

Earth Summit

Donors still split over WB fund

BONN, May 20: Donor countries may not agree before next month's United Nations Earth Summit on how much to contribute to a fund for Third World environment programmes, a senior German official said on Tuesday.

Hans Peter Reppnick, State Secretary in the Development Ministry that is leading German negotiations, told Reuters donors were still split over the size of a special World Bank fund.

"We are trying, but my expectations are limited," Reppnick said when asked if an agreement would be reached before the UN Conference for Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro on June 3 to 14.

German officials singled out the United States for much of the blame, saying Washington did not want to increase the

size of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) as much as some others.

The GEF is being promoted by industrial countries as an important source of funding to help the developing world pay for new environment programmes to come out of Rio.

The fund, initiated in 1991, has dollar 1.5 billion dollar it can lend through 1993. Donors include most major industrial states and some developing countries like China and India.

It finances projects that hope the Third World protect the global environment, like cutting down carbon dioxide pollution from fossil fuels.

Reppnick said donors were divided over a World Bank proposal to triple the amount the GEF can lend in the period 1994-1996 from its current ceiling.

Prabhakaran charged with Rajiv murder

NEW DELHI, May 20: India today formally charged the head of a Sri Lankan Tamil guerrilla group with the murder of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi a year ago, the news agency United News of India said, reports BSS.

It said the special investigation team probing Gandhi's assassination on May 21, 1991, charged Vellupillai Prabhakaran, head of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, and his intelligence chief, Pollu Amman.

India has asked Sri Lanka to capture and extradite Prabhakaran and other Tiger members it accuses of involvement in Gandhi's murder.

Gandhi was blown up by a woman suicide bomber as he bowed to receive a garland from her during an election meeting near Madras, capital of India's southern Tamil Nadu state.

A Colombo report says army artillery fire has hit a Hindu temple in northeastern Sri Lanka, killing 23 people and injuring 20, residents said today.

The military denied the report.

Residents said the incident occurred on Monday morning when 5,000 people were preparing for a major Hindu festival at the Vattapalai temple in the Mullattivu district.

Sanitation, water

From Page 1 Col 8

Nations Conference on Development and Environment (UNCED) in Brazil, Shetty pointed out.

"It was picked out because of the intrinsic importance of the subject," he said, adding "this report tries to put the development back in UNCED conference — it was leaning towards environment."

Saying that the link between development and environment was the central issue of the Report, Shetty said "both must be viewed as part of the same agenda."

Quoting the Report, he noted that the coming generation presents "unprecedented challenges and opportunities as the world's population grows by 3.7 billion by the year 2030.

The industrial output along with energy use would also triple worldwide and probably increase five-fold in the developing countries by that time.

The growth brings with it the risk of environmental damage while on the other hand, it could also bring better environmental protection and virtual elimination of acute poverty, Shetty pointed out.

Although there are considerable scope, he said, setting priorities poses problems. He suggested that priority should be given by developing countries to the one-third of the world population that has inadequate sanitation and the one billion without safe water.

Priority should also be given to the 1.3 billion people who are exposed to unsafe conditions caused by soot and smoke, the 300 to 700 million women and children who suffer from severe indoor air pollution from cooking fires and to the hundreds of millions of farmers, forest dwellers and indigenous people who rely on the land and whose livelihood depend on good environmental stewardship.

25 injured as hawkers, musclemen clash

By Staff Correspondent

At least 25 people were injured in a clash between the activists of Baitul Mukarram Market Merchants' Association and hawkers in the market area Wednesday morning.

The clash originated from an attack on the hawkers by the activists of the Merchants' Association. Immediately after the attack, the agitated hawkers launched a counter attack on their opponents.

Witnesses said, a sudden attack on the hawkers immediately scattered them and the attackers smashed their goods including fruits on the streets.

Babul, a hawker who sold diaries, notebooks on the sidewalks, said, a group of around 50 people attacked the hawkers with iron-rods and hockey-sticks all on a sudden and damaged their goods.

