

Ensure child-friendly features during city planning

Urban planners urge policymakers at roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Green activists and urban planners yesterday at a roundtable said children are nation builders of future and therefore policymakers need to put emphasis on child-friendly features during urban planning for Dhaka.

Proper mental and physical growth of children are linked to the sustainable prosperity of a country and adequate open spaces such as playgrounds and parks are essential to children's growth, they also said.

The Daily Star and Save the Children in association with Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP) organised the roundtable titled "Child Sensitive Urban Planning" at Planners Tower in the capital's Bangla Motor.

Green activist and architect Iqbal Habib during his speech said air pollution in Dhaka is worse than that in New Delhi of India and Shanghai in China.

Green activists have been vocal about this issue, but the authorities are not paying heed. They might be thinking that nothing will happen

and air pollution will not affect their children, he said, adding that amenities for poor and destitute children were ignored in the current urban planning policies.

"Guardians need to raise their voices to save their children."

He also advised children to read

Mahmud said vested quarters who wield the power have been grabbing public spaces for their own benefit and thus depriving the common people of their due rights.

Children, the leaders of future, need to start thinking about their dream city, he also said.

Moinul Islam, an urban planner currently employed at Narayanganj City Corporation, said by 2030, the world population will consist of near about 60 percent children, but Bangladesh is yet to prepare a suitable plan in this regard. "It'll be a pity if children cannot grow up with an enchanting memory."

Presenting a paper, Moinul said 400 students from eight schools in Dhaka and Narayanganj participated in a workshop arranged by Save the Children and BIP in August through November.

At the workshop the participants learned about child-friendly features a city should have and the importance of expressing their opinions when a city lacks such features.

Ten of the children who participated at the workshop also spoke at the yesterday's roundtable.

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IQBAL HABIB

Green activist and architect

and acquire knowledge on negative effects of an unplanned city.

Traffic congestion in the capital could be reduced by 40 to 45 percent in six months only by ensuring pedestrian-friendly walkways and footpaths, Iqbal observed.

BIP General Secretary Prof Akhter