

Govt gives top priority to afforestation

By Staff Correspondent

Environment and Forests Minister Akbar Hossain said yesterday that the government would launch a social movement to protect the country's ecology by giving top priority to afforestation.

The implementation of the afforestation programmes initiated by the government was indispensable for protecting the environment, meeting the socio-economic needs and restoring the denuded forest resources. He told a press conference at the ministry's conference room at the Secretariat in the capital.

The minister also announced the names of the organisations and individuals selected for the Prime Minister's National Award 1992 for tree plantation.

The awards are being given as incentives to increase the people's interest in social forestry and our overall aim is also the alleviation of poverty," he said.

Akbar Hossain informed the newsmen that the government was actively considering introducing "share cropping" in afforestation to increase the forest resources.

Under the plan, the land along public roads, railway tracks and embankments would be leased out to the people for planting and nurturing trees. The local government bodies would make contracts with the people and share the fruits and trees after a certain period of time, Hossain said.

The present forest area accounts for 11 per cent of the country's total land, the Environment and Forests Minister said, adding that it would be raised to 18 per cent over the next five years.

The Prime Minister's National Awards 1992 for tree plantation were given in nine fields. These are: Primary school/madrasah, high school/madrasah, college and university, religious institutions, union parishad, pourasava and poura corporations, ministry/division (sector corporations, defence and law enforcing

agencies), clubs and NGOs and individuals and nurseries.

The first prize carries Taka 5000, the second prize Taka 4000 and the third prize Taka 3000.

The recipients of the awards are:

Category I: Bata-2 Government Primary School, Dohar, Dhaka received the first prize; Deshi Bi Number-1 Primary School, Jaldhaka at Nilphamari, the second prize; and the Singhara Government Primary School the third prize.

Category II: The Malikhali Medium School, Pirojpur, first prize; the Pomra High School, Chittagong, the second prize; and the Choigharia A B S Senior Madrasah the third prize.

Category III: The Bangladesh Agriculture University, Mymensingh — 1st, Nazirhat College, Chittagong — 2nd and the Government Fazilatunnessa Girls' College, Bhola — 3rd.

Category IV: Islamic Mission, Sonargaon, Narayanganj — 1st; Ramkrishna Ashram, Anowara, Chittagong — 2nd and the Islamic Complex, Dumuria in Chittagong — 3rd.

Category V: Deara Union Parishad in Jessore Sadar Thana — 1st, Alokdia Union Parishad at Madhupur, Tangail — 2nd; and Dhamti (South) Union Parishad, Comilla-3rd.

Category VI: The Dhaka City Corporation — 1st; the Rajshahi City Corporation — 2nd and Jhenidah Pourasava — 3rd.

Category VII: the Barind Multipurpose Development Authorities, Naogaon — 1st; Thana Administration, Kachua, Bagerhat — 2nd; and Bangladesh Rifles, Mirpur, Kushtia — 3rd.

Category VIII: RDRS, Panchargarh — 1st; Jatiya Bandhujan Parishad, Bhola-2nd; and Mankichhari Agro-Industries Limited, Khagrachhari — 3rd.

Category IX: M Makbul Hossain, Kotwali, Dinajpur-1st; Sheikh Manirul Islam, Buriarbhanga, Fultala Thana, Khulna — 2nd; and Islam Nursery, Rajbari — 3rd.

Seminar on foreign exchange

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Elaborating, he added that the government is encouraging the study in the country while the affluent families, who live most of the time abroad, would transfer the capital in the name of family expenses.

The Bangladesh Bank Governor, however, hinted that the limited restriction on education, medical and travel expenses might be withdrawn.

About the lending rate band, he said it is the government's social responsibility to protect the interest of small depositors like the pensioners and widows who live on the income of their small deposits.

President of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) Latifur Rahman said rates setting in the exchange market is largely controlled or managed.

He said the banks have been allowed the freedom of setting their own buying and selling rates but, in practice, they closely tag the rates set by Sonali Bank.

