

Are we really prepared?

DNCC mayor raises question about city's preparedness on major earthquake

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Even if a 7.5 or 8.0 magnitude earthquake hits an area close to the capital, around 1.66 lakh city buildings would be affected and about 75,000 of those would collapse, Dhaka North City Corporation Mayor Annisul Huq said yesterday citing a government estimate.

It would cause casualties to some 1.52 lakh people, he said at the launch of a report on urban disaster resilience assessment.

The Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) and SEEDS Asia, an NGO working on disasters, jointly hosted the programme at a Baridhara hotel.

The mayor said removal of debris would take 122 crore truck trips in case of such a disaster.

"Are we prepared to tackle a situation of this magnitude given that it took us months to manage one Rana Plaza collapse?" Annisul questioned.

Md Mesbahul Islam, chief executive officer of DNCC, said preparedness is the key to minimise the damage caused by any such major natural disaster.

The city's open spaces must be

preserved to deal with an earthquake, canals and water reservoirs to fight fires and drainage system to help flood management, he added.

Terming earthquake an imminent danger for Bangladesh, Takatoshi Nishikata, country representative of Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica), said Dhaka is extremely vulnerable to quakes.

The city is also prone to flood and potential fire hazards, he said citing the resilience report.

People's resilience to such disasters is vital for evacuation and rescue works, Takatoshi observed.

According to the report, Dhaka north city has been gaining higher resilience to disasters since 2010.

The ward-level disaster risk assessment of five zones in the DNCC area was carried out by SEEDS Asia in cooperation with Brac University in June-September last year, with technical assistance from Japan.

SEEDS Asia Chairman Rajib Shaw and DNCC Superintending Tariq Bin Yousuf spoke, among others.



Two puppies sit on a piece of furniture at the Banshabari slum where a devastating fire gutted over 220 shanties early yesterday. Their owner Moni, the woman seen in the photo, said the two animals lost their mother and sister in the incident. Amid cries of the victims, these dogs also drew everyone's attention. Story on page 3.

PHOTO: MUNTAKIM SAAD



Maj Gen Md Nazimuddin Maj Gen Md Saiful Abedin

Changes

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and commander of Savar area. The incumbent GOC Maj Gen Waqar-uz-Zaman has been made military secretary (MS) of the Bangladesh Army.

Maj Gen AKM Abdullahil Baque, the incumbent MS, has been made commandant of DSCSC.

Deputy Force Commander of UNAMID in Sudan's Darfur Maj Gen Mohammad Maksudur Rahman has been appointed as the GOC of the 10 Infantry Division in Ramu of Cox's Bazar. The incumbent GOC Maj Gen Ataul Hakim Sarwar Hasan has been made commander of Logistics Area in Dhaka Cantonment.

Director of Military Operations (DMO) Brig Gen Nayeem Ashfaq Chowdhury is the new GOC of 55 Infantry Division and Jessore area commander.

Lt Col Mohammad Rashidul Hassan, director of Inter Services Public Relation (ISPR) Directorate, confirmed The Daily Star last night about the reshuffle.

The government has issued a gazette notification to this effect.

New CGS Maj Gen Nazimuddin would be promoted to the rank of lieutenant general and new GOC of 55 Infantry Division Brig Gen Ashfaq Chowdhury would be promoted to the rank of major general at their new offices, said an ISPR official.

Rohingyas get relief materials from Malaysia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Rohingyas, who have recently taken shelter in Rohingya slums in Cox's Bazar, are receiving Malaysian relief materials.

On Wednesday, a 25-member Malaysian delegation, led by co-chief of the humanitarian mission and lawmaker Abdul Azeez bin Abdul Rahim, distributed relief items among 150 undocumented Rohingya families of three slums, said sources at the district administration.

The Rohingyas entered Bangladesh following a military crackdown against them in Myanmar Rakhine state.

The three slums are in Kutupalong, Balukhali of Ukhiya upazila and Leda of Teknaf upazila. Of the relief items, there are 35 types of materials, including rice, cooking oil, mineral water, sugar and clothes.

