

Protect right to land Demand indigenous people

Indigenous people are still being oppressed in various ways across the country, said the representatives of ethnic communities at a meeting yesterday.

They are being evicted from their own lands and facing false cases filed by the Bangladeshes, the speakers said at the national committee meeting of the Bangladesh Indigenous People's Forum in the city.

Highlighting their various problems, the representatives urged the administration to protect their rights to land and property.

Forum President Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma alias Shantu Larma said a conspiracy has been going on to endanger the existence of indigenous people in the country.

"Though we work to protect the rights of every people, the ruling party is against it. We are more oppressed and deprived of our rights because of the domination by the fanatical forces," he said.

He also called on all to work unitedly to bring a revolutionary change to this situation.

The speakers said the administration always favours the intimidators who destroy the forests and file false cases against indigenous people.

Even the government does not acknowledge the ownership of the lands by indigenous people and they often do not get any compensation for the loss of their lands, they added.

In Jafflong, many Bangladeshes collect stones from the river, causing erosion of the land, which eventually leads to eviction of the Khasi community, said the representative from greater Sylhet.

A huge portion of lands of the Khasis also goes to Bangladeshes every time when a land survey takes place, he said.

"We don't get back the ownership of our land even after the verdict of the High Court in our favour. The government also does not pay heed to the rights of the indigenous people," said Ashit Mong.

The speakers urged the government to include the demands of the indigenous people in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).

They also demanded immediate steps for protection of the rights of indigenous people to land and property.

General Secretary of the forum Genabir Drong and Prof Mesbah Kamal of Dhaka University were also present.

Solo exhibition of Hamiduzzaman begins Feb 17

A 12 -day solo exhibition of Prof Hamiduzzaman Khan will begin in the city on February 17, says a press release.

World Bank Country Director for Bangladesh Christine Wallich will inaugurate the exhibition titled "Recent Sculptures and Other Works" on the gallery Kaya premises at 5:00pm.

Eminent art critic Prof Nazrul Islam will attend the inaugural ceremony.

A total of 42 sculptures and 33-water colour paintings will be put on display.

The exhibition will remain open from 11:00am to 8:00pm from February 17 to February 28.

AL programmes on Int'l Mother Language Day

Awami League has chalked out elaborate programmes on the occasion of the International Mother Language Day to be observed on February 21.

The day's programmes will start at 6:30am by hoisting party, national and black flags half-mast at all the branch offices of the party, including its central office.

The programmes also include wearing black badge, barefoot morning procession, paying tribute at the mazar of martyrs at Azimpur graveyard and placing wreaths at the central Shaheed Minar.

A discussion will also be held on the premises of Bangabandhu Memorial Museum with Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

AL General Secretary M Abdul Jalil yesterday urged the party leaders, members and activists to observe the day with befitting manner.

PAK SENATE CHAIRMAN, PML PRESIDENT MEET PM People-to-people contact underscored

UNB, Islamabad

Chairman of Pakistan Senate Mohammad Mian Soomro and President of Pakistan Muslim League (PML) Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain called on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia separately at her Serena Hotel suite yesterday.

During the meeting, Khaleda and Soomro stressed the need for exchange of parliamentary delegations between the two countries for strengthening democracy as well as to enhance people-to-people contact.

Chaudhry Shujaat during his meeting with Khaleda emphasised

on enhancing party-to-party contact for the benefits of the two peoples.

Welcoming the PML chief's idea, Khaleda said steps would be taken to increase the party-to-party contact.

Chaudhry Shujaat proposed holding a meeting of the political leaders of the Saarc member countries to establish peace and prosperity in South Asia and requested current Saarc chairperson to take initiative in this regard.

Khaleda also welcomed the proposal.

He requested her to send a delegation from Bangladesh during

the centenary observance of his party sometime this year.

Responding positively, Khaleda said a delegation will be sent from Bangladesh to attend the centenary celebrations.

Chaudhry Shujaat expressed the hope that Saarc under her dynamic leadership will bring peace and prosperity in South Asia.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain, Agriculture Minister MK Anwar, Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan, PM's Principal Secretary Dr Kamal Siddiqui and Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin were present during the meetings.

