

Delta Plan fails to address impact of India's river projects: Experts

Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh's ecology and economy have been damaged by Indian river inter-link projects and dams, as well as the adoption of dam-based water management (the cordon strategy) for rivers speakers at a seminar Thursday observed.

The Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) organised the seminar on a book titled "Water Development in Bangladesh: Past, Present and Future", held at a conference room of BIDS in the

capital.

Dr S Nazrul Islam, Chief of Development Research of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs wrote the research-based book.

Nazrul Islam's new research has called into question the Delta Plan. The country's Delta Plan 2100 was also criticised by many speakers in the seminar for adopting cordon approach for water management as well as flood control.

Speaking as the discussant Nazrulsaid the coun-

try's water development strategies were adopted above 70 years back following the western agency's cordon approach which mainly focused on making dams. India's inter-river connectivity project, which has built dams like Farakka or Ghazaldobar upstream of a neighbouring country on the international river, threatens the environment and economy of the downstream country.

He further said, "At the same time, various global and regional threats to

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Bangladesh's rivers have further complicated the situation. To overcome this, modern and sustainable water management policy has to be formulated by adopting open river policy."

"This open water management policy must be adopted in all plans, including the Delta Plan of Bangladesh, for the future existence of this delta," he also demanded.

The earlier approach didn't serve Bangladesh well, he said.

He suggested that the way out from this predicament is through adoption of the 'Open Approach' based on natural solution following the recent strategies of the countries like

USA.

The book also showed that the country's Delta Plan 2100 has neglected the issue by adopting traditional cordon method for water management.

Dr Shamsul Alam, State Minister for Planning who was special guest, said the Delta Plan has been initiated taking in account the water security of the country.

He said the plan was graphed in five years involving number of experts.

But there is option to adopt new and effective approaches in the plan, he said.

He said Dr Nazrul's research will be helpful for the Delta Plan.

Dr Binayak Sen, Director General of BIDS, who chaired this event, said dissent and debate in such a critical issue are always fruitful for the people.

He said Nazrul's research has thrown such a debate which ultimately could help the country to adopt a time befitting water management policy for the most vulnerable to natural disaster and climate change.

Economist Rehman Sobhan said floods were the biggest problem during the Pakistan period. At that time flood control was one of the tasks. Because of this region almost every year there was a flood.

Professor Sajid Kamal said

that the book needs to be translated into Bengali. The Delta Plan requires some changes.

Dr Zillur Rahman said, what has been thought for 75 percent of the rural people? There is a need to plan for the flood victims in the villages.

Earlier, Planning Minister MA Mannan was the chief guest of the programme.

Local Governance Specialist Professor Tofail Ahmed, Professor Sujit Kumar Bala of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) Institute of Water and Food Management and many others were present at the seminar.