



Residents of Kutubkhali and Dholaipar in the city's Jatrabari area have been facing waterlogging problem for the last several years. Because of the poor maintenance of drainage channels, the area goes under water even after a short rainfall. But the authorities have turned a blind eye to the problem.

Living on dangerous slope

FROM PAGE 1

these slums illegally to rent them to the low-income people while in many cases floating and poor people make thatched houses at the foot of the hills for cheap shelter.

Setting up of such slums seriously affects natural vegetation, triggering landslides, especially in the rainy season and people living in slums on 'Khas' or government land in and around hills are most vulnerable to death in landslides.

Large slums at Jamtali, Lalkhan Bazar, Matijhama, South Pahartali and an area to the west of Foy's Lake are on the lands of Bangladesh Railway, forest department and public works department.

Rehabilitation of the disadvantaged people has become a must to check the mushrooming growth of slums and death in landslides, urban experts said.

"Putting a stop to hill cutting would not be sufficient to stop death in landslides unless those living in the slums of hilly areas could be rehabilitated," CDA Chairman Shah Mohammad Akhter Uddin said.

"We have started the process of preparing a Detailed Area Plan identifying areas for rehabilitating the poor on some 35 acres of land at three separate spots of the city under a project -- housing for disadvantaged group of people," the CDA chairman told this correspondent on Wednesday.

"The plan to be prepared by December might identify land for rehabilitation in the areas adjacent

to Kalpaloke Phase II, Ananya -- a housing project under implementation at Jalalabad, and the other end of Shah Amanat bridge," he said.

He sought cooperation and participation of all the authorities concerned as well as NGOs and individuals to make the initiative a success.

The CDA has also plans to develop the northern fringe of the city spreading over 2000-acres of hilly land to the north of Zakir Hossain Road through creation of water reservoirs with necessary silt-traps at the bottom of different hills, said the CDA chairman.

It will help check erosion that fills the city drains with earth and silt, causing frequent inundation, he said.

Asked about steps to check the rampant hill cutting and consequent landslides causing casualty in the hill slums, he said the CDA won 18 cases where imprisonment and financial punishment were awarded to people accused of hill cutting.

It filed 25 cases accusing many big fishes for hill cutting since January 31 this year, he said.

The accused in the cases also include influential persons like detained Chittagong City Corporation Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, Director of Abul Khaer Group SK Sengupta, and proprietors of many real estate developers engaged in levelling hills at different locations under Bayezid, Khulshi, Panchlaish

and Pahartali areas in the city, CDA sources said.

"All the concerned authorities like the railway, forest department, public works department having hilly lands under encroachment should come forward to check the evil practice," the CDA chairman said.

Besides, the police are also empowered to arrest any person or confiscate equipment and properties for hill cutting at any time and any place under the Building Construction rules and Environment Protection Act, he added.



Banglalink officials hand over relief materials to the joint forces for the victims of floods and landslides in Chittagong recently. The company donated 3000 relief packets, containing rice, mineral water, saline and biscuits.

Gaza: a chaotic land of poverty, violence

AFP, Gaza City

The Gaza Strip, one of the most densely populated areas in the world, is home to around 1.5 million Palestinians who struggle against overwhelming levels of poverty and violence.

The territory is now in the hands of the Islamists of Hamas after its fighters routed rivals of the secular Fatah movement in fierce street battles that have killed at least 113 people over the past week.

Hamas's seizure of the coastal strip has effectively created two Palestinian entities adjutting Israel, with the power base of the Fatah movement of president Mahmud Abbas limited to the occupied West Bank.

Situated to the southwest of Israel and bordering Egypt, the Mediterranean coastal region covers 362 square kilometres (140 square miles), some 45 kilometres (28 miles) in length by six to 10 kilometres wide.

Each square kilometre (0.4 square mile) shelters an average of

2,350 Palestinians, making it one of the most crowded areas in the world.

Israel captured the territory from Egypt during the 1967 Six Day War, when it also seized the West Bank and east Jerusalem from Jordan.

For decades the Palestinian population lived alongside 8,000 Jewish settlers who enjoyed relative luxury and space on 33 percent of the land taken up by 21 settlements which needed an Israeli army division to ensure their security.

