

Increase canals' width to end Ctg waterlogging

Say experts

CU CORRESPONDENT

Experts at a seminar in the port city yesterday underscored the need for increasing the width of the existing canals and removal of illegal encroachments on its banks to

BDR Inter-Sector Azan, Qirat contest ends

BSS, Dhaka

The Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) Inter-Sector Azan and Qirat Competition-2007 ended at Peelkhana Central Mosque in the city yesterday.

Director General of the BDR Major General Shakil Ahmed, NDC, PSC, was present at the function as the chief guest, a press release said.

Sepoy Mohammad Moshin Ali of Mymensingh Sector secured the first position in the Azan competition while Sepoy Mohammad Abdus Salam of Comilla Sector became first in Qirat.

Mymensingh Sector became champion and Comilla Sector runner up in the overall competition.

The BDR will send Sepoy Mohammad Moshin Ali and Sepoy Mohammad Abdus Salam to Saudi Arabia for performing holy Hajj like other years.

In his address, Major General Shakil Ahmed said organising such kind of competition every year would sharpen the religious spirit of the Muslim members of the BDR.

He hoped the members of the BDR would show their honesty in performing their responsibilities.

Acting Deputy Director General of the BDR Colonel Saidul Kabir, officers of Peelkhana, JCO, and high civil and military officials were present on the occasion.

address the city's waterlogging problem.

They also suggested putting an end to all sorts of hill cutting and emphasised coordination among the authorities concerned in this regard.

They were speaking at a seminar titled 'Waterlogging in Chittagong city and our duties' organised by Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association (Bela) at a city hotel.

The experts also stressed demarcation and mapping of the hilly areas following accurate survey and developing a green cover on the areas already levelled by hill cutting.

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Acting Mayor M Manjur Alam was the chief guest at the seminar while Forum for Planned Chittagong (FPC) Executive Committee Member Architect Zerina Hossain, Institute of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB), Chittagong Chapter President Engineer Ali Ashraf, Department of Environment (DoE) Chittagong Director Nazmul Haque and Dhaka Wasa Deputy Secretary Dilwar Bakht spoke.

Manjur Alam in his speech assured of taking necessary steps to solve the problem.

"We are thinking of developing two new canals near Chaktai and Bohaddarhat, and have already inaugurated the Mariners Road at both side of Chaktai Khal to save the area from illegal occupants," the mayor said.

"A research cell for real findings would be set up in the CCC immediately," he informed.

Chittagong University (CU) Geography and Environmental Studies Department Prof M Shahidul Islam presented the keynote paper at the seminar with

Bela Director (Programme) Advocate Syeda Rizwana Hasan in the chair.

Professor Shahidul Islam held dumping of solid wastes and unplanned urban growth responsible for inundation in the city.

"The port city experiences a total of 3,000mm annual rainfall with more than 2,000mm during the monsoon. But, due to illegal structures and miserable condition of the canals or drains the water can hardly find a smooth passage to the river or sea," he said.

Besides, high-rise buildings, retaining walls and culverts developed in a most unplanned fashion also cause waterlogging and inundation, he added.

"Removal of such temporary and permanent blockages and widening the drainage network after identifying nature and characteristics of the waterlogging through systemic research and survey are must to rid the city of waterlogging and inundation," Prof Shahidul said.

He urged Chittagong City Corporation (CCC), Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) and Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) to maintain coordination and work following the guidelines of 1995 master plan.

Architect Zerina emphasised conserving the water bodies in the port city which are gradually being filled by the landlords for housing purposes.

"During heavy rainfall the water bodies contain huge water that share the pressure from the drainage system and canal," she added.

IEB President Ali Ashraf underscored the need for developing new canals as the Chaktai Khal (canal) the backbone of the city's drainage system, was not able to carry all the pressure of the sewerage water.



PHOTO: STAR

Dotted with potholes, this road at Basila, Mohammadpur, in the city has remained in a very bad shape for long, but the authorities have turned a blind eye to the woes of road users.

US plays down talk of tension with Saudis

AFP, Washington

The White House yesterday called relations with Saudi Arabia in the US war on terror on "very strong" despite a report saying Washington is deeply frustrated with Riyadh over its role in Iraq. The New York Times reported yesterday that Washington believes the Saudis are trying to undermine the Baghdad government and have failed to stem the flow of volunteers joining the insurgency there.

According to the report, the Saudis view Iraq's Shiite prime minister, Nuri al-Maliki, as an agent of Iran and appear to have stepped up efforts to weaken his government, providing funding for Sunni groups.

While refusing to discuss the Times report specifically, White House spokesperson Dana Perino insisted Friday that Washington and Riyadh are working closely on security issues.

"We have very strong relations on counter terrorism measures," Perino said.

"We have worked very closely

with Saudi Arabia."

