

SAARC COUNTRIES BEGIN THREE-DAY DISCUSSION

Green, clean S Asia underscored

UNB, Dhaka

The Saarc countries began a three-day discussion here yesterday on the agenda of building a green and clean South Asia by jointly addressing the environmental problems...

On the first day, the Saarc Technical Committee on Environment and Forestry (STCEF) held their meeting discussing several points of agenda on environment and forestry to prepare a report for the seventh ministerial meeting to be held on May 24.

The minister-level meeting, which is expected to strike a deal, will be preceded with a meeting of senior officials today.

Environment and Forest Minister Tariqul Islam attended the meeting as chief guest. State Minister Zafrul Islam Chowdhury was the special

guest with Zafar Ahmad Chowdhury, Environment and Forest secretary, in the chair held at Sonargaon Hotel.

"I hope, among various measures, the technical experts will move forward to consider the modalities for having a Regional Environment Treaty in furthering environmental cooperation among the Saarc states as envisaged in the 13th Saarc Summit," Tariqul Islam said in his speech.

He said that there is a vast scope for regional cooperation in various fields of environment, particularly in disaster management, coastal zone management, arsenic contamination of groundwater, water conservation, green South Asia and sharing trans-boundary flows of water.

"We had the directions from our leaders during the 13th Saarc summit that we need to coordinate our activities in various areas of disaster management, such as early warning, exchange of information, training and

sharing of experiences and best practices in emergency relief efforts", Tariqul told the experts.

Zafrul said that a number of environmental initiatives have already been taken under the Saarc process and in some cases progress has been made.

"Now we need furthering of our initiatives. We have to move forward to achieve a green and clean South Asia," he said.

On the sidelines of the technical meeting, Secretary Zafar said Bangladesh would place a package proposal for building a 'Green South Asia', free from environmental pollution, in the meeting.

The proposals include taking green city programme, establishing networks to regulate the restricted areas, arranging coordinated regional water-shade management, cleaning up the rivers and setting up an extensive infrastructure on natural calamity management and preven-

tion. He said the technical committee meeting dealt with the environmental issues envisaged in the 'Dhaka Declaration' of the 13th Saarc Summit.

Major points in the Dhaka declaration was the formulation of a complete outline for early-warning and disaster-management project and strengthening the Saarc Meteorological Research Centre and Saarc Coastal Zone Management Centre.

It also includes announcing the year 2007 as 'Green South Asia' and discussion on formulating a regional environment treaty to enhance the environment-related cooperation among the Saarc countries.

Delegates from all the member countries, including current chairperson of the technical committee Dasho Sangay Thinley from Bhutan, were present at the meeting.



Two students walk to their schools as the road from Science Laboratory to Asad Gate in the city was closed to traffic during the siege programme of Jubo Sangram Parishad. The Parishad was scheduled to lay siege to the Election Commission Secretariat yesterday to press their demand for immediate cancellation of the draft voter list.

TB infects over 3 lakh a year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday called for a social movement to control tuberculosis (TB) by creating mass awareness.

They said more than three lakh people are infected with tuberculosis every year.

The roundtable titled 'Tuberculosis Control Programme: Support of Mass Media' was organised by Brac and Amar Dosh at the National Press Club in the city.

The speakers said people should be informed that tuberculosis is a preventable disease and patients can get the treatment free of cost staying at home.

This message could be dissemi-

nated to people effectively through mass media, they added.

Programme Manager of National Tuberculosis Control Programme Dr Viqarunnessa Begum said under the programme the identification rate of TB patient has increased to 61 percent in 2006.

Vice-Chancellor of BSMMU Prof MA Hadi said as the germs of tuberculosis can remain alive in the air for hours, these could affect a huge number of population.

"It is heartening to note that patients across the country are now getting free treatment. They should be brought under national registration after identification," he added.

He however expressed concern over the occurrence of Multi Drug

Resistance (MDR) TB as its treatment is still expensive and the rate of cure at advance stage is very poor.

Chairman of Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health Affairs Moshir Rahman MP said people could not take the advantage of free treatment owing to lack of awareness.

Advisory Editor of Amar Dosh Ataus Samad moderated the programme attended by, among others, its Editor Amanullah Kabir, Director of National Institute of Chest Diseases and Hospital Prof Mostafizur Rahman, Prof Mirza Mohammad Hiron and Dr Salima Rahman of RDRS.

BNP cadres set fire to 5 houses of AL supporters in Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

BNP cadres went on a rampage yesterday, setting fire to five houses belonging to Awami League supporters and injuring three women during a clash over a land dispute at Bhalukgachhi village in Puthia upazila.