"They hit me with hockey-sticks and threw away my diaries and note-books on the streets," he added.

An office-bearer of the Merchants' Association said that they had earlier warned the hawkers who encroached the sidewalks hampering smooth running of their business.

Motijheel Police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control. No arrests were made till writing this report.

These are policies which would simultaneously reduce poverty," he said.

Shetty said that it was now a "very auspicious time" to identify and resolve the environmental problems.

He underscored the need for greater support from industrial countries to poverty alleviation projects in the developing countries and also to maintain open trade and resolve environmental problems affecting the global population.

He also underlined the importance of getting the information about the environmental problems out before the public. "Once people find out about the problems they are more forceful about finding solution to them."

B Chowdhury

From Page 1 Col 7

group that he would ask for party permission to quit politics with effect from January 1, next year.

Prof Chowdhury, a leading physician of the country, joined politics when late president Zia assumed power. He was elected to the present parliament on a BNP ticket from Munshiganj-1 constituency.

Prof Chowdhury, according to close associates, believes that he would be more effective in serving national interests if allowed to contest for the UN job.

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Visiting 6-member Asian Development Bank officials called on Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman at his office yesterday.

Women speak as they think

By Staff Correspondent

A piece of bad news for the country's male chauvinists and women oppressors.

Women leading in different fields of national life joined a seminar in the capital Wednesday to give vent to their grievances and assert equal rights.

The speakers at the open subject seminar criticised the male for his lack of understanding, even resented members of their own sex for helping men oppress women and vowed not to lag behind in different fields.

There was also a note of hope when mothers promised to educate their children in respecting womanhood.

Women political leaders, housewives, professionals including lady doctors, teachers, lawyers, even a leader of the women workers and a government intelligence officer spoke at the seminar titled "Ja Mone Ashe Tai" (speak as you think).

Organised by the Narigrantho Mancho, an organisation for equal rights to women, the seminar aspired to "untie knots in the women's thought."

The seminar invited all irrespective of sex. However, the spacious hall of the Jatiya Press Club was mostly occupied by women. Reporters of different dailies and news agencies covering the seminar also came under fire.

BNP Vice-Chairman Farida Rahman MP, novelist Selina Hossain, educationist Shamima Islam, noted singer Fatematu-z-Johra, journalist Mahmuda Chowdhury, women leader Rokeya Rahman, stage performer Mahmuda Anki, physician Hasina Khatun and labour leader Shamsunnahar were among those who spoke at the seminar chaired by eminent educationist Latifa Akhond.

Besides, some of the guests also spoke on various topics like repression on women, child labour, laws relating to women, campus violence, child smuggling, women labour, Golam Azam, gossip, democracy, jealousy and even on topics like coastal afforestation.

Farida Rahman MP, in her speech, resented the politics of Jamaat-e-Islami saying that the party had no political ideology "except one and that is to act against the women."

She accused the party of subjugating women and called upon the country's womenfolk to take to the streets "in the war of women's survival against Jamaat."

"I am once again ready to join the processions on the streets against Jamaat and to face teargas shelling," said the parliamentarian belonging to the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

"There is no scope to think that all the problems of the women will be solved overnight because the Leader of the House or the Opposition chief are women," she added.

Novelist Selina Hossain called for stopping child smuggling and repression on housewives.

"The society cannot give anything when women are denied justice," Hossain said referring to the torture on the floating female population on the streets.

Labour leader Shamsunnahar protested a news report about her by a vernacular daily stating that she was 'naked' while taking part in the pro-hartal activities in the capital Monday.

The leader described the sufferings of the women workers in the country's garments industries and alleged that one woman worker was kicked off the top of a three-storey factory at Motijheel in the capital.

The worker, who was pregnant, lost her child while the local police station did not accept the case against the owner of the industry, she accused.

Bilkis Islam is a housewife.

