

UN for global action on climate change

AFP, Geneva

All sections of the international community must take urgent action against climate change and the growing risk of natural disasters, two senior UN officials said yesterday.

"Today, eight out of the world's ten most populous cities are prone to earthquakes, and six of them are on or near the coast. A billion people live in unstable, overcrowded slums," said John Holmes, the UN under-secretary general for human-

itarian affairs.

"The combination of decaying infrastructure, land erosion, crowded conditions, and a lack of rescue services could lead to catastrophes on an unprecedented scale," said Holmes on the first day of a UN disaster reduction conference in Geneva.

He told journalists that governments, international organisations, civil society and the private sector all had a responsibility to put disaster risk reduction strategies at the heart

of policy-making.

"It's not enough to set up a national disaster management centre unless you give it some resources, but also ... you have to 'mainstream' this so that disaster risk reduction is built into policies of all different kinds."

This should apply as much to World Bank and United Nations programmes as to those of national governments, Holmes added.

Salvano Briceno, director of the UN's International Strategy for

Disaster Reduction secretariat, said huge "mega-cities" in the developing world – such as Mumbai, Mexico City, Bogota, Istanbul, Jakarta, Shanghai and Manila – could all be at risk. "Most of them are prone to either heavy storms, heavy cyclones, earthquakes and sometimes several of the hazards combined," he said.

"There's more people living in the wrong places and doing the wrong things," he added, citing people living on "risky" land that is either

close to the sea or prone to erosion and landslides.

Holmes said climate change meant that phenomena such as earthquakes could become more severe as sea levels rise, thus heightening the risk of a tsunami striking coastal areas.

Moreover, global warming coupled with existing environmental degradation could give rise to new threats such as forest fires and mudslides.

"The risks and vulnerabilities are very clear, the need to something about them is very clear, and that need has been very considerably exacerbated by what is happening on the climate change front," Holmes said.



Advocate Sohrab Uddin speaks at a roundtable titled 'The role of environment laws in protecting environment' at Dhaka Taxes Bar Association in the city yesterday. On his right are Siddiqur Rahman, Colonel (ret'd) Dr Abdul Latif Mallick and Dr Abdul Mannan Chowdhury. Bangladesh Society for Constitutional Rights organised the roundtable.

PHOTO: STAR



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A part of Bashabo-Madartek Link Road in the city has caved in, much to the suffering of the commuters and locals, while the authorities have turned a blind eye to the problem.

New candidates

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that begins on June 10 at Sripur, he said people's representatives would be involved in the voter enrolment activities through a three-member team including a ward commissioner and his nearest contestant in polls. Municipality chairmen will be involved at upazila levels, he added.

Sakhawat also said discussion with political parties is required as there are proposals like 33 percent women representatives in party ranks and positions and de-linking of their front organisations and branches abroad.

According to a draft proposal set by the commission, a political party will not be allowed to participate in the elections if it has any front organisations or branches abroad.

Earlier, a three-member National

Democratic Institute (NDI) team led by Deborah Healy met the chief election commissioner at his office. Election commissioners Sahul Hossain and Sakhawat Hossain were present in the meeting.

After the meeting Deborah Healy told reporters that the NDI would hold a conference on how to ensure facilities for physically challenged people in the election process. She said they informed the EC about the election model of Ireland and urged the EC to send representative to the conference.

"We are thinking about having information on the registration form to identify the physically challenged people," Sakhawat said.

Budget

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Written opinions and recommendations on the budget can be sent directly or by mail as well. All opinions and recommendations will be considered and measures will be taken to reflect reasonable suggestions on the budget.

After finalising the budget in this process, it would come into force through promulgation of an ordinance, the handout said.

To ensure wider participation, the link of the Finance Division website will also be available on the following government websites: www.bangladesh.gov.bd, www.nbr-bd.org, www.plancomm.gov.bd, www.imed.gov.bd, www.bdpresinform.org and www.cao.gov.bd.

The government hopes that all print and electronic media of the country will circulate all information and documents on the budget properly and help in participation of all.

Five held

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alias Dulal, 45, is a nephew of Eng Afsaruddin and the caretaker of the factory.

The other four arrestees are Abu Bakar, Jasim Uddin, Rabiul Hossain and Abdul Alam -- all from Chandanaish and Patiya upazilas.

A team of police from Bayezid Bostami Police Station led by Officer in Charge (OC) Matiul Islam raided a two-storied building at the abandoned factory on 74/81 Nasirabad Industrial Area at around 2.00pm yesterday.

At one stage of quizzing, Dulal, the caretaker, admitted to having licensed firearms and bullets kept in the toilet. The law enforcers recovered the arms and ammunition hidden inside a steel armoire in the toilet, said OC Matiul.

Two of the arrestees, Bakar and Jasim, told journalists that they were hired and stationed there to help Dulal guard the abandoned factory.

OC Matiul suspects that the firearms and bullets could belong to a crime gang based in Chandanaish of south Chittagong and these were meant for use during parliamentary elections.

Sources said police might interrogate Eng Afsaruddin over the recovery.

Eng Afsaruddin ran for member of parliament in the 2001 general elections on AL ticket from Chittagong 13 (Chandanaish) against Col (ret'd) Oli Ahmad.

Housewife killed during nor'wester

BSS, Jessore

A housewife was killed and her husband injured when the CI-sheet roof of their house collapsed on them during a nor'wester, which swept the town yesterday.

Hospital sources said Aklima Khatun, 20, died at Jessore General Hospital where she was taken with her husband Tito, 25, for treatment. The condition of Tito was stated to be critical.

Neighbours said the couple was injured when the house at Tantipara in Nilganj area collapsed when an old coconut tree fell on it during the nor'wester.

'Release Ruet students held by jt forces'

RU CORRESPONDENT

General students of Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology (Ruet) yesterday staged demonstration in front of the administrative building and demanded immediate releases of the students arrested by joint forces on Sunday night.

The joint forces arrested five students including an outsider and seized many electric circuits and equipments during the three-hour raids on different halls.

The arrested students were reportedly sent to court yesterday.

Campus sources said hundreds of angry students staged demonstration in front of the vice-chancellor's office and demanded the release of their classmates.

They threatened that they will not sit for today's examination if their friends are not released within 24 hours.

The students also protested police harassment during the hall raids.

Students Welfare Adviser Sayed Mafiz Uddin told the agitating students that as they were arrested by joint forces the authorities had nothing to do in this regard.

He however will try to get their release.

The adviser said the 1st year examination will be held as scheduled.

As the students were not pacified, police were asked to disperse them.