

'Protect city from floods'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of 20 environmental and social organisations yesterday called on the government to take effective steps to protect the city from floods and waterlogging and to evict illegal encroachers occupying water bodies.

They also demanded immediate execution of the government's decisions regarding the Master Plan of Dhaka Metropolitan 1997 and Law of Open Space and Wetlands 2000.

Hundreds of people formed a human chain organised by Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa) in front of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) yesterday to press the demands.

Speaking at a gathering there,

the leaders said most city roads go under Knee-deep water even after a slight or moderate rain as over 90 percent canals in and around the capital was filled up by land grabbers.

"We should recover lands, canals, rivers and wetlands from the illegal encroachers for the greater interest of future generation," said Prof Muzaffer Ahmed, president of Bapa.

He also called for launching programmes in every ward of the city to raise awareness about environment.

Mohidul Haq Khan, general secretary of Bapa, said the intolerable situation has been created as Rajuk did not perform its duties properly.

Mihir Biswas, joint secretary of

Bapa, told The Daily Star that the government has taken a decision to recover 37 canals, but no action has been taken as yet.

He alleged that a section of Rajuk officials gave permission to build plots at any place in the capital in exchange of bribes.

Nagorik Uddug, Coalition for Urban poor (CUP), Proshika, SID, Hunger Project, Srama Bikash and Paribesh Samabaya Samity, Saktar and Seba Samity, Bishwa Shanti Sangha, Work for Better Bangladesh, Bastibasi Adhikar Surakkha Committee, Pallima Sangsad, Citizens' Forum and Centre for Human and Communities Development took part in the demonstration.



PHOTO: PID

Japanese Ambassador Matsushiro Horiguchi called on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday.

Japan to help develop infrastructure

Envoy meets Khaleda

UNB, Dhaka

Japan has assured Bangladesh of increased cooperation in building infrastructure, including bridges, culverts and airports, to improve its development capacity.

During a meeting with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday, Japanese Ambassador Matsushiro Horiguchi also expressed his country's interest in power and gas sectors.

The prime minister expressed her gratitude to the people and government of Japan for their gesture in considering the suffering of the people of Bangladesh as their own.

She reciprocated the gesture when the ambassador said that the people of Japan also face natural calamity such as typhoon regularly and can feel the suffering caused by such adversity.

During the recent devastating floods, Japan came up with 6.8 million US dollars in emergency relief for meeting the needs of medicine, food, safe water and

Shamsuddin passes away

UNB, Dhaka

Former lawmaker of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Alhaj Md. Shamsuddin Ahmed died of cardiac arrest at the Birdem Hospital yesterday at the age of 60.

President Iajuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in separate messages expressed deep shock at the death of Shamsuddin.

They recalled his contribution to democratic movements as a lawmaker and social worker.

They conveyed sympathy to the members of the bereaved family and prayed for salvation of the departed soul.

In another joint message, Speaker Barrister Muhammad Jamir Uddin Sarker and Deputy Speaker Akhter Hamid Siddiqui also expressed deep sorrow at his death and said county has lost an eminent political leader in his death.

Death anniversary

Toady is the second death anniversary of the wife, son, brother and sister of Tapan K Podder, managing director, Prime Finance & Investment Limited, says a press release.

They died in a road accident in 2002.

A prayer session will be held at his residence at House # 62, Road # 2A, Dhanmondi at 5.00pm.

River erosion makes 80,000 homeless a year

Experts tell workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

River erosion renders 80 thousand people of floodplain homeless while almost equal number of 'char-dwellers' become shelterless every year, said the experts at a workshop yesterday.

Terming erosion as one of the most devastating natural hazards, they said the rivers and estuaries devour 10 thousand hectares of land every year.

The seminar on 'Monitoring and Prediction of Erosion' was organised by Water Resources Planning Organisation (Warpo) and Centre for Environmental and Geographical Information Services (Cegis) at Brac Centre Inn in the city.

Though it is extremely expensive to protect land from river erosion, we have to look for some cheaper alternative measures, as we cannot afford losing land any longer in a country with the highest density of population, said Water Resources Minister Hafiz Uddin Ahmad.

River erosion is a nightmare for

millions of people in the country, said Warpo Director General H S Mozaddad Faruque.

Little attention has so far been paid to minimise the losses and community sufferings caused by erosion, said Cegis Morphologist Maminul Haque Sarker in his presentation at the workshop.

No systematic documentation or holistic picture of erosion, its extent and damage is available, he added.

The river Padma alone engulfed 30.7 kilometres of rural and feeder roads and a total of 3,300 hectares of land including 260 hectares of settlement and 1,200 hectares agricultural land during 2001 to 2004, said Maminul.

He also showed in his presentation that the river Jamuna eroded a total of 1130 hectares of floodplain along its right bank in 2003.

The Cegis has developed some tools based on its study of river morphology with satellite image to monitor bank erosion in the rivers Jamuna, Ganges, Padma and lower Meghna.

It has also improved the tools under a project called Environmental Monitoring Information Network (Emin) for erosion prediction with one-year lead-time to help national organisations and NGOs in the vulnerable areas in reducing losses and community sufferings.

Cegis Executive Director Dr Riaz Khan and Water Resources Secretary Omar Faruque Khan also spoke on the occasion.

Int'l confce on HR begins today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A three-day international conference on 'Institutional Protection of Human Rights: Role of National Human Rights Institutions' will begin at a city hotel today.

Chief Justice Syed J R Mudassir Husain will attend the conference as chief guest.

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