

Seminar on water in city

'Farakka no longer a bilateral issue'

Environment and Forest Minister Akbar Hossain yesterday urged the international bodies to consider the Farakka problem as a global issue, reports UNB.

"This is no longer a bilateral issue, it has become a global issue for its adverse impact on the total environment," he said while addressing the inaugural session of a seminar here yesterday morning.

The seminar on "Challenges in Water and Sanitation" at the SPARSO Building was organised by the NGO Forum for Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation in observance of the "World Day for Water".

State Minister for Social Welfare, Fazlur Rahman, UNICEF Representative Rolf C. Carriere, acting Representative of WHO Prof Myo Thew, Deputy Resident Representative of UNDP Michael Constable and DPHE Chief Engineer Aminuddin Ahmed also addressed the inaugural session. Proshika MUK Executive Director Dr Kazi Faruque Ahmed presided.

The Environment Minister said that the international organisations should come forward to help solve the Farakka problem for saving a part of Bangladesh from desertification caused by unilateral withdrawal of the Ganges water at the upper reaches.

"We want justice, a just share of water in the common river and permanent solution to this man-made problem," he said.

UNICEF Representative Rolf C. Carriere said the major challenge in water sector in the country was the water level declining below the suction level. A large number of suction pumps become non-functional for several months prior to the monsoon rain, he added. Referring to diarrhoea as another main problem, Carriere said everyday over 700 children die in the country of this water-borne disease. "This also affects the child's nutritional status and hamper

her or his full physical and mental development."

The UNICEF official emphasised topmost priority to hygiene education, particularly proper hand washing before handling food and after defecation. Proper hand washing can reduce infection by over 30 per cent in the community, he said.

Prof Myo Thew in his speech called for creating awareness about using safe water and ensuring supply of adequate and safe water to reduce the deadly effect of the water-borne diseases.

Michael Constable said water is most vital for human life. Bangladesh has water but the use of polluted water makes this valuable resource dangerous.

Recalling his visit to the Sundarbans, the UNDP official expressed his apprehensions about the negative effects of excessive water salinity on the mangrove forest. A rapid action is a must to save this valuable forest resource, he said.

In his presidential speech, Dr Kazi Faruque Ahmed expressed his concern at the fall of water level in different parts of the country and said the scarcity of water is a serious threat to the people as well as ecology of the country.

Three papers were presented in the working session of the day-long seminar participated by representatives from government and non-government organisations.

The papers presented were: "Water Resources Development in Bangladesh with Focus on Drinking Water Supply" by Dr Mohammad Ali Bhuiyan of BUET, "Environment and Diarrhoea" by Dr Bilqis Amin Hoque of ICDDR, "North South Dialogue on Environment Development" by Dr Saleemul Haque of Bangladesh Centre for Advancement Studies and "Intensifying Good Sanitation and Hygiene Practice: NGOs Can Make a Substantial Difference" by Philip Van of UNICEF.

Patriot deployment in ROK may lead to war: DPRK

HONG KONG, Mar 22: North Korea said today that US President Bill Clinton's decision to deploy patriot anti-missile systems in South Korea could lead to war, reports Reuters.

"This is a provocative step to lead the situation to extremes by further aggravating tensions on the Korean peninsula," the British Broadcasting Corp quoted North Korean Radio as saying.

"The order by Clinton to deploy patriot missiles in South Korea is a grave threat to us. This clearly shows that the United States is leading the Korean peninsula to the situation of war."

The radio said the United States had broken up scheduled US-North Korea talks by strengthening its "military threat" to the North and putting pressure on Pyongyang by reviving plans for the team spirit 1994 joint military exercises with South Korea.

Washington called off high-level talks with the North, originally scheduled for Monday in Geneva, after Pyongyang

refused to allow full inspections of its declared nuclear sites in which the west believes the North is building A-bomb.

The United States decided on Monday to deploy the patriot air-defence missiles in South Korea.

Diarrhoea claims three more in Barisal

BARISAL, Mar 22: Diarrhoea claimed three more lives and attacked at least 272 people in four districts under Barisal division during 24 hours till Tuesday evening, reports UNB.

According to official sources, the deaths occurred — one each in Bhola, Barguna and Peropur.

The sources said since early this month, 21 people died and 3,272 were attacked in Barguna, 5 died and 302 attacked in Bhola, 19 died and 1,048 attacked in Patuakhali and 3 died and 250 attacked in Peropur.

AL deadline to EC

From Page 1 Col 4

and set homesteads of some Hindus on fire."

Hasina alleged that a reign of terror was created by the armed terrorists under the leadership of a large number of ruling party MPs, including Majid-ul-Huq, Major (Retd) Abdul Mannan, Major (Retd) Akhtaruzzaman, Abdus Salam Pintu, Barkatullah Bhulu, Abdul Wahab, Shahiduzzaman Beltu, Amanullah Aman and others.

Referring to the percentage of the votes cast in the election, Hasina asked: "How come the voter turnout was 72.42 per cent when the figure was only 60.28 even in the most rigged elections under Ershad's regime in 1986?"

The AL chief observed that the Khaleda Zia government had defeated the autocratic regime of Ershad, "especially in terms of election rigging."

Earlier, a dozen Awami League MPs, including Tofael Ahmed, Sajeda Chowdhury, Mohammad Nasim, Shudhangshu Shekhar Halder and A K M Jahangir narrated their respective experiences during the polling.

All the MPs accused their ruling party counterparts of influencing the results by various means that included bribing

the voters, assaulting the members of the minority community, influencing the concerned administration and rigging the election.

Tofael Ahmed, giving a detailed account of what he claimed had happened during the meeting between the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and the leaders of the various political parties at Magura on the eve of the polls, said that an apprehension of unfair voting had eventually compelled the CEC to return to Dhaka a few hours ahead of the polling.

Tofael, while recollecting his conversation with CEC Justice Abdur Rouf and his staff members at the office of the local Superintendent of Police (SP) Saturday evening, said that EC Secretary Shamsul Alam felt that the CEC could not stay at Magura where there were chances of trouble during the polls.

"Replying to my repeated request to stay at Magura, the CEC told me that he does not change his mind once he decides to do something," Tofael informed the newsmen.

Mohammad Nasim said the government headed by Khaleda Zia had resorted to rig the Magura by-election with a view to frustrating the hard-earned democracy.

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Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina speaking as chief guest at the Liberation War Commemorative Festival — '94 at the National Museum auditorium in the city yesterday.

'Explore ways to share region's water resources'

By Staff Correspondent

A group of researchers from Bangladesh, India and Nepal have suggested that the three countries should immediately explore the possibilities of regional cooperation in harnessing the water resources of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna basins.

A book titled "Converting Water into Wealth: Regional Cooperation in Harnessing the Eastern Himalayan Rivers" is the first academic effort to create public opinion for regional cooperation and chart a board-based water management and development programme.

The book, which is the outcome of an extensive research by scholars of the three countries, was launched Tuesday at the Jatiya Press Club in the capital.

The launching ceremony was organised to coincide with the World Day for Water observed Tuesday.

If has been suggested in the book that there should be an agreement soon between Bangladesh and India on the lean flow sharing of the Ganges as a step towards removing the "irritants" and mistrust between the two countries.

The water-sharing issue has become complicated and charged with emotion, but it is not an insurmountable problem, given goodwill on both sides, the authors of the book observe.

"Regional cooperation in the harnessing of the rivers — the Ganges, Brahmaputra and the Meghna — home to the largest concentration of the world's poorest, offers to all the countries gains far beyond anything that can be achieved by isolated national efforts," it says.

The authors also suggest a long-term agreement on the sharing of the Ganges water between Bangladesh and India, but speak against the Indian proposal for a Brahmaputra-Ganges link canal to augment the flow of the Ganges.

The book recommends construction of a barrage across the Ganges inside Bangladesh and a Brahmaputra barrage within Bangladesh. They also called on India to include Nepal in solving the water-sharing problem with Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP), the Centre for Policy Research (CPR) of India and the Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS) of Nepal jointly conducted the research.

BUP chairman Dr Qazi Kholluzzaman Ahmad briefed the newsmen about the book. Eminent water expert Amjad Hossain Khan and Dr K B Sajjadur Rasheed, Professor of the Geography Department, Dhaka University were also present.

BNP victory

From Page 1 Col 3

to establish the family control of the Awami League leader. The people had expressed their confidence in a new leadership for fulfilling their hopes and aspirations for development. The by-election had generated massive enthusiasm among the people of Magura for finding escape from years of deprivation, he said.

Talukder said the massive mass contact of Begum Khaleda Zia turned it into a wave of popular support. This was found reflected in the results on March 20, he said.

Salam Talukder said as usual, this time, too the Awami League leaders spoke of probable rigging, before polling, by the opponents and threatened to go for agitation if the Awami League candidate was defeated. After the defeat the Awami League took efforts to implement that threat, he added.

