

'Affordable housing for all should be the goal'

Experts skeptic of govt plan to construct 68,400 new flats in Purbachal, Uttara

HELEMI ALAM

After the finance minister in his budget speech revealed the government's plan to construct up to 60,000 flats in Purbachal New Town and 8,400 in Uttara Sector-18 to resolve the housing problem, experts have cast doubt on the plan, pointing to examples of previous initiatives like this, which had flaws in implementation.

Alongside building the flats, as promised by the prime minister, steps have been taken to build four satellite cities in the vicinity of Dhaka, considering its growth. Moreover, there are plans to build Bangabandhu Satellite City at both ends of the Padma Multi-purpose Bridge, said Mustafa Kamal.

Iqbal Habib, joint secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, said they welcome the initiative to construct satellite towns, but the housing problem will not be resolved by constructing apartments by the government.

Habib said the government has failed to provide apartments in Uttara third phase at affordable prices, rather, they have become expensive apartments, as prices do not remain in control under government management.

Echoing Habib, Adil Mohammad Khan, general secretary of Bangladesh Institute of Planners, said prices of flats constructed by the government were almost similar to market prices, and as a result, low-income people cannot afford those.

Adil said there is a shortage of housing facilities across the country, and in some projects, flats were constructed in an unplanned way.

Giving an example, he said 6,636 flats in Uttara Sector-18 have already been constructed. "Though the project was implemented targeting lower-

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During BIWTA's drive to remove illegal structures from the banks of river Buriganga, hawkers in the area in Dhaka's Kamrangirchar were forced to move away due to all the demolitions. But after authorities left, many have returned to set up their stalls amid the rubble of bricks and cement. This photo was taken on Friday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Six carjackers arrested with stolen microbus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police's detective branch (DB) yesterday claimed to have arrested six members of a gang, involved in stealing microbuses for a long time.

In a special drive in Narsingdi and Cumilla on Friday, a team of DB police Mirpur division arrested them, said AKM Hafiz Akter, additional commissioner (DB) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

The arrestees are Mizan Mia, Habib Mia, Md Faruq, Kamal Mia, Al Amin and Mubarak.

Police seized a stolen microbus from them.

According to the case statement, on April 21, an unidentified person hired a microbus from Kishoreganj to receive his relative from Dhaka airport.

The next day, the driver, Md Abul Bashar, started his journey towards Dhaka with him. But in the middle of the journey that person picked up four more people and when the microbus reached near Abdullahpur, they hijacked the vehicle, reads the case statement.

A case was filed with Uttara East Police Station on April 27.

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Reform needed in banking sector to prevent money laundering: NGOs

Budgetary steps to help people struggling amid the pandemic inadequate, says alliance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Reforms in the banking sector is needed to stop money laundering, according to speakers at a virtual press conference yesterday.

They also said the strategy to collect revenue in the proposed budget is traditional and steps to help people struggling to survive amid the pandemic are inadequate.

Equity BD, an alliance of several NGOs and CSOs, organised the event.

Presenting the keynote paper, Ahsanul Karim, a member of Equity BD, said the government has proposed to collect Tk 3,30,000 crore revenue through NBR and extended the purview of taxes to rural areas.

"Due to the ongoing pandemic, income of many middle, lower-middle, and lower-group people has decreased

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DHAKA AIRPORT THIRD TERMINAL Work progress ahead of target

Says state minister Mahub Ali

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Construction work of the third terminal of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) is ahead of target, State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism M Mahub Ali said yesterday.

In June 2021, 14.5 percent of the work of the terminal was supposed to be completed, but till yesterday, 17 percent work has been completed, he said while visiting progress of the construction work.

Mahub Ali said the size of the terminal would be more than double that of the current airport. The terminal will be connected through a tunnel with Ashkona Hajj Camp. This will allow pilgrims to enter the airport directly from the Hajj camp.

The state minister said construction work of the terminal did not stop even for a day when the whole world was at a standstill due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The terminal is expected to be completed in June 2023.

"However, we hope that the work will

be completed ahead of schedule," he said, adding that the metro rail will be connected to this terminal that will be fully automated.

"A separate (metro rail) station will also be created. Through this, passengers coming to Bangladesh will be able to go to their destination by metro rail without leaving the airport. Apart from this, anyone will be able to go directly to the departure area of the airport from any station in Dhaka by metro rail," Mahub also said.

Secretary to the civil aviation ministry Mokammel Hossain; Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh Chairman Air Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman; Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Biman Bangladesh Airlines Dr Abu Saleh Md Mostafa Kamal and other senior officials were present.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in December 2019 inaugurated the construction works of Terminal 3, designed

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We need coastal embankments for climate mitigation

Says foreign minister at event marking Environment Day

BSS, Dhaka

Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen yesterday said Bangladesh needs to build embankments with renewable energy facilities along the coastal belt as part of "climate mitigation" to save its people from becoming climate migrants due to the rising sea level.

"To protect our people from getting inundated by the rising sea level and river erosion, and from becoming climate migrants, we need to create embankments high and wide enough to sustain in times of natural disasters," he said.

Dr Momen said mangrove forestation around these embankments would work both as buffers during natural calamities like cyclones and surges, while also working as carbon sinks.

"We can also use the space on the embankments for installing solar panels and wind turbines to produce electricity for the nearby off-grid areas, and the national grid," he said.

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'Sundarbans acts as a carbon sink'

COP26 chief Alok Sharma says

UNB, Dhaka

COP26 President-Designate Alok Sharma has highlighted the importance of the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest, saying that it plays a significant role as a carbon sink.

During his recent visit to Bangladesh, Sharma travelled to Sundarbans and saw how natural defenses of the mangrove forest protect villages from wind speed and storm surges.

