

AL leaders involved in encroachment of rivers around Dhaka city : Fakhrul

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The Daily Morning Voice Online Desk : BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir has alleged that the ruling Awami League leaders and workers are involved in encroachment of rivers in the country, specially around the capital Dhaka. “Under the patronisation of ruling party, their people have been encroaching the rivers. The government makes tall talks about the development, but takes no step to clean or ensure free flow of the rivers. I have not seen any step from the government so far,” he said. The BNP leader was speaking at a seminar titled ‘Climate Change: Bangladesh and Rivers,’ organised by BNP at the Institution of Engineers Auditorium in the capital on Friday. Hasna Jasimuddin Moudud, wife of late BNP standing committee member Barrister Moudud Ahmad, presented a keynote paper at the seminar. Criticising the government for its ‘lack of planning’ to protect the country’s environment from the adverse effects of global climate change, Mirza Fakhrul said there is no democracy in the country. The Awami League government is doing whatever it likes. They want to cling to power selling out the country’s interests. They don’t feel accountable to people. Because of it, the government has failed to realise its due share of water from the neighbouring country. They have only one objective — how to cling to power. “Dhaka has become one of the most polluted cities in the country due to the government’s negligence in addressing the issue of environmental pollution,” he said.

The BNP leader accused the government of having no plan to address these issues and improve people’s future or livelihoods. “If you visit London, you will see how do they purify the Thames river. Despite London is such a big city, the water of the Thames river has not been polluted. On the other hand, we can’t walk beside the river Buriganga. Due to obnoxious smell, we can’t even think of crossing the river Buriganga. Besides, if you go to the river Turag, you will find that it had died. Now, encroaching of the rivers Dhaleshwari and Shitalakhya begins. These will also gradually die out,” he said. The opposition leader also said the small rivers that once existed in Savar-Dhamrai have nearly died out. “You may have noticed that several clubs have emerged along the Turag River, with the backing and support of high-ranking government officials,” he said. “These clubs have been constructed on top of the riverbed. Water levels are decreasing, and rivers are being encroached upon – anyone can see it. Those who are connected to the current government are responsible for these actions, yet no measures are being taken against them,” he added. He called for a people-oriented government to protect the environment. Fakhrul highlighted various measures, including the banning of plastic bags, a canal digging programme and the banning of tri-stroke baby taxis, taken under BNP’s rule to protect the environment. He stressed that a people-oriented government is needed to protect the environment and democracy is necessary for accountability. The harmful aspects of building dams upstream in India and the threat to nature and biodiversity were also discussed. BNP Standing Committee members Khandkar Mosharraf Hossain, former Water Resources minister Major (Retd) Hafiz Uddin Ahmad Bir Bikram, Joint Secretary General Khairul Kabir Khokon, Media Cell Convener Zahir Uddin Swapan, Professor Dr AK Enamul Huque, M Zakir Hossain Khan and Save the Sundar Foundation Chairman Dr Sheikh Faridul Islam spoke at the seminar.