

Dhaka no longer appears to be a livable city : Fakhrul

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Online Desk : BNP Secretary General and Minister for Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, has said that due to increasing pollution, mismanagement and mounting civic challenges, Dhaka no longer appears to be a livable city. He even indicated that he personally is thinking to live in another city in the country, leaving the capital. While speaking as the chief guest on Saturday at the inauguration ceremony of the 'Dokkhiner Janala' page, organized by the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), Mirza Fakhrul said, "These days, I often feel that I should no longer live in Dhaka; instead, I should move to another city in the country. The reason is that Dhaka no longer seems livable."

He noted that the capital is facing severe crises in fundamental civic services, including air quality, water and healthcare. "The oxygen we breathe, the moment we step outside our homes is polluted. It is difficult even to enter government hospitals. One institution after another is heading toward collapse. Unless we can overcome this situation, our dream of development and prosperity will never become a reality." He emphasized the need for a social movement to ensure a pollution-free environment and build a livable city for residents. Such initiatives, he said, would help raise public awareness and inspire a desire for positive change among citizens.

The BNP Secretary General stressed that raising public awareness alone would not be sufficient. Policymakers, city authorities and those responsible for implementing development projects must also be held accountable. "Projects worth thousands of crores of taka are being implemented, but it is essential to assess how much ordinary people and city residents are actually benefiting from them." He said that city corporations are autonomous local government institutions. Around the world, developed cities are managed through elected mayors and effective local governments. Therefore, these institutions must operate with patriotism, accountability and long-term planning.

Referring to environmental degradation and river pollution in Dhaka, the minister recalled that during his college years he regularly enjoyed boat trips on the Buriganga River. However, he said, it is now almost impossible to go near the river. "It is so polluted and foul-smelling that even standing there is difficult. In my view, many of Dhaka's problems stem from the pollution of the Buriganga. The Shitalakshya River is also moving in the same direction. Then where will city dwellers go?"

Mirza Fakhrul said that alongside ongoing development activities, structural reforms are also necessary. Development projects should not only be implemented but their long-term effectiveness must also be ensured. Expressing concern over the capital's water crisis, he said that the quality of Dhaka's water supply was discussed at a recent Cabinet meeting. "A large portion of Dhaka's water is still not safe or suitable for consumption. At the same time, groundwater levels are declining at an alarming rate, which could lead to a major disaster in the future."

Calling for effective measures to clean up the rivers, he said, "Many projects are undertaken, but very few effective initiatives are seen to make the Buriganga pollution-free. We want to discuss what can be done to restore the Buriganga, the Turag, and the surrounding rivers." He concluded by saying that there is no alternative to coordinated planning, accountability, and a long-term vision if Dhaka is to become a healthy, clean, and livable city.