Bangladesh to recognise Georgia

Bangladesh has decided to accord recognition to the Republic of Georgia which attained independence from the former Soviet Union on April 9, an official source said, reports BSS.

Commenting on the recognition of Georgia, a spokesman of the Foreign Ministry said that Bangladesh had earlier accorded recognition to all other states of former Soviet Union except Georgia as developments there were in an uncertain stage of evolution.

The spokesman expressed happiness over resolution of these problems leading towards greater stability in Georgia. The spokesman further expressed the hope that recognition would lead to development of mutually beneficial relations between Bangladesh and Georgia.

Bangladeshis in Thailand safe

All Bangladeshi nationals living in Thailand are safe and sound, a Foreign Office spokesman said here yesterday, reports BSS.

Quoting an information received from Bangladesh Embassy in Bangkok, the spokesman said the embassy has been in contact with Bangladeshi nationals living in that country.

Hill students condemn attack

By Staff Correspondent

Greater Chittagong Hill Tracts Hill Students' Council Wednesday blamed the Bangladeshi Students' Committee for an armed attack on their conference at Rangamati and setting afire houses belonging to the tribals there.

Sangmanu Marma and Karunamaya Chakma, Vice-President and General Secretary respectively of the Council, in a statement yesterday alleged that over 50 houses were set ablaze at Poravila, Tridib Nagar and Tribel Adam during the attack.

The Council demanded an impartial probe into the incident and compensation to the victims.

Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (BSD) also in a statement demanded punishment to the miscreants for the incident and said it was the attack incited by a certain quarter to disrupt amity in the region.

Samajtantrik Chhatra Front also demanded government's neutrality in digging out the fact on the incident and also condemned the attack.

8 killed as quake jolts Pakistan

PESHAWAR (Pakistan), May 20: At least eight people were killed and 39 injured in an earthquake that jolted Pakistan's northwestern and eastern regions Tuesday, witnesses and official sources said, reports AFP.

The epicentre of the quake, which measured 5.5 on the Richter scale, lay 70 kilometers (43 miles) southwest of Peshawar, the gateway to Afghanistan, the seismological department here said.

The sources said the deaths occurred in Kohat and nearby

Close associate of Obhi freed

A close associate of Obhi was released yesterday from the Dhaka Central Jail after eight months of detention, reports UNB.

Masudur Rahman Masud was arrested on September 16 last year from BUET and accused of killing Dr Shamsul Alam Khan Milon. He, along with 12 others, was acquitted by the court on May 13.

Masud was expelled from Jatiyabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) on November 25 in 1990 for his alleged collaboration with the Ershad regime along with the so-called Niru-Obhi band.

He joined the Awami League-backed Chhatra League in mid-1991.

Chhatra League brought out a procession in the TSC area of Dhaka University after his release.

Zafar Imam's bail prayer rejected

A bail petition of former minister Lt Col (ret'd) Zafar Imam was rejected Wednesday by a High Court Division Bench comprising Justice Anwarul Huq Chowdhury and Justice Mohammad Abdul Karim, reports BSS.

DU direct phone lines muted on request

By Staff Correspondent

The Dhaka University has requested the Telephone and Telegraph (T&T) Board to suspend direct telephone lines of the DU offices in the backdrop of international trunk calls made through illegal connections.

A DU press release said yesterday that the institution had incurred loss of huge amount of money due to abnormal rise in the number of trunk calls through illegal telephone connections over the recent days.

The DU authorities have regretted the inconvenience caused by the suspension of telephone lines, the press release said adding initiatives have meantime been taken for alternative arrangements.

However, the press release said, the PABX telephone lines of the university — 505163-65, and 505180-87 — will remain operative as usual.

Rangamati clash

From Page 1 Col 5

going on, a procession of the SCP protesting Tuesday's assault by a tribal student on Shah Alam, a Chhatra Union leader and SCP activist, was parading the street at about 10:30 am.