Stressing the need for removing restriction on capital account, the MCCI President said foreign exchange needs to be totally deregulated to make the taka a truly acceptable currency and thereby ensure the confidence of foreign investors.

A free floating exchange rate can be of immense help in de-

veloping outward orientation through competitive economy, he said and urged to carry on the reforms programmes.

"We need to take exchange rate reform to its logical conclusion so as to bring about dynamism in the manufacturing sector."

On interest rate reforms, Latifur Rahman said introduction of flexible rates has been on the right direction — towards a more flexible and market-driven financial system.

The MCCI President said the banks should be directed to lend more on the merit of a project or business rather than on the basis of collaterals to encourage young and new entrepreneurs.

Former Deputy Prime Minister Jamaluddin Ahmed stressed the need for creating an investment-friendly environment to attract foreign investment into the country.

Jamaluddin regretted that the country's market has been turned into a market of foreign goods taking advantage of the weakness of the local manufacturing sector.

ICAB President AM Halim Gaznavi said that with the adoption of free market economy, the convertibility of taka is a prime necessity for international transactions in the fields of trade, industry and commerce.

Nationalists leading

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living standards, for many Russians.

"The continuation of this course is harmful. But I have a gut feeling the course will be adjusted," Zyuganov said.



V. Zyuganov

He also said the Communists were prepared for "cooperation with those, who are ready to work for peace and progress."

While criticizing pro-reform groups as "anti-people" for harsh economic reforms, Zyuganov on Monday warned that the Liberal Democrat's ambitions of restoring the Rus-

sian empire threatened peace.

"Such intentions... can only further destabilize the situation in the country," he said.

Ukraine and the Baltic states, recently independent after the demise of the Soviet Union, were following the parliamentary race with concern. The republics see Russian nationalism as a major threat.

The pro-Yeltsin reform groups appealed to other parties to back them in a coalition to stop Zhirnovsky.

"We think the anti-fascist coalition could cooperate with everyone who would cooperate with us, including the Communists — if they want," said Economics Minister Yegor Gaidar, leader of Russia's Choice.

Rockslide kills 15 in Egypt

CAIRO, Egypt, Dec 14: A mountainside collapsed and sent boulders as big as houses crashing into a poor Cairo neighbourhood Tuesday, killing at least 15 people. Police said the death toll could rise to 50, reports AP.

Dozens were trapped under the rockslide, which occurred about dawn (0400 GMT) and caught many women and children still sleeping.

Public Enterprises Minister Yusuf Nor said he had directed the Urban Development Authority (UDA) to review all ongoing high rise projects as well as those being planned in the wake of Malaysia's worst building disaster.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia (top) and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina (bottom) laying wreaths at the Martyred Intellectuals' Memorial at Mirpur in the city yesterday.

Bangla Academy publishes 6th vol of 'Smriti 71'

By DU Correspondent

The Bangla Academy has published the sixth volume of the commemorative series 'Smriti 71' yesterday in memory of the intellectuals martyred between Dec 9 and 14, 1971.

A discussion meeting was held on the occasion at the academy's Battala yesterday afternoon.

The discussion was participated by Rashid Haider, Dr. Muhammed Hannan, Bashir Helal and Santosh Gupta with the Director General of the academy Professor Muhammed Harun-ur-Rashid in the chair. Professor A R Mullick attended as chief guest.

Professor Mullick in his speech, said that it was our duty to engage ourselves in materialising the dreams of the martyrs.

Professor Harun-ur-Rashid said that we must remember that the persons who were trying to distort the history of the Liberation War would fail to achieve their goal.

Rashid Haider has edited the sixth part of the 'Smriti 71' series.

Five city roads

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memory of the martyred intellectuals who had made supreme sacrifices during the Liberation War, Begum Zia said. More roads would be named after the martyred intellectuals. In phases, she added in a brief statement.