International Organisation for Migration and Bangladesh Red Crescent Society assisted the team in giving out the relief materials.

A cargo vessel named Nautical Aliya from Malaysia carrying the relief aid reached the Chittagong Port on Tuesday.

Saiful Islam Majumder, additional deputy commissioner (education and ICT) of Cox's Bazar, said the relief materials were kept in godowns in Ukhiya and Teknaf and those would also be distributed on Sunday or Monday.

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2-state solution

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between the two sides.

Saeb Erekat, chief negotiator for the Palestinians, raised the spectre of "apartheid" and called for "concrete measures in order to save the two-state solution."

"This is going to give Israel a free hand to do what it wants," said Mosheer A Amer, an associate professor at the Islamic University here in Gaza City. "At least Obama had some control over Netanyahu."

Israel captured and occupied the West Bank and East Jerusalem 50 years ago, in 1967, and the status of the former Jordanian territories has been a source of conflict ever since. (So has the Gaza Strip, which had formerly been administered by Egypt.)

For Palestinians, who seek a state in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, East Jerusalem and in the Gaza Strip, even the notion of a US retreat from the internationally backed goal of a future Palestine existing alongside Israel was alarming.

"If the Trump Administration rejects this policy it would be destroying the chances for peace and undermining American interests, standing and credibility abroad," Hanan Ashrawi, a senior member of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, said.

Trump has yet to speak to Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas and officials have quietly expressed alarm.

Abbas said his government was "ready to deal positively" with the White House, highlighting Trump's appeal to Netanyahu on to "hold back" on settlements -- seen as illegal by the international community -- for a "little while."

Hossam Zomlot, Abbas' special advisor, told AFP that while a two-state solution was still preferred, his administration was willing to discuss all options, providing Palestinian rights were protected.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, speaking in Cairo alongside the Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, stressed that the Israelis and Palestinians must not abandon a commitment to a two-state solution.

"There is no Plan B to the situation between Palestinians and Israelis but a two-state solution and that everything must be done to preserve that possibility," he said in remarks to the press.

Yesterday, Arab League chief Ahmed Abul Gheit said resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would require a

two-state solution, a day after Washington signalled it would drop that demand.

Abul Gheit affirmed that the conflict "requires a comprehensive and just peace based on a two-state solution with an independent Palestinian state," a statement said after he met UN chief Antonio Guterres in Cairo.

"WEAK" POSITION
Jihad Harb, a Palestinian political scientist, said the leadership was being cautious due to its "weak position" and its past failure to follow through on threats.

"The Palestinian leadership has failed to open a dialogue with the US administration. It is afraid that an escalation [in rhetoric] at this stage could ruin any possibility of dialogue."

The leadership, he added, has limited options if Trump continues to freeze them out.

It could return to the United Nations or International Criminal Court for another attempt to exert pressure, or instead push for "a movement of popular resistance against the occupation," according to Harb.

What a one-state solution would look like in reality remains unclear.

Ofer Zalzberg of the International Crisis Group think tank said the Trump administration appeared to have "zero clarity" on the meaning of a one-state solution, leaving the Israelis in prime position to dictate terms.

"Essentially Netanyahu was presented with the choice between one state and two," he said. "But he is in favour of one state and a half."

Shmuel Rosner from the Jewish People Policy Institute agreed it was unclear what Trump meant.

"I don't think what Trump presented yesterday was a realistic vision for Middle East peace," he said.

ARAB-BACKED PEACE PROCESS?
Declaring his deep support for the Jewish state and abandoning the bedrock principle that the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will come via two states, Trump referred to the possibility of an Arab-backed peace process, an idea that's been floating around since the beginning of this century without producing results.

"The United States will encourage a peace and really, a great peace deal," Trump declared at a news conference alongside Netanyahu. "We'll be working on it very, very diligently."

Asked whether he was abandoning the idea of a two-state solution, Trump said, "I'm looking at two-state and one-

state, and I like the one that both parties like."

