

TIPAIKUKH DAM PROJECT

Regional cooperation can resolve dispute

Says Kuldip Nayar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The dispute between the two neighbouring countries -- Bangladesh and India -- over the issue of Tipaimukh dam project can be resolved through regional cooperation, said veteran Indian journalist and columnist Kuldip Nayar yesterday.

It is a hydro-electric project, not an irrigation project, but the problem has been created due to the lack of people-to-people contact between the two countries, he said at a workshop at the National Press Club in the city.

The Coastal Area Resource Development and Management Association (CARDMA) and Bangladesh Water Partnership jointly organised the workshop on 'Regional Cooperation for Transboundary Water Resources Management'.

India has recently floated international tender for the construction of 1500 Megawatt Tipaimukh Hydro-Electric (multipurpose) Project at the confluence of the Barak and Tuivai rivers in its north-

eastern state of Manipur. The sale of tender documents will continue until February 15.

The concern for Bangladesh is that the project, once implemented, will obstruct the flow of water into its rivers Surma, Kushiara and Meghna.

Kuldip Nayar said the Indo-Bangla relationship depends on this issue and firstly the governments of both the countries should take measures to resolve the Tipaimukh problem.

"Water is a very important and serious issue for India and Bangladesh. Both the countries should think of regional interest," he said.

"There is no benefit for Bangladesh from the long march towards Tipaimukh ignoring the regional cooperation and diplomatic understanding," he added.

Speaking at the workshop, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed expressed fear that the Indian project will have a long-term negative impact on Bangladesh, particularly on the water flow of the rivers.

All the political parties should

come forward together and put a pressure on India to stop the Tipaimukh project for the greater interest of the country, he said.

The minister also called for conducting a research to get the exact data and information about the negative impact.

CARDMA President Hasna Jasimuddin Moudud, who moderated the workshop, said the Indo-Bangla Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) does not hold its meetings regularly.

The government should take more steps to resolve the Tipaimukh dam issue, she added.

The New Nation Acting Editor Mustafa Kamal Majumdar, Mohammad Shaiduzzaman MP and former Ambassador Muhammad Jameer also spoke.

According to the experts, under the project, India would build one of the world's highest 'Rock Fill Dam' (162.80 metres high) to harness the Barak waters for generating electricity. The Barak feeds the Surma and Kushiara in Sylhet that flow into the Meghna.

Long march draws participation of many with no political links

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Many people who claimed to have no political affiliation came from all over the country to join yesterday's long march of the 14-party opposition combine at Paltan Maidan aiming at ousting the four-party alliance government.

Talking to The Daily Star, many such non-political people expressed how they have been suffering since the BNP-Jamaat coalition government came to power.

Idris Ali, 60, of Nilphamari looked tired from marching a few hundred miles over the last few days to join the mass gathering at Paltan Maidan. Although he knew the ordeals, he did not bow to his age and rather decided to join the long march because he is "very upset about the price spiral of essentials".

"I am here to bring an end to the BNP-Jamaat-led coalition. We do not want to see such parties in power anymore," said day labourer Idris, who cannot even buy enough food for his six-member family, let alone meet other basic needs like clothes.

Mohammad Taher, a school-teacher from Mymensingh, said he has joined the long-march to "accelerate the out-governments movement". "As a conscious citizen of the country I feel an obligation to forge a movement against the government for the reforms of the caretaker government system and the Election Commission," he said.

Nuru Miah, a resident of Kansat in Chapainawabganj, spat venom against the government for the killing of eight people in his locality a few days back.

"We do not want to see a tyrant government [like this one] that does not hesitate to kill innocent people demonstrating for a basic need like electricity," he said.

VOTER LIST 'Ruling party activists influence enumeration'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ruling party activists influenced the voter registration process in different constituencies and lots of people were left out of the enumeration till January 31, observed an independent election monitoring agency.

With the financial support of Cida channelled through The Asia Foundation, Fair Election Monitoring Agency (Fema) had been monitoring the voter registration process at six constituencies in Chittagong-9, Dhaka-10, Barisal-5, Khulna-2, Sylhet-1 and Rajshahi-2.

