

Two lakh live in high-risk areas of cyclone-prone Sitakunda

Insufficient number of cyclone shelters, poor maintenance of the existing ones and absence of plan for setting up more shelters remain a matter of concern

NUR UDDIN ALAMGIR

About two lakh people live in high-risk coastal areas of Sitakunda, which is prone to cyclone damage.

Insufficient number of cyclone shelters, poor maintenance of the existing ones and absence of plan for setting up more shelters remain a matter of concern for them.

The people, who frequently witness loss of life and properties in natural disaster, fear large-scale devastation and huge loss if there is any repetition of the cyclonic storm of April 29, 1991.

With only one cyclone shelter for 5,000 people, any strong cyclone or tidal upsurge will

threaten the survival of many lives, local people said.

The administration, however, is quite indifferent to the menace, they added.

After the April 29 cyclone that left a huge trail of devastation and loss of lives and two other cyclones that hit the coastal area in 1994 and 1997, only 52 cyclone shelters were constructed in the upazila by the government so far.

Of the shelters, 11 are at Syedpur Union, seven at Baraiyadhala, four each at Sitakunda municipality, Barabkunda, Bhatiary and Bansbaria, eight at Muradpur, five at Kumira, two at Sonachhari and three at Salimpur Union. They were constructed with the financial assistance from different donor

countries, including Japan and Saudi Arabia.

With each of them having a capacity of accommodating only 60 to 70 people, they can provide shelter to some 3500 people during the natural disaster, said the local people.

More than 100 such shelters are required to save the people of this coastal area during the natural disaster.

People of Syedpur, Kumira and Muradpur narrating their nightmarish experience of '91 cyclone said if such a cyclone hits the area once again the casualties will exceed the previous record.

They said population of the locality has increased geometrically though the number of shelter remained unchanged.

"We need more shelters in the upazila to avert major casualties during any natural disaster," said Mohammed Yunus of Bara Kumira, who experienced the 1991 cyclone.

On the other hand, condition of most of the existing shelters is very bad and facing manifold problems, sources said.

Though the shelters are housing primary schools, they lack water, power and sanitation facilities, they added.

Lack of proper maintenance is causing damages to the shelters where the doors and windows are getting worn out and the buildings decaying beyond measure.

Untended by the authorities concerned, criminals are cashing on the situation and using the shelters as their safe dens.

A local schoolteacher of Guptakhali under Muradpur Union preferring anonymity said some local musclemen and drug peddlers gather at the shelter (Guptakhali Cyclone Shelter) in the evening everyday.

They carry out unsocial activities, including use and peddling of different drugs, at the cyclone shelters, said the teacher.

District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer (DRRO) in Chittagong Md Bazul Hyder Patwary said "We have sent a proposal for repairing the existing cyclone centres to the government and we have a plan to increase the number of shelters. He admitted the miserable condition of the centres.



A cyclone shelter in Sitakunda.

Tale of ailing Khagrachhari hospitals

JASIM MAJUMDER

Over five lakh people in Khagrachhari are deprived of proper healthcare services as facilities at the local health complexes have failed to keep pace with the growing needs of the people.

The state of hospitals tells the story of utter neglect on the part of the health department. Shortage of doctors, technological facilities and medicines seem to have acquired chronic dimensions.

There are one zila sadar hospital, seven upazila health



A patient lying on the floor at Khagrachhari Sadar Hospital for lack of

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complexes, 11 union sub-centres (USC) and one 10-bed rural health centre (RHC) in the district and all are in deplorable state for years, thanks to the indifference and negligence of the health department.

There are 47 doctors against 106 approved posts in Khagrachhari, sources at Civil Surgeon's Office said. Besides, 59 posts are vacant at different centres, including a deputy civil surgeon, two senior consultants of medicine and surgery department, five junior consultants on anaesthesia, cardiology, gynaecology, pathology and radiology and two upazila health and

family planning officers.

The health complexes have been running without any ambulances as the vehicles, provided by the local lawmaker, have become unfit within one year due to lack of proper care and maintenance, sources said. The government provided five ambulances for upazila health complexes during the financial year of 2004-2005.

The government also gave six X-ray machines to upazila health complexes, except Dighinala, during the period but machines could not be found in operation even for a single day for lack of technicians and

experts, sources said.

Civil Surgeon Dr Mohammad Abu Taher said, "We can't provide proper healthcare services to the patients here for shortage of doctors."

"We have sent letters on several occasions to the authorities concerned, including the health ministry, for sufficient doctors and filling the other vacant posts without any positive response as yet," he said.

Dr Taher said, "We hope we will get fund for repairing the ambulances soon." The patients are suffering a lot due to lack of ambulance, he added.

He said ambulances become

unfit due to technical reasons not for negligence in maintenance.

Rokeya Begum 45, from Shalbagan at the Khagrachhari Sadar upazila health complex said she has been waiting for four hours with a slip to meet a lady doctor but her turn is yet to come. Rokeya said she could not meet her as one doctor is to attend many patients at a time.

Hasmat Ali, 23, from Buachhari, said he has been waiting for hours to meet a doctor but doesn't know when his turn will come.

theweekthatwas

'Reform CG to ensure free, fair polls'

Speakers at a seminar here on Saturday stressed the need for immediate reforms in the caretaker government system to ensure a free, fair and credible election with a view to giving democracy an institutional shape.

They said three parliamentary elections were held under the system, yet the caretaker government has not been proved as the most effective method to ensure a free and fair elec-

tion. The seminar titled 'Non-Party Caretaker Government: Limitations and Reforms' was held at the auditorium of Engineers Institute, Chittagong.

