

Water is Life

FAYZA HAQ

Last month Goethe- Institut, Bangladesh held an workshop on the importance of water for man, with experts from overseas and home. Shaheen Rashed, the programme manager of Goethe-Institut, remarks that water management led to the existence of numerous civilisations, as has been the forgone conclusion of many thinking individuals. It is the absence of conservation that has led to the decline of ancient cultures -- each of which had mastered special methods of saving and using water. The workshop was a quest to raise Bangladeshi awareness to the water crisis that bewilders us today in the Ganges delta. In this admirable endeavour to raise awareness about the issue of saving this invaluable resource, Goethe-Institut was helped by the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, KAAK (The German Commission for Non-European Archaeology) and the Association of Alumni of German Universities in Bangladesh.

The paradox of water goes on; water is the source of life but it can also be the end of life. For us especially, water is vital for our thirsty crops, yet floods can often wash them away along with our very lives while droughts in our neighbouring countries cause untold miseries.

Eleven experts from Bangladesh and overseas read their papers and took questions. This included DR HJ Weisshaar, Commission for Archaelogy of the KAAK; Prof. Dr. Enamul Hoque, International Centre for Study of Bengal Art Dhaka; Dr. Claudia Nickel, Archaeology, Archaelogie im Glieberger Land e.V. Prof. Dr. MM Hoque, Faculty of Archaeology, Jahangirnagar University.

Along with these papers were the presentations by Prof. Dr. Broder Merkel, Bergakademie Frieberg, Anwanwar Zahid, Bangladesh Water Development Board. Four other experts from home and abroad read their pieces too, in order to wind up the coming together of like-minded individuals on the vital subject of "man and water." Dr Claudia Nickel, dealing with water and archaeology in prehistoric Europe, spoke of climate change – how the sea level rises and falls. Dr Nickel spoke of the artefacts and settlement traces on the North Sea ground, in between Germany and Great Britain. She spoke of archaeological sites that were uncovered in Switzerland, and traced settlements in Switzerland/Germany, down to the Bronze and Ice Age. She dwelt on the Roman times, and the important role played by water in Rome. At the same time, she touched on the importance of protection against water -- by