

Clearance must for building houses even at villages

*Cabinet clears draft bill proposing
maximum 5-yr jail for violation*

Staff Correspondent

THE cabinet on Monday approved in principle the draft 'Urban and Regional Planning Bill 2017' proposing mandatory clearance from the authorities concerned to use land for building any house or any other development activity even in rural areas.

Five-year imprisonment with a fine of Tk 5 lakh has been proposed as the highest punishment for violating the law, according to the draft.

'Any individual or organisation, either government or non-government, will have to obtain clearance from the authorities concerned for building houses or any other establishments even in rural areas,' cabinet secretary Mohammad Shafiul Alam said at a briefing after the cabinet meeting.

He said that a 27-member advisory council led by the housing and public works minister and 25-member executive council led by the works secretary would be formed for the implementation of the law.

The housing and public works ministry placed the bill in the weekly cabinet meeting chaired by prime minister Sheikh Hasina at the Cabinet Division.

The cabinet secretary said that the government had initiated the move to enact a law making tough provisions to ensure coordination among the authorities concerned for proper use of land

throughout the country.

He said that the government would have the mandate to authorise any agency to provide clearances for the construction of any establishments either in cities or rural areas besides the town development authorities and municipal councils now in functions.

Union parishads, as per the existing laws, were supposed to give clearances for the construction of houses in villages while the deputy commissioners' approvals were required to convert arable land for other uses, Shafiul said, adding that those laws were not followed properly.

He said that rules would be framed after the enactment of the law for its effective implementation.

The cabinet also endorsed in principle the draft Textiles Bill 2017 aiming at bringing the textiles and readymade garments industry under a single authority, according to officials.

In absence of any such law, the apparel sector was being run by various executive orders issued from time to time, the cabinet secretary replied to a question.

The cabinet approved the draft Expatriates' Welfare Board Bill 2017 to ensure the welfare of migrant workers. The bill proposed formation of a 16-member board led by the expatriates' welfare secretary.

The cabinet cleared the draft agreement concerning

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