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Ananda Niketan European School organises a winter cake festival on its premises at Dhanmondi in the city yesterday.

Sanitation coverage doubles to 67pc in two years

BSS, Dhaka

The nationwide coverage of sanitary latrines has doubled to 67 percent from 33 percent in the last two years, according to the statistics of the Department of Public Health and Engineering (DPHE).

Sources said only 33.21 percent of families in the country had access to sanitary toilets in September 2003, but the figure rose to 66.85 percent in a span of over 26 months.

The LGRD ministry, which aims to bring every family under sanitation coverage by 2010, now sees a grand success of the national programme ahead of schedule.

"We have set our target for 2010, but now we are quite optimistic to reach the goal well ahead of schedule," LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told BSS yesterday.

Bhuiyan said the nation has achieved the success without spending any extra money and

donors' aid. The programme can be an example of self-reliant initiatives, he added.

"A simple motivation can make a big difference. The national sanitation campaign is a glittering example of that," he said, adding that the government has just made the process easier and involved communities and local government bodies to make it successful.

The minister thanked people for the all out support and urged them to make the success sustainable. He also commended the role of the media and the FEJB in this regard.

The DPHE statistics show that a total of 1,43,01,524 families now using sanitary latrines compared to 71,06,141 families in August-September 2003.

The rural coverage has risen to 65 percent from 28.77 percent, municipality coverage increased to 76.72 percent from 53.10 percent, while city corporation coverage surged to 78.4 percent from 69.92



PHOTO: STAR

Bikkhubda Nagorik Samaj, a forum of aggrieved citizens, takes out a procession carrying national flags in the city yesterday protesting terrorism, fundamentalism and serial bomb blasts.

Call for urgent action to protect wetlands

BSS, Dhaka

Environmentalists, experts and journalists on Thursday urged all to take urgent defensive actions, which include implementation of wetlands protection act, to reverse dismal scenario of the wetlands of the country.

They warned that upstream diversion of water courses also put an extra pressure on the poverty situation and livelihood here besides creating economic, social and environmental stresses.

"The government should take urgent steps to protect wetlands, which is the most precious natural resource of the country, for huge biological diversity," said Dr Mohammad Mujibur Rahman of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) at a seminar titled "Wetlands for Poverty Alleviation and Livelihood."

The World Water Forum of Journalists (WWFJ) and Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB) organised the seminar to mark the World Wetlands Day at FEJB conference room in the city.

Presided over by WWFJ Secretary General and FEJB Chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury, CARDMA president Hasna J Moudud, Bangladesh Television Director General AKM Hanif, Hasib M Irfanullah of IUCN and News Today city editor Badiul Alam among others addressed the seminar.

"In Bangladesh, wetlands, which are immense resource of biological

diversity, have been turning to wastelands by encroachments and unsustainable use," Professor Mujib Rahman warned.

Hasna Moudud said that the wetlands, which work as a life support system for the people of the country and its nature, must be protected.