According to the Times report, which cites unnamed officials of the administration of President George W Bush, one official told the paper that there was evidence Saudi Arabia was supplying money to Maliki's opponents but declined to say if that funding was going to Sunni insurgents.

"That would get into disagreements over who is an insurgent and who is not," the official said.

The Bush administration officials also said that of an estimated 60 to 80 foreign fighters who enter Iraq every month, nearly half come from Saudi Arabia and the Saudi leadership has not done enough to counter the influx.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Defense Secretary Robert Gates planned to raise Washington's concerns in a visit next week to Saudi Arabia, the papers said.

The Bush administration has refrained from publicly criticising its long-time ally over Iraq and has instead blamed Iran and Syria for fomenting violence and sectarian divisions.

But the officials spoke to the Times with the clear intention of sending a signal to the Saudis after previous private appeals failed to produce results, the newspaper said.

US-Saudi relations have been increasingly strained since the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. In March, King Abdullah slammed the "illegitimate foreign occupation" of Iraq.

Tensions have also flared over the Arab-Israeli conflict, with Washington struggling to persuade Saudi Arabia to give full backing for US diplomatic efforts.

An illustration of the US-Saudi rift over Iraq came during a meeting in Riyadh in January, when Saudi officials confronted US

envoy Zalmay Khalilzad with documents suggesting Iraq's prime minister could not be trusted, the paper said.

One document claimed Maliki was an Iranian agent and another purportedly showed Maliki warning radical Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr to keep a low profile during a planned increase in US troops, the papers said.

Khalilzad protested to King Abdullah and US officials insisted the documents were forgeries. "Maliki wouldn't be stupid enough to put that on a piece of paper," one official told the Times.

The Saudis, however, remained skeptical, officials said.



PHOTO: STAR

Communications Adviser Maj Gen (retd) MA Matin and Myanmar Construction Minister Maj Gen Saw Tun shake hands after signing an agreement on direct road link between the two countries at the Secretariat yesterday. (Story on page 1)

Evidence of city beneath Alexandria

AP, Cairo, Egypt

Alexander the Great founded Alexandria to immortalize his name amid his quest to conquer the world -- but his was apparently not the first city on the famed site on Egypt's Mediterranean coast.

A Smithsonian team has uncovered underwater evidence pointing to an urban settlement at the site dating back seven centuries before Alexander showed up in 331 B.C.

The city he founded, Alexandria, has long been a source of intrigue and wonder, renowned for its library, once the world's largest, and the 396-foot lighthouse on the island of Pharos, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

But little was known about the site in pre-Alexander times other than a fishing village called Rhakotis was located there.

Coastal geoarchaeologist Jean-Daniel Stanley of the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History said his team's work suggested a much larger community at Rhakotis than had previously been believed.

The discoveries, reported in the August issue of GSA Today, the journal of the Geological Society of America, came by accident when his team drilled underwater in Alexandria's harbour, Stanley said.

"This often happens in science. We were not searching for an ancient city," said Stanley, who has been working in the Nile Delta for 20 years.

Their project, part of a 2007 Smithsonian-funded study of the subsiding Nile Delta, also involved Egypt's antiquities department and a French offshore group. Scientists extracted three-inch-wide sticks of core sediment 18 feet long under the seabed to try to understand what happened to cause later structures from the Greek and Roman eras to become submerged.

"One of the ways you do this is by taking sediment cores and examining core structures," he told The Associated Press, speaking by phone from Washington.

When his team opened the cores they saw ceramic fragments that reflected human activity but there was no immediate cause for excitement.

Then, more and more rock fragments, ceramic shards from Middle and Upper Egypt, a lot of organic matter plant matter and heavy minerals were found. Radiocarbon dating showed all the items to be from around 1000 B.C.

The scientists then analysed the concentration of lead isotopes in the

cores and saw that they, too, came from around 3,000 years ago.

"This was proof that there was significant metallurgy and human activity going on back 1,000 years B.C.," Stanley said. "Alexandria did not just grow out from a barren desert, but was built atop an active town."

"We had five well defined components that fit -- and we had the story. And the story was that Alexander the Great did not come first to set up Alexandria, there was already something there."

Stanley could not say exactly how big the community was, only that it appeared more developed than a small fishing village.

Mohamed Abdel-Maqsud, an Alexandria expert from Egypt's Council of Antiquities, was cautious, saying the work on uncovering Rhakotis was only just beginning.

Abhoynagar UNO receives death threat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Md Shahidul Islam of Abhoynagar in Jessore has been provided with police security as he received a death threat from criminals over cellphone on Thursday morning.

OC Shahadat Hossain of Abhoynagar Police Station said a criminal has threatened to kill the UNO in a bomb attack. So, forces have been deployed in the UNO office and residence, the OC added.

UNO Shahidul Islam filed a general diary on Thursday night seeking security of his life.

5X1

5.5X3

7X3

5X4