

Plastic waste clean-up campaign held at DU, BUET, DMC

Staff Correspondent 20 April, 2025, 00:11

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Environment, forest and climate change adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan, among others, poses for a group photo at a campaign aimed to raise awareness about plastic pollution in Dhaka on Saturday. | Press release photo

The United Nations Industrial Development Organisation, with financial support from the Royal Norwegian embassy in Dhaka, is providing technical support to the Department of Environment for the implementation of the project titled Integrated Approach Towards Sustainable Plastics Use and Marine Litter Prevention in Bangladesh.

As part of this initiative, a seminar and plastic waste clean-up campaign were organised, engaging students from Dhaka University, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology and Dhaka Medical College, on Saturday, said a press release.

The campaign aimed to raise awareness about plastic pollution and promote sustainable practices.

The event was moderated by Professor Md Ridhwanul Haq of DU and graced by Syeda Rizwana Hasan, adviser to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, as the chief guest. Concluding remarks were delivered by Professor Niaz Ahmed Khan, DU vice-chancellor.

Special guests included Farhina Ahmed, secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change; Md Kamruzzaman, director general, Department of Environment; Marianne Rabe Knavelsrud, deputy head of mission, Royal Norwegian embassy in Dhaka; Zaki Uz Zaman, country representative, UNIDO Bangladesh; Chowdhury Kamruzzaman Kamal, director, PRAN-RFL Group; Afia Shahnaj, provost, Dr Alim Chowdhury Girls' Hostel, DMC; Professor Aleya Begum, department of zoology, DU; and Professor Md Mafizur Rahman, department of civil engineering, BUET.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan emphasised the transformative role of youth in environmental conservation. She noted that student-led initiatives are fostering a significant shift towards greener and cleaner communities. 'We are working to distribute jute bags at subsidised rates to discourage the use of plastic bags.'

Niaz Ahmed Khan underscored the urgency of collective action to address plastic waste. He advocated for stronger institutional frameworks and practical strategies, stating, "We must bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and hands-on practices to effectively tackle plastic pollution."

Farhina Ahmed highlighted the constitutional responsibility to utilise natural resources sustainably. She emphasised the need to minimize non-degradable waste, including plastics, and address other harmful contaminants like chemical and inorganic waste.

Md Kamruzzaman remarked, "This event goes beyond just cleaning up waste. It marks a milestone in raising public awareness. The campaigns at DU, BUET and DMC should be replicated across institutions nationwide.'

Marianne Rabe Knavelsrud praised the enthusiastic participation of students and authorities, stating, 'If replicated across Bangladesh, this effort—led by the youth—can serve as a powerful example globally.'

Zaki Uz Zaman stressed the urgent need to address various waste streams, including plastic and medical waste, warning that unmanaged waste poses significant threats to public health and the environment.

Chowdhury Kamruzzaman Kamal announced that the group provided waste bins for the campaign and will collect the accumulated plastic waste for recycling at their facilities. 'This initiative aligns with our commitment to achieving 100 per cent plastic recycling by 2030.'