

'Political commitment a must to conserve Sundarbans'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday stressed the need for strong political commitment, proper implementation of existing laws and sensitising local inhabitants to conserve the bio-diversity and beauty of the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest in Bangladesh.

They observed that except its tigers, crocodiles and deer the real beauty of the Sundarbans has not been presented to people properly resulting lack of public awareness to protect its diverse ecosystem.

The discussion titled 'I will visit Sundarbans and let my children also to visit' was organised by Prokirti Foundation, a forum of mass media workers, at Dhaka

Reporters Unity auditorium.

Iftekhahul Arefin, director of Prokirti Foundation, delivered the welcome speech while Rahul Raha, presented the keynote paper at the discussion.

ATM Anwarul Quadir, general secretary of Philately Association of Bangladesh, presented an article titled 'Sundarbans in postage stamps'.

Advocate Rizwana Hasan, executive director of Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association (Bela), and Philip Gain, director of the Society for environment and Human Development (SEHD), were the panel discussants.

Rizwana said apart from its tigers and deer, the appeal of diverse eco-system including the thrilling silence of the Sundarbans has to be presented to

people for its proper conservation.

Philip Gain said about 2.50 lakh hectares of the mangrove forest has been illegally destroyed for shrimp cultivation.

He stressed the need for educating people about the importance of the Sundarbans for the sake of its proper conservation.

Journalist Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul laid emphasis on sensitising the local people dependent on the Sundarban for their livelihood to save the forest.

Saifuddin Sabuj, chairman of Prokirti Foundation, presided over the discussion where Faruk Ahmed, director of development and research, Sundarban Academy, also spoke as special guest.



Save the Environment Movement and Jono Udyog form a human chain at Shahbagh in the city yesterday with a call to formulate a national policy on haor to protect the environment and bio-diversity.

PHOTO: STAR

'Formulate haor policy to protect biodiversity'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Environmentalists yesterday called on the government to formulate a national policy on haor (huge water body) and cancel the system of leasing out haors in order to protect the environment and biodiversity.

They also demanded steps to ensure common people's rights to wetlands through proper development plan and declaration of certain haors as sanctuary to conserve biodiversity.

The demands came from a human chain programme jointly organised by the Save the Environment Movement and Jono Udyog at Shahbagh in the city.

Speaking on the occasion, the environmentalists said about 95 percent of the wetlands in the country is in the grip of influential people who are using the banner of 'fishermen'.

But the genuine fishermen and marginalised people living around the haors are doubly victimised as, on the

one hand, they have to face natural disasters and, on the other, they were evicted from their areas by the influential people, but the local administrations remains indifferent, they said.

They called on the government to take initiatives for proper management and development of haors in order to ensure welfare of the poor people and fishermen of the disaster-prone areas and conserve the biodiversity which are on the verge of extinction.

Convenor of Save the Environment Movement Abu Naser Khan, Director of Haor Development Board Engineer Enamul Haque, Secretary General of Peace Iqma Hossain, Advocate Abed Reza, Dr Jasmine Ara Sultana, Sushanto Sarkar of Jono Udyog, and Haji Ansar Ali of Dhaka Jagoron spoke at the programme.

'Halt Khulna' programme on Mar 13

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Greater Khulna Development Action Committee (GKDAC) will observe half an hour 'Khulna Achaal Programme' (halt Khulna programme) from 11:00am on March 13 demanding gas supply through pipeline, reopening of the state-owned Daulatpur Jute Mills, installation of 210 megawatt power plant, construction of Padma Bridge at Mawa, expansion of Khulna Stadium and installation of flood light at Khulna Divisional Stadium and a full-fledged TV centre.

GKDAC President Abu Mohammad Ferdous and Secretary General Sheikh Ashrafuzzaman urged the people to respond to the call for paralysing Khulna for half an hour from 11:00am on March 13.

Addressing a press conference yesterday at Khulna Press Club, the GKDAC leaders said the ruling party has done little for development of Khulna during the last four and a half years. The lawmaker, Ali Asgar Lobi and Ashraf Hossain, have built their own fortunes at the cost of funds allocated for implementation of different development projects, said GKDAC leaders.