

Russians go to polls today

First real test of Yeltsin's popularity

MOSCOW, Dec 11: Russians will vote Sunday for their first post-Soviet parliament and constitution in a crucial test of the country's growing impatience with President Boris Yeltsin's democratic reforms, reports AP.

Yeltsin's prime minister warned on the eve of the historic election that if the constitution was rejected, Yeltsin might have to declare "direct presidential rule."

The election is the first real test of Yeltsin's popularity since he sent tanks to pound the old, hard-line parliament into submission in early October.

Reformers are worried that extremist candidates, led by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, could win up to 20 per cent of the seats in the new Federal Assembly. That could saddle Yeltsin with a parliament no better than the one he dissolved September 21, when he called the new elections.

Zhirinovskiy's inflammatory remarks, such as a promise to recapture the former Soviet empire, outraged many voters but thrilled others and provided the only drama in an otherwise dull campaign. It was possible to walk through Moscow without glimpsing a single poster, label pin or bumper sticker.

To mollify voters angered by 900 per cent inflation this year,

Yeltsin nearly doubled most government pensions on Saturday. He also raised benefits for families with children, single mothers, orphans and children of army draftees.

Polls open at 8 am Sunday and close at 10 pm. Because Russia stretches across many time zones, voting will begin at 2000 GMT Saturday in the Russian Far East and finish at 2000 GMT Sunday in Kaliningrad. Results are not expected until Monday.

In Moscow on Saturday, there was more weariness than excitement in the air, and many people interviewed on the street said they weren't planning to vote.

Benazir asks India to be flexible over Kashmir

ANKARA, Dec 11: Pakistan's Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto urged India today to be flexible over the disputed region of Jammu and Kashmir when Indian and Pakistani foreign ministers meet for talks next month, reports Reuters.

"The foreign secretary talks have not come easily and now that they have come about, it is important that they should not be lost through obduracy," Bhutto told a news conference after ending the official part of her visit to Turkey.



African National Congress President Nelson Mandela (left) and South African President Frederik de Klerk smile after receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, Norway Friday. — AFP photo

Experts suggest integrated farming system for Bangladesh

International agri-experts yesterday suggested introduction of integrated farming systems with new approaches to multiply benefits and increase productivity by injecting ever more inputs into agriculture, reports UNB.

The suggestion came at the opening function of a four-day Twelfth Session of the FAO Regional Commission of Farm Management for Asia and the Far East at the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) auditorium.

Inaugurating the session, Agriculture Minister M Majid-ul-Haq said future agricultural development strategies should be based on integrated farming systems for multiple benefits to the small farmers.

"Farm management in a sustainable manner will need multi-pronged actions with adequate support of financial resources, human expertise and environmentally sound technology on national, regional and global perspective," he said.

Lack of expertise management is the main weakness of the developing countries like Bangladesh, he said. "We have to explore new areas and assess our problems to overcome stagnation in farm management. Crop production is inter-related and interdependent upon other components of farm."

The Agriculture Minister said crop yields in the region ranged from as low as 1 ton per hectare to as high as 6 ton per hectare, with many countries averaging below 2.5 ton per hectare.

He said Asian and Far Eastern countries would have to achieve an increase in the average food crop yield to the tune of 3.2 ton per hectare in the year 2010 in order to maintain

the present level of per capita food demand.

Bangladesh attained an average growth rate of 1.5 per cent in farm sector during 1961-85 against 5 per cent in some countries like Korea, Malaysia and China, he said with a note of caution that "if many Asian countries, including Bangladesh, fail to bring a dramatic change in growth rate, the scourge of hunger and malnutrition may deepen further."

About 50 agricultural experts from Bhutan, China, India, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, UK Vietnam and host Bangladesh are attending the regional session. The Ministry of Agriculture and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) have jointly sponsored the session.

Agriculture Secretary ANM Eusuf, FAO Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific AZM Obaidullah Khan, Director of AGS, FAO, Rome, G Dressrusse and Executive Vice-Chairman of BARC Dr MSU Chowdhury also spoke at the inaugural session.

FAO Representative Obaidullah Khan said the Asia and Pacific region seems to have reached or surpassed the safe limits for horizontal expansion of agricultural production.

The challenge of sustainably increasing agricultural productivity is particularly difficult in Asia where cropping intensities are already the highest in the developing world. The International Rice Research Institute has cautioned there is evidence rice yields slipping backwards, he said.

