

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

Inactive laws fail to save environment, say speakers

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Due to a lack of proper action by the government departments concerned, the environmental laws remain inactive in Bangladesh.

No case was filed under the environmental laws in the last six years in the environmental court, said speakers in the First International Conference on Environmental Law organised by Poribesh Bachao Andolon in the city on Saturday.

The theme of the conference was "The Concept of Environmental Court in The Contemporary World: Application in Bangladesh."

The speakers said it is possible to ensure overall development in the country's environment by activating the environmental court and the Department of Environment.

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The speakers also said that if the cases are not disposed of within 270 days then proper actions should be taken to find the solution.

They also demanded imple-

mentation of the Environmental Law 2000 and formation of an expert committee under the environmental court.

Abu Naser Mohammad Wahid, associate professor at the Department of Law and Justice, University of Rajshahi, in his paper titled "The Concept of Environmental Court in the Temporary World: Application In Bangladesh" said environmen-



tal laws are still confined into papers in Bangladesh.

He mentioned the lack of integration among several departments of the government while dealing with environmental issues.

He cited an example of how shrimp cultivation is monitored by two departments. The Department of Fisheries encourages people to cultivate more shrimp whereas the Department of Environment considers shrimp cultivation totally in a negative way as the process of shrimp cultivation has adverse effect on environment.

In the paper titled "Functioning of The Environment Court In Chittagong: A Critical Appraisal," Dr Abdullah Al Faruque, assistant professor, Department of Laws, University of Chittagong, said the environment court does not have any power of its own. It does not have any inspector and monitoring cell as well. He also mentioned different flaws of the environmental laws.

Dr Enamul Haque, member, Law Commission, said at present no environmental law is effective in Bangladesh.

Professor Jashimuddin, former vice-chancellor of Jahangirnagar University, said proper enforcement of environmental laws could not be possible due to the indifference of concerned departments.

Mohammad Abdus Samad, director (administration and development), of the Department of Environment, said the budget that the department gets every year is not enough. Moreover, it has shortage of manpower.

Former vice chancellor of Dhaka University Prof Maniruzzaman Miah said in most cases laws are drafted in such a language that the common people cannot understand the meaning and decide what to do.



Sanctity of Ahsan Manjil, one of the major historical sites in the city, is at stake as a temporary work shed was built by the authorities violating existing laws related to protection of historical sites. It was constructed on the western side of the palace around a year ago.

City high-rises ignore

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The DG also said they need modern training on fire fighting and more equipment like Turntable Ladders (TTL).

President of Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB) Mubasshar Hussain said gas leakage and electric short circuit are the usual reasons behind fire incidents in the buildings. There must be a fire exit, which everybody must know.

The culture of caging a building with iron fencing and frills here and there must stop to ensure of human safety, he said, a fire escape must be clearly marked, kept free of obstruction and lit with rechargeable lanterns.

"To my knowledge, Sheraton Hotel, Sonargaon Hotel and the Civil Aviation Authority regularly arrange fire drills perhaps to comply with international standards," said Mubasshar.

Architect Iqbal Habib, executive member of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon, said the Urban Development Committee with the help of Rajuk must carry out a survey on the buildings immediately to assess structural stability, fire fighting mechanism, compliance with car parking as well as ensuring compliance with other rules.

Prof Jamilur R Choudhury, vice-chancellor of Brac

University and president of Bangladesh Earthquake Society said town planning, architectural design and interior decoration of a building must be taken into consideration for installing safety measures.

Fire service department and Rajuk have to monitor the compliance with safety measures. The city planners at the time of town planning must ensure sources of fire hydrants as an essential means of fire fighting, Choudhury said.

"Building owners rampantly deviate from the original fire exit provision in the building design after having the approval," Choudhury said.

Rajuk Chairman KAM Haroon said the previous rules for buildings did not have detailed and adequate provisions for safety measures in a building or any effective mechanism for supervision.

Building inspectors used to oversee only the external deviation of a building, not any internal deviation, he said, but the newly framed rules of 2006 now in effect provide adequate provisions of safety measures in a building.

PWD's plan

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and Eidgah mosque committee are contemplating to grab approximately one bigha, situated between the Satmasjid Road and the Eidgah. On January 23 they chopped down several trees at the spot to create space.

The mosque committee claimed that the whole area inside the boundary fences of the Eidgah Maidan including the piece of vacant land situated between Satmasjid Road and the west side boundary fence of the Eidgah is a Waqf property.

PWD officials admitted that they are aware of the tree felling and claimed that the Eidgah belongs to the Department of Archaeology while the mosque is a Waqf estate. But the remainder of the land, an area of 2.5 acres, definitely belongs to PWD. The mosque authorities have only been using parts of their land upon receiving permission from PWD.

The residents of the area welcomed PWD's decision to convert the place into a park but feared that if the process of making a mini park lingered then the powerful mosque committee backed by the local ward commissioner Abul Khaer bablu will definitely grab the land.

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Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
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Muktijuddha Jadughar-Sunday
Dhaka Zoo-Sunday
Shishu Jadughar-Sunday