

# Include wetlands in DAP for environmental sustainability

### Says expert

UNB, Dhaka

Detailed Area Plan (DAP) would have to be included existing low-lying wetlands as well as revival of the pre-urban wetlands to ensure environmental sustainability of the city, said an expert.

"Immediate attention is needed for wetland preservation and reviving them for keeping Dhaka city liveable," said Dr Mohammed Ataur Rahman, director of the Centre for Global Environmental Culture (CGEC) Programme on Education of IUBAT.

He said revival of wetlands would restore and rehabilitate the flora and fauna, mitigate acute water crisis of the city, recharge ground water and revive the wetland ecosystem.

"With the revival of wetlands, the city will be free from water stagnancy and flooding while this will facilitate the communication system -- both waterways and road transportation system."

He noted that the Ramsar Convention has defined wetlands as areas of marsh, fen, peat land or water,

whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six meters.

Dr Ataur said Dhaka with an aerial extent of 298 square kilometer is bounded by the river Buriganga in the south, the river Balu in the east, the Tongi Khal in the north and the river Turag in the west. These rivers are connected to the Ganges-Brahmaputra River system and also include the Old Brahmaputra river flowing towards southeast from all sides of the bigger neighboring region.

The bigger area is closely dissected by a number of rivers and khals which are hydro-logically connected to these major rivers, he added.

Dr Ataur said wetland of the city has been squeezed to five percent only, resulting in acute shortage of surface water supply.

Pollution has become a great threat for the existence of aquatic lives.

He said the inland water bodies on the aerial photo of 1968 are more prom-

inent than 2001. Analysis and observation for inland water body on 1968 image show that the Gulshan Lake, Dhanmondi Lake and Ramna Lake are highly visible.

He noted that the total areas of inland water body are measured 5.1 square kilometer. Analysis of satellite image of 2001 for inland water body shows that the areas of lakes (Gulshan and Dhanmondi) have shrunken and narrowed down.

"Some khals and channels are not identifiable or missing in the south-western Mohammadpur and southern Motijheel area of the city and the total area is measured 1.8 square kilometer in 2001," he said.

It is seen that water bodies have become more sporadic and patchy in 2001 in comparison to 1968 in many parts of the city. Water body compartmentalisation, specifically, occurred in the north central, southeast and western part of the city.

He said canals, wetlands and depressions have been filled up by new urbanisation, both in and around the built-up city area. These unplanned

urbanisations have been destroying the water bodies and flow paths causing rainfall-flooding and drainage congestion in many locations in the city.

Filling activities, embankments and roads are compartmentalizing the wetlands and water bodies and hence obstructed the natural drainage.

Dr Rahman said the wetlands and other water bodies in the city is greatly reduced over the decades due to progressive urbanisation.

There were number of studies that mentioned the land filling activities and their effects on the drainage congestion and waterlogging.

At the moment, the city gets waterlogged, particularly during the heavy downpour in the wet season. The scenario will worsen with time as erratic and intense rain occurs with increasing frequencies due to climate change.

Plants and soils in wetlands play a significant role in purifying water, removing high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus, and in some cases, removing toxic chemicals through biogeochemical cycling and storage, he said.

# USAID expands support to prevent bird flu

UNB, Dhaka.

Stamping Out Pandemic and Avian Influenza (STOP AI) Bangladesh project yesterday launched a cleaning and disinfection (C&D) programme to improve the security of the live bird market at Sreepur purosava in Gazipur.

USAID, through the STOP AI initiative, collaborated with the Sreepur municipality and the market committee to develop a market improvement plan to prevent the spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza to birds and

people by including renovation of the water supply, addition of a bio-gas facility for proper waste disposal and a slaughter house, says a press release of the US embassy in the city.

It said the live bird markets can be a major source of the avian influenza and can contribute to its spread in Bangladesh. STOP AI, funded by the USAID, protects animals from bird flu and provides people access to safe food products and minimises the risks of avian influenza from becoming a public health epidemic.

# Call to resist Jamaat from creating unrest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Samprodayekota-Jangibad Birodhi Mancha (SJB) yesterday called on the people to resist Jamaat-e-Islami unitedly from creating disorder ahead of the war crimes trial, says a press release.

They in a statement said Jamaat would intensify its efforts to create unrest in the country in collaboration with the local and international forces, including BNP.

SJB is a platform against fanaticism and militancy.

The leaders urged all social and political organisations and people from all walks of life to be united and demand immediate trial of the war criminals and militants.

Signatories to the statement include Convener Ajay Roy, Joint Convener Ziauddin Tareq Ali, and Prof Syed Anwar Hossain.



