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Speakers at a roundtable titled “Fostering Gender-Sensitive Climate Actions for Marginalised Communities,” held at The Daily Star Centre in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Address plight of women in climate-hit areas

Speakers stress gender-inclusive solutions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Victims from climate-hit coastal areas at an event yesterday said they are facing worsening erosion, frequent floods, excessive rainfall, droughts, increased salinity, and fog – issues that impact women the most.

They also said many men from these areas have had to leave their homes due to a lack of local employment opportunities that often led to not returning, leaving their wives and children abandoned and struggling to survive alone.

The victims shared their experiences at a roundtable discussion titled “Fostering Gender-Sensitive Climate Actions for Marginalised Communities,” held at The Daily Star Centre.

Fahmida Nasreen, a student from Lalmonirhat, said her parents used to say in the past that floods would occur two or three times a year.

“Now, we experience floods at least six or seven times annually. This year, we have faced floods at least six times already,” she said.

She said river erosion in their region has become a severe issue.

Maria Murmu, a middle-aged woman from Dinajpur, said they now struggle regularly with excessive cold, unseasonal rains, and droughts.

“Amid this situation, we can’t go fishing. If we try to find other work, there’s nothing available, and we end up paying brokers Tk 50 just to get day-labour jobs,” she said.

Durga Mandal, a resident of Satkhira, said

everything she owned, including her house, was washed away during Cyclone Sidr. “Since then, we have been struggling just to survive, let alone provide an education for my children,” she said.

Mamun Hossain Mithu, a youth volunteer from Satkhira, echoed these struggles, saying women in his area face serious health issues, including menstrual and reproductive issues, due to the haphazard cultivation of shrimp and crabs.

Addressing the event as chief guest, Women and Children Affairs Adviser Sharmeen Murshid urged researchers to explore new solutions to address the crises faced by coastal communities.

She emphasised the need to increase advocacy efforts and raise voices on a global level.

“Climate change often causes male partners to leave, leaving women to survive alone with their children and making their economic conditions even more vulnerable,” she said.

The adviser advocated for a comprehensive policy on shrimp and crab farming by designating specific areas for cultivation and conservation.

Prof Tania Haque of Dhaka University’s Women and Gender Studies Department stressed the importance of identifying specific vulnerabilities of women in coastal areas.

“The climate crisis has placed a double burden on women, worsening their vulnerability in an already challenging situation,” she said.

Dilurba Haider, programme specialist for DRR, Climate Change, and Humanitarian Actions at

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HC starts hearing in 10-truck arms haul case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court has begun hearing on the death reference and appeals in the sensational 10-truck arms haul case in Chattogram.

The bench of Justice Mustafa Zaman Islam and Justice Nasreen Akter began the hearing on Tuesday with Deputy Attorney General Sultana Akter Rubi reading out from the paper book, that contains all the details of the case including trial proceedings, statements, evidence, verdicts and other documents.

After yesterday’s proceedings, the HC set today for resuming further hearing on the case.

If a lower court sentences any person to death in a case, its judgment is examined by the HC through

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ROAD SAFETY MEASURES

RHD issues directives again, but will they be enforced?

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The Roads and Highways Department (RHD) has issued a six-point directive, including removing illegal vehicles and structures from or along the highways to reduce road crashes and congestion.

The department yesterday gave the directives to all of its field and project offices following a recent letter from the Public Administration Ministry.

The ministry sent the letter after its senior secretary Mokhes ur Rahman made some observations about road problems and gave suggestions after visiting several districts.

However, many of these directives were given on several earlier occasions, but those were not implemented properly, leaving the roads unsafe and prone to congestion.

“I have received those directives, and thus I have forwarded those to all my field offices. We will try to implement those with the help of other government agencies,” RHD Chief Engineer Syed Moinul Hasan told The Daily Star yesterday.

Replying to a question about the non-

implementation of some of these directives earlier, he said, “There are some things that you can’t fix quickly. But we are trying.”

On October 24, Public Administration Ministry wrote a letter to the Road Transport

| DIRECTIVES |
|---|
| » Deployment of law enforcers |
| » Drives against encroachers |
| » Actions against slow-moving vehicles |
| » Shifting markets from highways |
| » Ensuring vehicle lights at night |
| » Installing traffic signs, boundary fences |

and Highways Division and the Public Security Division.

In the letter, the ministry said operations of non-motorised and slow-moving vehicles

on national highways and other highways were seen obstructing long-route vehicles and increasing the risk of road crashes.

Unplanned markets (Hat, Bazar) and illegal commercial establishments along the highways were seen causing congestion, resulting in wastage of fuel, delays in reaching destinations, and obstructing emergency services.

