

'Govt to follow Delta Plan as guideline'

Says state minister for planning commission on water management

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite "loopholes" pointed out by experts in the Delta Plan -- that was drawn for 100 years -- Shamsul Alam, state minister for planning commission, yesterday said they will follow it as a guideline to deal with Bangladesh's water management.

The minister said this at a seminar organised by Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) to invite opinion from experts on the book "Water Development in Bangladesh: Past Present and Future" authored by S Nazrul Islam, chief of development research of United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Nazrul Islam in his book shed light on the dissimilarities between plan and project in the plan, saying there was no coherence between the two.

"The plan does not reflect the project,

which was taken from other ministries and mostly from the water development board. The projects were repetitions of an earlier policy, which took a toll on our water management for not being inclusive and participatory," he said.

In the book, he presented the devastating situation due to the cordon off approach to deal with tidal water. He underlined the need for an open approach for Bangladesh being a deltaic country.

"The lessons from the past were not learnt," Nazrul alleged.

Nazrul Islam also said the country's river has been facing two threats. The global threat stems from climate change, while the regional one is the diversion of water by upstream countries. However, Shamsul Alam disagreed with the author, saying their plan was participatory and they took lessons from their past experiences for water management.

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“The allegation is not true as there are two groups, including experts and economists, in the development of the plan. We initiated a study titled “Water Sector Intervention and Lesson” to understand previous policies, emphasising the importance of water,” he said.

Mentioning riverbank erosion renders 55,000 families homeless each year, he said they needed a long-term plan which prompted the prime minister to draw the Delta Plan.

“In the days to come, we have to advance following the Delta Plan. It’s our guiding force in dealing with river and water,” he added.

Binayak Sen, director general of BIDS, moderated the seminar.

Rehman Sobhan, eminent economist; Sujit Kumar Bala, professor of Institute of Water and Flood Management at Buet; Zafrullah Chowdhury, founder of Gonoshasthya Kendra; Prof Sajed Kamal; and Prof Golam Rahman were present at the event and praised the book for its insight.