

CJ calls for justice as universal right

UNB, Dhaka



"Whether in the courtroom, the classroom, or the community, let us remain committed to building a society where justice is not a privilege but a universal right," he said.

He made this call while addressing the Rajshahi University Law Alumni Association (RULAA) Council held at the Shaheed Shafiqur Rahman Auditorium of the Supreme Court Bar Association.

"Together, we have the power to transform challenges into opportunities and to pave the way for a future defined by equity and integrity," he said.

Pointing at the alumni, he said they carry the responsibility of upholding the ideals of justice, equality, and human rights. Their work as legal professionals, educators, and advocates plays a pivotal role in shaping a society rooted in fairness and the rule of law.

"It is imperative that we continue to use our

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Indian propaganda won't cause harm to us' Says Sakhawat

BSS, Benapole



Adviser to the interim government for shipping, labour and employment Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawat Hossain yesterday said Indian propaganda will not cause any harm to Bangladesh.

"We have everything including medical facilities and huge market. So, we will not suffer from any Indian propaganda against us," he said while visiting cargo yard and immigration at the customs and land port station in Benapole.

Mentioning a huge number of Bangladeshis visit India for various purposes which India benefited economically, Sakhawat said, "If India is reluctant to provide these facilities, then Bangladeshis will not go there."

The adviser said, "There is no such divide among us. People of all faiths are living here with equal status."

"We are historically equal irrespective of all creeds and casts," he also said.

Once the lifelines of Dhaka, the city's canals are now mere shadows of their former selves—clogged with pollution, suffocated by encroachment, and neglected due to flawed urban planning. In this seven-part series, The Daily Star explores the current condition of the capital's canals, botched restoration attempts, and how the sorry state of these waterways is exacerbating the city's waterlogging woes. Together, these stories reveal what it will take to bring Dhaka's dying canals back to life. Here is the third part of the series:

The breach in Dhaka's FLOOD DEFENSES

Water retention ponds shrinking due to urban sprawl

HELEMUL ALAM

Designed to rescue Dhaka from floods, water retention ponds are now in need of rescue themselves. These basins, meant for stormwater management, are shrinking rapidly due to encroachments, unplanned urbanisation, and government neglect.

Just like the capital's canals, these lifelines are now being choked, one illegal grab at a time.

WHAT ARE RETENTION PONDS?

Retention ponds serve as reservoirs for stormwater runoff, preventing flooding and downstream erosion while maintaining water quality. By acting as buffers, they ensure that urban areas can cope with heavy rainfall, particularly during the monsoons.

Retention ponds act like giant bowls that collect and store excess rainwater during downpours, preventing nearby areas from flooding.

Imagine this: during a storm, instead of rainwater overwhelming streets and homes, these ponds hold the water temporarily.



Over time, they release it slowly into nearby rivers or canals, reducing the risk of sudden flooding.

For example, in Dhaka's Mirpur area, stormwater from nearby roads, homes, and markets flows into the Kalyanpur retention pond through Kalyanpur main canal and its branch canals, which is then pumped out to the Buriganga river, said a Wasa official. If this pond didn't exist, the water would pool on the streets, causing severe waterlogging.

Retention ponds also improve water quality by filtering out pollutants from the runoff before it reaches rivers.

"Retention ponds are indispensable for reducing Dhaka's flood vulnerability. Protecting them is critical for the city's sustainability," said Akter Mahmud, a member of the advisory council of the Bangladesh Institute of Planners.

WESTERN RETENTION PONDS

The western part of Dhaka is home to three key pump stations – Kalyanpur, Goran Chatbari, and Dholai Khal – each designed with designated retention ponds. However, over the years, these ponds have been encroached upon, drastically reducing their capacity.

At Dholai Khal, a box culvert constructed in the 1990s by the Dhaka city corporation destroyed the retention area. The pumping station, which requires at least 105 acres for optimal operation, now has just 3.5 acres.



Illegal structures now stand at the Kalyanpur retention pond area. Retention ponds like these are essential to prevent waterlogging, but unchecked urbanisation, jurisdictional overlaps, and negligence threaten their survival, endangering Dhaka's resilience against floods.

There are three pumps at the Dholai Khal station, each with a capacity of 7.4 cubic metres per second. They are struggling to manage the growing burden.

At Kalyanpur, the situation is equally dire.

A study by the Japan International Cooperation Agency in 1990 recommended a pumping station with a 20 cumec capacity and 514 acres of retention pond area. However, in over three decades, the government has managed to acquire only 53.004 acres, far short of the requirement.

Despite acquiring only 53.004 acres, the DNCC has designated 178.82 acres as retention space. This includes 98.35 acres owned by BADC, 6.36 acres by WDB, 11.40 acres of government khash land, and 62.71 acres belonging to Dhaka Wasa. A substantial part of this land is under encroachment.

The BADC recently attempted to fill 11 acres of retention land for a four-storey tissue culture building, violating the Environment Conservation (Amendment) Act 2010.

Although legal challenges have stalled the construction, environmentalists warn that the area remains at risk.

"The government's failure to acquire the required land when it was affordable has made the situation worse," said a WASA official. "What could have been done for Tk 50 crore then would now require an exponentially higher budget."

When asked about BADC filling up 11 acres of land, Md Mahmudul Hasan, administrator of Dhaka North City Corporation, said BADC still owns significantly more land than what has been filled. BADC uses the land as seed beds.

Rajuk has designated the area as a waterbody in the Detailed Area Plan.

Meanwhile, Goran Chatbari's retention pond, once 619 acres, has also lost 40 acres to the Road Transport and Bridges Ministry to implement one of their projects. Although additional pumps have been installed to compensate, the loss of retention area has

strained the system.

