

Poor execution of plan worsened liveability in Dhaka

Say speakers at conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The failure to execute plans aimed at developing Dhaka as a livable city has been a major problem over the years and that ultimately worsened the city's living conditions, speakers at an international conference said yesterday.

Urbanisation of rural areas has also been going on without proper planning, which requires special attention to reduce the environmental impact of urbanisation, they said.

These views were expressed at the 3rd International Conference on Urban and Regional Planning at a hotel in the capital.

"There are a lot of plans, but there is no coordination between them," Prime Minister's Private Industries and Investment Affairs Adviser Salman F Rahman said at the inaugural session of the event.

Referring to the Rajuk's Detailed Area Plan (DAP), he said that the plan could not be implemented due to the conflicts of interests of many vested interest groups.

He said a comprehensive national plan on expansion of upazila towns is a must.

The former FBCCI president said the government is drawing up a plan, as desired by the prime minister, under which setting up industries outside the economic zones would be barred.

At the second session of the conference, Enamur Rahman, state minister of the ministry of disaster management and relief, highlighted the situation in his electoral constituency in Dhaka's Savar upazila.

He said that there are schools, colleges, universities, medical colleges, public institutions and factories both in and outside the EPZ in Savar.

"But the development activities were not carried out according to the plan. For this same reason, cities including Dhaka have become vulnerable to earthquakes," he said.

Addressing the event as a special guest, Mahfuz Anam, the editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said the failure to execute plans is the main problem.

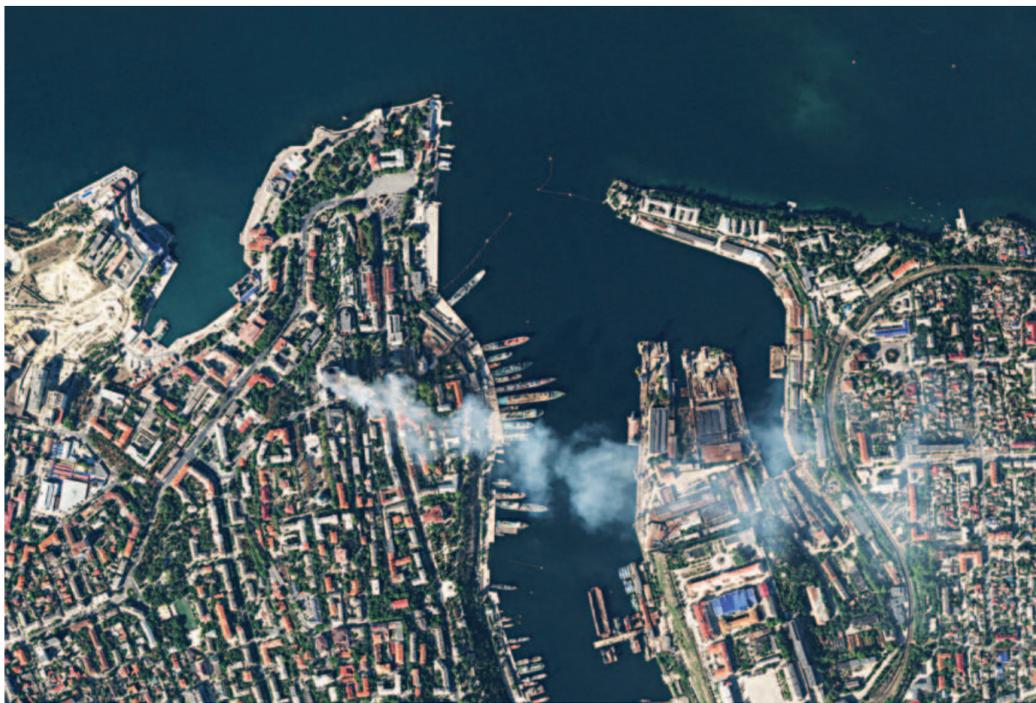
"The biggest problem of all plans is implementation. I have had exposures to many good plans, but when I look forward to the implementation, it is laborious, it is bureaucratic, it is stuck in this level or that level, and ultimately when it gets implemented, it is very different from what was originally planned," he said referring to the DAP which was first adopted in 1995.

The scene of Dhaka city has already changed while the DAP has not been implemented yet, he added.

About Thursday night's waterlogging in the capital, he said that this was a "wake up call" for everyone.