Witnesses said police intercepted the processionists apprehending clash with their rivals, but withdrew the barricade after the PCP function had been over.

But the PCP activists allegedly pelted stones on their rivals, triggering the widespread clashes and arson.

As policemen's tear-gas and lathicharge failed to contain the violence, security forces were called in and section 144 was imposed to quell it.

Firefighters from the local unit and Kaptal took about three and half hours till 3:30 pm to tame the fire which gutted more than 40 houses and shops.

"The situation is now under control," DC Aftabuddin Khan said adding section 144 will remain in effect in the town until further order.

Two held for possessing illegal frog legs

From Our Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, May 20: Police today arrested the Manager of Lockpur Sea Food Habibur Rahman Khan and the supervisor of Gemini Sea Food Lutfar Rahman for possessing illegal frog legs in their plants.

Earlier, customs authorities recovered banned frog legs worth about Tk 75 lakh from Gemini Sea Food and Lockpur Sea Food, two fish processing plants here yesterday.

Customs authorities also raided four more sea food processing plants today in the Rupsa industrial belt and recovered huge quantity of frog legs from one plant.

The raided plants are: Bangladesh Sea Food, Haji Malek Ice and Cold Storage Ltd, Asia Sea Food and Shahnewaz Sea Food.

Customs authorities found 28,830 pounds of frog legs at Haji Malek Ice and Cold Storage Ltd. However, customs authorities declared it as stock prior to the ban on frog legs.

Two killed, four hurt in road mishaps

By Staff Correspondent

At least two persons were killed and four others injured in four separate road accidents in the city during the last two days.

Our SSMCH Correspondent reports: At least one person was killed and three others injured in two road accidents at Bangshal early Wednesday.

Milon (22) died on the spot when a truck crushed him on the North-South Road at Bangshal early in the morning.

In another incident at the same spot, Ismail (45), Majid (20) and Saiful (25) were injured.

They were on a sugar and mango loaded truck which bumped against an electric pole at around 2.30 am Wednesday.

They were admitted to the Sir Salmullah Medical College Hospital (SSMCH).

Our DMCH Correspondent reports: Anwar Ali (60) who was run over by a car at Jurain at around 5 pm Tuesday, succumbed to his injuries at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) late Tuesday night.

A police constable, Abdul Motalab, was run over by a speeding truck at Nilkhet area at 3.45 pm yesterday.

He was seriously injured and admitted to the DMCH.

1 killed, 21 hurt as nor'wester hits Pabna

PABNA, May 20: A young man was killed and 21 others were injured in a storm that lashed over the town and its adjoining areas this evening, reports UNB.

The storm lasting half an hour and lashing at about 80 kilometers per hour, also damaged about 300 kutchas houses in six unions of the district.

The Midnight File

Georgian militants kill 52 refugees

MOSCOW, May 20: Georgian militants killed 52 refugees, mainly women, old men and children, in a machine gun attack on a bus in the troubled Georgian region of south Ossetia, the Georgian news agency Iprinda reported. "A journalist with the agency reached by telephone said he had been given the figure by parliament in Vladikavkaz, the main city of north Ossetia, reports AFP."

Nigeria bans tribal, religious groups

LAGOS (Nigeria), May 20: The military government on Wednesday banned all associations based on tribal, ethnic and religious ties after three days of communal riots in northern Nigeria left more than 200 people dead. The restriction comes as this nation of 88.5 million people, black Africa's most populous and powerful, prepares for a long-delayed changeover to civilian rule amid increasing political, social and economic tensions. Legislative elections are scheduled in July and a presidential vote in December, reports AP.

Pipe import

From Page 1 Col 7

also maintains the British standard specification.

The enterprise, with its three plants, has a capacity to produce about 45000 tons of tubes of different categories annually against the country's requirement of 10000 to 15000 tons, thus offering opportunity for export of a substantial quantity.

Established in 1964 at Tongi Industrial Area, the enterprise has gone through expansion and modernisation process thrice over the past 12 years — first in 1980, then in 1981 and again in 1982.