The five roads are: Shaheed Munier Chowdhury Sarak — from the TSC to the Bakshi Bazar Road crossing; Shaheed Shahittik Sangbadik Shahidullah Kaiser Sarak — from the Doyel Chatter to Chankharpur Road; Shaheed Altaf Mahmud Sarak — from the Doyel Chatter to the Dhaka Medical Emergency Gate; Shaheed Dr Faez Rabbi Sarak — from Fulbaria to Hardeo Glass Factory; and Shaheed Zahir Raihan Sarak — from the Bakshi Bazar crossing to the Fulbaria crossing.

Four of the intellectuals were killed towards the end of the Liberation War. Movie-maker Zahir Raihan went missing on Dec 31, 1971 while searching for his brother Shahidullah Kaiser at Mirpur.

Mayor of Dhaka City Corporation Mirza Abbas installed the memorial plaques on these roads in the afternoon.

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Malaysia may ban high-rise bldgs on hillsides

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 14: Malaysian authorities were today moving towards banning high-rise buildings on hillsides after a 12-storey luxury block collapsed Saturday following a landslide, burying some 50 people, reports AP.

Public Enterprises Minister Yusuf Nor said he had directed the Urban Development Authority (UDA) to review all ongoing high rise projects as well as those being planned in the wake of Malaysia's worst building disaster.

Scholarship programme for girls to be expanded

Star Report

In a bid to promote female education in the country the government is planning to expand its scholarship programme for the school-going girl students.

The special scholarship programme for the girl students will be introduced in 282 more thanas in addition to the existing programme in 178 thanas, sources said.

The European Community (EC) and the Danish donor agency Danida have already expressed their willingness to assist in the programme.

The existing scholarship programme is being financed by the Norwegian donor agency Norad, the IDA and the Asian Development Bank.

The education programme for school girls is now being viewed as the most urgent issue because of the country's unbalanced education. The ratio of male and female literacy is estimated to be 42:19. This reflects that the female half of the population is at a very disadvantageous position regarding education. On the other hand, the country's literacy rate is estimated to be around 30 per cent.

The new initiative to promote female education taken by both the donors and the government, now coincides with the theme of the coming 'Education For All' summit of nine highly populated developing countries — Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan, scheduled to begin in New Delhi.

However, reports from Delhi say seven out of the nine heads of state or government are unlikely to attend the summit.

One of the issues emphasised in the ministerial-level meeting held in the Indian capital ahead of the proposed summit was the need to divert more resources for female education in order to create an educated future generation as well as to check the population boom.

"Educating the female is the best effective way of educating the nation", an official of a donor agency told The Daily Star. "The females are often neglected, especially on economic grounds. That is why we have taken special scholarship programmes for the girl students," he added.

The government has taken up a massive programme to construct and repair roads under a Tk 438 crore road improvement and overlay project, reports UNB.

An official announcement said yesterday the project, assisted by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), is scheduled to go into operation by September next year and to be completed in four years.

The Board of Directors of ADB approved the proposal for providing Bangladesh about Tk 257 crore, equivalent to 68 million US dollars, on December 9 as part of the project cost.

The rest of the project cost, about Tk 180 crore, will be borne by the government. The loan is repayable in 30 years including a grace period of 10 years.

In all, 1,020 kilometres of roads and highways have been earmarked for improvement, development, repair and overlay works on the eastern side of the Jamuna.

The project is also inclusive of improvement of 70 kilometre-long Lohagara-Ramu part of the Chittagong-Cox's Bazar road, overlay works of 350 km priority-identified roads in the districts of greater Noakhali, Chittagong, Comilla, Dhaka, Tangail, Chittagong Hill Tracts and Mymensingh, silicoat works on 500 km and repairing of about 100 km road in greater Noakhali and Comilla.



A recent photograph of Khun Sa (right), the 59-year-old Myanmar drug warlord, at his Ho Mong camp in north eastern Myanmar's Shan State, which has declared its independence from Yangon. (Story on Page 5) - AFP photo

Homage

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sympathisers, raided the houses of the leading intellectuals. Fortunately many were not at home.

During their raids, the Al-Badr and Al Shams goons looted and also tortured the inmates of the houses, including women.

