

BEN community forum voices Climate Action for Bangladesh

Bangladesh Environment Network (BEN) Australia Chapter has observed the World Environment Day (5 June) on the 23rd of June 2012 at the Macquarie Fields Community Hall in Sydney. To observe the Day a seminar was held on the 16th of June in Canberra at the Bangladesh HC entitled, 'Securing safe water, health, food and climate outcomes for Bangladesh and beyond'. Distinguished environmental scientists, politicians, green activists, climate action groups and pro-environment groups have participated in this seminar. And, this community forum was mainly aimed at hearing from the visiting Secretary General of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (BAPA) Dr Abdul Matin.

The forum was chaired by Mr Kamrul Ahsan Khan and initiated by an overview speech by BEN Australia Chapter 's member Dr Nilufar Jahan. His Excellency the High Commissioner of Bangladesh Lt Gen Masud Uddin Chowdhury could not personally attend the forum but has sent a written message, which was read out by Dr Debashish Mazumder. This had a brief list of the on-the-ground actions and programs that the Government of Bangladesh has been undertaking to mitigate effects of Climate Change and Sea Level Rise on the people and land of Bangladesh.

In his speech, the Chief Guest Hon Laurie Ferguson MP, Federal Member for Werriwa (Sydney), a popular political figure among the Bangladeshis in Sydney, has emphasised on the importance of undertaking simple, affordable and effective adaptation programs. He has also emphasised on real actions on the ground. He assured the crowd of raising the environmental concerns of Bangladesh with Australian Federal Government and extending helping hand, where possible.

Among the other guests Ms Anne O'Brien, Climate Action Group in Australia; Ms Molly Greanaune from United Voice; Mr Nazrul Islam, senior member of the community; Mr Abdul Jalil, a member of the community ; and Mr Badrul Alam, Editor of Sydney-based newspaper Desh-Bidesh spoke. They emphasised on, 'be informed, be involved' in Climate Change and Sea Level Rise mitigation actions.

In his brief notes the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) NSW Chair for Climate Change and Mitigation Programs, has highlighted the need for local actions to link with global actions.

The main attraction of the event Dr Abdul Matin, the Secretary General of BAPA, spoke at length and informed the audiences the very many programs and projects that it has been running. He talked about the importance of the Government of Bangladesh taking the right initiatives for protecting her environment. He has emphasised on building community awareness and unity on local issues.

The unified voice of the forum was for the developed world to come forward and assist in taking mitigation measures before it is too late. It would be unwanted if thousands of 'climate refugees' take boats to reach Australian shorelines.

The forum was conducted by BEN's Sydney Branch Coordinator Dr Swapan Paul.

Thanks were given to the media and others who have helped in organising the forum, including Mr Iqbal for arranging the venue and A1 Printers for sponsorship.

On the occasion, a special issue of publication, Buriganga' was released, which can be found in BEN's communication partner <http://www.priyoaustralia.com.au/specialissues/>.