Moreover, he added, the problem of land scarcity is compounded by land degradation, of which soil erosion by water and salinisation are the major agents — about 315 million hectares, or half the total global water-eroded lands, are in Asia.

Deserts are creeping into the region at the rate of one million hectares per year. "We can no longer take water 'rolling from mountain top with soft inland murmur' for granted. Shortages are crippling production in Northeastern Thailand. And 70 per cent of the farms in the sub-continent are rainfed, he said.

Khan, a former Agriculture Minister of Bangladesh, said

JEC talks

From Page 1 Col 8 country and one of the two most important ministers in Rao's cabinet, will reportedly be armed with the authority to take up with Bangladesh leadership issues other than economic in an attempt to suggest their acceptable solutions.

He is expected to have the required mandate to discuss with Dhaka all those problems which have been bedeviling Indo-Bangla relationship for the past two decades or so.

During his stay in Bangladesh capital, Pranab Mukherjee, the source said, might go for in-depth study of the impact of Indian initiatives which would encourage Bangladesh government to make reciprocal gesture towards India and thereby open up a new vista of cordial cooperation in all fields between the two countries.

Judged, from the points of view stated above, Pranab Mukherjee's forthcoming visit to Dhaka is of utmost importance in as much as it is expected to prepare the ground for Prime Ministers Rao's impending trip to Bangladesh early next year.

Pranab Mukherjee's recommendations on Bangladesh-India relations and on ways to improve it are certain to carry a lot of weight with Prime Minister Rao who after his successful handling of Hazratbal crisis and considerable success of his party in the recent bye-elections in Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Mizoram would feel confident to mend fences with India's close neighbour like Bangladesh, the source said.

sustainability should not be limited to the physical and the material aspects of ecological integrity. It must be political empowerment, social justice and equity and the richness of cultural diversity. It must recognize human dignity, human potential and solidarity.

Agriculture Secretary ANM Eusuf said crop varieties resistant to severe diseases and pests need to be developed for economy of the farmers' level as well as to address the environmental pollution linked with poisonous pesticides in Bangladesh.

About 6 per cent land uses pesticide and only 4 per cent land uses certified seed in Bangladesh, he said, adding injudicious use of fertilizer is rampant in the country.

4 die in mishaps in & around city

By DMCH Correspondent Four persons were killed, two reportedly committed suicide and another three were injured in separate incidents in and outside the city during the last two days.

A bus conductor was killed when a speeding bus ran over him at Saidabad in the city Saturday morning.

In another road accident, a pedestrian Mohammad Amir Uddin, 45, died on the spot when a speeding truck hits him at Dhamrai Friday night.

A youngman Mohammad Mosharrif Hossain, 18, was killed when a train ran over him at Gopibagh rail crossing in the city Friday evening.

Meanwhile, police recovered the body of a male servant Saiful, 18, from Harmath Ghosh Road at Lalbagh Saturday afternoon.

Police suspect Saiful died after falling from the roof of a two storied house Friday night.

A housewife reportedly committed suicide at her house 32, Merul Badda, Gulshan Friday night.

The victim was identified as Shirin, 45, wife of Mohammed Nazari Ali.

Professionals

From Page 1 Col 8 successfully all over the country. Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mia Saturday morning visited the Purta Bhaban and went round different sections.

Our Dhaka Medical College Hospital correspondent reported that no patient was admitted Saturday because the doctors had gone on 'leave'.

Talking to The Daily Star, Prokrichi leaders expressed their determination to continue their agitation.

"We will not bow to any kind of intimidation," commented one leader. However, no step has yet been taken for ensuring the early return of the officials gone on leave.

Secretary of the Central Action Council of the Prokrichi, Javed Iqbal said that 90 per cent of the professionals have joined their mass leave programme.

When asked if any contact had been made from the government side to resolve the problem, he said, "We have not yet received any offer for talks but hope that, for the greater national interest, the government will give a serious thought about our demands and take positive steps."

Meanwhile, a statement of the BCS General Education Association yesterday said that it had no link with the on-going agitation of the professionals.

Secretary General of the Association Siddiqui Rahman said that if the 12,000 teachers working in 249 government colleges remained united then the cadre's demands could be met through discussions with the government or through agitation.

Besides, the struggle of the government officials could not be similar to those of the engineers and doctors, the statement pointed out.

128 canals to be excavated this fiscal

The National Committee on Canal Digging Programme has decided to undertake a programme of excavation or re-excavation of canals in the current year, keeping in view the benefits of the people in terms of increased agricultural and fish production and tree plantation, reports BSS.

