

Compact township stressed -The Daily Star

Staff Correspondent

Urban planners yesterday suggested establishing "compact towns" (CT) in rural areas of the country to check rapid loss of farmland and incessant migration to the cities.

The country will face grave challenges in food production, environment protection and urbanisation in a decade or two if the authorities fail to take immediate measures for building compact towns, they said.

The observations came at a discussion "Compact Township: Integrated Towns and Rural Development Planning" jointly organised by the Department of Urban and Regional Planning (DURP) of BUET and CTF at the DURP seminar hall.

Compact township is an agglomeration of houses, hospitals, schools, markets, rural industries and local governmental units, which provides all basic services to a population of about 20,000, according to Dr Abul Hossain, general secretary of Compact Township Foundation (CTF).

It is to be largely self-governing and self-financing, and the size is small enough for traffic within the CT to be conducted by non-motorised vehicles, making it well connected as well as environmentally friendly.

"Instead of having houses scattered, the CTs will be centres of jobs and businesses. For example, the area that has potentials for dairy farming can be established as a compact town based on dairy," he said.

According to a CTF statement, the country's population will be 24 to 28 crore by 2050, while 1,500 people are migrating to the capital every day.

Dr Akbar Ali Khan, former adviser to a caretaker government, observed that living standard of people was degrading due to unplanned development in both rural and urban areas.

"We see many high-rise buildings, but often not adequate amenities," said Akbar, adding that the whole country would turn into slums if the authorities did not focus on taking proper policy and the concept of CT.

Prof Emeritus at the University of Ilion in the US and CTF Chairman Selim Rashid said compact towns could be built near the major roads, which would help reduce the need for too many sub-roads.

"As a result, the wetland and farmland will be protected," he said, adding that the government should be accompanied by private organisations in such projects.

Prof Ishrat Islam, head of DURP, Prof Shayer Ghafur and Prof Sarwar Jahan of Buet, Dr Akhtaruzzaman, economic adviser to Bangladesh Bank, and Prof Nurul Amin of economics department of North South University also spoke.