"I learnt more about how this vital carbon sink protects local communities from cyclones and storm surges. Nature is the key to keep 1.5C in reach. Preserving it must be a priority for all," he said.

Sharma welcomed Bangladesh's climate leadership and ambition ahead of COP26.

Bangladesh signaled a transition from coal and submitted an ambitious plan during the COP26 president's visit.

"The next decade will be 'make or break' for our planet, and effective global collaboration will be vital to tackling the pressing challenges the world faces. So I am delighted to have witnessed the UK-Bangladesh climate partnership in action, and heard such positive ambition from my Bangladeshi friends," he said.

"I am inspired by the innovative work I have seen here to address some of the worst effects of climate change, and hope that Bangladesh will continue to lead by example ahead of COP26, which is our best hope of building a brighter future."

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY DISCUSSION

Experts urge govt to rein in unbridled construction

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Experts yesterday called upon the government to rein in unbridled infrastructural development to protect the country from environmental pollution, a growing risk factor for lives.

They also suggested opting for eco-friendly construction materials instead of bricks, as the production of bricks has detrimental impact on the environment.

They said this at a webinar titled "Green Construction - The Future of the Industry", jointly organised by The Daily Star and KSRM, marking World Environment Day.

SM Khorshed Alam, president of Bangladesh Association of Construction Industry, said, "Dhaka's concrete density is high, and there is insufficient number of trees. The more we're developing Dhaka, the more we're polluting it."

"We're endangering our lives to enjoy our development benefits," he said, adding that the environment ministry should monitor the impact of growing infrastructural

development of the country.

Emphasising the use of alternative materials and technology, Khorshed said, "We are building thousands of kilometres of roads, bridges and flyovers. And to build these mega structures, we are manufacturing millions of bricks by burning clay."

"To manufacture such a huge number of bricks, we are damaging our soil, cutting down forests, and polluting our air and water as well. Whereas, we have alternative technologies such as concrete blocks and stones, which are not yet popular in Bangladesh," he said.

Pointing out the adverse effects of using concrete and cement in huge volume, Dr Md Tarek Uddin, professor of Islamic University of Technology's civil engineering department, said, "If we continue to use concrete in such volume, our next generation might not get materials, resources and energy for living and making their infrastructures. That's why we need to

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Separate expatriate investors' authority required: speakers

Centre for NRB urges govt to start pensions for returnee migrants

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government should create a separate authority in the country to oversee investments made by the expatriates, demanded Centre for NRB, a non-profit organisation for non-resident Bangladeshis, yesterday.

During a press meet at a city hotel, the organisation said such authority was required to bring small-scale expatriate investors on a collective platform, stressing the need for investment-friendly policy and long term plan in this regard.

An investment authority for expatriates will help ensure injection of more "white money" in the country's economy, said MS Shekil Chowdhury, chairperson of the centre, stressing the need for eliminating flow of "black money" in economy.

Shekil said under the investment authority, opportunities for small-scale expatriate investors could be created in the country's capital market, bond market and industrialisation.

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Choosing a photo storage service: Finding alternatives to Google Photos

NAHALY NAFISA KHAN

Last November, Google announced that as of June 1st, its unlimited photo storage service was being changed to up to 15GB on the user's Google account. This implied that while photo and video storage once did not count against the user's total of 15 free gigs on a Google account, it does now, along with the Gmail, Google Drive files, and other stored data. Once a user reaches the 15GB limit, it would be imperative to buy into the Google One service to increase the storage capacity. For those who might want to start looking for alternatives to Google Photos, here are some options to consider.

FLICKR

Flickr has a free plan as well, but it's limited to 1,000 photos with certain guidelines. Photo files have to be limited to 200MB and video files to 1GB. For unlimited storage without ads, the users have to pay either \$6.99 a month or \$59.99 annually, excluding tax. Other advantages to a paid annual membership include stats about which of your photos are trending and a variety of discounts from several companies, including Adobe and SmugMug, which is now part of Flickr.

500PX

500px is a Canadian service that caters more to professional photographers. It offers them a place to store, exhibit, and license their work.

Among the two paid plans that the site offers, the first one, named Awesome, offers unlimited uploads, priority support, no ads, a history of "liked" photos, gallery slideshows, and a profile badge for \$59.88 a year or \$4.99 monthly.

The Pro plan adds a way to display the services and organisation tools for \$119.88 a year or \$9.99 monthly. And if the users want to make a bit of money, they can submit their photos to be licensed for stock usage through 500px. After signing up, the user gets a two-week trial period before committing to the Pro plan.

PHOTOBUCKET

Photobucket offers a limited free plan, allowing the user to upload up to 250 photos for free. After the trial period, the users can start with the Beginner plan at \$5.99 per month or \$64.68 annually, which gives them 25GB of storage, along with no ads, password-protected album sharing, and an image editor. For \$7.99 per month or \$86.28 annually, the Intermediate plan provides 250GB of storage and unlimited image hosting. The Expert plan offers unlimited storage and no image compression, among other extras or \$12.99 per month or \$140.28 annually.



A large banner attached to the main gate notifies all coming into Institute of Child and Mother Health in the capital's Matuail that due to no supply of Covid-19 vaccine, vaccination service at the facility will remain suspended until further notice.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Two killed in Naogaon road accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Two persons were killed when a motorcycle they were riding was hit by an unknown vehicle in Manda upazila of Naogaon on Friday night.

The deceased were identified as Apel Mahmud and Poncha Islam from Badalghat village in the upazila.

According to locals, an unidentified vehicle hit the motorcycle on Naogaon-Rajshahi highway at Bijoypur around 8:30pm while the two were returning home from the upazila's Kusumba area, said police.

Shahinur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Manda Police Station, said they are investigating the matter.

The bodies were handed over to their families, said the OC.