

THE BANGLADESH TODAY

Sunday, Dhaka, October 18, 2020, Kartik 2, 1427 BS, Safar 30, 1442 Hijri

'Allocate budget, formulate strategy to tackle annual embankment damage'

DHAKA : The tragedy of cyclones and consequent floods and embankment damage is an annual saga in Bangladesh. This year was no exception, reports UNB.

But what's lacking is a sustainable embankment and river management policy, say policymakers and experts, as they have urged the Bangladesh government to allocate an emergency budget for repair of embankments across the country in the wake of damage by Cyclone Amphan.

In fact, the clarion call for a long-term approach to tackle embankment damage came from none other than MP Saber Hossain Chowdhury, the chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, at a virtual seminar on Saturday. "Due to lack of sustainable embankment and river management policy, the country faces huge financial

losses every year as money is spent on embankment repairs. We need a long-term plan to tackle the problem as well as an integrated approach by engaging with ministries that are related with water and river management directly or indirectly," he said.

Saber Hossain was the chief guest at the seminar, titled 'Demand Emergency Budget Allocation in Upcoming Dry Season to Embankment Repair and Maintenance', was organised by non-government organisations, COAST Trust and Campaign for Sustainable Rural Livelihood (CSRL).

Arif Dewan of COAST Trust, on his part, said the latest Cyclone Amphan and consequent floods had damaged around 600km embankments across the country, thus causing losses to the tune of BDT 75 billion to the state exchequer. "In this context, emergency repair is needed in the upcoming dry season to avoid further devastation, he

said. Dr Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, the chairman of Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation (PKSF), who chaired the seminar, however, said that the country has a plan. "But it has never been the priority. We need an all-party parliamentary group to give a nod for an embankment management strategy. That might show results," he said at the seminar.

Moderated by Rezaul Karim of COAST Trust, others who attended the seminar included Talukdar Abdul Khaleque, the Mayor of Khulna City Corporation, Asheq Ullah Rafiq, Cox's Bazar-2MP, Nurunnabi Chowdhury, MP of Bhola-3 constituency, Md Monowar Hossain Chowdhury, Gaibandha-4MP.

Talukdar Abdul said that waterlogging is mainly caused by river siltation but embankment failure has been escalating the issue. "So the government should consider both issues as a long-term solution," he said.