Of the injured, Aklima, 55, and Khodeza, 57, were admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital while Manzura to Puthia Hospital.

The clash erupted when Momin Mondol's men tried to cut crops of a land belonging to Alim Uddin and Dalil Uddin Sonar.

Momin's men, backed by local BNP leaders, then attacked both the families and set fire to five houses.

Fire fighters from Rajshahi rushed to the spot and brought the fire under control, but all the houses burned down.

BIMSTEC meet on culture begins in Bhutan today

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The first BIMSTEC ministerial meeting on culture begins in Bhutan today.

The inaugural session will take place at the newly-built hotel Zhiwaling in Paro.

Foreign Affairs Adviser Reaz Rahman left here for Bhutan yesterday to attend the meeting.

BIMSTEC members are Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

Nepal, however, is not attending this meeting of BIMSTEC, an economic cooperation body of the region.

The three-day meeting will discuss how the member countries could join their hands to enhance and preserve their rich cultural heritage.

How cultural cooperation could be utilised to reduce poverty and vitalise communities through the promotion of cultural industries in the region will also dominate the talks.

Official sources said BIMSTEC cultural collaboration could pave the way for income and employment generation.

BIMSTEC region represents one of the most diverse regions of the world be it in climate, race, culture, language or ethnicity.

Death anniversary

UNB, Dhaka



Today is the 5th death anniversary of Nuruddin Ahmed, former president of the FBCCI, DCCI and Dhaka Club.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at his Banani residence after Maghrib prayers.

All relatives and friends are kindly requested to attend the milad, says a press release.

Asia Khatun



Today is the second death anniversary of Asia Khatun, who died in a launch capsizing in the river Meghna in 2004, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at Paripattar under Kalkini Police Station in Madaripur.

A citizens' condolence meeting will be held in memory of the victims of launch mishap of 2004 at the central Shaheed Minar at 4:45pm.

PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

1,000 teachers appointed on political considerations: AL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 1,000 BNP-Jamaat men have been appointed as teachers at different public universities on political considerations in the last four and a half years' rule of the four-party alliance government, causing a slide in the standard of education, leaders of the main opposition Awami League said yesterday.

In most cases, political consideration, not the merit, was used as a yardstick during the appointment of teachers, they said.

Also, the alliance government allowed establishment of 38 new private universities so far, flouting all kinds of rules and regulations, the leaders said at a press conference organised by the AL sub-committee on education and human resource development at

the party's Dhanmondi office in the city.

They said most public universities, including National University, Rajshahi University, Chittagong University, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, Bangladesh Agriculture University and Islamic University, have turned into dens of terrorists due to politicisation of appointment of teachers and officers and dominance of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, student wing of BNP, and Islami Chhatra Shibir, student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami, over dormitories.

One of the agitating students was killed in police firing in Sylhet recently when they were demonstrating against irregularities and corruption at Shahjalal University of Science & Technology, said Nurul Islam Nahid, education affairs secretary of AL.

A few days ago, the syndicate of Islamic University appointed 88 BNP- and Jamaat-backed candidates against 53 vacant posts, he said, adding that the vice-chancellor had to stay away from the campus following violent demonstrations over the issue of recruitment.

Former president of Dhaka University Teachers' Association Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique said the alliance government has recently appointed two members of the University Grants Commission, who were involved in the controversial recruitment of 545 people at Rajshahi University.

Former vice-chancellor of Dhaka University AK Azad Chowdhury, AL Joint Secretary Obaidul Kader and Abdul Mannan were also present at the press conference.

Swechchhasebok League protests killing of leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Awami Swechchhasebok League condemned killing of two Swechchasebok leaders allegedly by the ruling BNP cadres in Shyampur and demanded punishment to the killers.

They were speaking at a rally at Mukhtangan in the city yesterday.

Addressing the rally, Joint General Secretary of Awami League (AL) Obaidul Kader said people's rightful movements can never be stopped by means of political killings and oppression.

The ruling government under Khaleda Zia is to take responsibility for the killings, said Bahauddin Nasim, president of Swechchasebok League.

They also brought out a procession that started at Mukhtangan and ended in front of AL party office.

Abdur Rahman, Dr Mostofa Jalal Mohiuddin, Pankaj Debnath and Matir Rahman Mati spoke on the occasion.

Tk 37crore EC grant to improve food security for ultra-poor

BSS, Dhaka

The European Commission (EC) will provide 4.5 million Euro (approximately Tk 37 crore) as a grant to improve food security of the country's ultra-poor through the increase and sustenance of hard-core poor households' income.

