

Stop unplanned housing to keep Dhaka livable

Environmentalists tell conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka will turn into an unlivable city unless a plan is immediately put in place to develop a smooth transport system and stop unplanned housing, said environmentalists yesterday at a conference in the capital.

Environmentalist groups Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa) and Bangladesh Environment Network (BEN) jointly organised the daylong conference on urbanisation, traffic jam and environment at Bangladesh Institute of Management.

The government is planning to develop four satellite towns around Dhaka with one lakh high-rise buildings in each to reduce the overwhelming pressure on the capital, said Abdul

Mannan Khan, state minister for housing and public works.

He said a group of powerful realtors are filling up rivers, canals and wetland in and around Dhaka city for their housing projects. Thus, the city goes under water even after a moderate rainfall.

However, the minister said, the recently introduced real estate management act provides for two years imprisonment and a fine of Tk 5 lakh for placing an advertisement for illegal housing projects.

Prof Jamilur Reza Choudhury, a noted civil engineer and transport expert, said Dhaka might become unlivable if no measure is taken soon to implement the Detailed Area Plan (DAP) and subsequent urban plans.

He said the government has more

interest in high investment and infrastructure development than effective management of the available space.

The effective use of roads and circular waterways can reduce one-third of Dhaka's prevailing traffic congestion.

Besides, commuter railway service can bring about long-term solution to transport problem, said Reza.

"Bangladesh has lost about 10 percent of its agricultural land over the past two decades due to unplanned developments," he added.

Prof Muzaffer Ahmad, president of Bapa, said instead of Dhaka-centric developments on education, health and housing, the government must strengthen the local government institutions to keep rural people from crowding into the capital.



Citizen for Good Governance (Shujon) forms a human chain at Manik Mia Avenue in the city yesterday urging political parties to nominate honest and efficient candidates in the upcoming municipal polls. (Story on page 3) PHOTO: STAR



First round of NID observed

BSS, Dhaka

First round of the 19th National Immunisation Day (NID) was observed yesterday across the country by administering polio vaccine to nearly 2.2 crore children for maintaining its polio-free status.

Describing NID as a movement, Deputy Speaker Shawkat Ali said Bangladesh has been made polio-free through this movement. "We have to maintain the polio-free status of the country with united efforts of all," he added.

He said this while he was inaugurating the NID programme organised by Japan-Bangladesh Friendship Hospital at Dhanmondi in the city.

Polio vaccine is being administered to a child at Japan-Bangladesh Friendship Hospital in the city during the first round of the 19th National Immunisation Day (NID) yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

PROPOSED ELEVATED RAILWAY

DU for alternative route

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University (DU) authorities yesterday proposed an alternative route for the city's proposed elevated (partially) railway that goes over the campus from Shahbagh to Chankharpool.

The railway route is planned to run from Shahbagh intersection through TSC, the Central Shaheed Minar, and Dhaka Medical College & Hospital to Chankharpool.

The university authorities, on the other hand, recommended that the railroad go straight from Shahbagh through Doel Chattar to Chankharpool.

DU authorities yesterday held a view-exchange meeting with the experts of the elevated railway project called Mass Rapid Transit (MRT Line 6).

The request was made considering the security and beauty of the campus and the Shaheed Minar.

According to the plan proposed by Dhaka Transport Coordinate Board (DTCB) experts, one station will be built near Jagannath Hall on DU campus and the other at Chankharpool intersection.

DU Vice Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique said the project will certainly help reduce traffic congestion in the capital and it should be implemented as early as possible.

"There will be three dormitories of female students alongside the route DTCB has planned; so it has been a matter of our girl students' privacy too," he said.

In response, the DTCB experts said they will take DU's proposal to their technical team and examine the plan again soon.

The proposed MRT is a 21.5-kilometre partially elevated railway from Uttara to Sayedabad through the capital with 18 stations at different places.

According to the project experts, some 60,000 people will be able to travel on the rail route everyday.

DTCB Executive Director GM Zainal Abedin Bhuiyan was present as the chief guest at the meeting held at DU's Old Senate Bhaban.

Md Moniruzzaman, deputy team leader of Padma Multi-Purpose Bridge Project; and Ashraf Alam Sarker of Jica study team; made two separate power-point presentations on the project.

PM'S ADDRESS

AL breaches pledge: Jamaat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday said Awami League has breached its electoral pledge on submission of wealth statement of its ministers and lawmakers.

The party yesterday came up with formal reaction on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's address to the nation on Thursday.

In a press release, Jamaat's Acting Secretary General ATM Azharul Islam said AL promised its leaders will submit wealth report every year, once the party comes in power.

Two years elapsed, but none of the AL minister and lawmaker has submitted wealth statement as yet, said the release.

Pointing to the premier's speech on arrest of Jamaat leaders, Azharul claimed, "Honourable PM told a lie on the so-called war crimes trial."

GOVT'S TWO-YEAR CELEBRATION

Ctg city AL factions to hold separate programmes

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, Ctg

Intra-party feud and division in Awami League (AL) Chittagong city unit has intensified again over celebrating government's two-year term and marking the Homecoming Day of Bangabandhu.

One faction is led by city unit President and former mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury and the other led by Vice President and lawmaker of Kotwali constituency Nurul Islam BSc.

Both are set to hold two separate rallies today and tomorrow.

Nurul's faction rented Laldighi Moidan for tomorrow where Mohiuddin's long-time close supporter Primary and Mass Education Minister Afsarul Amin is scheduled to attend as the chief guest.

Two other close aides of Mohiuddin, city unit Joint General Secretary Advocate Ibrahim Hossain Chowdhury Babul and its Treasurer Abdus Salam will attend.

The faction held a meeting, in this regard, with leaders of grassroots and activists of 43 organisational wards at Chittagong Circuit House on Friday.

Leaders at the meeting blamed Mohiuddin's faction for spreading confusion among the party activists about Monday's rally. Pointing to Mohiuddin, Afsarul said city unit is not depended on one man, rather based on grassroots activists and urged all to make tomorrow's meeting a success.

City unit General Secretary Kazi Inamul Hoque Danu said they are holding the rally a day before today as the venue was hired earlier.

Government

responsible for HR violation

Say speakers

DU CORRESPONDENT

The government must take responsibility of human rights violations including killing in border areas and in the name of 'crossfire', said speakers at a discussion yesterday.

The discussants came down heavily on the government for not being able to take effective measures to stop killing of Bangladeshis by Border Security Force (BSF) of India.

The discussion was organised by Odhikar, a human rights organisation, to release its annual report on human rights scenario in Bangladesh at Dhaka Reporters' Unity in the city.

Political analyst Farhad Mazher at the programme expressed concern over the government's silence on the present situation of human rights violations.

Indicating role of Rab, he said it is not acceptable that a state-run force carries out extra-judicial killings in the name of crossfire.

Awami League lawmaker Saber Hossain Chowdhury urged political parties not to use human rights issue in political interests rather work together in protecting human rights in society.

Columnist Syed Abul Moksud, lawmaker Ashifa Ashrafi Papia, Biplobi Workers Party General Secretary Shaiful Haque also spoke on the occasion with Odhikar President Dr CR Abrar in the chair.

Obituary

BSS, Dhaka

S M Ansar, a valiant freedom fighter, passed away due to kidney failure at Bangladesh Medical College Hospital at Uttara in the city on Friday at the age of 60.

Ansar, son of Hatem Ali Talukdar, resident of Baultali village under Bauphal upazila of Patuakhali.

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