He said if the Awami League had won the polls they would have forgotten everything about 'rigging and agitation' as they did in the past.

Seminar on Liberation War told 'India got involved not just to help Bangladesh'

By Staff Correspondent

India got involved in Bangladesh's Liberation War of 1971 not just to help the people of this country but also to protect her own sovereignty, Dr Shantimoy Roy, president of Bangladesh-India Maitree Samitee said at the Bangladesh Liberation War Commemorative Festival 1994 yesterday.

"It was a test for India," The Indian historian observed at a seminar attended by intellectuals, members of the diplomatic corps at the National Museum. "The very presence of the Seventh Fleet in the Bay of Bengal posed a severe threat to India's independence and thereby prompted India to help Bangladesh," he elaborated.

Dr Shantimoy recalled the role of the late Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in mobilising international support for a sovereign Bangladesh.

He also observed that Bangladesh now needs to wage another war against degraded values which are also common in India and Pakistan.

The British High Commissioner Peter J. Fowler, however, noted that the new war should be aimed at eliminating poverty, illiteracy and repression of women.

These observations were made at the seminar on "Aspiration and Achievement of the Liberation War," with Prof Kabir Chowdhury presenting the key-note paper.

The seminar, organised as part of the commemorative festival was also addressed by British MP Lord David Ennals, Ambassador of the Russian Federation Edward Shevchenko, Prof Zillur Rahman Siddiqui, Attorney General Aminul Haq, Amir Hossain Amu, Indian Deputy High Commissioner Amitava Tripathi, Dr Mahmud Hasan with Justice K M Sobhan in the chair.

In his paper Prof Kabir Chowdhury said that the expectation of the people of Bangladesh to live in an independent and sovereign country has been achieved.

"But the absence of true democracy, the rise of fanaticism and communalism, the spread of violence, breakdown of law and order, constant distortion and disintegration of Bengali nationalism and economic exploitation seem to mock every moment the aspirations and ideals of the Liberation War," he remarked.

Prof Zillur Rahman Siddiqui, in his speech drew a parallel between the attack of Pakistan on Bangladesh and the attack of the Nazis on the Jews.

The festival was rounded off with a colourful cultural programme.

The day-long festival was earlier inaugurated by the Leader of the Opposition in the House Sheikh Hasina.

In her inaugural speech she called upon all to uphold the true history of the Liberation War and protect independence achieved at the expense of three-million lives.

Sheikh Hasina said since the assassination of Bangabandhu on August 15, 1975 and subsequent killing of four national leaders in jail the history of the Liberation War was being distorted to keep the new generations in dark about the heroic struggle of the nation to free the motherland.

Hasina said the Liberation War had its ideals and values which inspired the nation to fight. But after the political changeover in 1975 the values and spirit of the Liberation War were being destroyed in a motivated way, she added.

The Awami League chief said there was no progress in any sector for the last 18 years and the people had been suffering from a sense of insecurity.

Four Sector Commanders of the Liberation War were introduced at the inaugural session attended by Col Shawkat Ali MP, Indian High Commissioner K Raghunath, Ambassador of Bhutan, Deputy Chief of Italian Embassy and other members of the diplomatic corps.

The festival was rounded off with a colourful cultural programme.

The Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and the Montu-backed Chhatra League also blamed the pro-Awami League BCL for creating anarchy on the campus to mar the DUCSU polls, scheduled for April 12.

The JCD held a protest-rally around 1:30 pm in front of the Arts Faculty building while the Montu-backed Chhatra League held a rally in front of the DUCSU Bhaban at the same time.

The JCD rally was addressed by its central leaders Nazimuddin Alam, Moniruzzaman Monir, Shahiduddin Chowdhury Anny and Shahjahan Hawlader Sujon.

The Gonatantrik Chhatra Oikya, the Chhatra Maitree and the Chhatra Front also brought out processions on the campus protesting terrorism and supporting the DUCSU polls date on April 12.

Directive to supply quality newsprint to newspapers

Information Minister Nazmul Huda yesterday underscored the need for supplying improved variety of newsprint to the newspapers and directed the organisation concerned to take effective steps in this regard, reports BSS.

Nazmul Huda was presiding over a meeting on proper allocation and supply of newsprint to the newspapers at the Information Ministry.

The meeting was informed that production and supply position of newsprint at present in the country was normal and satisfactory.

The meeting reviewed the demand and supply situation and decided to give priority to newspapers in case of supplying newsprint.

