

FP, development to go together: PM

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said here yesterday that the essence of her government's population policy was to integrate family planning programme with the nation's overall development activities in cooperation with all reports BSS.

Begum Zia said like other national issues the government had specific political will for and commitment to population control. As an accountable government it is pledge-bound and also determined to complete the implementation of the national population policy and planning, she asserted.

The Prime Minister was addressing the main function of the National Population and Family Welfare Day at the Osmany Memorial Hall here. The function included reception to 64 ideal couples, each with two children and distribution of Prime Minister's Population Award to five voluntary organisations.

While pointing to the salient features of the policy, Begum Zia said it aimed at reducing the death rate of mother and child by providing them with healthcare.

She said the main target of the population policy was to bring down the present population growth rate from 2.17 to 1.08 by 1995.

Begum Zia said the country is already receiving the benefit of the present population policy. She pointed out that the family planning adoption rate had stood at 40 per cent, which increased during the last year.

She said there were 80 lakh couples who had adopted family planning methods.

Begum Zia expressed her happiness that the country had already exceeded the target of achievement in the field of EPI in the majority of the districts.

She pointed out that 80 per cent of children were targeted to bring under the EPI. She said 83.04 per cent children had already been brought under the programme.

The Prime Minister said the education of all, especially for the women community, was needed for the success of the family planning activities in the country.

Narrating the negative impact of population boom the Prime Minister said during the last 40 years the population increased three times but the food production did not increase at same rate. 'Till now

we have to import 15 lakh ton food grain every year,' she said.

The Prime Minister said at present the per capita land in the country was 0.30 acre. With the present population growth rate the per capita land would come down to zero by the year 2000 and the country would need 21 lakh ton additional food grain at that time, she said.

She further said employment opportunity would have to be created for 31 lakh people and steps would have to be taken for the education of 80 lakh children of the country.

She said we have to achieve the joint target of 'health for all by the year 2000' and 'family of two children by the year 2005.' She said the population control was not alone our target, we want to establish happy, affluent and healthy families in cooperation with all irrespective of any party opinion.

The Prime Minister said all the development activities of the country would go in vain if the population continues to grow unbridled.

'Paribar Pankalpani Atanibedito Mahila' a voluntary organisation received the award at national level while Palashipara Samaj Kallyan Samity, Mamata Manobik Sahajya Sangstha and Tilottoma Mahila Sechhasabi Sangstha from four divisions received the award at local levels.

Appointment of non-agriculturalists at research bodies opposed

By Staff Correspondent Bangladesh Krishi Bid Institution, Gazipur Unit, has opposed appointment of any non-agriculturalist as chief executive of an agricultural research organisation.

The demand was made at a central meeting of the unit at the Krishi Gabeshana Institute at Jaidevpur.

According to a press release of the unit Sunday the meeting demanded an immediate end to the complications created due to posting of acting director generals in various agricultural research bodies.

The meeting resented the transfer of the present director general of the Gabeshana Institute terming it a conspiratorial.



Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman exchanging views with editors of national dailies and news agencies in Dhaka Sunday. Information Minister Najmul Huda also attended the meeting. — PID photo

Talk of repatriation frightens Rohingyas

Voluntary bodies seek permission to start relief operations

From Monaem Khan in Cox's Bazar and Nurul Alam in Chittagong

Seven non-government voluntary organisations sought government permission to start relief operation at the shelters of the Muslim Rohingyas refugees, official sources here said Saturday.

The NGOs filed separate applications to the district administration seeking permission to begin relief works at the refugee camps on humanitarian ground, they said.

The NGOs pointed out in

as Myanmar citizens. Report from Chittagong adds: Fearing pushback into their homeland thousands of Rohingyas refugees are taking shelter scatteredly at different places of Cox's Bazar and Chittagong districts instead of massing in the refugee camps, officials and refugee sources said.

During this correspondent's tour of Cox's Bazar and Taknaf, the officials and refugees leaders informed that a large

a refugee camp at Dechuapalong, about 20km off Cox's Bazar town, this correspondent talked to a large number of refugees who were living in shanties made of dry straw and ordinary pieces of bamboo. Most of them showed negative attitude towards repatriation fearing further persecution by Myanmar troops at Rakhaine. Sona Ali (50), who arrived from Kepurdong village of Buchidong seven

When asked Ali Joha tossed his head saying 'I don't like go back to my homeland as I might be picked up again by the troops.'

Almas Khatun (70) who came from Anogowai village of Buchidong two weeks ago along with her sons and other family members echoed the same sentiment saying 'I am not willing to return unless the repatriation is made with strong commitment from Myanmar government.'