Among the brutally murdered intellectuals, including university teachers, physicians, engineers, journalists, lawyers and other prominent personalities, were Prof Munir Chowdhury, Prof Mofazzal Haider Chowdhury, Altaf Mahmud, Shahidullah Kaiser, Prof Anwar Pasha, Prof Giasuddin Ahmed, Dr A N M Muniruzzaman, Syed Nazmul Huq, Dr Alim Chowdhury, Dr Faez Rabbi, Dr Sirajul Haq Khan, Abdul Mukhtar, Dr Abul Khayer, Dr Fazlur Rahman, Dr Shaadat Mahe, Ataur Rahman Khadim, Anuddaipaayan Banerjee, Rashedul Hasan, S Banerjee, Sharafat Ali, Dr Abdul Karim, Dr Mostafa Muhammad Sadek, Abul-Bashar, Dr Md Murtaza, Dr Md Shafiq, Sirajuddin Hossain, Nazimuddin Ahmed, Khadraker Abu Taleb, Abul-Kalam Azad and Naton Chandra Singha.

Thousands of people from all walks of life thronged from early morning yesterday at the Mirpur Memorial for Martyred Intellectuals and Rayer Bazar — the two killing fields in the city.

President Abdur Rahman Biswas was the first to place a wreath at the Mirpur memorial.

Prime Minister and BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia, accompanied by her cabinet colleagues and central leaders of her party, followed the President at 6:45 am.

Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina along with the central leaders of the AL placed wreaths at the mausoleum at 8:50 am.

The leaders and workers of different political parties including the CPB, Gano Forum, Nap (Mozaffar), Janata Dal, Gano Azadi League, Jatiyatabadi Bastuhara Dal, Chhatra Union, Chhatra League, Chhatra Maitree, BSD, Nirmul Committee, Bangabandhu Parishad, Zia Sangskritik Sangathan, Mukti-joddha Sangsad, Jatiya Sramik Dal, Bangabandhu Praakashali Parishad, DUCSU, Ganatantrik Biplabi Jute and others also placed wreaths.

Different socio-cultural organisations and personalities including the Dhaka University VC Prof Emajuddin Ahmed, Jahangirnagar University VC Prof Md Abul Hossain, Bangla Academy, Shilpakala Academy, the Dhaka University Teachers' Association, the Jahangirnagar University Teachers' Association, BUET VC Dr Mohammad Shahjahan, BIDS, all employees' associations of Dhaka University, Shishu Academy also paid their homage to the martyred intellectuals.

The Leo Club of Gulshan, Bashundhara, Muktaadhara, Greater City and the Lions Club of Dhaka Muktaadhara arranged a blood donation programme near the memorial.

The Zia Sangskritik Sangathan organised an open discussion programme.

The BNP and the AL set up stages at the entry point to the memorial. The AL chief Sheikh Hasina and other leaders addressed the visitors in the morning.

Hasina said, "The governments after 1975 rehabilitated in politics the anti-Liberation forces who are now engaged in distorting the history of the Liberation War."

"Unfortunately, for that reason, the new generation does not know the history of the war. They do not know that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman led the war," she said.

"The Bangabandhu laid the foundation stone of the Mirpur Memorial in 1972. Now, they have removed his name from the stone," she pointed out, "Because he fought for the freedom of Bangladesh and created Bangladesh."

She urged the people to fight fundamentalism and the anti-democratic forces and to unite for peace and progress of the country.

Dhaka University, which lost many of its teachers on this day in '71, drew up a day-long programme. In the morning the teachers, students and employees brought out a silent procession from the "Aparajeya Bangla" to the mass grave site of the Jagannath Hall. The processionists placed wreaths at the site of the killing of three teachers of the university.

The BNP hoisted the party and black flags on its offices all over the country. A discussion meeting was held at the Ramna Park in the evening, organised by the JASAS.

The AL hoisted the national party and black flags on the party office. The party leaders and workers also placed wreaths before the portrait of the Bangabandhu at Dhanmondi Road Number 32.

The Bangla Academy, Shilpakala Academy, Shishu Academy, Nazrul Institute and Islamic Foundation also observed the day through elaborate programmes.