Information Secretary Nuruddin al-Masud, president of Bangladesh Sangbadpatri Parishad Prof Majidul Islam, secretary general A Q M Zainul Abedin and representatives of Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation attended the meeting.

A three-member review committee has been formed to ensure proper use of newsprint taken by the newspapers and to examine regularly any shortage of newsprint allocated to newspaper concerned.

3 killed as storm hits Rangpur, Gaibandha

From Our Correspondent

RANGPUR, Mar 22: A severe cyclonic storm swept over Rangpur Sunday night leaving two persons dead and five hundred injured. Ten thousand houses were damaged and many trees uprooted.

The deceased were identified as Sakina, 60, of Pirgachha and Mahimuddin, 25, of Gangachara. They died because of house collapse.

Relief goods have been sent to the affected areas.

Our Gaibandha Correspondent adds: An old woman was killed and five persons received injuries when a cyclonic storm lashed thirteen unions of Sunderganj thana Sunday night. About one thousand houses were also damaged.

Spielberg: Oscar

From Page 1 Col 8

was one film "we have to make."

After smoothly running through the usual "thank yous," Spielberg's voice choked up as he paid tribute to the Jews killed by the Nazis in World War II — "to the 6 million who can't be watching this among the 1 billion watching this telecast tonight." He left the stage wiping tears from his eyes.

The other contenders in the directing category were Jane Campion for "The Piano," Jim Sheridan for "In the Name of the Father," James Ivory for "The Remains of the Day" and Robert Altman for "Short Cuts."

Spielberg was the front-runner all along. Earlier this month, he won the top prize from the Directors Guild of America. Only three DGA winners since 1949 have failed to win an Oscar.

One of those was Spielberg. He won the DGA award for "The Color Purple" in 1985, but was not even nominated for an Academy Award.

Spielberg is the most successful filmmaker in box office history. His "Jurassic Park" and "E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial" are the two highest-grossing films ever.

"Jurassic Park" was largely ignored in Oscar balloting, but it won all three of its nominations in technical categories.

Tom Hanks picked up his Best Actor award for his portrayal of a lawyer with AIDS in "Philadelphia," and Holly Hunter was named Best Actress for her role in "The Piano" as a mute Scottish mail — order bride in 19th-century New Zealand.

From the very day the nominations were announced, "Schindler's List" — which was up for 12 awards — was considered a sure bet to dominate the Oscars and break Spielberg's string of losses spanning two decades.

But his heart may have skipped a beat when presenter Clint Eastwood opened the envelope and said "this is a big surprise" before naming him the winner for Best Director.

"I have friends who have won this before and I swear I haven't ever held one before," Spielberg told the awards audience, his voice cracking with emotion.

Only minutes later, he returned to the stage to accept his best picture award. Wiping away tears, he pleaded, "Please do not allow the holocaust to become a footnote in history."

The Dinosaur epic "Jurassic Park" — another Spielberg creation — and Jane Campion's "The Piano" provided the closest competition, each winning the Oscars. Campion lost directing honours to Spielberg but won for best original screenplay.

The Midnight File

China to help Pakistan make tanks

ISLAMABAD, Mar 22: China will help Pakistan make tanks and armoured recovery vehicles under an agreement signed today, a Pakistan government statement said. With this agreement, the Chinese-aided heavy industries at Taxila, near Islamabad, will achieve "the capability to manufacture modern tanks like MBT-2000 and 125 MM smooth bore tank gun", it said. The statement gave no further details of the agreement, reports Reuters.

Rabbani's forces down Dostam's aircraft

ISLAMABAD, Mar 22: Afghan government warplanes shot down an aircraft belonging to Uzbek General Abdul Rashid Dostam in the northern Balkh Province today, state-run radio Kabul said. The broadcast, monitored here, said forces loyal to Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani had destroyed a total of 14 aircraft under Dostam's command since the ex-communist General rebelled against the government and launched attacks on Kabul on January 1, reports AFP.

ROK declares 9-day alert for armed forces

SEOUL, Mar 22: South Korea declared a special nine-day alert for its armed forces, starting today, one day ahead of President Kim Young-sam's scheduled trips to Japan and China, the Defence Ministry said today. Defence Ministry officials said army, navy and air force field commanders would be ordered to stay at their bases during Kim's trip overseas that starts on Thursday, reports AFP.

Tamil Nadu wants to extend ban on LTTE

MADRAS, Mar 22: The South Indian state of Tamil Nadu, once a haven for Sri Lanka's separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), said today it wanted a ban on the organisation in India extended for two more years, reports Reuters.

