

## URBAN, HOUSING POLICIES Govt yet to approve

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has yet to approve urban and housing policies though planned urbanisation remains a key to overall development and urban liveability, leading planners said at a discussion yesterday.

Prof Nazrul Islam, a noted urban researcher, who led the team on framing National Urban Policy and National Housing Policy, said they submitted the urban policy seven years back and the housing policy five years back.

The thrust in the draft urban policy was on decentralised development of economic and urban services so that onrush of rural migrants does not overburden the capital city, he said.

Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP) organised the discussion, "Planned Town for Balanced Development", on its premises in the capital in observance of World Urban Planning Day.

General Secretary of BIP Khondker M Ansar Hossain said the government's Urban Development Directorate, which should have been the backbone of the country's urban planning, had long been ignored.

Unplanned concentrated development is taking place at random across the

country in the absence of an overall land use plan, viewed Dr M Rahmatullah, a transport planner and former director of UNESCAP.

He underscored the need for an independent city government for management of Dhaka city, where 29 government departments under seven ministries work for physical and service development.

Existing small towns must be developed with urban facilities to arrest people's rush to Dhaka and destruction of wetlands and croplands for housing, said Akhtar Hossain Chowdhury, a professor of Khulna University.

Mahbubun Nabi, a retired professor of urban planning of Buet, said planned development was impossible without decentralisation of political, administrative and economic power.

Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu also stressed decentralisation for development and urged the government to prepare a national physical planning to ensure balanced development.

Adviser to a former caretaker government Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman said balanced development could not be ensured without planned urbanisation.

## KHALAF MURDER Four more prosecution witnesses give statements

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Four more prosecution witnesses gave their statements before a Dhaka court yesterday regarding the killing of Saudi embassy official Khalaf Al Ali.

On March 6, Khalaf, an official at the consular section of the embassy in Dhaka, was shot dead near his Gulshan house in the capital's diplomatic enclave.

The prosecution witnesses are Aminul Islam, Khalaf's driver, Saiful Islam, a caretaker of Khalaf's residence; Zulfikar Ali and Helal Uddin, security guards of two other houses near the occurrence spot.

Later, defendant's lawyers cross-examined them.

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