He said the media will play its due role in developing a planned Dhaka city.

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A satellite image shows smoke billowing from a Russian Black Sea Navy HQ after a missile strike, as Russia's invasion of Ukraine continues, in Sevastopol, Crimea on Friday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

KILLING OF SIKH LEADER Assist Canada with probe

US asks India amid bitter diplomatic row

AFP, New York

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called on India Friday to cooperate with Canada and ensure "accountability" over the killing of a Sikh separatist, after Ottawa accused New Delhi of involvement.

Blinken said the United States has been in touch both with India, with which it has warming ties, and Canada, a close ally which expelled an Indian diplomat earlier this week.

"We want to see accountability. And it's important that the investigation run its course and lead to that result," Blinken told reporters in New York, where he was taking part in the UN General Assembly.

"We would hope that our Indian friends would cooperate with that investigation as well," Blinken said.

Blinken, without commenting directly on the substance of the allegations, said that the United States took "very, very seriously" incidents of "transnational repression."

"I think it's important, more broadly, for the international system that any country that might consider engaging in such acts not do so," he said.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Monday that Indian agents played a role in the June murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Canadian citizen, near Vancouver.

Trudeau on Thursday called on India to cooperate on the investigation.

Nijjar was wanted by India for alleged terrorism and conspiracy to commit murder. He was part of the Khalistan movement, which advocates a separate Sikh homeland and was crushed by Indian security forces in the 1980s.

India has come back swinging at Canada, reducing its diplomatic staff and stopping visa services.

Meanwhile, India's top investigation agency yesterday confiscated the properties of a prominent Sikh separatist and close ally of Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, a lawyer believed to be based in Canada, was designated as a terrorist by Indian authorities in 2020 and is wanted on charges of terrorism and sedition.

He is also the founder of the US-based group Sikhs For Justice (SFJ), whose Canada chapter was headed by Nijjar before he was gunned down by masked assailants in June near Vancouver.

A diplomatic firestorm erupted this week with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau saying there were "credible reasons to believe that agents of the government of India were involved" in Nijjar's death.

Pannun jumped into the raging row and issued a video telling Canadian Hindus to "go back to India", claiming they had adopted a "jingoistic approach" by siding with New Delhi.

Women account for higher dengue deaths

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

While more men are being admitted to hospitals for dengue, women, even with fewer cases reported, have a higher mortality rate, said the Directorate General of Health Services.

According to DGHS data, men account for the majority of reported dengue cases – 112,689 of the 184,717 cases recorded till yesterday – while women account for 513 of 893 deaths, including 14 reported just yesterday.

This year has already become the deadliest dengue year since the first recorded epidemic in 2000.

Dr HM Nazmul Ahsan, associate professor at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, emphasized on the vulnerabilities of female patients with comorbidities such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, high lipid levels, arthritis, asthma, and sleep apnea.

He added that pregnant and menstruating women require special attention as they are more vulnerable to contracting dengue.

4 journos hurt in attack by 'hospital staffers'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Four journalists were injured in an attack allegedly by some employees of Mymensingh's Trishal Upazila Health Complex last morning for "reporting on hospital mismanagement".

The victims are Saiful Alam Tuhin of Dainik Ajker Patrika, Rakibul Hasan Sumon of Naya Shatabdi, Riadul Hasan of Desh Sangbad, and Masud Rana of Gonomukti. They are all Trishal upazila correspondents.

Journalist Tuhin said, "When we [four journalists] went to the health complex this [Saturday] morning to know about the standard of food supplied by the hospital to the patients, hospital cook Sohrab Hossain had an altercation with us, and at one stage, Sohrab and some five employees attacked us."

Talking to The Daily Star, Trishal Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Nazrul Islam said a three-member probe body was formed to investigate the incident.

Md Nazrul Islam, Civil surgeon of Mymensingh, said they will take action following the probe report.

Md Mainuddin, officer-in-charge of Trishal Police Station, said a complaint was lodged against two persons, including hospital staffer Sohrab.

3 killed in lightning strike in Naogaon

UNB, Naogaon

Three people died after being struck by lightning in Mohadevpur and Porsha upazila of Naogaon yesterday afternoon.

The victims are Sreemati Pahan, 27, and Sobani Pahan, 65, of Silimpur village of Mohadevpur, and Rafiqul Islam, of Chakbrishnapur village under Porsha upazila.