The ban on the LTTE expires in May this year and we want it to be extended by two more years. But despite our repeated pleas there has been no response from the central government," Chief Minister Jayalalitha told the state assembly.

She denied allegations, made by her political rivals including the Congress Party of Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao, that she was not keen to stop the LTTE, accused of plotting the 1991 assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

India banned the LTTE, the largest and the most dangerous of Sri Lanka's Tamil separatist groups, earlier this year after its leaders were accused of plotting the assassination.

Raphel's visit

From Page 1 Col 7

Raphel to show Indian displeasure over her remarks.

During her talks here, Raphel is expected to lay the groundwork for an April 6-8 trip to New Delhi by Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, who may issue an invitation to Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao to visit Washington.

Human rights and nuclear non-proliferation are also expected to be on the agenda for Raphel's discussions here, Indian officials said.

The strains in Indo-US relations have emerged following the departure for Moscow a year ago of the US Ambassador to India, Thomas Pickering, and the failure of the Clinton administration to name a successor.

Stephen Solarz, a former member of the House of Representatives from New York, was tipped to replace Pickering but he recently withdrew his candidacy.

Aussie market

From Page 1 Col 7

He said the bilateral trade gap can also be reduced through investments by businessmen from Australia.

A number of Australian companies already have a presence locally while some others are pushing for joint ventures, he pointed out. The ANZ Grindlays Bank has substantial business interests in Bangladesh and the Snowy Mountain Engineering Corporation (SMEC) of Australia has been involved in a number of donor-aided infrastructural projects here for the past few years.

Another big Sydney-based company — Broken Hill Properties (BHP) Minerals — has recently completed negotiations with the government on a production-sharing contract to explore coal reserves in the country's north-western region.

It is significant that both SMEC and BHP, he said, are planning to make their regional headquarters in Dhaka, while managing projects in India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and the Maldives.

Such high profile moves by leading companies would help attract other Australian businesses to invest in Bangladesh, he added. They might be interested in infrastructure projects and the telecommunications and power sectors, he said.

But investors, Hook explained, have to be given adequate fiscal incentives and infrastructural facilities.

12 hurt as BCL, JCD activists clash in Pabna

PABNA, Mar 22: At least a dozen people were injured when the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists clashed during pro and anti-hartal campaign in the town this evening, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the clash occurred when a procession brought out by the BCL in support of Wednesday's country-wide hartal called by the Awami League came face to face with an anti-hartal procession of the JCD near Indira Park.

District Awami League president Waziuddin Khan accused the JCD activists of hurling handbombs at the pickets of the BCL, the student wing of the party.

Former president of the District BNP Abdur Rauf Abed alleged that brickbats were hurled at the JCD procession by the Awami League and BCL activists.

Two of the injured were identified as Abdul Majid, 22, of the BCL and Tozammel Huq, 25, of the JCD.

Police intervened and brought the situation under control.

Another UNB report from Jhenidah said two JCD activists were injured when a pro-hartal procession of the BCL and an anti-hartal procession of the JCD confronted in Shaikhpura thana.

World Meteorology Day today

The World Meteorology Day will be observed today globally including Bangladesh with due enthusiasm, reports BSS.

The Bangladesh Meteorological Department has taken an elaborate programme to observe the day in a befitting manner in keeping with the theme "Observing the weather and climate" chosen by the world meteorological organisation for the year 1994.

The day's programme in Dhaka will include an inaugural function followed by a technical seminar at the head office of the Bangladesh Meteorological Department at Agargaon in the afternoon. Exhibition of meteorological equipment and charts from 4:30 pm to 6:00 pm will also be held for the members of the public.

Public exhibition of meteorological equipment and charts will also be held at Meteorological and Geo-physical Centre, Agrabad, Chittagong.

Jakarta to apply for UNSC seat

JAKARTA, Mar 22: Indonesia will put forward its candidacy for non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council to replace outgoing Pakistan, a Foreign Ministry official said here today, reports AFP.

The official who declined to be named, said Foreign Minister Ali Alatas told a coordination meeting of Indonesian ambassadors here Monday that Indonesia would apply for the position during the upcoming UN General Assembly in September.

The official said that Indonesia had already intended to apply to represent Asia at the Security Council twice but had refrained from putting its candidacy forward, in order to give the opportunity to fellow Non-Aligned Movement members who also vied for the seat.

Indonesia currently chairs the 108-member Non-Aligned Movement.

The official said that so far there was no other candidate from Asia.

He said that the candidacy would be put forward for the two-year period to begin in 1995.