

'Launch battle to end city waterlogging'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a press conference yesterday called for a battle to recover the natural canals, which have been encroached indiscriminately by land grabbers over the years.

"Billions of cubic meters of sand are being dumped to fill up the low-lying areas, miles of canals have already been filled up...if we fail to address the issue of rampant encroachment, Dhaka city might not be liveable in 10 to 15 years time," said the leaders of the National Committee of Paribesh Bachao Andolon (Save the Environment Movement) to eliminate waterlogging in the city.

The press conference titled, 'Recommendations to solve

waterlogging problem in the city' was held at the National Press Club where the environmentalists expressed fear of devastating flood in the capital and urged to form a platform of people who would play the watchdog role in keeping the sewerage system clean.

Through a video presentation Shafi Uddin Sarker, chairman of Research and Study Cell at the Institute of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh showed how the natural canals and water bodies have shrunk in course of time.

With a view to saving the city from waterlogging and imminent flood he insisted on clearing some canals at Goran Chotbari, Kalyanpur, Imanganj, Mill Barack and Rampura for free flow of water.

He also stressed on digging the existing canals saying, "These should be expanded by 200 feet wide and 30 feet deep."

Warning that Dhaka city might take a barren look in next few years with the outbreak of some deadly diseases, Sarker said, "The stagnant water after every short spell of rain is so polluted that plague or cholera may take a heavy toll on city life."

He demanded strong monitoring to stop the factories from discharging untreated toxic wastes into the rivers.

The national committee has already urged the government to demarcate the boundaries of natural canals and water bodies and demolish the illegal structures over there.

Presenting the recommenda-

tions, Engineer Abdus Sobhan stressed on maintaining the existing storm sewers, canals, catch pits, receptors and gratings as per the original design.

He also called for urgent measures to ensure free flow of water through canals and culverts.

"The cleaners of Dhaka City Corporation as well as the city dwellers dump the waste in the manholes and catch pits damaging the drainage system," he added.

Engineer Sheikh Mohammad Shahidullah presided over the press conference which was also addressed by Paribesh Bachao Andolon President Abu Naser Khan.



PHOTO: STAR

Justice Kemaluddin Hossain, *left*, and Begum Peary Mahboob, *right*, present a bouquet to Dr BB Chowdhury, founder of International Bangalee Forum, at a reception in the city yesterday. Bhasa Andolon Museum organised the reception.

'Plus-minus formula' can't be objective of reforms: ex-CEC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former chief election commissioner (CEC) Justice MA Rouf yesterday said implementation of so-called plus-minus formula cannot be the objective of ongoing reforms in politics in the country.

"Plus-minus cannot be the intention of political reforms," he said, adding, "Establishing rights of people should be the goal of actual reforms."

Justice Rouf was addressing a meeting tilted 'Ongoing political reforms' to commemorate the 50th founding anniversary of National Awami Party (Bhashani) at the National Press Club in the city.

"We do not say that our politicians did not commit any crime, but only

those who committed crime, should be punished," he said.

"Similarly, we can't send them (those who committed crime) into exile as they are the citizens of the country," added the former CEC.

Presided over by Moshtaq Ahmed Bhashani, the meeting was also addressed by the initiator of newly formed political party Progressive Democratic Party (PDP) Advocate Fazlur Rahman, MH Majlish and Afzal Hossain Kaiser.

They lauded the role of army and caretaker government for the drive against corruption.

"Our independence and integrity would be put under threat if this government fails," PDP leader said, adding, "Formation of new political party is a must to save the country."