Lack of proper road maintenance is causing traffic congestion, it wrote, adding that lack of enough traffic signs and post markings was causing an increasing number of road crashes.

The senior secretary gave six suggestions. Those are – deployment of at least six police or ansar members round the clock for uninterrupted and safer vehicular movement; carrying out regular mobile court drives to evict unplanned and illegal commercial establishments; shifting markets from along the highways; taking legal action against non-motorised and slow-moving vehicles on highways; ensuring that the vehicles operating at night have necessary indicator lights and removing illegal lights from vehicles; and

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Media freedom key to democracy

Speakers tell event

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Media freedom and active engagement of citizens in holding authorities accountable are key to democracy, said analysts at an event marking the US presidential election yesterday.

They also said that disinformation and fake news have become threats to democracy, which suggests that fact-checking is critical in the digital age.

The US Embassy in Dhaka hosted the presidential election watch party at the American Center, offering a unique opportunity for Bangladeshi youth leaders, journalists and civil society to experience the US electoral process firsthand.

The event featured interactive activities, such as a mock election where attendees voted for their favourite American sweets; two panel discussions; and two speakers from the US.

“The US electoral process is a testament to democracy in action,” said US Embassy Chargé d’Affaires, a Megan Bouldin.

“By engaging Bangladeshi youth in this experience, we are fostering a better understanding of democracy and the importance of civic engagement,” she added.

During a panel discussion, Shameem Ara Sheuli, Bangladesh country representative at

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Bangladesh now a transit for cocaine smuggling

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

A sharp rise in the smuggling of cocaine, which mainly enters Bangladesh from African and South American countries, has become a new headache for authorities.

Law enforcers have seized around 48,358 kilogrammes of cocaine in the first six months of this year alone, according to the Annual Report 2023-2024 of the Department of Narcotics Control (DNC).

There has also been a rise in the number of seizures this year compared to the previous two years.

The annual report shows that around 13kg of cocaine was seized in 2023, while the figure was 4.57kg in 2022.

On January 25 this year, DNC, along with Airport Armed Police Battalion (APBn), seized 8.3kg of cocaine at Dhaka Airport, a record bust in the country.

The DNC officials found that the smugglers were transporting cocaine to India through Bangladesh from certain East African countries for years. Law enforcers arrested a Malawian, four Nigerians, and a Tanzanian for their involvement in the smuggling at that time.

DNC officials said the international narcotics syndicates are exploiting Bangladesh as a smuggling route and that the majority of cocaine consignments came from Nigeria, Tanzania, Malawi,

Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia.

Tanvir Momtaz, director (operations & intelligence) of the DNC, said, “Cocaine is mainly entering the country through air routes from African countries. The smugglers are using Bangladesh as the transit.”

“The cocaine consignments are then smuggled out of the country, mainly towards India, since we share a porous border,” he added.

DNC officials believe that cocaine currently has no market in Bangladesh due to it being highly expensive, as each kg of cocaine sells for around Tk 10 crore.

Besides cocaine, three other major narcotics – yaba, phensedyl, and heroin – which enters from neighbouring countries are also harming Bangladesh, said Khondoker Mostafizur Rahman, director general of the DNC, while addressing a seminar at the Dhaka district administration office.

According to DNC Annual Report 2023-24, law enforcement agencies recovered around 700kg of heroin in 2023, which is double the amount seized in 2022 – around 338kg.

In the first six months of this year, already 357kg of heroin have been seized. However, reports show a decrease in yaba and phensedyl seizures.

The DNC annual report shows that

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Ramzan Ali and Abu Hossain, brothers of Abu Sayed, met Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus at the State Guest House Jamuna in Dhaka yesterday. Abu Sayed was shot dead by police on July 16 during the mass uprising that toppled Sheikh Hasina-led government. At the meeting, Prof Yunus assured the two of all possible support for their family. He said the interim government has ordered the police to expedite the investigation into Abu Sayed murder and ensure justice.

PHOTO: BSS

EU to help govt with its reform initiatives

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The European Union is ready to support the interim government in “every possible way” in its reform initiatives and fight against corruption.

Paola Pampaloni, director of Asia and Pacific Department at European External Action Service, expressed their keenness to support the government during a meeting with Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus at his office in the capital’s Tejgaon yesterday, according to a statement issued by the chief adviser’s press wing.

Michael Miller, the ambassador and head of delegation of the EU to Bangladesh, was also present.

“The message is very clear. The European Union is with you. We want to support your reform,” Pampaloni told Prof Yunus,

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