Death of patient in city hospital sparks off clash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The death of a patient sparked off a clash between his relatives and the staffs of Shomorita Hospital in the capital yesterday morning.

Four people were injured in the clash that erupted after the patient's relatives alleged that the patient died due to doctor's negligence, said police and hospital sources.

The patient, Kawzar Ahmed, 55, who suffered a brain stroke, died at 7:45am yesterday. He had been undergoing treatment at the hospital since February 6.

Soon after his death, relatives and neighbours rushed to the hospital and went on the rampage, hospital sources said.

"They assaulted a doctor and a ward boy and vandalised some of the decoration of the hospital, claiming that negligence of the physician concerned caused his death," said Nurul Islam Tuhin, general manager of the hospital.

Around 80 agitated people rushed to the hospital and went berserk, leading to the clash, said Nurul Islam. He said that he was also assaulted during the melee.

Later, police stepped in and brought the situation under control.

Dismissing the allegation as false, Dr Kazi Deen Muhammad who was treating the patient said Kawzar suffered a severe brain stroke.

"The patient's condition was critical and I had already informed his relatives about his condition," he added.

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Confucius Instt opens

The launching ceremony of the Confucius Institute was held yesterday at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city, says a press release.

North South University (NSU) and Yunnan University of China jointly established the Institute at the NSU campus to teach Chinese language.

This is the first institute of its kind not only in Bangladesh but also in South Asia.

Professor Wu Song, president of Yunnan University, Chai Xi, Chinese ambassador in Dhaka and Iftekharul Alam, chairman, NSU Foundation spoke on the occasion.

NSU Vice Chancellor Dr Hafiz GA Siddiqi chaired the inaugural session.

Initially the Institute offers a one-year course for the beginners. Classes will begin on February 25. Faculty member from Yunnan University Dr Zhang Gaoxiang will conduct the course.

In the ceremony, speakers said China is enormously growing economic power in the world and learning the Chinese language will help develop business and trade in the South Asia region.

They also mentioned that the establishment of the Institute is a milestone of exchange and cooperation in the field of education between China and Bangladesh.

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Four killed in road crashes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four people were killed and three others, including a joint secretary, injured in separate road accidents in Dhaka city and Keraniganj yesterday.

AKM Jahirul Haq Khan, 42, an official of Titaz Zone-4 in Badda, was killed as a speeding truck rammed his private car on Mirpur Road near Asad Gate in the city at 1:30am.

Jahirul was returning home at Mohammapur from the airport along with his brother Solaiman Khan, joint secretary of establishment ministry, and Solaiman's wife Shahnaz Kamrunessa Khan.

The three and driver Jewel, 30, were injured in the accident. They were rushed to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) where Jahirul died at 4:30am. Others left the hospital after receiving treatment.

In another accident, an elderly man, 50, was crushed under the wheels of a vehicle at around 6:45am when he was crossing the road near Kalyanpur bus stand.

He was taken to the DMCH at 7:35am where the doctors declared him dead. His identities could not be known.

Another unidentified youth, aged around 30, was run over by a train at Malibagh level crossing in the early morning. He died at the DMCH a couple of hours later.

In Keraniganj, a speeding human hauler ran over eight-year-old schoolgirl Sharmin Akhtar, daughter of a rickshawpuller, at noon.

The girl was returning home from her school but the vehicle knocked her down at Muslim Bazar on Nayabazar-Nawabganj Road, killing her on the spot.

Local people intercepted the vehicle, but its driver managed to escape.

They also demonstrated in the area demanding arrest and punishment of the driver and owner of the vehicle.

Farmers demand reduction in electricity charges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Farmers and farm labourers yesterday demanded withdrawal of repressive fees and reduction in electricity tariffs charged by the Rural Electrification Board (REB).

They also called for resolving problems of low voltage and loadshedding.

The demands were placed at a press conference organised by Bangladesh Krishak Samity and Bangladesh Khetmajur Samity in the city.

The leaders of the organisations also threatened to launch a tougher movement if their demands go unheeded.