The Midnight File

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Indian MPs seek compromise between govt, BJP

NEW DELHI, Dec 14: Indian parliamentarians sought a compromise today between the government and the main Hindu opposition party after the party's members paralysed the House over the arrest of their leaders. The right-wing Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) stopped proceedings in the Lok Sabha (lower house), demanding the release of eight jailed colleagues, including its president, Lal Krishan Advani, reports Reuters.

Success of LDP in Russian polls alarming: Hurd

LONDON, Dec 14: British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd said today the success of ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirnovsky's party in Russian general elections was "alarming". In a radio interview, he said that Zhirnovsky's Liberal Democratic Party had taken advantage of the "humiliating" feeling of many Russians at the collapse of the Soviet empire, reports AFP.

Autopsy tests say Gen. Asif Nawaz died of heart attack

ISLAMABAD, Dec 14: General Asif Nawaz, the late Army chief, died of a heart attack, not arsenic poisoning as relatives had alleged, international forensic investigators concluded in a report released Monday, reports AP.

Specialists from the United States, France and Britain dismissed accusations by Nawaz's wife that the 55-year-old man had been deliberately poisoned.

Nawaz dropped dead last January after a morning jog. Doctors said that he had suffered a heart attack. But the general's widow, Nuzhat Nawaz, said she had proof her husband was poisoned with arsenic.

She hinted that former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was behind her husband's death.

Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto ordered an investigation, saying she too believed he had been killed.

Rabin to respect Apr 13 deadline, hopes Arafat

STASBOURG, France, Dec 14: PLO leader Yasser Arafat said today the credibility of the Middle East peace process would be in doubt if Israel did not meet an April 13 deadline to complete its withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho, reports Reuters.

"The 13th of April is not enough?" A surprised Arafat replied to journalists when asked about reports that Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was backing away from the deadline.

Speaking on the productivity of the labour forces, she said steps should be taken to raise it to help accelerate rural uplift.

Begum Zia stated that Bangladesh has adopted a two-pronged strategy to fight poverty. The first is to create employment opportunity for the rural people and the second, to provide basic social services to the rural masses.

Lauding the role of CIRDAP in alleviating poverty, she appreciated the CIRDAP project aimed at monitoring the effects of structural adjustment on poverty in Bangladesh.

She also assured Bangladesh's continued support to the activities of the CIRDAP.

Begum Zia later laid the foundation stone of the CIRDAP's permanent headquarters at Champel Bhaban in the city. The government has sanctioned Tk 22.3 million for the construction of the office complex.

Home Secretary Azimuddin Ahmed, Law Secretary Mirza Asaduzzaman Al Faruque, Additional Secretary of Law, Additional Secretary of Home, Inspector General of Prison and other high officials of concerned ministries were present in the meeting.

Search for oil
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and guarantee the full repatriation of profits, among other facilities.

Meanwhile, a representative of an American company — Occidental International E and P — which signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Bangladesh in mid-September last, has arrived in the capital.

The company is presently negotiating with Petrobangla.

According to sources, a representative of a renowned French company — Total Exploration Production — which submitted proposals to Petrobangla last month, is coming to the capital on December 18 for negotiations.

Four other companies submitted their proposals to Petrobangla last month. These are: Cairn Engineering Pvt Ltd Co of Scotland, McKenzie International of the USA, United Meridian International Corp of the USA and Steller Oil and Gas (BVI) Ltd of England.

Report on admn
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The committee reviewed the UNDP report on "Public Administration sector study in Bangladesh" prepared on the basis of the experience of the four secretaries' visit to the United Kingdom, the USAID survey on "public administration efficiency" and other studies for scrutinising proposals of the different cadre services and evolving suitable recommendations.

Presided over by the convener of the committee Communications Minister Oll Ahmed, the meeting was attended by Post and Telecommunications Minister Tariqul Islam, Commerce Minister M Shamsul Islam, Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam Miah, Labour Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Education Minister Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar and State Minister for Establishment Barrister Aminul Hoq.

The meeting was adjourned after in-depth discussion on its working pattern, said an official handout.

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