EASTERN RETENTION PONDS

Dhaka's eastern retention ponds are also struggling to survive.

Two critical areas – one at the confluence of the Gobindpur and Bouthar canals at the Uttar Khan and Dakkhin Khan areas on the bank of Balu River, and another at the ending points of the Dumini and Norai canals at Nagdarpara and Kayetpara – are also being filled up in the name of housing projects.

"These areas are earmarked in the Drainage Master Plan, Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (DMDP), and Detailed Area Plan (DAP)," said Akter Mahmud.

Without intervention, the government risks losing these crucial areas, jeopardising future drainage projects, he said.

WHO IS TO BLAME?

Encroachment, negligence, and a lack of coordinated government action are at the heart of the crisis, according to experts.

Overlapping jurisdictions between Wasa, DNCC, and the Ministry of Agriculture have resulted in a lack of accountability and enforcement, they added.

"The government must take immediate steps to protect these areas," said Iqbal Habib, an urban planner. "Canals and retention ponds are integral to the city's drainage system. Any disruption could lead to a total collapse."

Despite the grim outlook, there are, however, some promising initiatives.

DNCC Chief Engineer Brig Gen Md Moin Uddin revealed plans for a hydro-eco park at Kalyanpur. The project envisions a retention pond surrounded by trees to increase water carrying capacity while maintaining ecological balance.

However, a large portion of BADC's land is essential for this project.

Meanwhile, administrator Mahmudul Hasan said both the DNCC and LGRD Ministry support the project, but an inter-ministerial decision is required for the land.

An escape from 'hell'

25-year-old tells story of being confined by traffickers in Myanmar

SHARIFUL ISLAM

What began as a promising opportunity towards a better life turned into a harrowing ordeal for Junaid Hossain Parvez Ariyan, 25, of Narsingdi's Belabo.

He fell prey to an international human trafficking syndicate and was forced to work for an online scam gang operating in Myanmar's Karen State.

Ariyan was among approximately 300 individuals, including women, held captive in at least 10 confinement centres near the Thai-Myanmar border. Thirteen of these victims are Bangladeshi.

The captives are subjected to work under inhumane conditions and tortures.

On October 18, Ariyan managed to flee from one of those confinement centres, which are guarded by armed members of Karen insurgent groups and criminal gangs. He jumped into a river, surviving an arduous trek through hills and forests.

He returned home on November 14 and shared his harrowing experiences with this newspaper recently.

DREAM TURNS INTO NIGHTMARE
Ariyan had previously been working in Dubai's hospitality sector.

In August, he was enticed by the promise of a lucrative computer operator job in Thailand, offering a salary of US \$1,200-\$1,500 -- twice his salary in Dubai.

Convinced by a broker, Noman, a Dubai expatriate



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'Regardless of faith, we are all Bangladeshis'

Says BNP leader Khandaker Mosharraf

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP standing committee member Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain emphasised yesterday that there is no distinction among the country's citizens, regardless of whether they are Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Christian, or of any other faith.

He said this while addressing an event at the Jatiya Press Club marking the 'Fall of Autocracy and Day of Democracy', organised by leaders of the 1990 Ducus (Dhaka University Central Students' Union) and the All Party Student Unity.

"The identity of all citizens of this country is Bangladeshi. So, why should there be any division? If 18 crore Bangladeshis remain united, no country can succeed in conspiring against Bangladesh," he also said.

Khandaker Mosharraf alleged that certain quarters are hatching conspiracies to destabilise the country.

The BNP leader also accused Awami League of engaging in conspiracies from abroad. "They [Awami League] will try to create unrest and division in Bangladesh," he said.

Calling for urgent reforms, Mosharraf said, "Priority should be given to reforms in elections, the electoral process, and providing a roadmap for holding the elections."

"In the last 15 years, countless injustices and oppression have taken place. BNP supports the interim government to bring reforms in every sector. It has done so to ensure that this government facilitates an acceptable election, hands over power to the people, and leaves," he added.



3 more die of dengue, 186 patients get hospitalised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least three dengue patients died while 186 patients were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning.

All the deaths were reported from Dhaka North City Corporation areas.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services, with the new deaths and cases, the total number of deaths rose to 517 while the number of cases rose to 95,070.

Currently, 2,354 dengue patients are undergoing treatment in different hospitals, of which 1,401 are from outside Dhaka. A total of 92,199 patients have been released till yesterday.

A celebration of colours

Butterfly Fair held at JU

JU CORRESPONDENT

The Zahir Raihan Auditorium at Jahangirnagar University transformed into a vibrant hub of activity yesterday during the daylong Butterfly Fair, showcasing hundreds of live butterflies and captivating photographs.

The colourful fluttering of butterflies, combined with engaging activities, delighted visitors of all ages. "I've never seen so many butterflies together before. They're of so many colours -- red, blue, purple, yellow -- and absolutely stunning," said five-year-old Faiyad Ahmed Aditya from Savar.

Approximately 35 butterfly species, including Striped Pierrot, Blue Tiger, and Painted Lady, were displayed near the auditorium, Butterfly Park, and Botanical Garden.

The event, organised by JU's Zoology Department with Cute as the title sponsor, carried the theme "Urle Akashe Projapiti, Prokriti Pay Notun Got" (If butterflies fly in the sky, nature gets rejuvenated). Its goal was to



With jubilation in her eyes, a girl looks at butterflies with her father at the daylong Butterfly Fair at Jahangirnagar University yesterday. The Zahir Raihan Auditorium of the university turned into a vibrant hub during the fair, showcasing hundreds of live butterflies and captivating photographs.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN