**Report of the view-exchange meeting on**

**“Protecting the cultivating-land, Planned Accommodation, Better life and Compact Township”**

**Venue: Auditorium , Chehelgazi Union Parishad’**

**Chehelgazi, Sadar, Dinajpur**

**Date: 30 November 2014, Time: 11 am**

**Organized by: Chehelgazi Union Parishad and Compact Township Foundation (CTF)**

**Minutes**

1. A view-exchange meeting on Protecting the ‘Agro-land, Planned Accommodation and Compact Townships (CT)’ was held on last 30 November 2014 at the auditorium of Chehelgazi Union Parishad, Dinajpur. The view-exchange meeting was presided over by Mrs. Aparna Roy Lata, UP Member and acting chairman of Chehelgazi Union Parishad. Dr. Abul Hossain, General Secretary of Compact Township Foundation (CTF) graced the occasion as the Chief Guest, while as Special Guest were present Mr. Habibul Bosnia, General Secretary of *Sanskritir* *Noya* *Shetu*, Mr. Ariful Alam Pallab, Senior Reporter of the Daily Teesta, Mr. Mamunur Rashid, Associate Professor and Head of the Accounting Department of Hazi Danesh Science and Technology University, Dr. Mohidul Alam, and Dr. Adnan Bachhu, Associate Professors of Hazi Danesh Science and Technology University, Mr. Ansar Ali, Sub-assistant Agricultural Officer of Dinajpur Sadar Upazila . Among the many other guests in the meeting, were present local dignitaries including Mr. Shah Alam Shahi, Staff Reporter of ‘Channel I’ and Mr. Abdus Salam, Executive Director of BSDA.

The meeting was moderated by renowned Human Rights activist Mr. Belal Hossain.

1. At the outset of the meeting, Mr. Belal portrayed the objective of the meeting to the participants with prior permission of the Chair. Then he requested Dr. Abul Hossain to make an introductory speech to the participants. In his speech, Dr. Abul Hossain delineated that the Compact Townships concept is the result of 18 years long research. Then he gave a vivid picture of Compact Townships. He also informed, according to a government statistics, every year about 1 percent of cultivating land is disappearing in the country. If this trend continues, there will be no cultivating land after some decades .The population size will reach to 24-28 crore by 2050. What will be the situation then with this large number of population? There will be no land rest for cultivation, no land for accommodation. Some say that many people go abroad but, if they (foreign countries) don’t take any more from us? All people will not be able to go abroad. Many of us also say that, many people work in garments sector. But this sector is also fragile. If we lose this sector for cheap labour to other countries; if garment factories are concentrated to Africa or any other country, then what will happen with the people involved in this sector? Dr. Abul questioned. We have to think about it, he stated. Dr. Abul Hossain also delineated the advantages of the Compact Townships( CT).

Discussion:

1. The Sub-assistant Agricultural Officer of Dinajpur Sadar Upazila , **Mr. Ansar Ali** said - population is increasing but not the cultivable land. The land is decreasing owing to establishments of factories, homes and brick kilns; if this trend continues, we are doubtful whether we would find any land for cultivation by 2050. He also mentioned that, we are inundated with multiple problems with the agriculture. Due to smoke emission from brick kilns, the litchi and mangoes productions have got reduced and their productions are halted. This is not expected. Compact Townships (CT) is a noble initiative, and he wishes a success of the initiative.
2. Mr. **Ariful Alam Pallab**, Staff Reporter of the Daily *Teesta* in his speech stated, there is no rural setting in villages any more. The experience of walking down the mud road we acquired past, our children cannot make so now. The rural settings have disappeared with onrush of pucca roads and pucca buildings. It seems the cultivating lands will finish by 2040. In past, we used to account land in acres, then *bigha* and now we have to do it in decimal. In future we have to do it in feet and yard. We want to overcome this problem. Compact Townships (CT) may be a good alternative. Those who are our guests today are engaged in re-building the nation, I want to thank them. I think first we must make the urban people understand and then the rural people. In this context, Dr. Abul Hossain said, we are working at policy level as well as field level everywhere. If you want to make view-exchange meeting in large scale, more meetings can be done.
3. **Dr. Mahidul Hasan**, Associate Professor of Hazi Danesh Science and Technology University said, there are lots of people in the country who don’t have any accommodation. I have seen in Korea that 35% people live in Compact Townships and the government of that country is very keen. We have to take up the positive impact of the Compact Townships to the government by organizing meeting in a large scale. I would request the organizers to have such meetings with the participations of students. I would extend all out co-operation in this regard.
4. I did not have any idea about the compact township, but similar kind of thinking was in my head, **Mr. Sabir Hossain** , a solvent farmer, opined. . In villages where earlier 300 people used to live now 600 people live there. As a result, the size of villages is increasing and the pressure is mounting on agro-land. I thought whether city-village can be established instead of letting the villages expand? The village people may not like the Compact Townships and may not want to go there. For this reason, we need to make a survey. The government provides more subsidies to agriculture. At present the electricity production rate is very high, each unit costs around Taka 13. Instead of giving subsidy to the agriculture, the government may arrange solar energy system. With the subsidy money, government can implement the Compact Townships or such kind of project. In context to this point, Dr. Abul Hossain said, Compact Townships was thought in terms of economic growth. He said, Compact Township will be established beside the highway roads network, so many roads will not be required for communication. The concept of the Compact Townships can be implemented with the land sharing of people. Thus the people and government both will be benefitted.
5. **Mr. Abdsus Salam**, Executive Director of BSDC, a local NGO, in his speech said: Many researchers mentioned the population size in Bangladesh will be 28 crore by 2050. The concept of Compact Townships(CT) must be transformed into a social movement. In fact, we are working against the Compact Townships by constructing various factories and industries. So this should be considered as a political agenda. The people of villages are no more farmers, they are now labourers. The Compact Township issue may give us directives. Compact Townships concept should not be thought in the manner of NGOs. The proper utilization of our money must be made, because environment cannot be bought by money. So, let’s come we turn the concept into a social movement.
6. A farmer of Borail village named **Harish Chnadra Roy** opined: Babies are born in ground and grown up in ground, once we shall die in this ground. As our land is shrinking up, our life is stake today. We, the landless people are deprived of our basic rights. At past, we used to eat rice *Dheki*-pruned rice, now from auto rice mill due to various reasons. For such many unexpected reasons, we are deprived of our rights in multiple ways. Aren’t we the citizens of Bangladesh? We also need housing for poor .
7. **Mr. Madhab Chandra** of Bonokali village said, we are landless people, dwell on *khas* lands. We, 200-300 families live on *Khas* land in our village. We have to fight much for dwelling on *Khas* lands. Compact Township(CT) is undoubtedly a good initiative. If there is scope for our dwelling and cultivation in the Compact Township, we don’t need to dwell on Khas land risking our lives.
8. **Mr. Mamunar Rashid**, Associate Professor and Head of the Accounting Department of Hazi Danesh Science and Technology University in his speech said, I understand planning. There will be planning from family life to country-wise. If there is planning, it is easy to implement, budgetary allocation, monitoring and evaluation and do everything. We must move forward through planning. We need to create public support in this regard. There are projects like Compact Township in many foreign countries.
9. **Mr. Adnan Al Bachhu**, Associate Professor of Hazi Danesh Science and Technology University viewed, whether we understand it or not? I had an experience of visiting the Compact Townships in Kuwait, it is also possible to implement in our country. Now-a-days lands cannot be purchased alone in town, to purchase land many people have to be together. I support the concept of Compact Township for solving our accommodation problem and want its implementation.
10. **Mr. Habibul Bashar** of *Sanskritir* *Noya* *Shetu* pointed out, when lands are distributed at our individual level, no land remain for our children. The necessity of Compact Townships has appeared more apparent. Now the question is how to implement the Compact Townships. Whether the state will do it or we ourselves do it. If we think about the Chehelgazi union, here live about 50,000 people. The accommodation problem of this people can be solved by creating Three Compact Townships.
11. In this regard, Dr. Abul Hossain pointed out, what the issues you have raised here govt. policy support is required here. As for instance, Bangladesh obtains loans from the World Bank, which have to be pay off by 40 years interest rate is only 1 percent . Our rickshaw pullers have also to pay this interest if they get such low interest loan. Therefore, there is scope of financing. To build Compact Townships it will require many manpower and labourers; and through this many business people can get employment. On the other hand, we will be able to save agro-land and get planed life style.
12. In fine, the Chair of the meeting Mrs. Aparna Roy laid stress on the necessity of Compact Townships and she wished a great success of the initiative. She concluded the meeting with thanks to all.