'In 1978 also I was repatriated with others but again I was forced to leave my homeland in the face of atrocities by troops.'

She informed that her 40-year old son Oli Ahmed was mercilessly beaten by the troops while he was taking lunch inside the house charging him for delay in joining back to the forced labour at their camp.

Almas Khatun was also booed out when she raised hue and cry.

Yangon

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when Myanmar celebrated its Independence Day (Jan 4).

Far Eastern Economic Review has a good record of tracking the developments in Myanmar, including modernisation of its 230,000-strong armed forces.

It said China and Myanmar concluded a 1.4 billion-dollar arms deal in October 1989. In 1990 and early 1991 Beijing delivered a substantial number of naval patrol boats, tanks, armoured personnel carriers and jet fighters to Myanmar by sea.

The recent convoys across the land border are the first confirmed deliveries of small arms, reported to account for 250 million US dollars of the deal.

More military equipment, the weekly said, is expected to be delivered later this year.

MP

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an institutional shape for which the people had fought for a long time.

She expressed the hope that the Parliament Members Club would provide an opportunity to the MPs belonging to different political parties for exchanging their views on any national issues.

She said late President Ziaur Rahman had felt the necessity of such club that would bring together the MPs irrespective of party affiliations and established the club in 1979.

The Prime Minister distributed prizes among the winners.



Rohingya children in refugees camps: Destination unknown. — Star photo

the applications that the government relief efforts at different camps of the Rohingyas refugees, who have been here to escape ill-treatment in their homeland, were inadequate to meet the growing need for good, shelter and medicine.

The voluntary organisations, who sought permission, are: Red Crescent Society, Concern, Caritas, Gana Shasthya Kendra, Medicine Sans Frontiers of France and CODB, the officials said.

According to an unofficial count, some 85,000 Rohingyas have crossed Bangladesh border from Myanmar since December 21, last year.

Officials said that the applications of the voluntary organisations had been sent to the NGO Bureau in Dhaka for approval.

Meanwhile, reports from across the border said Saturday that the Myanmar authorities have started confiscating the identity cards provided earlier by the SLORC government from the Muslim citizens in Rakhaine (formerly Arakan) province.

Rohingya refugees who crossed the border since Thursday alleged that their ID cards had been snatched by the Myanmar troops so that the Bangladesh authorities could not prove their identity

number of the Rohingyas refugees had by now merged with their kith and kin already settled at various parts of Cox's Bazar and Chittagong.

An official of Cox's Bazar district administration said 'now it has become difficult to identify. The refugees in order to bring them under the fold of ongoing 'headcount' process as their dialect and appearance are similar to those of the people of Chittagong and Cox's Bazar'. So far the administration finalised a list of, with names and full particulars, three thousand two hundred refugees. The administration collected reports on the entry of 23870 Rohingyas refugees till January 26 who are staying at Taknaf, Ukhia, Ramu, Chakaria upazilas and at Cox's Bazar Sadar. The refugees included 9390 males, 7170 females and 7310 children. The headcount continues while the influx of the Rohingyas refugees increased following the stepped-up crackdown by the Myanmar troops at Rakhaine.

Officials and leaders of Rohingyas refugees said those who are have-nots and without kith and kin here took shelter in the camps under open sky while the affluent ones trekked into other parts of Cox's Bazar and Chittagong.

Meanwhile, during a visit to

months back with his twelve-member family, expressed his reluctance to go back to his homeland saying 'I can agree to commit suicide by taking poison on the soil of Bangladesh but I would not return to the hellish life in Myanmar where its troops tortured us and turned my house into their camp.'

Sona Ali sobbed that all his family members and neighbours were evicted by the troops unleashing severe persecution.

Ali, who led almost a happy life by farming his six acres of fertile rice land at Buchidong, was caught by Bangladesh police after he had crossed into Cox's Bazar. Treating him as infiltrator, local police kept him along with others under custody and released after 15 days, Ali said.

Ali Joha (25), who came one week ago from Chwpara of Buchidong, informed that the Myanmar troops swooped on him while he was working in his crop land near his house.

He was taken for conscription at Tarain camp where he was not given even a morsel of food. Eight others were also taken from his neighbourhood just four days before his crossing. He was released after three days' captivity at Tarain camp.



Hotel owners and employees holding rally in front of the National Press Club yesterday. — Star photo

Hotel employees, owners to go for greater movement Feb 24

By Staff Correspondent Some 2,000 owners and employees of city's restaurants Sunday staged a rally in front of the National Press Club to press home their five-point demand, including withdrawal of Value-Added Tax (VAT) from hotels and restaurants.