A press release issued by Fema yesterday said information collectors in six wards of Chittagong-9 constituency did not enumerate minority population at the instruction of the ruling party activists.

Fema observers found that the registration staff did not visit 668 houses out of total 2,225 houses till January 31.

In the capital itself, residents of more than 150 bamboo-made houses at North and South Begunbari under Dhaka-10 constituency had been left out of the registration process completely.

In Barisal-5 constituency, about 25 percent voters could not be enumerated due to shortage of Form 2.

There is also allegation that in violation of the Election Commission directives, the information collectors filled up the forms sitting in a house of their own choice for all the voters living in and around the house and forged the signature or thumb impression of voters.

In Khulna-2 constituency, lack of publicity did not let many voters to fill up their forms as they were temporarily absent when the information collectors visited their houses.

About 25-30 percent people eligible for enrolment as voters at Chowkidheki, Molipara and Badam Bagicha under Ward No 6 of Sylhet Sadar were not enumerated.

Same incidents also took place at different areas of Rajshahi-2 constituency, said the press release signed by its Programme Officer Feruzul Alam.

Poet Tarik Sujat wins Krittibas award

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Poet Tarik Sujat has won an award, Krittibas, one of the most prestigious literary awards of West Bengal, India.

He is the first Bangladeshi poet to receive the award which is given to two young poets every year. Tarik won the award this year for his book titled 'Jabo Boley Theme Thakley Nei' published by Agami Publication.

The other winner is Chiranjib Basu, a young poet from West Bengal.

The award was handed over to the winners at a gala programme at the UBI auditorium at Kolkata Book Fair on January 28. Eminent writer Sunil Gangopadhyay chaired the award giving ceremony.



Opposition activists from different districts arrive in the city by a train yesterday as part of the long march programme of the 14-party opposition combine. The picture was taken from Airport Railway Station.

Finalise overseas employment policy for safe migration

Experts demand at a seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Experts at a seminar yesterday demanded immediate finalisation of overseas employment policy for safe migration.

As there is no overseas employment policy, the women migrant workers are being harassed and oppressed abroad, they added.

The speakers said Bangladesh is the seventh largest remittance recipient country in the world. It earned around 3.6 billion dollar in remittance last year and the lion share came from the women migrant workers.

Funded by Manusher Jonno, Bangladesh Ovbashi Mahila Sramik Association (Bomsa) organised the seminar titled 'Contribution of female migrant workers in national economy and overseas employment policy' at Boesi auditorium in the city.

While presenting the keynote paper, Prof Tasneem Siddiqui of Dhaka University said the policy would yield positive results on migration of women workers.

"The women migrant workers should be trained properly before

going abroad and the government, instead of the association of the recruiting agencies, should provide the certificate," she said, adding that domestic work should be recognised as maid employment both in sending and recipient countries.

Explaining the role of Baira in safe women migration, its Secretary General Ali Haider Chowdhury said the agency has made a month-long training mandatory for aspirant women migrant workers.

It has also proposed to the government to recruit people in receiving country's embassy to maintain liaison with the domestic maids and their employers abroad, he added.

Ali Haider said the condition of women migrant workers is much better now as they are much aware, but the awareness programme should reach the grassroots level.

Expecting to finalise the policy soon, Secretary to expatriates' welfare ministry Ashfaq Hamid said as different committees and experts are engaged in processing the policy, it is taking a little more

time. "We don't want our women victims of trafficking. We just want their safe migration. Our demands are ratification of the UN Convention, finalisation of the policy and written contract with the recruiting agencies so that we could help abused women migrant workers," said Sumaiya Islam of Bomsa.

The government should discharge its responsibility towards women migrant workers before their departure, at the time of their arrival in the receiving countries and on their return home, said Rina Roy of Manusher Jonno, adding that the migrant workers should have the access to all information properly.

General Secretary of Bangladesh Women Journalists' Forum Mahmuda Chowdhury presided over the seminar while Lutfun Nahar of Action Aid, Director General of Boesi Mahbubur Rahman and a host of aspirant women migrant workers were present the seminar.

