

Timely steps taken against Indian river-link project

Minister tells JS

BSS, Dhaka

The government had taken appropriate steps in time against the Indian move to withdraw waters from trans-boundary common rivers, Water Resources Minister Hafizuddin, Bir Bikram, told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

A formal protest was lodged on August 13 against the proposed Indian mega-project for river inter-linking, the minister said replying to a question from Shah Mohammad Ruhul Quddus of Khulna-6.

Under the proposed project, the Indian government is planning to unilaterally withdraw and divert the waters of the international rivers of the Ganges, Brahmaputra, Teesta and other common rivers.

The minister said a task force has been formed to observe and monitor the

project. The government has been evaluating the report of the task force being submitted from time to time.

He said the issue was raised and discussed in the 35th meeting of the India-Bangladesh Joint River Commission (JRC) in September.

In the meeting, Bangladesh conveyed its deep concern over the project, the minister said.

Bangladesh also demanded that India refrain from implementing the project till a consensus is reached between the two countries through mutual understanding and negotiations, headed.

Hafizuddin informed the House that the JRC also agreed to include this issue in the agenda of the commission. As a result, the door has opened for further discussions on the issue in the next JRC meeting.



PHOTO: STAR
The Jatiya Samajtantrik Sramik Jote stages a demonstration in the city yesterday protesting price spiral of essentials and demanding payment of salary and festival bonus to the workers before Eid.

'Female edn a must for gender parity'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Female education is a must for removing gender discrimination in the society.

This was stated by Iqbal Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury, divisional commissioner of Chittagong, at a training workshop on 'Gender, Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS' at the Chittagong Metropolitan Union of Journalists (CMUJ) auditorium yesterday.

The Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) organised the three-day workshop sponsored by UNFPA and Department of Mass Communication.

The divisional commissioner said although there was some involvement of women in education and health sector, overall empowerment of women is yet to reach satisfactory level.

He said female education is also needed for widening knowledge on reproductive health to bring down the maternal mortality rate and help build up a healthy nation.

CMUJ President Iskander Ali Chowdhury presided over the inaugural session.

BFUJ Vice-President Zahidul Karim Kachi, General Secretary Kasem Mahmud and Alilur Rahman of PIB also spoke.

More protective measures needed to combat AIDS

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh will have to take more protective measures to combat HIV/AIDS due to its geographical location, said the participants at a roundtable yesterday.

They said massive awareness will have to be created among the sex workers, drug addicts and young people to prevent spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

The roundtable was organised by the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) and the Ittefaq in the city.

Speaking on the occasion, Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharrif Hossain said a low level awareness about HIV/AIDS still prevails among the general people including high-risk groups.

"Although the prevalence of this disease is comparatively lower here than other neighbouring countries, there is nothing to be complacent with this situation. We have to take more protective measures," he added.

Unicef Representative in Bangladesh Morten Giersing said 23 million people have so far died of

HIV/AIDS and this number might rise to 45 million across the world by 2010.

"Bangladesh is located in HIV/AIDS prone area as it is surrounded by India where four to five million people are HIV/AIDS positive," he added.

Morten said HIV/AIDS is spreading alarmingly as young boys and girls are most vulnerable to this infection.

Referring to drug addicts, Dr Tasnim Azim of ICDDR,B said more attention must be given to them as they are sexually active and they have marital life.

Chairman of the Technical Committee of the National AIDS Council Dr Motiur Rahman emphasised the need for safe blood transfusion which is one of the major causes of AIDS.

"We have to be open in discussing HIV/AIDS-related issues keeping aside all social stigmas," he added.

Moderated by the Executive Editor of the Ittefaq Hasan Shahriar, the roundtable was participated by Dr Mizanur Rahman, director general of the health services, and Ferdous Ara, joint secretary of women and children

affairs ministry.

Naseem-ur-Rahman of Unicef gave the vote of thanks.

Two get 14 years for felling Sundari trees

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A special tribunal of Bagerhat has sentenced two persons to 14 years' rigorous imprisonment (RI) and fined Tk 10,000 each for felling Sundari trees in the Sundarbans.

The convicts are Parimal Bacharh and his younger brother Subhash Bacharh.

According to prosecution, the convicts were arrested by Mongla thana police on the night of October 24, 1999 with a trawler loaded with Sundari wood.

Judge Md Bazlur Rahman of the Special Tribunal pronounced the verdict on Monday.

FM returns home

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan returned home on Monday night after a weeklong official visit to Singapore and the Philippines.

During his visit to Singapore from November 11 to 13, Morshed Khan called on Singaporean Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong.

He also had meetings with his Singaporean counterpart Prof. S Jayakumar, Trade and Industry Minister George Yeo Yong-Boon and Manpower Minister Dr Eg Eng Hen.

The foreign minister addressed a meeting on 'Business Opportunities in Bangladesh', hosted by Singapore Business Federation and Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

He also delivered a speech on 'The Look East Policy of the government of Bangladesh', organised by the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies.

During his November 14-16 visit to Manila, the foreign minister called on President of the Philippines Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and Senate President Franklin Drilon.

He also had meetings with his Filipino counterpart Blas F Ople, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and Secretary of the Department of Education and Culture, said an official handout.

BNP leader Pathan passes away

BSS, Dhaka

Azmal Hossain Pathan, vice-president of city BNP, died of old-age complications at the Bangladesh Medical College Hospital yesterday. He was 74.

Pathan had been suffering from various diseases for a long time. He is survived by his wife, one son and three daughters.

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister and Secretary General of BNP Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Mayor and President of city BNP Sadeque Hossain Khoka and general secretary Abdus Salam, and others BNP leaders visited the residence of late leader.

They consoled the members of the bereaved family and prayed for salvation of the departed soul.

In a condolence message, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia expressed her deep shock at the death of Pathan. She prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed sympathy to the members of the bereaved family.