Khandeker Ruhul Amin, President of Restaurant Owners' Association told the rally that they would go for 'greater action' if VAT was not withdrawn and gas, water, electricity bills and other City Corporation taxes were not reduced immediately.

Announcing their programme, they said they would lay siege to the National Board of Revenue (NBR), Titas Gas head office and City Corporation on February 24, March 3 and April 18 respectively.

Sunday's demonstration and rally marked the ending of 48-hour strike of the owners and employees.

The Midnight File

Cresson in the firing line

PARIS, Feb 2: French Prime Minister Edith Cresson was in the firing line today as the Socialist Party demanded government changes following Palestinian leader George Habash's controversial stay in Paris. With the leader of the radical Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) safely dispatched to Tunis on Saturday, members of the ruling party began hunting out the authors of the government's public humiliation, reports Reuter.

Yeltsin's proposal a major breakthrough: Cheney

WASHINGTON, Feb 2: US Defense Secretary Dick Cheney said Sunday that Boris Yeltsin's proposal for the United States and Russia to work together to create a worldwide missile defense system is "a major breakthrough." Cheney said the two countries need to follow up on the Russian president's proposal that Moscow and Washington collaborate on a space-based defense system that would make nuclear weapons obsolete, reports AP.

ANC, Inkatha hold joint rally

DURBAN (South Africa), Feb 2: As the country's two leading black groups held their first joint peace rally Sunday, eight blacks died in factional fighting only a few kilometers (miles) away. About 1,000 supporters of the African National Congress and the Inkatha Freedom Party met on a grassy field in Mpumalanga to celebrate an agreement to end fighting that has raged in the township almost daily since the mid-1980s, reports AP.

Repeal black ordinance or face mass movement, AL warns government

The Awami League Sunday reiterated its demand for scrapping what it described as "the black indemnity ordinance," otherwise it warned that the party would launch a nationwide mass agitation, reports UNB.

"It's a hated, anti-people black law... people have already expressed their verdict for its repeal. The entire nation demands its repeal. It must be scrapped as the first step of democracy," a party resolution said.

The resolution, adopted Sunday at the end of a two-day emergency meeting of the party's Central Working Committee in the city, said doubt and confusion were being created among the people by "indecision" of the ruling BNP on the question of rescinding the ordinance.

The party urged the people to take all out preparation for movement if the BNP government disagrees to repeal the ordinance.

Awami League introduced in

parliament the Indemnity Ordinance (Repeal) Bill in keeping with its commitment made in the Joint Declaration of the three alliances to end politics of killings, coups and conspiracy and remove obstacles in the way of restoration of rule of law, it said.

The party observed that the politics of coup and murder began with assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and members of his family on the fateful night of August 15, 1975.

The resolution said in line of its commitment to the nation, Awami League passed the 11th and the 12th constitutional amendment bills to restore parliamentary democracy against the politics of coups and killings.

The Awami League, in another resolution, criticised the government for not taking any action whatsoever against "Pakistani national" Prof Goulan Azam for his involvement in the country's internal politics.

5 killed in road mishaps

By Staff Correspondent

At least five people were killed in four road accidents in Dhaka and Mymensingh Sunday.

A rickshawpuller, aged about 27 died on the spot and one Idris, 12, was injured when a truck (Dhaka Da-2530) hit them near Shyamoli cinema hall Sunday morning.

Witnesses said, the truck also hit four rickshaws, one autorickshaw and a BRTC bus during the incident.

The truck driver, however, managed to escape leaving the truck on the spot. In another accident, Jobeda Begum (50) of Muradpur died on the spot when she was hit by a speeding truck while crossing the road in front of Demra thana Sunday morning. The body was sent to DMCH for autopsy.

Police arrested the truck driver and seized his vehicle.

Our BAU Correspondent adds: Two people were crushed under the wheels of a minibus on the Mymensingh-Dhaka road near Purba Panchpara village in Trishal upazila Sunday.

Shahana (5) and her grandfather Abdu Samad (90) were killed when they were returning home after taking a bath at a nearby pond. Both of them died on the spot, police said.

After the accident, angry villagers barricaded the road

halting traffic for about four hours. The accident occurred around 10 in the morning and the traffic was restored at 2.30 pm.

Meanwhile, a madrasa student was killed near Modhubur village on the Mymensingh-Haluaghat road yesterday.

Rajib (14) was run over by a coach (Mymensingh Ka-256).

Police seized the vehicle but the driver escaped.