Mozaffar Hossain, officer-in-charge of Mohadevpur Police Station, said Sreemati and Sobhani were working in a paddy field next to their houses, when the lightning struck leaving the duo dead on the spot and another injured.

Porsha Police Station OC Jahurul Islam said Rafiqul also faced a similar fate when he was catching fish in a river during a thunderstorm in the afternoon.

5 'outsiders' held with weapons at CU halls

UNB, Chattogram

Police in a drive arrested five people with locally made weapons from the dormitories at Chittagong University (CU) after the sporadic clashes between two factions of Chhatra League on the campus last night.

The identities of the arrestees could not be known immediately.

CU Proctor Nurul Azim Shikdar said that ten people were injured in sporadic clashes between two factions of the university's Chhatra League unit – CFC and 69 groups – on Thursday and Friday.

Later, a team of police conducted drives at Shahjalal Hall and Shah Amanat Hall from 10:00pm to 11:00pm Friday night.

During the drives, police seized sharp weapons from Shahjalal Hall and arrested five "outsiders" from Shah Amanat Hall.

Chattogram city condemned to waterlogging

FROM PAGE 1

The act stipulates that the waterbodies be identified through a gazette notification, and it was the duty of the CDA to do so.

The CDA board did the opposite by taking advantage of a grey area in the act, Khan added.

"Instead of playing the role of a protector of low-lying areas, the CDA is acting like a predator. They are more interested in taking up mega development projects than taking action against illegal occupants," Hasan said.

Contacted, CDA Chairman Jahirul Alam said the decision would be revised at the soonest and the water bodies would not be allowed to be filled up.

Regarding the development projects, he said: "The CDA takes up development projects for the sake of people, not for business. Because of these projects, people can own plots."

Meanwhile, the government has taken up four projects involving about Tk 11,000 crore to address the waterlogging – but to little effect.

All four projects have either missed the deadline or are running well behind schedule.

Since 2017, the CDA has been implementing a mega project worth Tk 5,617 crore that promised to alleviate waterlogging in the port city by leaps and bounds by June 2020.

The project entails extraction of mud from 36 canals, construction of 85.68 kilometres of roads on the banks of important canals, 10.77 km of new drains, expansion of 15.5 km of side drains, 200 cross drain culverts, building of 48 guarder bridges, six culverts, five tidal regulators and 42 silt traps.

The project, which is being implemented by the Bangladesh Army, failed to meet the deadline and was given a three-year extension. But the June 2023 deadline was also missed, with the project's progress now standing at 76 percent.

"It is a faulty project from design to phase-wise construction management," said Subhash Chandro Barua, a town planner.

For instance, the CDA mega project seeks to address 36 out of 56 canals when it should have included all the 56 canals, said Cuet professor Hasan.

Since not all canals are being cleared up, the city's waterlogging problem would not go away fully, he said.

The CDA submitted the project hurriedly without conducting an environmental impact study, according to Hasan.

Although the overall progress of the CDA mega project is 76 percent, it is not result-oriented, as people are not getting its benefit, said Delwar Majumder, former president of the Institute of Engineers Bangladesh (IEB), Chattogram.

The retaining walls built on either side of the canals under the project are creating obstacles to receding rainwater as those have been made two to three feet high from the road.

Besides, the sluice gates on the mouth of canals are not functional while the pump houses cannot pump rainwater due to a lack of engines, Majumdar said.

The non-inclusion of the secondary and tertiary drains in the project was a major fault, according to Barua. "If the secondary and tertiary drains are not cleaned up, how would water flow to the primary drains and canals?"

This should have been addressed at the start of the project, Barua said, while questioning the veracity of the CDA's claim that 76 percent of the project work has been completed.

"If that was the case, there would have been a lot of improvement in the waterlogging problem."

De-siltation of canals should have been the priority of the project. A total of 9.50 lakh cubic metres of mud are supposed to be extracted from 36 canals.

"But we don't know exactly how much soil has been extracted from the canals in six years," Barua added.

Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, mayor of Chattogram City Corporation (CCC), said that the CDA has extracted just one-third of the soil so far.

"As most of the soil has not been extracted from canals, those cannot contain rainwater," he added.

Shah Ali, a lieutenant colonel of the Bangladesh Army who is serving as the project director, refuted most of the allegations, saying that residents in many areas were getting the benefit from the mega project.