He continued, "If Israel and the Palestinians are happy, I'm happy with the one they like the best."

He also said at one point, "It is the parties themselves that must directly negotiate. Both sides will have to make compromises." Then turning to

A White House official said peace did not necessarily have to entail Palestinian statehood and it was up to the Israelis and Palestinians themselves to decide on the shape of any future peace.

In response, PLO leading Hanan Ashrawi, said if Trump was "trying to create alternative realities, then he should spell out what the options are. A

homes and legalized settler outposts in the West Bank.

Netanyahu, who endorsed the idea of two states in 2009 under pressure from the Obama administration, sidestepped questions about whether he still supports the concept Wednesday, saying instead he wanted to avoid "labels" and talk substance: the need for Palestinians to recognise Israel as a Jewish state and the need for Israel to have overriding security control. It's not clear how Netanyahu is going to persuade them to come to the table.

He also didn't give a direct response when asked whether he would comply with Trump's request at the news conference that he "hold back" on settlement expansion.

Pressed by reporters later Wednesday, the Israeli prime minister replied, "I think we'll try to find a common understanding that is consistent with pursuit of peace and security."

It was an early indication that getting the parties to comply with US aspirations in the Middle East can be a challenge.

"I believe the great opportunity for peace comes from a regional approach," Netanyahu said at the White House, "from involving our newfound Arab partners in the pursuit of a broader peace and peace with the Palestinians."

Trump described the idea of Arab involvement as "actually a much bigger deal, a much more important deal in a sense. It would take in many, many countries and it would cover a very large territory."

Trump has said his chief negotiator for Middle East peace will be his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, who has already been meeting with influential Arab leaders, such as Jordan's King Abdullah and UAE ambassador to the US Youssef al-Otaiba.

"I think we have some pretty good cooperation from people in the past who would never, ever have even thought about doing this," Trump said, "so we'll see how that works."

Sachs said that Trump seems to think the regional approach is new.

"It's not," he said, pointing to a 2001 Saudi initiative that proposed Arab recognition of Israel in exchange for peace with the Palestinians and Syria and an independent Palestinian state whose capital was East Jerusalem.

Source: The New York Times, CNN, AFP and Reuters

QUOTES FROM TRUMP-BIBI CONFERENCE

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actually for a while is something that allows them to show more flexibility than they have in the past. As far as settlements, I would like to see you hold back on settlements for a little bit.

PALESTINIAN 'HATE'

Trump: I think the Palestinians have to get rid of some of that hate that they're taught from a very young age. They're taught tremendous hate. I have seen what they're taught... it starts in the school room, and they have to acknowledge Israel.

ISRAELI DEMANDS

Netanyahu: First, the Palestinians must recognise the Jewish state. They have to stop calling for Israel's destruction. Second, in any peace agreement, Israel must retain the overriding security control over the entire area west of the Jordan River.

'HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY'

Netanyahu: We can seize an historic opportunity, because for the first time in my lifetime and for the first time in the life of my country, Arab countries in the region do not see Israel as an

enemy, but increasingly as an ally. I believe that under your leadership, this change in our region creates an unprecedented opportunity to strengthen security and advance peace. Let us seize this moment together.

IRANIAN 'THREAT'

Trump: The security challenges faced by Israel are enormous, including the threat of Iran's nuclear ambitions, which I've talked a lot about. One of the worst deals I've ever seen is the Iran deal. My administration has already imposed new sanctions on Iran, and I will do more to prevent Iran from ever developing -- I mean ever -- a nuclear weapon.

'UNFAIR' UN

Trump: We reject unfair and one-sided actions against Israel at the United Nations, which has treated Israel, in my opinion, very, very unfairly.

EMBASSY TO JERUSALEM?

Trump: As far as the embassy moving to Jerusalem, I would love to see that happen. We're looking at it very, very strongly. We're looking at it with great care. Believe me. We'll see what happens. Okay?

SOURCE: AFP

Netanyahu, he added a question: "You know that, right?"

