

# NEWAGE

THURSDAY, JANUARY 29, 2009

## Urban areas to be worst hit by climate change: Muhith

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Urban development planning and its implementation should be made in accordance with the impact of long-term climate change on urban areas, said the experts at an international conference in the city yesterday.

They said the urban areas especially the metropolitan cities of developing countries like Bangladesh is going to be affected severely due to displacement of climate change victims caused by sea level rising.

But the present city structures and development strategies are not enough to face the challenge, they added.

The conference titled 'Climate change and urban poverty: Infrastructures of development' was organised by Brac University with its Vice-chancellor Prof Jamilur Reza Choudhury in the chair.

Speaking as chief guest at the conference, Finance Minister AMA Muhith said hitherto previous governments were concerned with 'rural poverty'.

"But now it is needed to concentrate on urban poverty as urban areas are going to be worst hit due to indirect impact of climate change," he added.

Muhith stressed the need for having at least one climate change expert in the budgeting and planning cells of every ministry for adapting to climate change effects.

He said the government is going to set up a climate change cell in all the ministries as experts believe that most of the sectors would have adverse



PHOTO: STAR

Finance Minister Abul Mal Abdul Muhith speaks at an international conference on 'Climate change and urban poverty: Infrastructures of development' at the Brac Centre Inn in the city yesterday.

impacts of climate change. The conference was to share the findings of researchers led by Brac University and Brooks World Poverty Institute (BWPI) at the University of Manchester that climate variability is already having an impact on the lives of urban poor in Bangladesh.

They also warned of worse consequences ahead due to accelerated climate change.

Speaking as special guest Brac Chairperson Fazle Hasan Abed said natural calamities are increasing due to climate change.

"The natural calamities leave a long-term effects on people's livelihood," he added.

"We are already having the impacts of climate change," said Dr Ainun Nishat, the coun-

try director of IUCN.

"The night temperature is not decreasing as per expectations. The fogs are also persisting for days. It may have impact on crop productions," he added.

BCAS Executive Director Dr Atiq Rahman and Director of Global Urban Research Centre at the University of Manchester Dr Caroline Moser also spoke at the inaugural session.

According to a study on urban poor presented at the conference, 35 percent of total population of Dhaka live in slums occupying only 4 percent of the total land while 5-6 people live in every room. The study team spent four days talking to poor people living in the slums of Narayanganj and

Karail in Dhaka and visiting a waste management plant.

They also discussed ways of adaptation to climate change with fellow researchers, NGOs and practitioners in Rajendrapur.

They found that poor urban people are experiencing more frequent flooding of their homes, toilets and water pipes creating health and livelihood problems that could deepen further.

The discussions also identified other problems in slums like overcrowding, land insecurity, poor sanitation and water pollution.

Poor toilets and bathing areas are the major problems, particularly for women, making water-borne diseases very common.