The decision was taken at this year's first meeting of the committee held at the International Conference Centre (ICC) yesterday with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in the chair.

It was decided at the meeting that a total of 128 canals would be excavated or re-excavated in the year 1993-94 and 35 thousand metric tons of wheat had been allocated for this purpose.

The meeting decided that 75 per cent of the digging programme would be carried out under the Food for Work Programme while the rest 25 per cent would be on voluntary basis.

The meeting further decided that awards would be given for the successful canal digging.

SAF Games

From Page 1 Col 8 The meeting reviewed the progress and overall preparations of the SAF Games.

The meeting was also informed that all preparations had already been taken to successfully hold the Games.

Farakka

From Page 1 Col 5 of Orissa.

An earlier case study by Swain, on the environmental destruction caused by the Farakka barrage and the subsequent acute social conflict, surmised that the impact of the barrage on the country's agricultural production, particularly during the dry season, has been "calamitous".

The diversion of the Ganges flow in the upstream had also reduced Bangladesh's capacity to irrigate its own land and at the same time worked against the planning of non-irrigated crops which depend upon the residual moisture of the soil, that study found.

The study also revealed that the Farakka barrage has:

- * delayed planting of crops and shortened the growing season;
- * limited Bangladesh's irrigation capacity to only 23 per cent of the total arable land;
- * caused salinity intrusion up to 460 kilometres inside the country;
- * handicapped the industrial and domestic fresh water supply in the Khulna region;
- * damaged the Khulna Newspaper Mills and the thermal power station at Goalpara;
- * threatened the existence of the Sundarbans — the world's largest littoral deltaic forest, with an estimated timber loss worth US dollar 20 million annually;
- * sharply reduced capture fisheries; and
- * shrunk the country's waterways to 5,000 km from the pre-Farakka 25,000 km of navigable inland water routes.

The Midnight File

US troops pullout from Somalia

WASHINGTON, Dec 11: A battalion of US Army soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division is expected to begin heading home this week from Somalia, the first wave of a lengthy troop pullout that will extend through March. About 1,000 soldiers from the Fort Drum, NY, base — which was among the first to send troops into the starving nation last year — are expected to be among the first flying home at the end of the week, said military officials who spoke on condition of anonymity, reports AP.

Hekmatyar transfers state powers to Amin Waqad

ISLAMABAD, Dec 11: Afghanistan's hardline Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar has transferred his state powers to his deputy in the Hezb-i-Islami party, Qazi Amin Waqad, the official Kabul radio reported today. President Burhanuddin Rabbani had approved Hekmatyar's action, the radio said. It was not immediately clear whether Hekmatyar had resigned from the post he took up this year or had handed over powers temporarily, reports Reuters.

MPs suggestions

From Page 1 Col 5 They suggested that measures be taken to discourage women to conceive before the age of 20 and after the age of 30 years and fix the minimum marriage age at 20 for women and 25 for men.

The Jatiya Sangsad members felt that proper education on family planning was the most effective means to control population and called for introducing family planning education in school and college curricula. In order to ensure a motivational, coordinating and supervisory role of the MPs in population control activities, the conference stressed the need for taking necessary legal steps immediately.

The conference inaugurated by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in the morning was divided into three sessions. Presided over by the Minister for Health and Family Welfare, the concluding session was attended by Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina as the chief guest.

The intermediate session was chaired by Deputy Leader of the House Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury while Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdus Samad Azad was present as the co-chairman.

Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury said population problem was one of those national issues for which the nation need to come to a consensus irrespective of political affiliation.

Prof Chowdhury said that women were the worst victims of high birth rate and in view of the present social circumstances they need to play the pioneering role in family planning activities.

He, however, strongly emphasised involving people of all sections in family planning activities to make it a social movement.

Kamal Ibne Yusuf felt that the conference would endeavour to integrate the efforts of all to keep the population under control and help frame a meaningful family planning policy for the country.

The Family Planning Minister said through adopting multidimensional approaches some success had been achieved in population control, but still we have to go far away.

Yusuf emphasised on human resource development, joint efforts of government and NGOs and expansion of male FP methods.

Courier Editor, 2 others get bail

The Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court yesterday granted bail to the Editor, Assistant Editor and a contributor of weekly Dhaka Courier who had been summoned by the court in connection with a defamatory suit, reports UNB.

Enayetullah Khan, Editor of the Courier, Sabir Mostafa, who was Assistant Editor of the weekly and M A Faisal, one of its contributors, were granted bail when they appeared before the Court of Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Md Nazul Islam.

