

Integrated management a must to address water problems in S Asia

Say experts

UNB, Dhaka

Comprehensive integrated watershed management involving South Asian countries can address the longstanding water-related problems including flood havoc, desertification and flash flood, according to water experts.

They say as the origin of all principal rivers of Bangladesh is outside the country, those rivers depend on upstream water to continue its flow and the country will not be able to address water-related problems without integrated initiative with neighbouring countries.

About 92 percent of the catchments area of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and the Meghna (GBM) rivers are located outside Bangladesh while the GBM river basin is around 64 percent in India, 18 percent in China, 9 percent in Nepal, and 3 percent in Bhutan.

It is estimated that the catchments area of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers is 12 times the size of Bangladesh.

Water expert Sardar M Shah Newaz told UNB that river floods result from melting of snow in the Himalayas and heavy monsoon rainfall over the catchments of Ganges and Brahmaputra floodplains lying outside Bangladesh.

He said: "Flash flood occurs in Bangladesh every year due to runoff during heavy rainfall in the neighbouring upland areas, mostly outside Bangladesh. We cannot manage our flash floods for want of comprehensive and planned watershed management."

Shah Newaz, also director of Flood Management Division of Institute of Water

Modelling (IWM), underscored the necessity of water reservoirs in maintaining water system in South Asian region.

He said as Bangladesh is a downstream country, there is no capability to build water reservoirs here. Bangladesh can build water reservoirs in upstream areas of GBM basin in cooperation with neighbouring countries.

"India, Nepal and Bhutan have great potentiality to construct water reservoirs in upstream areas due to huge space. If those countries will take joint initiative to build water reservoirs with mutual understanding, all countries will be benefited."

Shah Newaz said more power can be generated by setting up hydropower station in upstream areas to address the electricity crisis in the region.

Recalling some big floods that occurred in Bangladesh over the couple of decades, he said it is common phenomena that the country's Meghna river basin is flooded every year and the flood situation can be controlled by ensuring integrated watershed management in the region.

"If we will ensure comprehensive integrated watershed management in a planned way, the ecosystem may improve though it will be changed."

Chairman of National Disaster Management Advisory Council Dr MA Quasem said water availability is around 90 billion cubic metre (BCM) during the dry season against the demand of about 147 BCM, a shortfall of nearly 40 percent, resulting in drought like situation in large parts of the country.

"Water shortage in the dry season affects all water using sectors. Due to inadequate surface water, ground water is extensively used for irrigation and the over-extraction is causing deterioration of its quality."

He said Bangladesh receives more than 1.0 billion tons sediment inflow from the upper catchments of the GBM rivers in absence of planned water management. "Rivers get silted as these sediments are deposited within the channels."

Dr Quasem said rapid global warming has been causing fundamental changes to the country's climate. While flood-proneness in the monsoon season would increase, reduced water availability in the dry season would become more severe and accelerated sea level rise would increase salinity intrusion into low-lying areas.

"It is predicted that 45cm rise of sea level may inundate about 17 percent of our land by 2050 resulting in about 35 million climate refugees from the coastal districts. Our water-related problems are created on the upstream watershed outside our territory and we face the consequences."

He said integrated watershed management of the GBM basin can increase water flow in dry season (flow augmentation potential in dry season around 175,000 cusecs).

Dr Quasem, also member of National Water Resources Council, said the upstream storage reservoirs would provide multipurpose benefits like hydropower generation in addition to dry season augmentation of flows.

Nepal's hydropower generation is estimated

at about 83,000MW, of which 42,000MW is considered as techno-economically feasible while that of Bhutan about 20,000MW, and India 34,000MW, he said.

He said the issue of cooperation among the co-riparian countries on watershed management should be considered as an issue of national development growth, rural development and poverty alleviation, and should not be used for political expediency.

"The benefits of such cooperation should be clearly visualised and appreciated by the people in general."

Dr Quasem stressed the need for taking initiative to start an awareness campaign to popularise the concept and bring the issue in public consideration and formulating a forum or institution with representatives from regional countries.

Experts said water is a commodity that is particularly vital in South Asia, where most of the countries are still largely agrarian.

The first and foremost challenge in South Asia is the vulnerability to water scarcity and water-related disasters that cause huge loss of life and property.

Estimated loss to agriculture ranges from 2-20 percent and revenue loss between 12-66 percent that erodes hard earned gains of development and hinders sustainable development for poverty reduction.

The integrated watershed management efforts are indispensable for the region -- both for rural development and poverty alleviation and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), experts said.



People wait in a queue to collect their national identity cards at Tejgaon Polytechnic College in the city yesterday.



Bangladesh's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Dr AK Abdul Momen exchanges greetings with Queen Elizabeth of Britain at a reception in New York on July 6.

Imams vital in preventing militancy: Tuku

BSS, Rajshahi

Imams and other Islamic scholars could play pivotal role in preventing militancy to make the nation free from its stigma said State Minister for Home Shamsul Haque Tuku.

He said the present government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is determined to uproot militancy with collective efforts of all quarters especially the imams and other religious leaders.

