

## Feature

## Environment

## An Enlightening TV Programme on Environment

by Masud Hasan Khan

ENVIRONMENTAL activities on programmes should remain above politics and be implemented by the united efforts of the people — because it is the question of our existence.

This was the view that was emanated from a discussion on the protection and improvement of the environment at the 'Avimat' — a live programme on current affairs of Bangladesh Television recently.

Conducted by Muhammad Jahangir, the discussion on 'What Can We Do To Protect and Improve Our Environment' was participated by Member of the Parliament from BNP and a member of the Parliament's Standing Committee on Forest and Environment M Abdus Salam Pintu, Forest and Environment Secretary Abdullah Harun Pasha and Dr Saleemul Huq, Executive Director of the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS) and environmental scientists.

Speakers at the discussion also observed that people at the grassroots level should be closely involved in all the planning and implementation of the environmental programmes.

Opening the discussion, Muhammad Jahangir noted out that people's awareness about the protection of the country's ecology has increased because of the continued efforts by both the government and the private sector.

However, he pointed out that planting trees do not protect the environment alone and there were many other components.

Abdus Salam Pintu MP listed that, besides the population control and poverty alleviation, many programmes like reduction in the use of chemical fertilizers, encouraging the use of natural fertilizers, stopping the dumping of wastes in the Bay of Bengal, hill-cutting were also the need of the hour.

He also suggested that environment should be included in the national curriculum to increase awareness among the

students.

The Environment and Forests Secretary listed different government programmes in protecting the ecology and biodiversity of the country including the Environment Policy and National Conservation Strategy — which was now under consideration of the government.

Pasha said that a draft law for protection and develop-

ment of the environment has recently been prepared by the government and the Forestry Sector Master Plan was now under active consideration.

Besides, the Department of Environment has been monitoring both industrial and air pollution over the last 20 years, he added.

Dr Saleemul Huq said that the government alone cannot solve all the environmental problems in the country and private efforts were required to achieve the goal.

"We should also talk with the developed countries on pollution control and environmental protection," he suggested.

Dr Huq mentioned the National Environmental Management Action Plan (NEMAP) as an example of the joint exercise of the government and the NGOs.

Abdus Salam Pintu added that the government was equally concerned about the people's participation in the environment programmes.

"Earlier, such programmes were imposed from above, but now the government pursues

the bottom-up policy so that the people's perspective is reflected in the planning and implementation of the environmental programmes," he said.

Replies to questions received from the audience by telephone, the Forest and Environment Secretary said that the government was keeping a vigil against the dumping of wastes by foreign ships in the

Bay of Bengal.

Responding to a question on the role of the NGOs in redressing the adverse impact of the Farakka Barrage, Dr Saleemul Huq said that the government should immediately start negotiation with India to settle the issue of water sharing.

Abdullah Harun Pasha, while answering to a question, however, admitted that the government ban on the use of plastic bags have been post-

poned to achieve the goal.

The government has restricted further installation of plastic bag company for the environmental interest of the country, he pointed out.

A total of 117 suggestions made by the audience on the topic were received by the BTB authorities.

Some of the suggestions recommended formation of environmental laboratories, charting environment-friendly planning and economic programmes and setting up of industries with approval of the environment ministry.

Some of the audience also highlighted the need for strict

enforcement of environmental laws and creation of public awareness to combat pollution. One suggestion said that bank loans should be denied to those industries polluting environment. Emphasis should be given more on the use of surface water than ground water in the irrigation sector and land use should be made scientific, said one audience. Another audience suggested co-ordinated pest attack management and reduced dependency on chemical fertilizer.

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