

# **Environment Adviser Issues Clear Directives to Deputy Commissioners on Protecting Rivers, Hills, and Forest**

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Adviser to the Ministry of Environment, Forest, Climate Change, and Water Resources, has issued clear directives to the Deputy Commissioners to ensure the protection of the country's rivers, hills, and forests. She instructed strict legal action against those responsible for hill cutting. Additionally, she emphasized the importance of demarcating the Madhupur Sal Forest, eliminating illegal encroachments, and updating official records to protect reserved forests, rivers, and wetlands.

During the session, the Environment Adviser ordered the cancellation of the Cox's Bazar District Administration's 51-acre housing project, which was planned on a protected forest area along a hillside near a highway. She also underscored the necessity of evicting the Raja Kashem Ship Breaking Yard from forest land.

These directives were delivered on Tuesday afternoon during her address at the 2025 Deputy Commissioners' Conference at Osmani Memorial Auditorium.

She stressed the need to identify and conserve century-old, heritage, and landmark trees. She directed that at least one river in each district should be freed from encroachment and pollution. Furthermore, she emphasized the importance of developing and enforcing specific guidelines to regulate tourism in coastal areas, haors, islands, and forests.

The Adviser underscored that environmental clearance from the Department of Environment must be obtained before extracting

sand and stones. She called for the deployment of adequate magistrates for anti-pollution drives and, if necessary, for joint forces' assistance in enforcing environmental regulations. She also instructed continuous monitoring of polluting industries and urged authorities to take wildlife-related complaints seriously.

To address human-elephant conflicts, she called for effective mitigation measures. She further directed the preparation of lists of environmental offenders, volunteers dedicated to environmental conservation, and nominees for the Environment Award and Tree Plantation Award.

Regarding pollution control, the Adviser stressed the need for strict action against illegal brick kilns and the immediate launch of crackdown programs on polythene production sites and markets. She suggested promoting alternative solutions by engaging private organizations in producing reusable fabric bags from old clothes.

She instructed all government offices to become single-use plastic-free and emphasized launching awareness campaigns for horn control.

Additionally, she called for preparing an inventory of all ponds, reclaiming encroached water bodies from land grabbers—including Totail Beel, Belai Beel, Benai Beel, Arial Beel, Gacha Khal, and various canals in Noakhali district—and removing illegal occupations from Water Development Board lands. She recommended that, where appropriate, these lands be developed into urban forests, parks, or public spaces.

Stressing the crucial role of Deputy Commissioners in environmental conservation and sustainable management, she stated that ensuring the protection of the nation's natural resources is a fundamental responsibility of the administration.

The session was presided over by Cabinet Secretary Dr. Sheikh

Abdur Rashid. Also present were Dr. Farhina Ahmed, Secretary of the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, Nazmul Ahsan, Secretary of the Ministry of Water Resources, and the heads of relevant agencies under both ministries.

Divisional Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners from across the country highlighted various environmental and water resource-related challenges in their respective regions. The Adviser assured them that all concerns would be reviewed and addressed accordingly.

Later, at a press briefing, Syeda Rizwana Hasan responded to questions from journalists on various environmental issues.