The three journalists were sued in a case filed by Additional Attorney General Abdul Wadud Khandkar for publishing a news item in Dhaka Courier on September 17 which, the complainant alleged, was defamatory to him.

Advocate Abdul Awal, assisted by Advocate A B M Shajahan Kabir appeared for the defendants.

PM: Check population

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pleasure and pain. You have also a political commitment to upgrade their quality of life," the Prime Minister exhorted the MPs.

The pace of the development process and population control activities have to be geared up simultaneously, Begum Zia said and called upon the MPs to create awareness about the dangers of a population explosion and motivate the people to adopt small families.

She recalled that late President Ziaur Rahman had identified the population size as the number one problem of the country and formulated a national population policy for the first time.

Begum Zia mentioned that the recent UN report on population acclaimed the success achieved by Bangladesh in population related programmes.

But she warned against making the country's population programmes too much dependent on foreign aid. "This dependency can't augur well for the country in the long run. Ways have to be devised for transforming this programme into a self-reliant one," the Prime Minister said.

Begum Zia said special care will have to be taken to further upgrade the quality of services and efficiency of field workers and stressed the need for strict imposition of accountability.

She, however, cautioned that although the rate of growth has declined there was no scope for complacency since the total population was increasing unabated. "This situation is incompatible with our cherished goal of economic progress."

Involve MPs: Hasina

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the need for creating a favourable atmosphere for a social change and development.

Involvement of the population with human resource development as well as economic development is a precondition for success, she said, adding that piecemeal efforts might bring temporary success but would not help change the situation substantially.

The Awami League chief said despite various programmes undertaken by the government, the population growth rate remained high, and "We cannot expect the present rate to reduce remarkably in the coming years."

There were many targets set by the past regimes of reducing the population growth, but those targets were not achieved, she said. In support of her contention, she said 60 per cent of the couples in the country still remained outside the family planning programme.

Giving statistics, the Awami League chief said at present there are 2.20 crore women in the country capable of bearing child. This figure is likely to grow to 3.10 crore by 2005.

"We must bring down the net productivity rate to 1 per cent by 2005 from the present 2.3 per cent," Hasina said. This target cannot be achieved only by the bureaucracy, motivation is imperative to reach the target, apart from administrative efforts.

China and the Java island of Indonesia where booming populations had been turned into productive forces, Hasina said each and everyone in society should join the movement for checking the population boom.

The Prime Minister pointed out that the global population had already exceeded 5.5 billion and a vast majority of that huge populace live in the developing countries, thus causing hindrance to development efforts.

"While we are talking right now about the population problem, five new babies are being born each minute in the country. We have to ensure a habitable, pleasant and promising future for our children," the Prime Minister reminded.

Referring to her government's efforts to contain the population, Begum Zia said a permanent infrastructure for providing maternal and child health care services throughout the country has been established.

Bangladesh's present population growth rate is about 2.03 per cent, according to a Health Ministry figure. The total population of the country is now 116 million.

The inaugural function of the conference was chaired by Health and Family Welfare Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf and addressed by Deputy Health Minister Sirajul Huq and DG Family Planning A K M Rafiquzzaman.

Indian troops kill 29 Kashmiri militants

SRINAGAR, Dec 11: Indian soldiers in Kashmir shot and killed 29 Muslim separatist guerrillas, including 16 Pakistani nationals, who tried to sneak into India Saturday, police said, reports AP.

"If we fail to contain the population growth, not only will the extent of poverty expand, also the process of development will be hampered."

Making the family planning programme a success also presupposes "political will and commitment, bold leadership, proper planning and favourable atmosphere," she said.

Hasina cautioned, poverty and social unrest would prevail, resulting in increases in the food deficit and the number of educated unemployed people.

The AL leader said her party had given priority to education and health for the common people. Productivity would increase through education and efficiency that would also help increase the earning of workers and farmers as well as reduce the population growth. Women's education is also an important factor for a planned family, she said.

Hasina expressed concern at the poor performance of the present infrastructure for health and family planning. People are not getting adequate services from the workers employed in the concerned institutions, she said.

Monitoring system at the field level is very weak as, she said, high officials do not want to go to oversee the execution of the programmes. Steps should be taken for proper maintenance of family planning centres at the thana and village levels and for improving their services.

Health Minister Kamal Ibne Yusuf presided over the session. Suranjit Sengupta, MP, Dr A K M Qamruzzaman, MP, and Director of USAID Richard M Brown also spoke at the concluding session.