100 hurt as cops beat up marchers

FROM PAGE 1

Kanchpur and Keraniganj. The opposition leaders alleged that the police obstructed the advancement of the marchers at different places.

The 14-party arranged the long march to press home its demands, including resignation of the alliance government, removal of the controversial chief election commissioner and two election commissioners, and holding a free, fair and credible election under a reformed caretaker government system and Election Commission.

Meanwhile, in the continued blanket-arrest drive at some places of the country, law enforcers detained at least 500 people, including 350 in the capital, as of early yesterday.

Earlier, the police arrested more than 10,000 opposition supporters and workers along with a number of non-political people both in and outside the capital. At least 500 opposition workers were also injured in the attacks carried out in different parts of the country over the last four days by both the police and ruling party cadres.

Witnesses said some 30 people were injured when BNP cadres aided by the law enforcement agencies attacked the marchers at the Sadarghat terminal yesterday morning. They said the police without any provocation charged batons on the long march participants trying to get down from a trowler.

At least 15 people were injured in the city's Siddique Bazar area as BNP cadres attacked the opposition supporters proceeding towards the Paltan Maidan to join the grand rally. The agitated opposition workers allegedly set fire to two vehicles in Tantibazar area at 2:30pm.

The police charged baton on a Gono Forum procession on the city's North-South Road leaving at least 10 workers injured.

Our correspondent in Comilla reports: At least 30 opposition men were injured at Daudkandi as the cadres of the ruling BNP and its front organisations swooped on a procession marching towards the capital. Nine of the injured were admitted to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital.

Chittagong City Corporation Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury told journalists that at least 15 vehicles carrying opposition workers were damaged during the attack.

Sanjoy Bhowmik Kankan, a Bangladesh Chhatra League leader from Chittagong, told The Daily Star that a group of around 70 ruling party cadres armed with hockey sticks and brickbats attacked their bus at the Daudkandi toll plaza.

Our Manikganj correspondent reports: At least 25 opposition workers were injured when the police and BNP cadres swooped on them in front of the deputy commissioner's office at about 11:00am.

Meanwhile, thousands of opposition workers began marching from Tongi amid tight security at around 11:30am after holding a rally. Awami League (AL) senior leaders, including Motia Chowdhury, Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, Sayer Hossain Chowdhury, Mubeen Uddin Khan Badal, Sohel Taj, Zahid Ahsan Russell and Rahmat Ali, led the march.

In Munshiganj, the police intercepted an opposition procession on its way to join the long march at the Kathpatti ferry ghat. The law

enforcers picked up 22 people from different areas in the district. The police were seen patrolling the terminal area in speedboats yesterday, preventing anchoring of launches.

WELCOMING THE MARCHERS

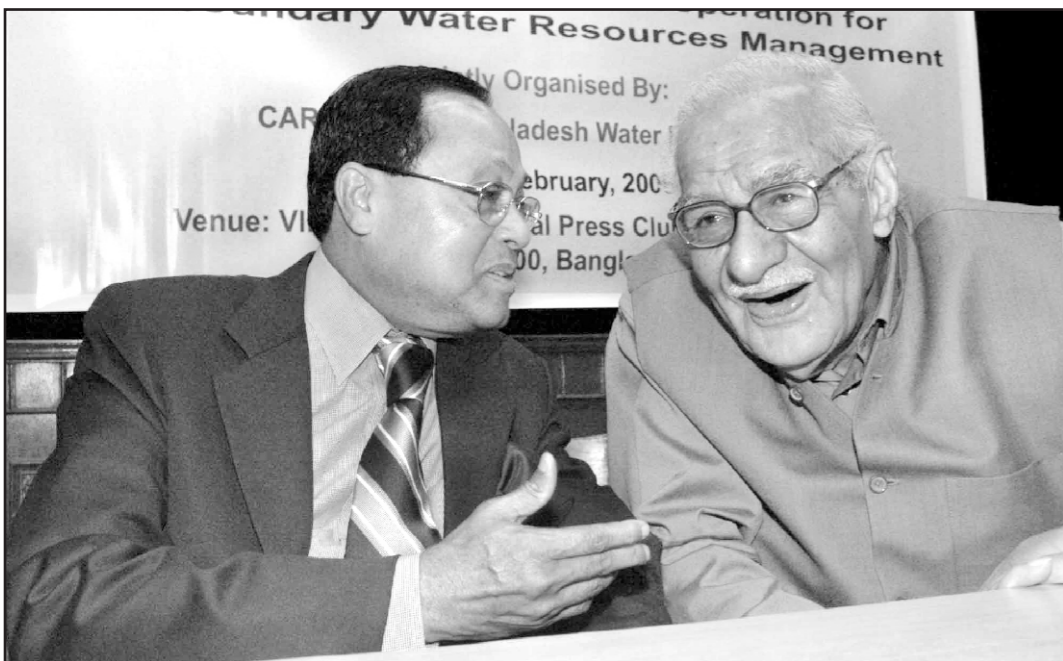
Hundreds of opposition leaders started gathering at all entry points to the capital to welcome the marchers since early morning yesterday.

