

Over 500 people risk lives at CU foothills



Houses were built at the foothills by the fourth class employees on the Chittagong University campus ignoring the threat of mudslides that could endanger their lives. Five of a family were killed in a devastating landslide at Islamia Colony on the campus on June 11.

NUR UDDIN ALAMGIR

Over 500 family members of fourth class employees of Chittagong University (CU) are now living in the vulnerable foothills and in hill pockets on the campus with constant fear of fresh devastating landslides like one on June 11.

Since then they stay at homes in the daytime and at the shelters at CUCSU building, BNCC Office and Old Medical Centre at night.

To rehabilitate them and avert further casualty, the CU authorities last week decided to shift the families to safer places on plain lands on the campus.

The CU decision, however, pushes the families into a fresh concern as they are unable to build homes on their own.

While visiting the foothills during the heavy downpour on Saturday, this correspondent found that many of the families were staying in their houses risking lives while the homeless are at the shelters.

A total of 12 people were killed in landslides on the campus in 1974, 2000 and this year.

More than 1,500 people of 662 families live in 17 colonies at different points on the campus, sources at CU Estate Department said.

Of them, around 120 families live at Medical Block Colony near CU Central Field while 70 families at Tangu Colony near Shaheed Abdur Rab Hall, 10 families at Islamia Colony near Shaheed Minar and 117 families at Shahi Colony near Alao Hall.

The residents of Medical Block Colony, Islamia Colony, Barisal Colony, Colony near Science Faculty, Botanical Garden and Jharna areas are the most vulnerable to natural disasters, sources said.

Five members of Saidur Rashid, an inkman of CU printing press, met with tragic end on June 11 when a large chunk of earth fell on his house at Islamia Colony from a nearby hill at around 8:15am.

Saidur lost his wife Senowara Begum, 40, daughter Jannatul

Nesa, 20, (a sophomore of English Department), son Saiful Islam, 18 (an HSC examinee), Mizanul Islam, 12, and Minhazul Islam, 7.

Only Saidur and his another son Manirul Islam, 7, could escape unharmed of the seven-member family.

Five people were killed in a landslide at Islamia Colony and Medical Block on June 24 in 2000 and two at Medical Block in 1974, said the sources.

Monwara Begum, who has been living in the Islamia Colony for long and lost her two minor children in a landslide in 2000, said she shifted her home from the foothill after the incident.

She said, "Now we stay at home in the daytime and at the shelter at night whenever we sense any fresh downpour." "We have no other option but to adopt the strategy out of fear," she added.

Monwara said "If the authorities force us to leave the land or say to build houses on our own, we don't know whether or not we will be able to do that."

Mohammed Shafi, who narrowly escaped on June 11 and now staying at Old Medical Centre, said he has lost all his belongings in the landslide.

"I don't know how would I overcome the crisis and build another home," Shafi said.

The CU syndicate at an emergency meeting on Wednesday decided to shift over 500 members of 110 families to plain lands following the death of five members of a family by July.

They will be shifted on a three-acre of plain land at north side of CU central field near Pagoda and WUS (World University Service) Primary School.

Vice Chancellor Prof Dr M Badiul Alam said the decision was taken on humanitarian consideration.

"Engineering Department will formulate a master plan for the proposed rehabilitation programme as early as possible and after finalising it the families will be shifted to the designated places," he said.

Move to develop city drainage system

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD

The authorities concerned have started pursuing development of a proper drainage system in the port city with the launch of massive crackdown on the perpetrators of hill cutting and encroachers of Chakta Khal following the June 11 rain-induced devastating landslides and inundation.

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) and Chittagong Development Authority (CDA), two major government development agencies, said Chakta Khal (canal) has no capacity to drain out all the storm water of the port city.

Both the organisations underscore the need for developing a proper drainage system for the city as proposed in the Chittagong Storm Water Drainage and Flood Control Master Plan of 1995.

The study area of the plan comprising 92sq miles has been divided into 10 drainage areas on the basis of physical characteristics, topography, catchments and routes of existing drainage channels.

The proposals were supposed to be implemented in five phases within the plan period of 1995-2015 at an estimated cost of Tk 750 crore, said the sources at CCC and CDA.

Seven years have been elapsed since gazette publication of Drainage Master Plan in 1999 with no visible progress for its implementation, they said.

Taking 1992 price as the base price, the consultant Binnie & Partners estimated an approximate cost of Tk 88.70 crore for the project in the first phase, sources said.

Under the Tk 50 crore World Bank financed project titled 'Environment Development Project' in the first phase, CCC could develop only a two-kilometre box culvert stretching from Agrabad to the Karnaphuli river at a cost of Tk 22 crore in 1995.

Due to financial and other irregularities caused the implementing authorities of CCC fail to release the rest of the money, leading to cancellation of the project, said the

sources concerned.

Only a two-kilometre diversion canal stretching from Bakalia B Ed College to Razakhal bridge was constructed following the plan at a cost of Tk 10 crore.