"A vast area in Agrabad and Halishahar used to go under water during high tide earlier but now these areas do not go under tidal water," he said.

Previously, the Prabartak intersection used to go under water whenever it rained but the intersection has been freed from waterlogging in the past two years.

He also asserted that rainwater now recedes within an hour in the city instead of several hours before.

Ali also said the non-inclusion of secondary and tertiary canals and drains in the project was not a major weakness.

"Our project is not aimed at addressing waterlogging of the whole city. Like our project, some other projects have been undergoing in the city in a bid to ease the waterlogging problem," he said, citing the exclusion of 20 canals from excavation and the secondary and tertiary drains.

Asked about the allegation of not extracting enough soil from the canals, Ali said: "We were supposed to extract 9.5 lakh metres of soil from 36 canals but we have extracted more than that. We have even extracted soil and garbage from the drains and canals. This was not under our jurisdiction."

The soil and garbage from the canals and drains are extracted twice a year but they get filled up with silt every monsoon and with plastic and polythene garbage throughout the year, according to Ali.

Works in 16 of the canals have already been completed, while the work on some canals including two major ones – Chaktai Khal and Hizra Khal – has made little headway due to complications in land acquisition.

"We cannot move our excavators as the banks of the canals are very narrow."

A 5,850-metre retaining wall was supposed to be built along the 5.8 km Chaktai Khal.

"But so far we could build retaining walls in 2,900-metre areas as the CDA is yet to hand over the land to us. If we start excavating the canals without building retaining walls, all the buildings and structures on the banks would collapse."

He said that they had started the work before the land acquisition with the assurance from the CDA that they would get the land on time.

"But in five years we are yet to get the whole acquired land. It is the failure of CDA," Ali added.

CDA passed the blame on bureaucratic delays.

When the development project plan was approved in 2017, the government's compensation rate for land acquisition was 1.5 times higher than the land's usual price, said Hasan Bin Shams, chief engineer of the CDA.

However, the government in 2018 increased the compensation rate to three times the land's value.

"For this reason, we have sent a revised DPP to the government but it is yet to be approved," he added.

The CDA has been implementing another project worth Tk 2,310 crore since June 2017. It is scheduled to be completed by June 2024. Only 65 percent of the work has been done so far.

Apart from constructing a dam on the banks of the Karnaphuli river and Chaktai and Razakhali canals, 12 sluice gates and pump houses would be installed to regulate tidal water, according to Shams.

So far, 11 sluice gates have been installed and not the pump houses, he said.

Since 2014, CCC has been implementing a project to dig a canal from Bahaddarhat Baroipara to the Karnaphuli.

The Tk 1,362 crore project was supposed to have been wrapped up by June 2017, but its deadline has been extended to June 2024. The overall progress of the project is 50 percent.

Forhadul Alam, its project director, blamed the delays on land acquisition, which is yet to be completed.

CCC has got 21 acres of land from Chattogram District Administration

Heavy defeat leaves Tigers with lot to ponder

FROM PAGE 1

Rahman and Khaled Ahmed, the debutant pacer eventually ending with three wickets. But a 61-ball 49 from Henry Nicholls and 66-ball 68 from Tom Blundell in middle-order resurrected the Kiwi ship before some handy efforts down the order, including 35 from player-of-the-match Sodhi, took them to the total that they eventually defended comfortably.

Bangladesh never got going in their chase despite a refreshing 44 off 58 deliveries from Tamim Iqbal, the former captain who batted for the first time since July this year. Once the left-handed opener departed with the team score at 92 for five – becoming Sodhi's third of six victims – Bangladesh were already looking down the barrel. Mahmudullah Riyad, another returnee to the national team, held the rocking ship for quite a while, passing 10,000 runs in three formats in the process. But a loose shot on 49 against the off-break of Cole McConchie left the veteran all-rounder one short of 5000 runs in ODIs, extinguishing Bangladesh's hopes of a fight.

With the first match of the three-match series washed out, the third match scheduled for Tuesday becomes a series decider and an opportunity for the visitors to inflict a home-series defeat on Bangladesh for the first time in 15 years.

Apart from the record being on the line, the Bangladesh team management would also be worried about the brittle batting effort, not least helped by another poor show from Liton Das as well as Tanzid Hasan Tamim and Soumya Sarkar, both failing to make a case for inclusion in World Cup squad. Runs from Tamim and Mahmudullah, though, would assuage some of the corners.