Premier University organised the seminar on the occasion of third anniversary of its law department with Vice Chancellor Prof Anwarul Azim Arif in the chair. Eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain spoke as the chief guest. Md Shahinur Parvez, a teacher of the department, presented the keynote paper.

Dr Kamal in his speech said the musclemen, a section of dishonest politicians and patrons of black money,

terrorists and party goons have bulldozed the constitutional rights of the people.

People are also deprived of their rights due to absence of honest and competent representatives in parliament, he said. He said Bangladesh is now experiencing a monarchy-type of parliamentary system.

Dr Kamal urged all to raise their voices against all kinds of deprivation, injustice, repression and corruption to help establish democracy.

Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, scientist Prof Jamal Nazrul Islam, Barrister Tanya Amir, Prof Mohit Ul Alam and Prof Dr M Badruddin also spoke.

Partex Gallery launched

Partex Industries Limited, a leading furniture manufacturing company, launched its outlet in the city on Thursday.

Marketing Director of Partex Group M Rahman inaugurated the 'Partex Gallery' at a ceremony at Sheikh Mujib Road at Agrabad in the port city.

Company General Manager (marketing) Ashfaq Ul Kabir, Sales Manager AKM Nagir, dealers Hasanul Kabir and Mostafa Iqbal Jubayer were present on the occasion.

Organisers said different types of essential furniture like office, hospital and home furniture, kitchen cabinet and interior design materials will be available for the customers in the outlet.

Convention on environment soon Speakers at a meeting said the port city is now a victim of different types of environmental-hazards like air, noise and water pollution.

They said this at a preparatory meeting to organise a convention on environment held on Wednesday at Islamabadi Memorial Hall at Momin Road. Social worker Bakhtiar Nur Siddique presided.

Curator of Chittagong University Central Museum Prof Shamsul Hossain, engineer Delwar Mazumder, Advocate Harisadhan Dev Barman, Prof Md Jahangir, Prof AKM Ismail, Prof Nazim Murad and journalist Hasan Ferdous spoke at the discussion.

Environmental activist Sharif Chowhan presented different aspects of pollution in the city.

The meeting decided to hold a convention on environment in order to prevent pollution in the city. A committee was formed with Prof Shamsul Hossain as chairman and journalist Hasan Ferdous as member secretary in this connection.

'No polls without reforms'

Awami League (AL) Forest and Environment Secretary Dr Hasan Mahmud said people will not accept any election without proposed reforms in caretaker government and election commission.

He was addressing as chief guest a discussion organised by AL Lemua Union unit of Feni on the eve of national mourning day on Friday with unit President Bholu Member in the chair.

Jubo League Organising Secretary Manjurul Alam Shahin, Feni AL acting General Secretary Abdur Rahman, Jubo League Feni unit President Advocate Abul Hossain, General Secretary Karim Ullah, AL leaders Hazi Rahim Ullah, Shahed Reza and



Cultural activists bring out a mourning procession in the city on August 18 condoling the death of premier poet Shamsur Rahman.

Advocate Nur Hossain also spoke.

The speakers said present government should reform the election commission and caretaker government to establish people's right to vote.

Dutch-Bangla opens ATM booth

The Dutch-Bangla Bank opened its ninth ATM booth at Chittagong Press Club with a view to providing the banking service at the doorsteps of customers.

CPC President Abu Sufian inaugurated the booth at a ceremony on the CPC premises at city's Jamal Khan Road on Wednesday.

CPC General Secretary Kalim Sarwar, Joint Secretary Ezaz Yusufi, Executive Vice President of the bank Kazi Tawhidul Alam, Vice President SH Mokhter Ahmad, Senior Officer Rashedul Amin and journalists of different dailies were present at the ceremony.

The customers will be able to pay

different utility bills and draw cash through the booth that will provide 24-hour service, the bank officials said.

Suprabhat celebrates 2nd anniversary

Local Bengali daily Dainik Suprabhat Bangladesh celebrated its second anniversary on Thursday amid great enthusiasm.

A colourful rally was brought out on the occasion from Cheragi Pahar Intersection at Momin Road in the afternoon. Eminent historian Dr Abdul Karim inaugurated the procession by setting off balloons.

Educationist and sports organiser Prof Shayesta Khan, Chittagong Press Club President Abu Sufian, Suprabhat Editor Rusho Mahmud and journalists of different local and national dailies were present.

Different socio-cultural and political organisations, including Ghasful,

Aparajeo Bangladesh, Barnali, Baishakhi Khelaghar, Hawker Union, Bodhan Abritti Parishad, View Finder, Proma Abritti Sangathan, Consumers' Rights Protection Committee, Bangladesh Chhatra League, Chhatra Union, Jono Udyog, Young Power in Social Action (YPSA) and Bright Bangladesh participated in the procession that paraded different city roads.

Dr Safaat made CPA member

Dr Safaat Hossain Khan has recently been made member (engineer) of the Chittagong Port Authority (CPA), says a press release on Sunday.

Dr Safaat was serving as chief engineer of the CPA. He graduated in civil engineering with a first class from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BuEt) and joined CPA as assistant engineer in 1974.

He obtained Ph. D degree on Port & Harbour Hydraulics from Sofia University, Bulgaria in 1985.



Eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain speaks at a seminar on 'Non-party Caretaker Government: Limitations and Reforms' organised by Premier University at the Engineers' Institute auditorium.