He was addressing as the chief guest at an imam conference titled "Role of imams to prevent militancy and terrorism" jointly organised by Rajshahi district administration and the Islamic Foundation Bangladesh (IFB) at the Zila Parishad Auditorium on Thursday.

He said there is no alternative to complete the trial process of the Liberation

War criminals and added that the government is committed to it at any cost.

Addressing as the main discussant, Director General of IFB Shamim Muhammad Afzal said Islam has no relation with any sort of militancy, violence and any other anarchic activities rather it is a religion of global peace and tranquility.

Tuku underscored the need for proper motivation and counseling among the new generation imams so that they could supplement the government effort to culminate militancy and terrorism along with completing the trial process of the Liberation War criminals.

"You have to come forward to foil the conspiracies being hatched by a certain quarter to halt the government efforts," he reminded the imams.

Blaming the previous BNP-Jamaat alliance government for patronising the JMB and its destructive activities, the minister said their anti-state and anti-Islamic activities are still continuing and urged the religious leaders to resist the conspirators.

Local lawmaker Fazley Hossain Badsha and Commissioner of Rajshahi Division Nurul Islam addressed the occasion as special guests with Deputy Commissioner Dilwar Bakht in the chair.

Convener of the Trained National Imam Samity Maolana Barkullah Been Durul Huda presented a concept paper on "Role of imams to prevent militancy and terrorism" while IFB Directors Shahadat Hossain and AK Abdul Aziz made their welcome and thanksgiving speeches.

Arms recovered from criminal's den

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

The army recovered arms, ammunition and various documents from a house at remote Paillabanga of Ramgorh upazila in Khagrachhari yesterday.

Police said acting on a tip-off two teams of army led by Sindukchhari Zone Captain Kamrul and Captain Rajib Risalat raided the house and recovered two LGs, one bullet and a receipt book for collecting monetary contributions.

Police said 'Janatar Muktir Sangram' was written on the receipt book.

People who were occupying the house fled sensing the presence of the army. All recovered arms were handed over to Guimara police and a case was filed in connection with the recovery, police added.

Mawa-Kawrakandi ferry services hampered for 8 hours

UNB, Madaripur

Ferry services on Mawa-Kawrakandi river routes were hampered for about eight hours as three ferries stranded at a shoal at Hazra Point of the Padma river yesterday.

BIWTA sources said three ferries -- Bhasa Shaheed Barkat, Shah Mokhdum and a K-type ferry -- with 70 vehicles got stranded at a shoal at Shihbar upazila at 8:00am.

Ferry services on the routes were hampered, resulting in a huge traffic jam on both the sides of the routes.

The ferry services, however, resumed at 4:00pm when the ferry workers managed to move their vessels from the shoal.

Obituary

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Md. Mujibor Rahaman, head of History Department in Govt. Rajandra College passed away yesterday morning at a private clinic in the town at the age of 54.

He has been suffering from liver cancer the last couple of years.

He is survived by his wife and son.

He will be laid to rest at his family graveyard after Namaz-e-janaza at KM Dangi village under Charvot upazila of the district.

Death Anniversary

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Today is the 19th death anniversary of Samsuddin Mollah, a Liberation War organiser.

On the occasion, a milad and doa mehfil will be held at his residence at East Khabaspur after Asr prayers.

Relatives and well-wishers are requested to attend the milad.

River erosion takes serious turn in Gaibandha

BSS, Gaibandha

River erosion has taken a serious turn at various places of Shaghata upazila in Gaibandha as the water of the Brahmaputra recedes during the last few days.

Local sources said a vast tract of cropland and a good number of dwelling houses have been washed away by the erosion of the river leaving at least 50 families homeless.

The most affected areas of the upazila are Chalkpara, Hatbari, Hasilkandi, Chiniripatal, Kamarpara, Kumarpara, Holdia and Dihalkandi.

The homeless people of the vulnerable areas are in great panic as incidents of robbery have increased in

the areas.

Shaghata upazila headquarters, upazila port, flood control embankment, academic institutions, business establishments, mosques and temples are facing threat of erosion.

Local lawmaker Fazley Rabbi Miah and Upazila Parishad Chairman AHM Golam Shahid Ranju visited the erosion affected areas separately few days ago and assured the locals of taking necessary steps to protect the vulnerable areas.

To mitigate the sufferings of the affected people upazila administration has allocated two tonnes of rice under emergency relief assistance programmes, office sources said.

Academic activities of Bangabandhu science varsity begin in Jan

UNB, Gopalganj

The academic activities of Gopalganj Bangabandhu Science and Technology University will start from January next year.

Chairman of University Grants Commission Prof Mohammad Nazrul Islam yesterday said this while he was talking to journalists after visiting the site of the university at Gobra on Dhaka-Khulna Highway near the town.

Classes of four subjects of the university will be held on temporary basis on the Government Bangabandhu University College campus before the beginning of the academic activities, he said.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina during her previous tenure on January 13 in 2001 had laid the foundation stone of the university on about 50 acres of land.

Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecnc) already approved about Tk 96 crore for implementation of the project, which is likely to be completed by 2012.

50 injured in Savar clash

UNB, Savar

At least 50 people were injured as workers of a dredger owner clash with villagers over sand lifting near the Bongshi river at Bardail village of Dhamrai upazila yesterday.

Of the injured, Raisuddin, Nurul Islam, Fazal, Ramjan, Karim, Sirajul, Ruhul, Molkhal, Rakib, Jonayed, Asgar Ali, were rushed to a local hospital with serious injuries.

Locals said Matiur Rahman allegedly

lifted sands from by three dredgers from cultivable lands near Bongshi river yesterday morning.

The clash began at about 11:00am when the villagers prevented Matiur's labourers from lifting sand from their lands.

The workers attacked the villagers with lethal weapons, leaving at least 20 people injured from both the sides.

The clash erupted again at about 5:00pm injuring at least 30 people.

China seizes melamine-tainted milk powder

AFP, Beijing

Chinese authorities have seized 76 tonnes of milk powder tainted with melamine, the same chemical responsible for the deaths of six babies two years ago, state media said yesterday.

The powder was seized in northwestern China's Gansu province after tests showed it contained up to 500 times the allowed level of the toxic industrial chemical, Xinhua news agency reported.

The Beijing News said tainted powder has also been detected in Jilin province in China's northeast and that two officials from the dairy company at the centre of the latest discovery in Gansu had been detained.

The reports highlight China's continuing problems in curbing the use of melamine, which is used to make plastics but has been widely and illegally added to dairy products to give the appearance of higher protein content.

In 2008, melamine was found in the products

of 22 Chinese dairy companies in a massive scandal blamed for the deaths of at least six infants and for sickening 300,000 others in China.

It also led to huge worldwide recalls of Chinese dairy products.

China's government has repeatedly said that all tainted products were seized and destroyed after the scandal and that there was no further public health threat, but reports of tainted items have continued to trickle out.

Xinhua said authorities traced the latest contaminated batch of milk powder to the Dongyuan Dairy Factory in Qinghai province, which borders Gansu.

Both the factory owner and the production manager have been detained, the report said.

It said the seized powder included 64 tonnes of raw milk powder and another 12 tonnes of finished powder. Some of the ingredients were purchased from suppliers in Hebei province, where the 2008 scandal erupted.

New Zealand anti-whaling activist deported from Japan

AFP, Tokyo

New Zealand anti-whaling activist Peter Bethune was deported from Japan yesterday after receiving a suspended two-year sentence for obstructing Japanese whaling in the Antarctic Ocean.

Bethune, 45, was sent home on an Air New Zealand flight which left Tokyo's Narita airport for Auckland at 6:22pm (0922 GMT), airport spokesman Masaru Motoyama said.

Bethune was convicted at Tokyo District Court on Wednesday on a number of charges including injuring a whaler by hurling a rancid butter stink bomb during the latest campaign by the US-based Sea Shepherd Conservation Society.

His sentence was suspended for five years because, the judge said, Bethune had no criminal record in Japan, had apologised and paid for damage he caused, and because he had said he would join no more Antarctic missions.

Sea Shepherd has hailed him as a hero and "an inspiration in courage and dedication" for helping save hundreds of the ocean giants.

WEATHER

Rise in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers with temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at a few places over Khulna, Barisal and Chittagong divisions and at one or two places over Rajshahi, Rangpur, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions in next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may rise slightly over the country, Met Office said.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:50pm today and rises at 5:19am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 36.0 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Chuadanga and lowest 25.5 degrees Celsius at Cox's Bazar.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	34.5	27.4	73	69
Chittagong	31.8	26.0	83	83
Rajshahi	35.8	26.0	83	65
Khulna	34.7	27.5	76	84
Barisal	33.2	27.1	74	92
Sylhet	34.2	26.1	83	80
Cox's Bazar	31.0	25.5	96	85



The people arrested on charge of leaking question papers of the written test for assistant teacher recruitment at public high schools are being sent to jail in Rangpur yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

15 die as rain, floods wreak havoc in China

IANS, Beijing

At least 15 people were dead and tens of thousands evacuated after rain-triggered landslides wreaked havoc in China, authorities said yesterday.

Six people were killed, two missing and 56,000 relocated in central China's Hunan province, Xinhua reported.

Hunan's neighboring province of Hubei saw seven people dead and three missing due to the rain-triggered accidents.

A woman and her daughter were crushed to death in their sleep after their house collapsed in heavy rain in Qingtian County, Lishui city of

east China's Zhejiang province, said municipal fire fighters.

About 15,000 people were evacuated from their homes Friday after torrential rains left two townships in southwest China's Chongqing Municipality in flood waters.

No casualties were reported in the flash floods that affected Fenshui township and Sanzheng township in Wanzhou district.

A rain-triggered landslide disrupted the Sichuan-Guizhou Railway at Tongzi County in southwest China's Guizhou province early Friday, said Wang Zhong, head of Tongzi County government.