The EC has sought for proposals from the non-profit making NGOs to improve the low nutritional status of the ultra-poor people in the country's most vulnerable six northern and north-western districts.

The EC sources said the NGOs, who will apply for the grants, should have documented experience on the successful implementation in

food security and poverty alleviation projects.

Dinajpur, Joypurhat and Rangpur to the west of the Jamuna river, and Jmalpur, Netrakona and Sherpur to the east have been selected for implementing the food security project, said the sources.

Individual projects may receive between 1 and 1.5 million Euro. The EC will finance 50 to 90 percent of total project costs while the duration of each project will be between 30 and 36 months.

The last date of proposal submission is July 20. An information session on this call will be organised by the EC on May 25 at BRAC center here, the sources said.



Awami Swechchhasebok League demonstrates at Mukhtangan in the city yesterday protesting killing of its two leaders at Shyampur.



Traders of West Panthapath take out a stick procession in the city yesterday to protest against extortion.

7 killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

At least seven people were killed and 29 others injured in separate road accidents in Gazipur, Gaibandha, Manikganj and Netrakona yesterday.

UNB from Gazipur reports: Three people were killed and 20 others injured when a bus rammed a tempo and then turned upside down on Kaliakoir-Nabinagar road in Chandra area yesterday.

Local sources said the Bogra-bound bus from Dhaka hit the tempo coming from opposite direction and then skidded off the roadside at noon, killing a man on the spot. Two others succumbed to their injuries on way to Dhaka.

The identities of the dead could not be known immediately.

The injured were given treatment in different local clinics.

Our Correspondent from Gaibandha reports: Two people were killed and six others injured in a road accident when a speedy bus hit a rickshaw from behind at Chapadaha on Sunderganj-Gaibandha highway yesterday.

A Gaibandha-bound loaded bus dashed the rickshaw from behind at Chapadaha, five kilometre off the Gaibandha town. The rickshaw passenger and puller skidded off the road and crushed under the wheels of the speedy bus.

The dead were identified as Abul Kashem Pramanik, 65, a retired schoolteacher and rickshawpuller Kachu Mia, 38.

Local people set fire to the bus following the accident. The people also beat bus driver Nuruzzaman mercilessly and handed over to police.

The passengers said the bus hit a rickshaw van with six passengers that skidded off the road and fell into a ditch leaving all injured at Kuptola on the same route.

Nuruzzaman, a motor mechanic, was driving the bus, said one passenger.

Our Correspondent from Manikganj adds: A student of class ten was killed in a road accident on Dhaka-Aricha road in Manikganj

yesterday.

The dead was identified as Tuser, student of Nali High School and son of Mujibar Rahman of village Nabagram under Shivalaya Police Station in Manikganj.

Police said, the accident occurred at 10:30am at Nabagram area when a Dhaka-bound passenger bus hit cycle rider Tuser from behind while he was returning home from private tuition, leaving him dead on the spot.

The body was taken to Manikganj Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

The local people put up barricade on the Dhaka-Aricha Highway for one hour from 12:30pm demanding exemplary punishment to the killer driver.

Hundreds of vehicles remained

stranded on the road following the barricade.

BSS adds: A college student was killed and three others were injured when a passenger bus and a tempo collided head on at Baishdher area on Netrakona-Kalmakanda Road yesterday.

Police said the accident occurred when a Kalmakanda bound passenger bus from Netrakona collided head-on with a tempo coming from opposite direction. One of the passengers of the tempo Suman, 18, a second year student Baushi College in Barhatta upazila of Netrakona district died on the spot, the police added.

The injured are being given treatment at Barhatta Upazila Health Complex.

WEATHER TODAY. No change in temperature likely. Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at one or two places over all the six divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today. Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said in a forecast. Highest temperature 37.2 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 24.4 degree Celsius at Sandwip. The sun sets in the capital at 6:38pm today and rises at 5:12am tomorrow. Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

Table with 4 columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius (Max, Min), Humidity in percentage (Morning, Evening). Rows include Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar.

DHAKA TODAY Seminar. Zia Parishad organises a seminar on 'Globalisation and Economy of Bangladesh'. Venue: Barc auditorium, Dhaka. Time: 5:00pm. Discussion. Peshajibi Samannoy Parishad will hold a discussion on 'Free and fair election: Precondition of people's empowerment'. Venue: Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre. Time: 4:00pm. View exchange. Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry organises a view exchange with the media people on women entrepreneurs. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 11:00am. Publication ceremony. A publication ceremony of a book titled 'Dr Shirin Kazi smarana tar rachana shomogra' will be held to mark the fourth death anniversary of Dr Shirin. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 4:00pm.