

# Unplanned urbanisation a big barrier

Says Centre for Policy Dialogue, suggests economic plan for every urban area

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unplanned urbanisation is now a recognised structural barrier to all middle-income countries, including Bangladesh, in becoming developed nations, said Centre for Policy Dialogue Distinguished Fellow Debapriya Bhattacharya.

He said this while sharing the research paper on "How Prepared is the Urban Local Government in Bangladesh to Deliver SDGs?" during a dialogue organised by the CPD at a city hotel yesterday.

Debapriya said development experience of the countries which were on the so-called middle-income track, especially some Latin American countries, showed they remained stuck in their middle-income status and could not come out as developed nations largely because of unplanned urbanisation.

The CPD held the dialogue on "Delivering SDGs in Bangladesh through Urban Local Government: An Exploration of Status, Prospects and Challenges".

It said the country's cities should be developed and managed in a planned way, led by urban local government institutions, for sustainable development.

There should be an urban plan or city plan for each urban area as well as individual economic plans, the think tank said in a research paper disseminated during the dialogue.

Debapriya said development activities centring urban local government were very limited in Bangladesh. Most of such activities were done centring rural local government.

Debapriya and CPD Senior Research Associate Umme Shefa

Rezban jointly presented the research paper.

Debapriya added that global projection suggests that total urban population would be more than the rural population by 2035 after the end of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) period (2016-2030).

In future, this issue will be very crucial and it is also important for Bangladesh, he said.

He pointed out some challenges to the country's urban local government bodies for their proper functioning and proposed establishing a Local Government Commission to overcome those.

The "colonial mindset" of dominant bureaucracy, centralised governance mechanism, and the government's political attitude were the challenges for the urban local government in implementing the SDGs, he said in the research paper.

Chairing and moderating the dialogue, another CPD Distinguished Fellow Prof Mustafizur Rahman said urban issues and areas were important from the SDGs perspective of "Leave No One Behind", as well as for implementing the goals.

Addressing the dialogue, former election commissioner Brig Gen (retd) Md Sakhawat Hossain said structural change in the local government system was required to function properly.

In the existing system, women municipality councillors of reserved seats and upazila vice-chairmen often do not have any meaningful jobs, he said.

Speaking as the chief guest, Local Government and Rural Development Minister Tajul Islam said the government was committed to strengthening the local government

SEE PAGE 12 COL 1

# No electricity

FROM PAGE 1  
posting a Tk 1,000 bail. The farmer, however, had to suffer in jail for three days.

Jalal said he was jailed without any reason. After his release, he went to the office of the Palli Bidyut but did not get a copy of the case from the officials.

Md Zahirul Islam, managing director of the samity, claimed they had lodged a case with a Mymensingh court against Jamal Uddin but police arrested Jalal Mandol.

He said the samity had nothing to do with the mistake.

"I visited Jalal's house on Tuesday and there is no power connection in the residence," he said, adding that work for electricity connection in the area was going on but Jalal had not applied for a connection.

Locals said Jalal still felt the humiliation of the arrest. They

demanded an investigation into the matter.

Contacted, UP Chairman Rezwan Sarwar Robbani said it was a grievous mistake and police should be more careful before arresting someone.

Md Mazharul Islam, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Bhaluka Police Station, claimed they had just followed the arrest warrant issued by the court so they could not be the ones at fault.

This correspondent did not see a copy of the warrant.

Although there are laws against such wrongful confinement, which come with fines and prison sentences, Jalal did not express any desire to pursue the matter further.

In a similar incident earlier this month, a day labourer was sent to jail in Cumilla for not paying electricity bills, even though his house had no electricity supply.

# Sri Lanka admits

FROM PAGE 1  
minister Ruwan Wijewardene conceded at a press conference yesterday.

"The government has to take responsibility."

**CHILLING FOOTAGE**  
Chilling CCTV footage has emerged showing one of the attackers calmly patting a child on the head and shoulder moments before he walked into the packed St Sebastian's church and detonated his bomb among those attending Easter Mass, unleashing carnage.

President Maithripala Sirisena, who is also defence and law and order minister, pledged Tuesday to make "major changes in the leadership of the security forces in the next 24 hours".

He has asked the police chief and defence secretary to quit following the suicide bomb attacks, two sources close to the president said yesterday.

The sources declined to be named due to the sensitivity of the matter amid accusations within the government of intelligence failures ahead of the attacks, reported Reuters.