The night before Netanyahu's arrival at the White House, senior administration officials cast doubt on the two-state solution, which the international community still holds as the basic foundation of any agreement. The US explicitly called for that arrangement under Republican President George W Bush and Democratic President Barack Obama.

one-state solution would require equal rights and citizenship for all, unless he is advocating an apartheid state."

There are growing questions about whether a two-state solution is even possible, given Israel's continued settlement building, said Diana Buttu, a former spokeswoman for the Palestinian Liberation Organization who now teaches at Harvard University.

Since Trump's inauguration, Israel has announced 6,000 new settlement

Charge pressing stalled as Nitor 'loses' medical reports

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the director, the police official said, adding that he met the director on January 20, but he sought more time.

Contacted, Prof Iqbal Qavi, the director, said he had no idea where the reports were and that he had asked his staff to look into the matter.

This correspondent on Sunday visited the hospital's record room and queried about the report with the sisters' registration numbers.

An official named Mohiuddin, who was in-charge of the record room on that day, said they had no record of any girl by these names having received treatment at the hospital.

The record room is staffed in rotation, he said.

This correspondent also visited the record room earlier this month, but two staff there said they had no such files.

A high official of the hospital, requesting anonymity, told The Daily Star that they looked for the reports but

could not find those.

However, Abdul Gani Mollah, a professor at Nitor's orthopaedic department that makes the reports, said files of such major cases were not supposed to go missing.

Also the joint director of the hospital, Gani said they would definitely look into the matter to know what happened.

He could not say anything when this correspondent asked him how a report could go missing.

Victims' father Ahsan Habib said he went to the hospital several times for the reports, but they failed to provide those.

He suspected that the accused in connivance with some hospital staff removed the reports.

In the meantime, the prime accused and his accomplice secured bail from court.

On October 19 last year, the 16-year-old sisters, who are HSC students of BCIC College on Chiriakhana Road,

were assaulted near the college gate when they were returning home.

Jibon Karim alias Babu, owner of Ahona Fast Food and Khabar Hotel in the area, beat them up with a bamboo stick, as they protested abusive language hurled at them by him. As he is an influential man in the area, no one came to their rescue.

Jibon is said to have close ties with local political leaders.

The victims' father filed a case with Shah Ali Police Station the next day, accusing Jibon and some unnamed men of the attack.

Police arrested Jibon's restaurant partner, Lutfar Rahman, the same day while the Rapid Action Battalion arrested Jibon on October 24.

Both the arrestees are now on bail.

Had the police submitted the charge sheet earlier, they would not have got bail, Ahsan said, adding that he was disappointed with the way things were going.

The accused were moving freely before their eyes, which made his daughters feel more insecure, said the father.

Ahsan said his daughters were yet to recover from the injuries and that they were going to college with their mother.

Asked what would happen if police did not get the reports, IO Anuj said they would have to submit the charge sheet under section 323 of the Penal Code, meaning the victims might not get their rightful justice.

If they get the reports, he said, the charge sheet would be submitted under section 326 of the Penal Code, which means the chances of getting justice would be higher then.

Abdus Sattar Dulal, additional public prosecutor of Metropolitan Magistrate Court, told The Daily Star yesterday that mismatch between medical reports and the charge sheet or the first information report weakens a case and makes it easier for the accused

to go unpunished.

"We have seen at least 10 to 15 percent of cases in which the accused got bail or released due to poor evidence or such mismatch," he said.

Bangladesh National Woman Lawyers' Association Executive Director Salma Ali told The Daily Star that delay in submitting charge sheet, absence of proper evidence, damaged evidence and not presenting evidence properly were reasons enough to ruin any case.

It all goes in favour of the accused, she added.

IO Anuj said if proper supporting documents or evidence were not there, the charge sheet could not be filed properly, which would create more difficulties.

The investigation officer is supposed to submit charge sheet within 180 days for any case. However, for drug-related cases, the IO has to submit charge sheet within 21 days.