Since then some renovation and soling work of canal bed was done at a cost of Tk 25.50 crore on different occasions until 2006.

Yet the city dwellers could not find respite from the waterlogging as the work was very often delayed and caught up in the rains, making the dredging of the canal mouth near the Karnaphuli uncertain.

The canal silted up to overflow and flood the neighbouring areas, including the traditional business hubs of Chakta, Khatunganj and Asadganj.

Waterlogging and inundation cause untold sufferings and huge losses of properties to the city dwellers even after a moderate rain at the very onset of the rainy season every year.

The city dwellers, particularly those living in the neighbouring area of Chakta Khal, work will cost some Tk 300 crore which was earlier estimated at Tk 88.70 crore.

Work for the drainage system at Sadarghat, Agrabad, Chakta Khal, Mirza Khal and Bakalia Khal was proposed under the first phase, sources said.

The work under master plan to be implemented in five phases included construction of three new primary canals and 30 new secondary canals to collect water from tertiary drains, rehabilitation of existing primary canals and five secondary canals, improvement of the existing secondary and tertiary drains and construction of 19 silt traps.

CDA Chairman Shah Mohammad Aktheruddin said a proper drainage system as per the master plan could not be developed for the city. All the concerned authorities like CDA, CCC, Water Development Board and Chittagong Port Authority are required to be involved for implementation of the project, he added.



A rickshaw puller with passenger is negotiating with chest-deep water at Katalganj area in the port city after a heavy downpour recently.

the week that was

'Punish perpetrators of hill cutting'

Speakers at a meeting demanded exemplary punishment to the persons responsible for destroying environment in the port city through mindless hill cutting.

They were speaking at a discussion titled 'Disaster in Chittagong: Ways to Protect Human Lives and Environment' organised by Human Welfare and Social Development Research Centre at Muniruzzaman Islamabadi Hall on Thursday.

Security analyst Major General (Retd) Syed Muhammad Ibrahim was

the chief guest at the discussion with Centre President Prof NKM Akbar Hossain in the chair.

World Blood Donor Day observed

Fatema Begum Red Crescent Blood Centre, run by Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, observed the World Blood Donor Day on Thursday.

On this occasion, a peace rally was brought out from the centre premises at Anderkilla in the morning that paraded different city streets.

Later a discussion was held at the unit office of Chittagong District Red Crescent Society with its Medical Officer (in-charge) Dr MA Jalil in the chair.

Chittagong Medical College (CMC) Principal Prof MA Wahab Chowdhury was the chief guest at the discussion while former CMC Principal Prof Chowdhury B Mahmud was the main speaker.

Speakers emphasised the need for creating mass awareness about regular blood donation in order to help patients.

They hoped that the centre would continue its activities to play an effective role for the people suffering from different diseases.

Senior medical officers of Jernison Red Crescent Maternity Hospital Naz Sohan Sultan (gynaecology), Juria Rahman (gynaecology) and child specialist Md Tafazzal Hossain also addressed the discussion.

The blood donors, who donated blood for 10 times, were distributed

crests.

Workshop on money laundering held

Speakers at a workshop underscored the need for taking effective measures to prevent money laundering in the banking sector.

The workshop on 'Money Laundering and Credit Risk Management' was jointly organised by Agrabad, Khatunganj and OR Nizam Road branches of Premier Bank Limited on Wednesday at its Agrabad office.

General Manager of Bangladesh Bank, Chittagong SK Chowdhury was the chief guest at the workshop with Manager of Premier Bank Agrabad

branch SM Hemayet Uddin in the chair.

Fifty-four executives and officers working in the branches participated in the workshop.

Tree plantation inaugurated

A tree plantation programme began on the Hazi Muhammad Mohsin College campus on Thursday with a view to increasing beauty of the college campus as well as to maintain the ecological balance.

Principal Prof Md Nurul Huda inaugurated the programme at a ceremony as the chief guest with head of the Botany Department Prof Nazma Begum in the chair.

Speakers at the ceremony urged the students of the college to take part in tree plantation on the college campus as well as in their respective areas.

Secretary of the Teachers' Association Md Jashim Uddin Khan, Teachers' Club Secretary Abu Mohammad Mehedy, Prof Dr Hazrat Ali Mia, Prof Md Nur-U-Nabi, Prof Md Abdul Gofran, Prof Md Enamul Hoque Khondakar, students' representatives Md Ibrahim Chowdhury and Mosleh Uddin also spoke.

Call to work to end child labour

Speakers at a meeting urged the people to work together side by side the government initiatives to end child labour and give the ill-fated children a congenial environment for their development.

They were addressing a meeting at Chittagong Shishu Academy on Wednesday to mark the International Child Labour Prevention Day.

Basic Education Project for the Working Children, a project run by Primary and Mass Education, organised the meeting.

District Officer for Children Affairs Mohammad Abdus Salam, programme officers Md Golam Kabir and Sumukar Das and Area Coordinator of NGO - Surabi Mohammad Jahed participated in the meeting.

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