A US FBI team is now in Sri Lanka, deputy defence minister Ruwan Wijewardene said, and Britain, Australia and the United Arab Emirates have all offered intelligence help.

Experts say the bombings bear many of the hallmarks of IS attacks, and the government has suggested local militants could not have acted alone.

But it has not yet officially confirmed any IS role in the blasts against three churches packed with Easter worshippers and three high-end hotels.

A desperate search was under way for other suspects linked to the blasts, including the head of a local Islamist

group believed to have played a key role in the attacks.

The government has said the National Thowheeth Jama'at group was behind the attack, perhaps with international help, and its leader Zahran Hashim remains unaccounted for.

He appears to be among eight people seen in a video released by IS on Tuesday, leading seven others in a pledge of allegiance to IS chief Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

It was not yet clear whether Hashim was among the suicide attackers or had escaped after the blasts.

**MULTIPLE ATTACKERS**

Government officials have said they cannot rule out further attacks while suspects remain at large.

In all, nine people are believed to have blown themselves up in Sunday, either during attacks or when police attempted to arrest them.

Sri Lankan police sources have told AFP that two Muslim brothers, sons of a wealthy Colombo spice trader, blew themselves up at the Shangri-La and the Cinnamon Grand hotels.

Their father is now one of the 58 in custody.

The Kingsbury hotel in the capital was the last one hit. A fourth planned attack on a hotel failed, authorities said. The would-be attacker was followed back to a Colombo lodge, where he blew himself up, killing two people.

Sources close to the investigation said two more people -- a man and a woman -- blew themselves up at another location as security forces launched a raid. Those blasts killed three police.

Work was continuing to identify foreign victims in the blasts.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina consoles the grieving family members of Awami League leader Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim's grandson Zayan Chowdhury, who was killed in the blasts in Sri Lanka on Sunday. He was laid to rest in the capital's Banani graveyard yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

## Stay alert

FROM PAGE 1

"I don't know what they [terrorists] want to achieve through such killings of innocent people. The children are innocent ... why did they lose their lives?"

In the attacks, Zayan's father Moshiul Haque Chowdhury Prince (Selim's son-in-law) was injured. He is now undergoing treatment at a hospital in Sri Lanka.

Prince has not been told about his son's death, said Hasina.

The prime minister prayed for the salvation of the departed soul of Zayan and all others killed in the brutal attacks on April 21.

Meanwhile, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Mohammad Javed Patwary yesterday directed all units of police to step up security measures and intelligence surveillance ahead

of May Day, Buddha Purnima, Ramadan, and Eid-ul-Fitr.

The IGP gave the directives in a video conference with the chiefs of all police units and police high officials at the Police Headquarters (PHQ), Md Sohel Rana, assistant inspector general of police, told The Daily Star.

The two-hour long conference, from 7:00pm, was convened to review the country's security situation in the wake of terrorist attacks in Sri Lanka, according to sources.

In the meeting, the officials were instructed to be aware of homegrown small militant outfits, said a source who was present.

"We have already gathered intelligence and information from the arrested militants," said the official, requesting anonymity. The police are now following the leads.

AIG Sohel said the law enforcers were directed to work alongside the people, the same method used before to fight militancy and terrorism. The police chief also asked the community police network be used for curbing militancy, he said.

Sri Lankan police have so far arrested 58 people, all Sri Lankans, and security remains heavy, with bomb squads carrying out several controlled explosions of suspected packages yesterday.

The Sri Lankan government yesterday acknowledged "major" lapses for its failure to prevent the attacks despite prior intelligence warnings.

In all, nine people are believed to have blown themselves up, either during the attacks or when police attempted to arrest them.

## Bomber studied

FROM PAGE 1

told a briefing yesterday.

"Right now we are asking people to be vigilant but I think within a couple of days, within the next few days, we will have the situation totally under control."

Wijewardene told parliament on Tuesday that two Sri Lankan Islamist groups - the National Thowheeth Jama'at and Jammiyahul

Millathu Ibrahim - were responsible for the blasts, reported Reuters.

He said yesterday the leader of one of those groups blew himself up in the attack on the luxury Shangri-La Hotel in Colombo.

A total of 60 people had been detained for questioning across Colombo since Sunday, Wijewardene said. That total includes a Syrian, according to security sources.

Islamic State released a statement claiming responsibility for the attacks, but its propaganda channels did not substantiate the claim with evidence.

Most of those killed and wounded were Sri Lankans, although officials said 38 foreigners were also killed. That included British, US, Australian, Turkish, Indian, Chinese, Danish, Dutch and Portuguese nationals. Forty-five children were among the dead.