The opposition also brought out motorcades in the city to mobilise people to join the grand rally at the Paltan Maidan.

AL city unit General Secretary Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya told The Daily Star that at least 10 podiums were built for welcoming the marchers. "But the police vandalised them all," he alleged.

A total of 2,000 volunteers were deployed to maintain discipline at the rally.

Maya claimed that at least 400 opposition workers were arrested until 6:00am from Saturday midnight.



Law Minister Moudud Ahmed talks to veteran Indian journalist Kuldip Nayar at a workshop on 'Regional cooperation for transboundary water resources management' at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

Health service delivery system still backdated

Prof Yunus tells CAPGAN congress

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today the health sector of the country is better than it was 30 years ago but it is still non-functional, said global personality Prof Muhammad Yunus at an international congress on diarrhoea and malnutrition in the city yesterday.

Speaking as keynote speaker at the inaugural ceremony of the congress, he said with the rapid advancement of science, many things are being invented but the service delivery system for the benefit of the people is still backdated.

It is very unfortunate that huge budget is allocated in health sector but people are yet to get its benefit, said Prof Yunus, managing director of Grameen Bank, adding this problem prevails not only in Bangladesh but also in many other developing countries.

He said the country has enough skilled people and health infrastructure, but there is a big gap between facilities and service delivery.

The inaugural ceremony of the 8th Congress of Commonwealth Association of Paediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition (CAPGAN) was held at a city hotel.

The theme of the congress is 'Combating malnutrition and intestinal diseases in children: Are we doing enough?'

Hosted by ICDDR, the inaugural ceremony of the three-day congress was attended by Dr AZM Zahid Hossain, head of urology department of Dhaka Medical College and Hospital, Prof Edmund Anthony Nelson, current president of CAPGAN congress and Dr David A Sack, executive director of ICDDR.

ICDDR for the invention of oral saline to prevent diarrhoea of children, Prof Yunus said in 30 years back cholera was a serious epidemic disease but now it has been possible to prevent the disease.

Stressing the need for safe drinking water to prevent diarrhoeal diseases, he said awareness must be built up among the people about the disease.

Around 500 delegates including 100 scientists are expected to join the congress, said the organisers.

The congress will hold 27 scientific sessions, six plenary sessions and more than 100 lectures on common childhood problems particularly on diarrhoeal diseases, malnutrition, HIV/AIDS and natural disasters.

The sessions will be held at different halls and seminar rooms of ICDDR at Mohakhali.

WEATHER TODAY

No change in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather may remain mainly dry over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Light fog may also occur over the river basins of the country during early morning, Met Office said, predicting nearly unchanged night temperature.

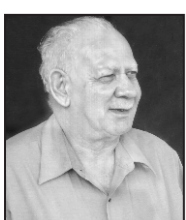
Highest temperature 30.6 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Chittagong and lowest 12.3 degrees at Jessore.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:48pm today and rises at 6:37am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	28.5	15.7	67	47
Chittagong	30.6	17.0	85	50
Rajshahi	27.8	12.8	83	68
Khulna	29.0	13.2	85	50
Barisal	29.3	13.4	90	73
Sylhet	28.5	17.0	76	64
Cox's Bazar	30.4	18.0	83	--

Obituary



Belayetul Karim Chowdhury of Dashmina Talukdarbari, a renowned soil scientist, passed away in Dhaka on Saturday at the age of 65, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, two sons and a daughter to mourn his death.

