

Indo-Bangla initiative to save Sundarbans urged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cross-border management is crucial for the survival of the Sundarbans and that of the communities dependent on the world's largest mangrove forests in the face of climate change, conservationists said at a discussion in the city yesterday.

Saleemul Huq, senior fellow of London-based International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), said Bangladesh and India have to take a collaborative approach to save the Sundarbans through adaptation with the changing climate.

Delhi-based environmentalist group Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) and Dhaka-based Coastal Development Partnership (CDP) jointly organised the programme in Biam auditorium while releasing a study report on the Sundarbans, a world heritage site.

Prof Muzaffer Ahmad, a noted environmentalist, said man-made assaults with incompatible development interventions and lack of

governance already have alarmingly ruined the forest, a storehouse of natural resources. "Let's stop harming the Sundarbans".

The communities of Bawali (wood collector), Mowal (honey collector), fishermen and farmers, who traditionally used to extract Sundarbans resources for livelihood, are fast losing ground.

In the Indian territory, the Sundarbans lost 250 square kilometres of land including agricultural land in past 80 years due to erosion, said Aditya Ggosh, senior coordinator of the CSE, who wrote the report.

The Sundarbans is a natural sink more efficient than the Amazon forests to absorb atmospheric carbon, he said.

Chandra Bhushan, deputy director general of CSE, said high rate of land subsidence and increase in temperature of the sea surface are causing sea-level rise.

Sea-level rise by 25 centimeters would devour 40 percent of the 10, 000 square kilometres Sundarbans, said Jahangir Hasan Masum, executive director of CDP.