## Govt failure writ large

FROM PAGE 1

The laws were also not the first step.

In 2010, the government mulled banning begging and making it a punishable offence but backtracked after the move was considered a human rights violation. Afterwards, they turned their focus towards rehabilitation.

But going by the scores of beggars visible all over the country, it looks like neither the law nor the plans are being enforced properly.

According to an estimate gathered by representatives under the Department of Social Services (DSS) last year, the city had about 22,000 beggars, or 10 percent of all beggars across the country.

### GOVT REHABILITATION PROGRAMME

With the promise of an inclusive growth, the government in 2010 launched a programme on rehabilitation and alternative employment under the DSS of the social welfare ministry for rehabilitation and alternative employment for people engaged in begging.

Almost a decade later, little progress has been made.

Until 2015, the programme for rehabilitation and alternative employment for the people engaged in begging was limited to conducting surveys and a pilot project, which rehabilitated 37 people in Mymensingh and 29 in Jamalpur.

Ten NGOs were engaged in making lists of beggars across Dhaka back in 2010, but according to those involved the surveys were not completed properly.

Since 2010, about Tk 24 crore has been allocated for the programme in yearly budgets, with 80 percent of the funds left unused.

In all, nine people are believed to have blown themselves up in Sunday, either during attacks or when police attempted to arrest them.

Sri Lankan police sources have told AFP that two Muslim brothers, sons of a wealthy Colombo spice trader, blew themselves up at the Shangri-La and the Cinnamon Grand hotels.

Their father is now one of the 58 in custody.

The Kingsbury hotel in the capital was the last one hit. A fourth planned attack on a hotel failed, authorities said.

The would-be attacker was followed back to a Colombo lodge, where he blew himself up, killing two people.

Sources close to the investigation said two more people -- a man and a woman -- blew themselves up at another location as security forces launched a raid. Those blasts killed three police.

Work was continuing to identify foreign victims in the blasts.

they were in, so as to prevent the migration.

In fiscal 2017-18, the government rehabilitated 2,710 people in 58 districts at a cost of Tk 3 crore.

The number, however, was not even a drop in the ocean.

A 2017 Unicef data puts the yearly influx of urban migrants at five to seven lakh people.

Last year, deputy commissioners and district-level officers of the DSS were asked to estimate expenditure for rehabilitating beggars in their areas. They came up with a figure of over 2 lakh beggars and rehabilitation cost of Tk 422 crore.

Meanwhile, as part of the Dhaka city corporations' efforts to show the beggar menace is being dealt with, it declared places such as diplomatic zones, VIP areas and luxury hotels as "beggar-free".

Some 212 "professional beggars" have so far been detained from such zones in the city during drives by mobile courts, according to the DSS.

Driving beggars out of some areas in the capital that the government considers its "drawing room" is not a solution, says Debasish Kundu, of Dhaka University's sociology department. Their socio-economic condition and geographical areas where they are coming from should be analysed to prepare short-, mid- and long-term rehabilitation plan.

Issues related to begging may vary from place to place. Noted economist Hossain Zillur Rahman says the problem has to be seen from the humanitarian perspectives. Employment should be generated under social safety net for this most disadvantaged group, not focusing on skills, rather on the financial need of them, he added.

A problem with focusing on skills and employment generation has been the absence of children from being part of any rehabilitation programme.

### ALL CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND

Asked about the support provided to children in this regard, Shah Jahan says there are six shelter homes run by the government for vagabonds, where children stay until their families are traced.

During anti-vagrancy drives, police detain them and then place them before court that sends them to shelter homes.

A problem with focusing on skills and employment generation has been the absence of children from being part of any rehabilitation programme.

Asked about the support provided to children in this regard, Shah Jahan says there are six shelter homes run by the government for vagabonds, where children stay until their families are traced.

After handing them over to their families, guardians or relatives, there

is no follow-up to ensure that they get proper care and don't return to the streets.

"It [follow-up] is not possible," Shah Jahan says.

Forhad Hossain, executive director of LEEDO (Local Education and Development Organisation), says it rescued about 2,000 children from the streets over the last four years.

Most of them were between 5 and 12 and had left home to escape abuse or an environment where they were uncared for, resulting from separation between parents.

Some of them were abandoned.

Around 700 of them were reintegrated into their families. Others were sent to shelter homes run by the government and NGOs. Fifty-two children were accommodated in the Peace Home.