Around 900,000 of the Palestinian population are refugees -- those who were expelled or left their homes after the creation of Israel in 1948 -- and their offspring. Half of those live in eight camps managed by the United Nations.

Under a so-called disengagement plan, Israel withdrew settlers and troops in 2005 after a 38-year occupation. But as it still controls the coastal strip's borders and the movement of goods and people, the territory is still considered under its occupation law under its international law.

Laws, role of locals must

FROM PAGE 1

forests in the name of protecting the forests, said Fazlous Satter, coordinator of Global Network for the Prevention of Torture (GNPT).

Ritwick Dutta, a lawyer of the SC of India, said one of the major flaws in the forest related colonial laws is and has been that it puts absolute power in the hands of the forest department officials in managing the forests.

He said India enacted Forest Conservation Act in 1980 and Forest Rights Act in January 2007.

Editor of the daily New Age Nurul Kabir said most of the forest related laws are unjust to the people living on forests.

Social ownership is crucial in the case of forest management, said Ronald Halder, a Bangladeshi documentary filmmaker of nature.

Coordinator of Nijera Kori, Bangladesh, Khushi Kabir, said there has always been a conflict between the dependents and traditional users of the forests and implementers of laws.

"It is the local people who have so far protected whatever forests we have today," said Kabir, who chaired the inaugural session.

Executive Director of The Ecological Foundation, India, Sudhirendar Sharma said all countries in the region have laws for conservation of forests but perhaps they do not enforce them properly.

"All the ongoing physical developments may go wrong unless we conserve the very basic environment and forests," Sudhirendar said.

Community forestry has been a significant intervention in the conservation of forests in Nepal, contrary to the government management with bad laws and policies that ultimately is responsible for the destruction of forests, said Ghanashyam Pandey, chairperson of Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal.

Neither forests nor the dependent tribal people have been protected despite various laws, institutions and movements, said Director of Bela Syeda Rizwana Hasan.

Conservator of Forest, Social Forestry Circle Abdul Motalib admitted that forest related laws of colonial era were aimed at exploiting the people and is inadequate in addressing the needs of today's management.

He said the forest department has no hard documents of land ownership for protecting particularly the Sal forests of Tangail, Mymensingh and Gazipur, except for a number of notifications.

AHM Rezaul Kabir, secretary to the ministry of environment and forest, said due importance has not been given for conservation of precious and irreplaceable forests in the region.

Terming the recent catastrophe caused by mudslides in Chittagong man-made, the secretary said unplanned urbanisation is the foremost reason behind deforestation.



PHOTO: STAR

An exhibition of paintings by Shamsunnahar Lovely began at Zainul Gallery at the Institute of Fine Arts in the city yesterday. The exhibition will remain open from 11:00am to 6:00pm daily up to June 22.

Russia steps up efforts to cut greenhouse gas emission

AFP, Moscow

Russia is to intensify efforts to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions in order to stay in compliance with the Kyoto treaty as its economy rebounds from the economic collapse of the early 1990s, the country's deputy economic development minister said.

The 1990s dramatic drop in economic production made Russia's Kyoto targets more achievable, but Moscow hopes to begin to improve remaining industry with new joint projects bringing in foreign investment, Andrei Sharonov said.

"Even by the most optimistic

forecasts of economic development, we will not go over the level of 1990 (emissions), which is our obligation as stipulated by the Kyoto Protocol," Sharonov assured Friday as quoted by RIA Novosti.

"The Kyoto Protocol's secretariat now registers 29 joint projects by Russian companies," which allow other countries to invest in upgrading Russian enterprises to reduce emission of greenhouse gases, Sharonov said.

The Russian government last month issued a decree allowing such joint projects and is working on accords facilitating them,

with "active consultations" being held with France, Denmark, Sweden, Germany and Italy, Sharonov said.

Within five years, Russia aims to reduce emissions by 300 million tonnes of gases equivalent to carbon dioxide, Sharonov said, warning however that for the goal to be met, "it would take many such projects."

The Kyoto Protocol, which came into effect in February 2005 after Moscow's signature in November the year before, commits industrial nations to reduce emissions of six greenhouse gases between 2008 and 2012.