Today is the 10<sup>th</sup> Death Anniversary of our beloved father Mr. Musharraf Hussain Chowdhury. He was a Vanguard soldier of language movement of 1952 and in recognition of this contribution he was awarded Ekushe Padok. He was also the former Managing Director of Titas Gas Transmission & Distribution Co. Ltd.

The family members of late Musharraf Hussain Chowdhury have requested all his relatives, friends, former colleagues and well-wisher to pray for the salvation of the departed soul.

Rume, Jamee, Sadee  
07 - 07 - 2010

# Pirate leader killed in 'shootout'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

A pirate leader of the coastal areas of Shubarnachar and Hatia was killed in a 'shootout' between his cohorts and law enforcers in Hatia upazila here yesterday.

Dead Bashar Majhi established a reign of terror in the mid-80s.

Noakhali Superintendent of Police (SP) Harun-ur-Rashid Hazari said a joint squad of Rab, Coast Guard and local police cordoned off Janata Bazar area around 4:00am yesterday when the pirate gang led by Bashar was preparing for robbery.

Sensing the presence of law enforcers, the pirates started shooting at the squad prompting them to fire back.

Bashar was caught in the line of fire and died on the spot, the SP added. Rab sources said the pirate was accused in 31 cases, including six for murder.

Local lawmaker Ekramul Kabir and Inspector General of Police offered bounties of Tk 2 lakh and Tk 1 lakh respectively for the capture of Bashar.



Bangladesh Jubo Moitri forms a human chain in front of the National Press Club in the city yesterday demanding trial of war criminals including Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami leaders Motiur Rahman Nizami and Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojahid.

# TB prevalence drops in Bangladesh

### Says survey

BSS, Dhaka

The prevalence of infectious pulmonary tuberculosis (TB) has come down in the country, finds a nationwide survey conducted in 20 years, thanks to scaling up of directly observed DOTs therapy, high case detection and cures rates as well as improved socio-economic status of population.

The new survey titled "National tuberculosis disease-cum infection prevalence survey 2007-'09" was jointly conducted by National Tuberculosis Programme (NTP) of the government and ICDDR,B with supports of USAID, KNCB, WHO and the Global Fund.

"The overall prevalence of smear-positive TB was 79.4 per one lakh adults, which is significantly lower than previous survey results or the current estimates," read the summary of the survey, which is scheduled to be made public at a city hotel today.

The last nationwide survey was conducted in 1987-88, when the TB burden among adults aged over 15 years was 910 per one lakh population. There were also some other regional surveys done in 1995, 2001 and 2002, where ICDDR,B in its survey found the prevalence rate 95 per one lakh eight years ago.

"This wide variation might be due to the design of the study, sampling strategy and sampling adequacy including the quality of data collection," said an epidemiologist who obtained a copy of the study before its today's formal dissemination.

The survey was conducted over 52,098 adults aged over 15 and nearly 18,000 children between 5 and 14 years in 20 urban and 20 rural clusters in 20 districts of the country. All the participants of the study submitted two sputum samples, which were examined by high quality fluorescence microscopy at ICDDR,B.

According to the new survey, a higher prevalence of TB was found in rural areas

than urban or semi-urban areas, while persistent higher prevalence among males was recorded compared to females in the country.

Nearly two-thirds of the TB cases were found among the 45 plus age group, while over 80 percent cases recorded among married couples.

At least two, out of five, cases were identified farmers and day labourers, while the lesser the education the more the TB prevalence was recorded during the study done between 2007 and 2009.

One of the important findings of this study is that the vulnerable population in Bangladesh are the elderly male (55 years or above), people with poor economic condition (monthly income less than Tk 3,000 and had no education) as shown in the table of the study.

"This has two meanings one of which is that TB continues to affect the poorest segment of the society although it is known that TB is a disease of the poor but it is again proved in the big study," said Dr

Abdul Hamid Salim, immediate past country director of Damien Foundation Bangladesh (DFB), one of the two major components of the study.

Dr Salim, now in Dutch-based KNCB, told over email that more TB prevalence among elderly population is a good sign.

He says probably the infection transmission is under control because of extensive DOT network across Bangladesh. The young children are less infected and as such young people have less TB, he said.

But an epidemiologist in Dhaka said, "What is very strange in the study is that the urban population has less TB than the rural which looks a bit strange. I do not at all think that TB services in urban is better than rural areas. Urban TB control still needs to be strengthened."

Dr K Zaman of ICDDR,B was the principal investigator of the survey, while Prof Dr Provat Chandra Barua was the chairman of the study steering committee.



Cirdap Director General Durga P Paudyal speaks at a seminar on "Watershed management for rural development and poverty alleviation in Cirdap member countries" at Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday. On his left is SMA Khan and on his right are Dr MA Quasem and Dr SK Singh. (Story on Page 3)

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