All these were done to supply quality tubes to the country's gas industry, irrigation sector, water supply and such other areas.

But the objective is hardly being achieved now as inferior quality items have flooded the markets since the 1990 CCIE order that has been described by concerned circles 'an abuse of the government's policy of import liberalisation'.

The CCIE order did not mention any standard specification of the items to be imported, resulting in the influx of low quality goods.

As a result, the NTL, producers of international quality pipes, has been facing uneven competition from the importers who are marketing the much inferior quality goods allegedly using the good name of the NTL, popularly known as Adamjee pipe, at a lower rate.

Allegations have it that the importers resort to under invoicing that contributes to the low marketing prices and also causes financial losses to the national exchequer.

"If this goes on, the enterprise will eventually face closure, leaving some 700 to 800 workers, staff and officers jobless," says a senior management official of NTL.

"It is being strangled slowly to death," says the official who believes "still it can be salvaged if the relevant government departments including the Tariff Commission give a little attention to the problem."

"Shouldn't an industrial unit be given minimum protection which has excess capability to produce", the official, requesting anonymity, argues while pleading for tariff protection.

According to a Tariff Commission source, the Commission has recently received a petition from the company's management seeking 'tariff protection'.

The management has also made a plea with the Tariff Commission for the revival of the ban on import of locally produced GI, MS, API pipes.

As an alternative, the management has said, a 150 per cent import duty and a 20 per cent sales tax may be imposed on these items.

The alternative suggestions include a reduction in duties on the steel strips and zinc ingot, being imported by the NTL, to the barest minimum.

According to an estimate, the company's closure will deprive the public exchequer of some Taka 3.30 crore as revenue.

Meanwhile, the company is looking into prospects for exporting its huge quantity of unsold goods, said the Managing Director of NTL.

Newsmen of Times, Dainik Bangla to get arrears

Information Minister Nazmul Huda yesterday assured that specific steps would be taken very soon regarding the formation and reconstitution of the Times-Bangla Trust, reports BSS.

Huda said measures would be taken for payment of arrears salaries and allowances of journalists and employees of the Dainik Bangla and Bangladesh Times within the current month.

Panic over kidnap threat Poor attendance in Vigarunnessa Noon School

By Staff Correspondent

The Attendance of the students in Vigarunnessa Noon School and College was thin Wednesday due to the panic following a threat to kidnap students.

The Private Secretary to the Principal of the institution received a telephone call Tuesday in which a person anonymously threatened to kidnap students.

Following the threat, the Principal informed Rangna police to tighten security in and around the institution.

Talking to The Daily Star Wednesday, the Principal Hamida Ali, said that no untoward incident took place in the institution during last two days.

Tinbigha

From Page 1 Col 7

Siliguri report adds: The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the students wing of the BJP, today urged the Prime Minister, Narasimha Rao, to visit Tinbigha to realise the gravity of the situation that would arise over its leasing out to Bangladesh and send an all-party delegation to the spot prior to his visit.

The central committee vice-president of the ABVP Dr M Rao, told newsmen here today that since 1956 no Prime Minister has visited the spot. Criticising the Congress (I) government at the centre, he said that visit by the Prime Minister was necessary before any decision on the sensitive issue was taken, particularly when the treaty raised questions on sovereignty of the country and constitutional rights of 50,000 Indians in Kuchibari.

The ABVP leader, who heads a five-member delegation of the situation, said that the ABVP would also start mobilising supports well before June 26 around Tinbigha which he termed a 'disputed area' and organise a 'historic rally' there on the day of the proposed leasing out.

1 killed, 21 hurt as nor'wester hits Pabna

PABNA, May 20: A young man was killed and 21 others were injured in a storm that lashed over the town and its adjoining areas this evening, reports UNB.

The storm lasting half an hour and lashing at about 80 kilometers per hour, also damaged about 300 kutchas houses in six unions of the district.