**Declining of Agro& forest lands and water-bodies -- great damage of the country**

**Discussion Meeting on Compact Townships**

**Date: 19 September 2014**

**Venue:** Monohordi Municipality Auditorium, Monohordi**, Narsingdi**

**Organized by –Compact Township Foundation (CTF)**

**Minutes**

1. A discussion meeting on ‘Compact Townships’ was held on 19 September 2014 at the MonohordiMunicipality Auditorium of MonohordiUpazila in Narsingdi district. The meeting was presided over bythe Monohordi Municipality Mayor Mr. Alfaz Uddin, while Dr. Abul Hossain– General Secretary of Compact TownshipFoundation (CTF), Core Team-member of CTF Mr. EkramHossain, Assistant Professor Md. Nazrul Islam Khan, Monohordi Collage, graced the occasion as the Special Guests.
2. Among the others present were Principals and Professors of colleges, school teachers, political personalities, businessmen, local philanthropists, lawyers, Agriculture and BRDB officials, former women vice-chairmen of Upazila Parishads, local press-club journalists, including representatives of people from various walks of life.
3. At the very outset of the meeting Professor Md. Nazrul Islam Khan delivered the welcome speech to all the participants.
4. **Mr. Ekram Hossain,** the core-team member of CT Foundation described the background of Compact Township Foundation and the concept of Compact Townships (CT) in brief. Meanwhile, all the participants made self-introduction one by one in the meeting. While delivering the backdrop of CT, Mr. Ekram mentioned the glory and beauty of Bangladesh as a richly watered, fertile and flourishing green Bangladesh. The country is now turned to a densely populated country and its capital Dhaka is a distressed city.
5. **Dr. Abul Hossain**, The General Secretary of CTF, described the aims and objectives of the Compact Township Foundation (CTF) and the crucial elements of the concept of Compact Townships (CT). In his speech, he said, in 1947 the number of population of this country was 50 million, in 1971 it was 70 million, now the figure has reached 160 million. According to the statistics of a govt. entity ‘Soil Resource Development Institute (SRDI)’, every year Bangladesh is losing 1% of its agro-land.The trend started visibly during the ‘80s, and it is increasing gradually. If this trend continues for a few decades, there will be no agro-land in our country. In 2050, the population of this country will reach about 260- 280 million; what will happen to accommodation, employment and other facilities for such a huge population? Dr. Abul also quoted Mr. Salim Rashid- President of Compact Township Foundation (CTF) and professor emeritus of the University of Illinois that “Compact Townships (CT) also enhances GDP growth”. “If CT is implemented properly, it is possible to have the GDP growth 10%”.

**The following opinion and suggestions emerged from the discussion meeting:**

1. Earlier there were more lands and space, now those are occupied by houses. In this respect, the CTF’s initiative is welcome.
2. Many high rise buildings are being constructed in Dhaka. If these are constructed here, the CT concept would be successful.
3. The CT concept related papers are huge. The basis of this theory is not found. The analysis of the CT is not understood. Factors are not mentioned – (A colleague Principal pointed out).
4. What will be the air and Oxygen condition in CTs? It is not mentioned here. As for example, there needs minimum 25% forest cover in a country, and not the below of 16% forest. It is essential. These are not related here in the discussion. What is the extent of research done at the CT Foundation?
5. Environmental issue like Virus, germs and CFC gas etc which are detrimental are not seen.These threaten the environment. These problems should be brought into consideration.
6. Human beings create many things out of their needs, such as a big tree grows out of a seed and then it blooms flowers and fruits. So CT will grow, as now it is a need.
7. What will be the consequences of the present population pressure to the future generation? We did not get the opportunity to research or ponder; now, from todays’ discussion, we have got an idea.
8. It is not a easy task. However, where there is problem, there is a way-out (Monohordi Municipality Mayor and many participants pointed out).
9. The CT cannot be implemented just by having an office at Dhanmondi, or visiting the municipality or upazila. How will the CT be implemented? This task that the government has failed?
10. The CT concept should not be confined only to seminars and symposia. Now we need initiatives for implementation.
11. In the **Haor** area, people are dwelling in one kind of Compact Township due to shortage of land. Many families dwell on a small land. It is better to start Compact Township (CT) from there.
12. It should be started with the rural people who would save the arable land. This may not be cent percent successful but the idea will expand.
13. It is believed that CT can provide a good environment with all modern facilities.
14. Where will funds come from for building CTs?
15. For whom will the lands be saved? For farmers? But the farmers and fishermen do not want their children to be farmers or fishermen, rather find jobs and have more money.
16. The basic needs of people will come from where? It will come from agriculture and some from industry. Agriculture is our life. Therefore, this should be protected.
17. The topic is very timely and important. For understanding this concept, people need not be highly educated or good researchers.
18. Most of the economic growth of our country comes from agriculture, though it is dwindling. Industrialization is taking place here but no industrial revolution yet took place. If the documents would reach to us earlier, more in-depth discussion could have been made. Only today we have been informed about the CT --- implementation is a matter of long-time.
19. Whether the state is engaged in it? If the state does not want it, how far it is possible to implement the idea? People will participate in it and the government should make the people aware.

After a very good discussion, Mr. Alfaz Uddin, Mayor of Monohordi Municipality concluded the meeting by thanking all of the participants.