

Use own efforts to face disasters

Minister urges all

UNB, Dhaka

Food and Disaster Management Minister Dr Abdur Razzaque has urged all concerned for taking effective preparation with own efforts to face all sorts of natural calamities and disasters in future.

"Bangladesh had faced a series of natural disasters including cyclone Sidr and Aila over the last couple of years. We didn't get adequate assistance from international communities, as expected," he said at a national workshop yesterday.

Disaster Management Bureau (DMB) and Disaster Management and Relief Division under the Food and Disaster Management Ministry jointly organised the workshop on 'Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-2015): Progress Monitoring' at the IDB Bhaban auditorium in the city.

Food and Disaster Management Secretary In-Charge Dr M Aslam Alam, Project Director of Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP) M Abul Qayyum and UNISDR Representative Dr M Aminul Islam also addressed the workshop. Director General of Disaster Management Bureau Ahsan Zakir presided.

Addressing the session, Razzaque said approximately 200 million people - most of them poor - become the victims of various natural disasters every year across the world.

About preparedness, he said although the 'Hyogo Framework for Action' was taken in 2005, Bangladesh had taken preparedness programmes after the country's independence to reduce disaster risks as well as to address natural disasters.

"Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman signed an agreement with the International Red Cross in 1973 to operate the Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP) with some 42,675 volunteers trained in the country's coastal belt."

Razzaque said the present government has also trained some 5,000 volunteers in Khulna and Satkhira districts to expand the operation of the CPP.

Referring to the various government initiatives to address disasters, the minister said, "We've procured heavy equipments at a cost Tk 70 crore to address the disasters and these have already been handed over to the concerned authorities."



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina beholding the spectacular Winter Passing Out Parade of Bangladesh Navy at Bangladesh Naval Academy in Chittagong yesterday. (Story on Page 20)

PHOTO: ISPR

People to reply 'misdeeds'

Mosharraf warns govt

UNB, Dhaka

BNP standing committee member Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain said people are ready to give reply to the government's "misdeeds" and for creating unstable situation in the country.

He made the remarks at a rally in the city's Muktagong yesterday.

Shechhasebok Dal held the rally protesting cases filed by Anti-Corruption Commission against BNP Secretary General and former chief whip Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, former speaker Zamiruddin Sircar and ex-deputy speaker Akhter Hamid Siddiqui.

They also protested 'false cases' filed against BNP leaders Amanullah Aman, Nazimuddin Alam and Shechhasebok Dal President Habib-un-Nabi Khan Sohel.

Mosharraf said all nationalist and democratic forces will have to be united under the leadership of Khaleda Zia to save the country and its people.

Referring to the two-year old Awami League government's failures in various sectors, he said the government has totally failed to contain prices of essentials as the prices of various commodities have shot up compared to last year's.

Mosharraf said the ruling party will claim success of the completion of another one-year rule but he questioned why prices of various essentials have gone up.

He said now the price of coarse rice is Tk 36 to 38 per kg while one year back it was Tk 26 to 28 a kg. The price of coarse rice was Tk 16 to 18 a kg when BNP completed its tenure in 2006.

The BNP leader said price of garlic is Tk 120 to Tk 180 per kg against Tk 90 kg of the last year.

He protested the cases filed against BNP leaders and its front organisations and demanded immediate withdrawal of the cases.

Presided over by Senior Vice-president of Shechhasebok Dal Monir Hossain, the rally was also addressed, among others, by Shamsuzzaman Duda, Fazlul Huq Milon, M Elias Ali, Zainul Abdin Farooque MP, Abul Khaiyer Bhuiyan MP, Moazzem Hossain Alal, Abdus Salam, Shirin Sultana, Sarafat Ali Sapu and Shafiq Bari Babu.

\$1.68b loss for traffic jam a yr

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Traffic congestion in the capital causes a loss of about \$1.68 billion a year.

The estimate was given by SM Salehuddin, additional executive director of Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB), at a seminar on Modernisation of Bus Transport in Dhaka yesterday.

"Annual loss caused by traffic congestion in Dhaka city is approximately \$1.68 billion," he said.

Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) organised the seminar at its office.

Salman F Rahman, private sector adviser of Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, Geetam Tiwari, professor of Transport

Planning at Indian Institute of Technology and FBCCI President AKAZad also spoke on the occasion.

Discussions said traffic gridlock causes economic losses by eating up travel time and burning of excess fuel. It also causes environmental damage and road accidents.

Experts blamed lack of transport infrastructure, poor traffic management, illegal car parking, too little footpath and pedestrians' facility and absence of separate lane for bus for the city's nagging traffic jam.

Also contributes to it is the mixed traffic flow of motorised and non-motorised vehicles on the road, said the DTCB official.

To reduce congestion and thus economic losses, public transport systems, especially bus services, must be improved by allocating a separate lane for passenger

bus in the capital, speakers observed.

Geetam Tiwari, professor of Transport Planning at Indian Institute of Technology, stressed the need for separate lanes for bus.