The farmers are passing their days in utter misery due to power, diesel and fertiliser crises, they said and demanded timely supply of diesel at fair price in rural areas and subsidy in fertiliser.

They also demanded exemplary punishment to those responsible for killings in Kansat, Chapainawabganj.

The leaders also announced that they would lay siege to all offices of the district commissioners and upazila nirbahi officers across the country on February 19 to press for their demands.

Khetmajur Samity President Shamsuzzaman Selim read out a written statement at the press conference.

Krishak Samity leaders Nurur Rahman Salim, Morshed Ali and SMA Sabur and Sazzad Zahir Chandan of Khetmajur Samity also spoke.

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Samrik League, labour front of the opposition Awami League, takes out a procession at Mukhtangan in the city yesterday in support of today's countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal. The AL-led 14-party has called the hartal.

Tk 450cr Dutch grant for six projects

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Netherlands will provide Tk 450 crore to Bangladesh for implementing six projects in the water resources sector in the next two years.

The two countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) yesterday for a two-year extension of Twining Arrangement, under which the projects will be implemented.

The projects are Char Development and Settlement Project (CDS), Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project (ICZMP), Estuary Development Programme (EDP), Integrated Participatory Sustainable Water Management Project (IPSWAM), South East Area Integrated Water Resource Planning and Management Project and Water Management Improvement (WAMIP).

Water Resources Minister M Hafiz Uddin Ahmed and Development Cooperation Minister of the Netherlands Agnes van Ardenne signed the MoU in the city. Dutch Ambassador BCM Beemsterboer and Secretary of

Water Resource Ministry Syed Mohammad Zubayer were also present.

Water Resource Minister Hafiz Uddin said the Twining Arrangement was signed in 1999 initially for five years (2000-2005). "Now both the countries have agreed to extend the agreement for two more years with view to sharing water policy, water management and knowledge."

Agnes van Ardenne said it is easy to work in Bangladesh because many things, including water management and water system, are similar in both the countries.

She also said that they want to work in Bangladesh for poverty reduction, checking river erosion and sharing knowledge in the water resources sector.

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Adequate power for irrigation demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Bangladesh Krishak League yesterday submitted a memorandum to the Rural Electrification Board (REB) demanding adequate electricity supply to the irrigation projects in the northern districts of the country.

They also demanded compensation for the families of the Kansat victims who were killed in police fire.

Prior to the submission of the memorandum, they held a brief rally in front of REB central office in the city.

Addressing the rally as chief guest, Krishak League President Dr Mirza Jalil said the Khaleda-Nizami government increased the prices of fuel, fertiliser and electricity, as they do not want welfare of the farmers.

He said the police with the directives of the government killed farmers who were demanding electricity. Farmers are being deprived of their legal rights after the government had come to power, he added.

If their demands are not met they will lay a siege to every Pali Biddut office in every upazila, he threatened.

Motahar Hossain Mollah and Sheikh Mohammad Jahangir also spoke.

Summer looks darker

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combined cycle plant, it took US company AES only \$170 million for the Meghnaghat 450MW combined cycle plant. The PDB installed a 70MW simple cycle plant in Shahjibazar for only \$30 million in 2001.

The contract for the plant gave German company Siemens an extra incentive to finish the job before the December deadline and penalty for missing the deadline.

Siemens would have been given \$8,000 per day as bonus if it could finish the job before the deadline and \$50,000 penalty per day for missing the deadline, sources said.

But these did not work as the RPCL's consultant Lahmeyer International Pali Power Services Ltd (LIPPS), which enjoyed uninterrupted unauthorised power over the RPCL affairs, messed up the project's finances and abruptly got involved in a clash with the government. The LIPPS top executive was trying to takeover the government shares of the RPCL through a third party.

Because of Lahmeyer's resistance to allow German donor agency KfW to conduct an audit into the books of RPCL, the gov-

ernment lost a 20 million euro untied grant earmarked for this project and another 40 million euro for another power project.

The KfW wanted to conduct the audit following in-depth reports in The Daily Star on the corruption in the RPCL involving KfW funds.

The remaining investment for this project was supposed to derive through the Pali Bidyut Samities (PBSs).