Our Gaibandha Correspondent adds: Four persons were killed and seven others injured when a loaded truck rammged a market at Mashastangarh on the Rangpur-Bogra highway Saturday night. The truck Comilla Ta-5977 was coming from Rangpur.

Three pedestrians were killed on the spot and four of the injured were rushed to Bogra Hospital in critical condition. One succumbed to his injuries on the way. The victims are Mofazzal (35), Ranju (18), Quddus (12) and Lailia (45).

Displaced

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to expedite hearing to those disputed cases and if necessary the help of lawyers could be taken. The government has taken this decision for solving the problems of the displaced families relating to the exchange of property.

Shaheed Day

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forget their identity and roots, and they would not have the backbone left to resist foreign rule.

Imposition of Urdu as the only state language would precisely have set in motion that process.

The warning bells, however, had begun to ring even before Jinnah's infamous speech. Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah, in an article published in the Azad in August, 1946, championed the cause of Bangla as the state language of East Bengal; later Dhrendranath Dutta made a similar demand in the Provincial Assembly in Dhaka; Tumuddin Majlis, an organisation set up in Dhaka in 1947, cultivate Islamic culture, issued a booklet calling for Bangla to be made the official language of East Bengal; the same demands were raised by the Muslim Students League and the Jubo League.

The battle lines were being drawn and the road to February, 1952 was being mapped out.

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Bangladesh Bank report

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The report further says during the period under review the growth rate was maintained at 3.6 per cent though the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate fell to 2.4 per cent from 5.4 per cent during the previous year.

The fall in the GDP growth rate has been attributed to the decline in the growth rate of the agricultural sector.

The industrial growth rate, according to the report, stood at 7.9 per cent in 1990-91 as compared with 8.4 per cent in the preceding year while the rate of growth in the power and gas sector declined from 16.7 per cent in the previous year to 5.7 per cent during the period report reviews.

Contesting the forecasts, noted economist Dr Mahub Hossain says he is not optimistic about maintaining the growth of the economy.

'Overall performance of the economy during the current financial year does not seem to be optimistic,' Dr. Hossain, Director General, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), told The Daily Star.

Pegging economic growth to democratic process in the country Dr Hossain says democratic freedom has created some problems. The way different pressure groups and organizations are raising demands is creating disruptions. 'The economy has no capacity to meet these demands,' he added.

Referring to the flow of aid Dr Hossain says donors have committed money because of the prevailing democratic situation but 'we are yet to see utilization of that commitment. For the present, aid utilization is poor though the government is trying to be active.' He adds, 'work stoppage and other activities are affecting project implementation.'

Dr Hossain contends natural disasters did not affect agricultural production during 1990-91 as those were localised.

Explaining the phenomenon of about three-year cycle of good harvests, Dr Hossain expresses doubts whether the same would continue during the coming boro season. Rather, increase in the price of fertilisers and other agricultural inputs will affect agricultural production during the current year,' he adds.

Professor Wahiduddin Mahmud expresses fear whether aid would accelerate the growth of the economy. He says 'the project implementation capacity is still lacking in order to absorb the aid in the pipeline. The government has to take steps to improve the capacity.'

On the aid utilization capacity, Prof Mahmud who teaches economics at the Dhaka University says the mechanism which existed during Ershad regime was corrupt.

Such a corrupt system cannot implement projects properly, he adds.

Prof Mahmud, however, says 'the government is trying to find an alternative mechanism but the problem lies with the bureaucracy. In bureaucracy, nobody is taking decision.'

Pointing to the role of investors, the professor says the confidence of investors is yet to be restored. 'Unless the government can assure a stable policy environment the private sector will not respond at the short run to the extent of reviving economy.'

Giving credit to the agricultural sector Prof Mahmud says the performance of the sector was good. But, 'it did not create favourable impact on the health of the economy.'

Poetry festival concludes

By DU Correspondent

The two-day 6th National Poetry Festival ended yesterday. In the morning, a seminar titled 'Poetry of Four Decades 1952-92' was held as part of the festival, organised by the Jatiya Kabita Parishad

Editor: S. M. Ali
Executive Editor: Mahfuz Anam
Published by S. M. Ali on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd.,
52 Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000 and printed by him at
Offset Printing Dialogue Publications Ltd., 19 Kazi
Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1215. Editorial, News &
Commercial Offices: 28/1, Toynebee Circular Road,
Dhaka-1000. Tel: PABX- 246023-4, 245061-2.
Advertisement: 245063 & Ext. 20, Fax No. 88-02-
863035. GPO Box No. 3257. GRAM: DAILY STAR,
DHAKA.