

Frame policy to ensure access to safe water

Speakers urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a consultation yesterday called on the government to formulate Clean Water Act with a view to ensuring pure drinking water and stopping of its contamination.

They also stressed the need to decentralise water management for proper supervision among the local government institutes.

Environmentalists, academics and development workers made the call at the consultation jointly organised by Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE), UNIC, WHO, WSP-World Bank and NGO Forum for Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation at the National Press Club to mark World Water Day today.

The year's theme of the day is 'Clean Water for a Healthy World'.

Dr Mujibur Rahman, professor of environmental engineering department of BUET, made a presentation titled 'Water quality challenges: Do we really care?' at the programme.

He said, "The government should

formulate Clean Water Act following strategies of the developed countries to stop water contamination and ensure drinking water for all."

Water quality is directly related to human health, economic activities, ecosystem and biodiversity, added Prof Mujib.

He said population growth, rapid urbanisation, discharge of human and industrial waste and new chemicals from industries are key factors that contribute to deteriorating the quality of water and causing severe health hazards.

Domestic sewage, industrial waste and agro-chemicals hugely pollute the surface water of the Buriganga, Balu and Sitalakkhaya rivers, he pointed out.

As a panel discussant, Dr Anun Nishat, senior adviser of IUCN Asia Pacific region, underlined the importance of developing location-wise decentralised water treatment plants to be monitored and supervised by local government institutes.

The total ecosystem as well as biodiversity is being affected today and it

is related to water quality, he added.

Prof M Feroze Ahmed of BUET said various water quality parameters in Bangladesh have deteriorated 16 to 20 times in recent times than those were in 1976.

"Industries are mainly polluting water," he said, adding: "60 percent of our contaminated water is created by industrial waste, 30 percent by Dhaka Wasa and the rest percentage by Dhaka City Corporation."

NGO Forum Executive Director SMA Rashid said 70 percent infant mortality is caused by lack of safe water supply, which could be prevented just by ensuring safe water supply.

Chaired by Dewan Nakib Ahsan, additional chief engineer of DPHE, the programme was also addressed by Jan Moller Hansen, deputy head of mission of Norwegian Embassy, and Mark Ellery, regional water and sanitation specialist of World Bank, and Mohammed Hossain, project coordinator of NGO Forum.

Shyamal Dutta, Editor of Bhorer Kagaj, moderated the consultation.



Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement forms a human chain at Muktagang in the city yesterday to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 2010.

PHOTO: STAR

Citi IT contest launched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Citi Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Citi, launched the Second Citi Financial IT Case Competition at a press conference at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

The contest, being jointly organised by Citibank NA Bangladesh and DNet (Development Research Network), pits students of public and private universities against one another for developing unique software and information system solutions for the country's financial sector.

Presenting the keynote at the press conference, Mahmud Hasan, programme director of DNet, said students have a scope to contribute to the financial sector by using advanced technology.

The competition will develop leadership qualities of the young learners of university level, he added.

The competition will have three phases -- primary selection, semifinal round and final round.

Each team should be comprised of five members -- a faculty member, two students with IT background and two other with business background.

Interested teams should get their names registered by April 15. They can log on to ficc.dnet.org.bd for details.

In 2009, the first year of the competition, a total of 54 teams from 20 universities and institutions took part while University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) won the title, bagging \$5000 on the way.

Abrar Anwar, head of Global Corporate and Commercial Bank Division of Citibank NA, was present at the press conference.



Paribesh Bachao Andolon (Save the Environment Movement) forms a human chain in front of Wasa Bhaban at Karwan Bazar in the city yesterday demanding pure drinking water for all.

PHOTO: STAR

HC stays govt circular on teachers' promotion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday stayed for six months the operation of a government circular restricting the promotion of private high school teachers who have third class in examinations at all levels of their student life.

The HC bench of Justice Md Mamtaz Uddin Ahmed and Justice Naima Haider also issued a rule upon the government to explain within four weeks why the circular should not be declared illegal.

The bench came up with the order upon a writ petition filed by two schoolteachers Debendra Chandra Baishnab and Noor Mohammad Jomaddar challenging the legality of the circular.

The education secretary issued the circular on February 4 this year, saying that the teachers of private high schools having third class at all levels will not get promotion.

Advocate Abdul Matin Khasru appeared for the petitioners.

Blame game over killer billboard

KAILASH SARKAR

Who actually built the billboard that fell during last Monday's storm in Gulshan-1 and killed two people is still uncertain. The owners of Gulshan Shopping Centre and Akhter Furnitures Ltd are now accusing each other of building the faulty billboard.

Gulshan Shopping Centre Managing Director Faizur Rahman told The Daily Star, "Akhter Furnitures Ltd rented the space from us for advertisement purpose and built the faulty hoarding. The company was given a lease for building a light-weight billboard but it made a heavy one and did not maintain it properly which led to the collapse, deaths and injuries."

"After the shop owners and market committee members asked me to remove the billboard, I

asked Akhter Furnitures to remove it. But the company showed me a court stay order against removal of billboards."

KM Akhteruzzaman, MD of Akhter Furnitures, said, "Gulshan Shopping Centre authorities were the owner of the billboard and responsible for the incident. A negotiation to rent the space was going on but as the market authorities demanded high rent, we backed out."

He said, "It is not true that we are the owner of the hoarding and we showed them a court stay order."

Shop owner Abdus Salam of Gulshan Shopping Centre said all the shop owners of the market and the members of the market committee requested the building owners in writing several times to remove the billboard but they did not respond.

After the billboard collapsed, he filed a murder case against market owners Faizur

Rahman, one of his brothers and two sisters accusing them of negligence that resulted in the deaths of one of his employees and a car driver and injuries to eight people, including his son.

Gulshan Police Station Officer-in-Charge Kamal Uddin said they could not arrest anybody as the accused went into hiding.

Meanwhile, the authorities concerned of Dhaka City Corporation, police and building owners could not remove illegal rooftop hoardings due to a stay order issued by the High Court.

Deputy Commissioner AKM Hafiz Akhter of Gulshan division said police could not go for action due to the court order.

Outdoor Advertisement Owners' Association leader Kazi Mahbub Alam said they filed two separate writs with the HC, in 2005 and in 2007, against the removal of those hoardings.

Terrorists consider Bangladesh softer destination

Experts tell workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Security experts at a workshop yesterday said international terrorists consider Bangladesh a softer destination compared to Pakistan and Afghanistan.

They also expressed grave concern over the lack of security measures at Shahjalal International Airport.

Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS) is organising the five-day workshop on 'Counter Terrorism Capacity Building' at a city hotel in association with the British High Commission.

BIPSS President Maj Gen (ret'd) ANM Muniruzzaman said, "Terrorists are trying to find new places to hide out as Afghanistan and Pakistan authorities are becoming tough on militants."

"The recent arrests of some leaders and activists of Lashkar-

e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed in and around Dhaka are the proofs that terrorists are considering Bangladesh a softer destination."

He said BIPSS research showed there are more than 30 militant organisations based in Bangladesh. "These organisations would be helpful for those trying to take cover here."

Muniruzzaman stressed collaboration among South Asian countries to address the problem.

"It cannot be curbed without mutual cooperation," he said.

John Harrison, head of research of Singapore-based International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, said that as airports are becoming the prime target of terrorists across the world, tardy security measures at Bangladesh's international airport is a cause for concern.

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