

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

# Community empowerment makes a difference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Villagers of Kaulia in Morelganj, Bagherhat, are very happy to see that a cyclone shelter is being constructed in their village to protect them from natural disasters.

It is the first cyclone shelter of their village, which will stand testimony to the success of their community.

"With separate arrangements for men, women, cattle and rainwater harvesting facilities, the shelter is being built on land donated by our own people," Jahangir Alam, a villager, said while narrating the success story of their community at a programme.

"We have taken the responsibility for its management. About 277 families living in the area donated money for its registration as public property and we have also successfully negotiated with the local government for the construction of a better road to the cyclone shelter," he added.

The Bangladesh Disaster Preparedness Centre (BDPC) organised the event titled 'Good governance in disaster risk reduction: Story telling' at the Spectra Convention Centre in the city yesterday.

Faizul Azim of Kutubdia described how his community used the Right to Information Act to ensure accountability in the activities of local elected representatives.

"The act helped us find out that the local government representatives were giving us less rice under the VGF programme. We then claimed the amount of rice we are entitled to receive, and forced the corrupt members to distribute rice properly," he said, adding that he now feels empowered.

Speaking at the programme, experts called

for formulation of policies focusing on pre-disaster risk reduction interventions instead of the current practice of post-disaster response and recovery method.

They added that advance preparations and sustainable planning can help reduce the impacts of natural and man-made hazards.

The also stressed the need to strengthen good governance, empower the communities and ensure participation of community members in disaster management.

Minister for Food and Disaster Management Abdur Razzaque said the method of

disaster management is changing worldwide. The focus is now on early preparedness and sustainable development rather than post-disaster relief programmes.

Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, said that local people knows best about the problems of a community. So, it is urgent to involve them in finding out solutions to their problems.

Yolanda Wright of DFID, and Ahsan Zakir, director general of Disaster Management Bureau, also spoke.

## Clients lay siege to developer's office

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 35 clients of Xenovalley Model Town (PVT) Ltd., a real estate company, laid a siege to its office at Lake Circus in the city yesterday demanding immediate handover of plots to them.

They were also locked into a scuffle with the company staff who prevented them from entering the office.

Some 10 people were injured in the scuffle. They are Nurjahan Shikder, 52, Zakir Hossain Munna, 35, Shahedul Hasan, 40, Suharto Sharif, 25, Sikder Bacchu, 40, Enam Ahmed Chowdhury, 45,

Nurunnabi, 38, and Shisir Rahman, 35. The clients said that they completed payments of all installments on the plots about two years ago, but the company did not hand over any plots to them until now.

Taher, a businessman, said he had paid over Tk 1 crore in installments, but the company is dilly-dallying in handing over plots. Noorjahan, an expatriate living in New York, accused the developer of fraud and said, "I have paid around Tk 50 lakh about two years ago, but the company is yet to hand over a plot to me."

Officials of the company, however, declined to comment on the issue.