Death anniversary



Today is the second death anniversary of Dr A B M Mofizul Islam Patwari, former professor of law, University of Dhaka and founding president of Dhaka International University, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil and Qurankhani will be held at his village at Moniram and Debi Chowdhurani in Rangpur.

AUG 17 BLASTS

Trial starts in Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The trial of the August 17 serial bomb blast case of Joypurhat started at Rajshahi Speedy Trial Tribunal yesterday.

The tribunal fixed February 15 for framing charges in the case, which was shifted to the tribunal from Joypurhat on December 24.

Out of 29 accused in the case, 23 arrested people were produced before the tribunal.

They were brought to Rajshahi Central Jail from Joypurhat under tight security on Saturday.

CRIMINAL CASE

Salman gets

ad-interim bail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday granted ad-interim bail to Salman F Rahman, a reputed industrialist and vice-chairman of Beximco Group in a criminal case filed with Dohar Police Station on August 15 last year, says a press release.

The bench comprising Justice Abdur Rahshid and Justice Md Mizanur Rahman issued the order when he (Salman) appeared before the court and prayed for anticipatory bail.

The bench also issued a rule upon the government to show cause as to why he would not be granted regular bail.

On December 30, 2005, police submitted a charge sheet against 45 people, including Salman F Rahman.

After the charge sheet, a Dhaka court on January 25 issued arrest warrants against Salman F Rahman and six others in the case filed with Dohar Police Station.

According to the prosecution, on August 15, 2005, Sub-Inspector Masudur Rahman Khan, filed the case against a number of local Awami League (AL) leaders and workers with Dohar Police Station, accusing them of obstructing police in discharging their duties at Dohar while the AL men were observing the mourning day on the occasion of the death anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

However, the names of Salman F Rahman and six others were not in the first information report (FIR).

Barrister Rafique-Ul Huq and Advocate Shah Manjurul Huque appeared for the petitioner.

'597 militants held so far'

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The government has so far arrested 597 people against 214 cases to dismantle the network of terrorists and bombers across the country.

Of them, trial in 31 cases have already begun while 121 charge sheets have been submitted. Seven cases have been sent to the speedy trial tribunal while 35 others are under process to be sent to the tribunal.

The health minister on behalf of the State Minister for Home Lutfozzaman Babar told this to the House in response to a question from lawmaker Shahinur Pasha Chowdhury yesterday.

2 bills passed, 4 more placed in JS

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The Jatiya Sangsad (JS) yesterday passed two bills, including the Fertiliser (Management) Bill 2006, while two more bills were placed in the House.

Earlier, the JS passed the Electricity (amendment) Bill-2006 with the provision of stern punishment for illegal uses of electricity and its pilferage.

Besides, the Bangladesh Telecommunication (Amendment) Bill-2006, the Court Reforms Implementation (Complementary Rule) (Amendment) Bill-2006, the Birth and Death Registration (Amendment) Bill-2006 and the Law and Order Disrupting Crime (Speedy Trial) (Amendment) Bill-2006 were placed in the House.

The bills were sent to the concerned parliamentary standing committees for preparing reports on them after proper scrutiny.

RU TEACHER KILLING Duta protest today

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) will observe a two-hour work abstention, stage a one-hour sit in and bring out a silent procession on the campus today protesting the killing of Rajshahi University Professor S Taher Ahmed.

Duta at an emergency meeting on Saturday took the decision with its Vice President Prof Tazmery SA Islam in the chair.

The meeting demanded immediate arrest and exemplary punishment to the killers of Prof Taher.

Teachers will observe a two-hour work abstention from 11:00am to 1:00pm. They will stage a one-hour sit-in at 11:00am at Battala in front of Arts Building.



A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the United International University (UIU), Dhaka, and Wakkana Hokusei Gakuen University, Japan, in the city recently. Under the MoU, the two institutions will exchange programmes and the UIU will introduce a Japanese language course.