deepti MP, Coalition for the Urban Poor Executive Director Mostafa Qayyum Khan, DCC official Khandker Millatul Islam, Onneshan Executive Director Mitali Nusrat Parveen and coordinator Sharifa Nazneen also spoke.

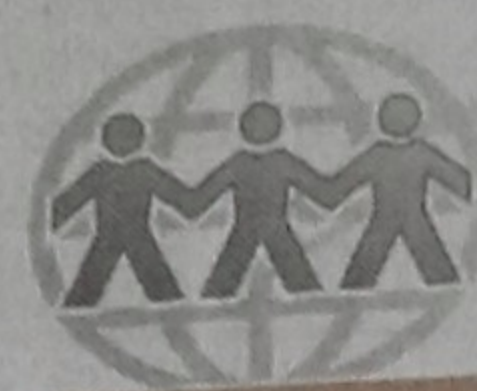
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