Presently, some 7,000 buses carry about 25 lakh commuters daily. But these buses often compete with each other creating severe jam.

The competition is fierce, as the number of bus owners is very high.

Salehuddin of DTCB said public traffic system in Dhaka will improve significantly if competition between bus operators is reduced by merging of bus companies.

Salman F Rahman said infrastructure must be improved to ease traffic in Dhaka. He also emphasised the need for strong regulatory body and coordinated implementation efforts to relieve commuters from traffic mess.

JS body for action against outsiders in MP hostels

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Stern measures will be taken if any lawmaker illegally allows others except his/her family members to stay in their allotted flats in the parliament members' buildings and MP hostels in the city, a parliamentary body said yesterday.

The House Committee of the parliament also asked the parliament secretariat to prepare a list of flats within two weeks where outsiders are living in lieu of the respective lawmakers or his/her family members.

The watchdog also expressed strong resentment over the close down of parliament cafeteria from December 13 and asked the secretariat to submit a report on how to resume operations of the cafeteria.

"It is totally illegal that lawmakers allow outsiders in the flats which were allocated for them to stay. We have found that a number of lawmakers are not staying in their respective flats and allowing others to stay there causing security threat to others," Abdus Shahid, chief of the committee told reporters after a meeting

at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

Meeting sources told The Daily Star that as many as 28 lawmakers are not living in their respective flats allocated in the parliament members' building at city's Manik Mia Avenue and MP Hostels at Nakhalpara.

"We have asked the parliament secretariat to finalise a list of flats where outsiders are staying instead of the respective lawmakers," Abdus Shahid, also a chief whip of parliament said.

"After getting the final list from the parliament secretariat, letters will be sent to the respective lawmakers again urging them not to allow outsiders to stay in their flats," he added.

On closing down of parliament cafeteria, the committee chief said, we have asked parliament secretariat to come up with a report on how to reopen the cafeteria.

Meanwhile, the lone cafeteria styled "Shapta Dinga" shut down on December 13 following dispute between the two proprietors of the cafeteria causing food sufferings of hundreds of officials and employees of parliament secretariat.

Custodial deaths never good sign for justice

Says int'l tribunal chairman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Deaths in police custody can never bring well-being in the justice system, said International Crimes Tribunal Chairman Justice Nizamul Huq yesterday.

While speaking at a memorial meeting on Barrister Salma Sobhan, Justice KM Sobhan and Advocate Aminul Haque at Ain O Shalish Kendra (ASK), he said Advocate Aminul Haque proved this through legal battles.

He also spoke on the life and contributions of the three at the memorial meeting at the ASK office in the city.

Executive Director of ASK Advocate Sultana Kamal delivered the welcome note while Prof Rehman Sobhan, Rehan Sobhan and Advocate Asaduzzaman were present at the programme.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Commodore (ret'd) Mohammad Ataur Rahman, former chairman of Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd, distributes prizes among the students achieving the highest positions in banking department from different universities. The bank awarded the successes at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel in the city yesterday.

WFP scales up food security scheme

BSS, Dhaka

The United Nations World Food Programme executive board has approved a one-year extension of the current Bangladesh country programme to provide support to 2.1 million hungry, vulnerable and malnourished people at a cost of nearly US\$76 million.

The decision will enable WFP to continue development programmes to reduce malnutrition and improve the food security of ultra-poor households in Bangladesh until the end of 2011, says a press release.

"The one-year extension of the ongoing country programme will not only strengthen our partnership with the government, but also support Bangladesh in achieving its Millennium Development Goals. We are committed to continuing our focus on the provision of food assistance to the ultra-poor population," said Christa Rader, WFP Representative in Bangladesh.

The WFP has been supporting the government's Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) programme, the largest safety net programme in Bangladesh, for 30 years.

In line with its new country strategy, WFP's food distribution programme under VGD will be phased out by the end of 2010.

The government has increased its own food and cash contribution to VGD and will cover the needs previously met by WFP.

Meanwhile, WFP will provide support to the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs to enhance programme management.

As a part of gradually handing over the school meals programme to the government, WFP will also extend technical support to the national school-feeding programme, in addition to providing food assistance to 1.2 million school children.

WFP will continue to place emphasis on enhancing the resilience of the disaster-stricken communities through food-for-work and cash-for-work schemes, thereby ensuring the creation of community assets that protect the livelihoods of the most vulnerable.



PHOTO: STAR

Mother of Abul Kalam Azad, a gold trader of Tantibazar in Old Dhaka, wails as her son was shot dead by muggers yesterday. (Story on Page 3)

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Bangladesh's victory!

Best Value Destination

Bangladesh was selected as the 'Best-Value Destination' for 2011 by Lonely Planet, the world largest travel guidebook, owned by BBC Worldwide. This recognition will help raise awareness of Bangladesh across the globe as a tourist destination.

We are earning victories everyday as we march on in the journey of progress.

Ignite the power within

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