

54 INTERNATIONAL RIVERS

India urged to give due share of water

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday demanded that India provide due share of water of all the 54 international rivers flowing through Bangladesh.

They also warned that if India continues to withdraw water from the international rivers by building dams at different upstream points, 70 percent of areas in Bangladesh will be inundated with saline water.

Bangladesh should receive around 1346 billion cubic metre water from these rivers, but India has been withdrawing 900 billion cubic metre water by erecting 500 dams in 54 rivers, said SI Khan, an environmentalist, in his keynote paper.

International Farakka Committee organised the seminar at the National Press club to mark the 33 years of long march against the Farakka barrage.

The Ganges Water Sharing Treaty, signed by Bangladesh and India, has mentioned how to share water during the period from January 1 to

May 31 of a year, but nothing has been said about the period from June 1 to December 31, SI Khan said, adding that India is taking the advantage of this loophole and withdrawing water during that period.

If India builds the Tipaimukh dam, Surma, Kushiara and Meghna rivers would dry up, he said.

If the water level in the Meghna declines by 3 metre, saline water will intrude into Sylhet city; and if it goes down by 7 metre, saline water will cover 70 percent of areas in the country, said Khan.

Bangladesh is incurring huge loss in the agricultural sector, amounting to Tk 2000 crore, every year due to Farrakka barrage, he said, adding that the government should realise compensation from India for this loss.

He suggested placing a proposal in this regard in parliament and discussing the issue with India, China, Nepal and Bhutan.

Dr Ali Akbar, Awlad Hossain Khan, Syed Irfanul Bari and Prof KMA Malik also spoke at the seminar presided over by Prof Jasim Uddin Ahmed.

Int'l AIDS Candlelight Memorial Day observed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

International AIDS Candlelight Memorial Day 2009 was observed yesterday with the slogan 'Together we are the solution'.

On the occasion, National AIDS/STD Programme (NASP) organised a programme at the Biam auditorium in the city remembering people who died of AIDS in Bangladesh.

Speaking as the chief guest, Dr Hosne Ara Tahmin, additional director general of Directorate General of Health Services, said prevention is always better than cure and for that mass awareness is a must.

Children of the persons who died of AIDS are suffering immensely. The government will make an attempt to provide them with support so that they can continue their education, she said.

Dr Md Isaque Khan, line director of NASP, said the social stigma about AIDS should be eliminated and AIDS-infected people should not be discriminated.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, AIDS has claimed more than 28 million lives around the world while about 42 millions are now living with HIV and AIDS worldwide.

In Bangladesh so far 165 people died of AIDS while 58 died in the last one year.

The Candlelight Memorial Day was first observed in 1983 in the USA. It is now being observed across the globe every year on the third Sunday of May.

Lighting candles has become a way for the communities to take action by mourning publicly and by strengthening local and national commitments to fight the pandemic.

Bandhu Social Welfare Society presented a cultural function titled 'Essence of Soul' on the occasion while Ashar Alo Society held a documentary show on AIDS.

The programme was participated by family members who lost their near and dear ones at the hands of AIDS and different government and non-government organisations working with HIV awareness programmes.



PHOTO: STAR

National AIDS/STD Programme (NASP) holds a candlelight vigil at the Biam auditorium in the city yesterday in memory of those who died of AIDS in Bangladesh to mark the International AIDS Candlelight Memorial Day 2009.

Social movement a must to change dowry culture

Speakers tell workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dowry is one of the major causes of violence against women in the country and it is a must to create a social movement to change the culture of dowry, speakers at a workshop said yesterday.

The workshop on the findings of the study on 'Dowry demand and its consequences' was held at the city's Biam auditorium where the speakers also stressed the need for

changing attitude towards dowry.

MRC-MODE Limited organised the workshop to discuss the study that was conducted by MRC-MODE under the project 'Promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment'.

The project is jointly being implemented by UNFPA and the Department of Women Affairs.

The study that interviewed more than 4,500 people in Cox's Bazar, Sylhet, Bhola and

Kurigram revealed that there are differences between the legal meaning and people's perception of dowry.

Around 79 percent believe that dowry is more prevalent in the rural areas while more than 80 percent of males think that what is given to the bride by her parents is not dowry. Around 60 percent of males believe that without dowry girls cannot be married off to good families.

About 54 percent of the women who had to give dowry

said that their families faced a financial crisis as a consequence of dowry.

The speakers also said that dowry has also mental and physical consequences alongside financial consequences.

Terming gender discrimination a cause of dowry, the speakers also stressed the need for bringing equity in the society and establishing empowerment of women through education.

Speaking as the chief guest, Secretary to the Ministry of Women and Cultural Affairs Rokeya Sultana said that empowerment of women did not come through revolution, it came through education.

"So providing the girls with education is a must and until women are considered as human beings first, it will be difficult to eradicate dowry from the society," she added.

"There is no space for dowry in Islam," said Director General of the Department of Women Affairs Rowshan Ara Begum.

Laws are important though laws don't change our behaviour, said Arthur Erken, representative of UNFPA Bangladesh, stressing the need for changing the behaviour.

Mokhesur Rahman, project director, noted cultural personality Sara Zaker and representatives from different non-government organisations and women affairs ministry also spoke.



PHOTO: STAR

International Farakka Committee forms a human chain in front of the National Press Club in the city yesterday protesting unilateral withdrawal of water from international rivers by India.

New list of elderly people, widows soon for allowance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The social welfare ministry will soon prepare a new list of elderly people and widows to give them allowance from next fiscal year.

Bringing allegation of irregularities and corruption against the BNP-led four-party alliance government in preparing the list, the ministry took the decision of preparing a new list.

The social welfare ministry stated this at the meeting of a parliamentary standing committee at the parliament building yesterday.

The meeting recommended to the government to

increase the amount of allowance from Tk 220 to 250.

The ministry officials also told the meeting that a five-member committee has been formed at ward level comprising of elected member of union parishad, an elected female member, and a man and woman nominated by local lawmakers who will primarily prepare the list.

List at upazila level will be prepared as per the list of ward level and the final list would be prepared after getting the nod of local lawmakers.

Some of the committee members at the meeting alleged that the immediate-

past BNP government committed serious irregularities and corruption in preparing the list of elderly people and widows.

"Chairmen of pro-BNP and pro-Jamaat included their own people in the list. They even included names of people in exchange for money," alleged some of the members of the standing committee.

Presided over by the committee Chairman Mohammad Mozammel Hoque, the meeting was attended by Social Welfare Minister Enamul Haq, committee members Monirul Islam, AKM Bahauddin and Abdul Mazid Khan.

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