

Poverty alleviation needs enabling environment

By Staff Correspondent

A meeting of development workers, parliamentarians, business leaders, government officials and journalists yesterday observed that the poor must be empowered and given the right environment to determine their destiny in order to alleviate poverty.

The meeting was organised by the Hunger Project at a local hotel.

Addressing a post-meeting press briefing, the officials of the organisation said the wisdom, courage and creativity of the people are the main resources in overcoming poverty.

The meeting was held in conjunction with the Hunger Project's global board of directors annual meeting held for the first time in Dhaka.

Member of Parliament Abdur Rab Chowdhury, who also attended the meeting, said in conventional development planning there is a missing link for lack of which the lot of the poor does not change.

He said the meeting had identified weak management system, the structure of the

country and the belief and value systems of the society as impediments to poverty alleviation.

The project president Joan Holmes said the solution to poverty must come from the particular society that faces the problem, and not from outside.

The Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Hunger Project Robert N Chester said empowering the people would lead to better health, education and preservation of the environment.

State Minister for Planning Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan, also present during the press briefing, said the government is committed to alleviate poverty and has involved the people into the planning process through a participatory planning system.

The briefing was also attended by Hunger Project representative Dr Badul Alam Majumder, members of the board, Dr Peter G Bourne and Dr Ebrahim Samba, and journalist Gias Kamal Chowdhury.

Tk 2.40 lakh looted from cloth market in city

By Staff Correspondent

Armed men looted Tk. 2.40 lakh from three shops in a wholesale cloth market at Islampur in the city yesterday afternoon.

Witnesses said, about ten armed men entered the Masjid Market around 3:15 in the afternoon, locked the collapsible gate on the ground floor and looted the cash from three shops.

The affected shops are Rocky Fabrics, Mahanagar Traders and Rauf Traders. Both police and witnesses said the armed men took barely five minutes in staging the heist. The robbers left the scene through an alley behind the market, they added.

Nor'wester lashes 3 districts

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Apr 19: At least five people were hurt as nor'wester swept parts of Jhalakati, Pirojpur and Barisal districts today.

The storm with a speed of about 80 km per hour razed hundreds of thatched houses to the ground, disrupted power supply, uprooted trees and damaged crops over a vast area.

BSS adds: At least 11 persons, including two children, were feared drowned and 31 others missing as boats capsized in the rivers of Barisal, Patuakhali, Pirojpur and Barguna during the nor'wester.

Demolition

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such buildings according to the laws of the land and the building owners will have to bear the demolition expenses," a RAJUK press release said yesterday.

The capital development authority has urged all to provide it with information to help identify unauthorised and risky structures.

It has also requested the city dwellers to construct houses in compliance with approved building rules.

4 killed in city

By DMCH Correspondent

Four persons were killed in the city and its outskirts in separate incidents yesterday.

A 60-year-old man and a woman aged 30 were killed in road accidents at Sayedabad and Manik Mia Avenue yesterday morning. None of the victims could be identified immediately.

Shahjahan, 50, reportedly committed suicide by hanging at his Jagannath Saha Road over a family feud in the morning. Lalbagh police recovered the body.

A housewife who suffered burn injuries in Keraniganj across the Buriganga Monday, succumbed to her injuries at the DMCH yesterday.

Astami

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Bathers at 13 ghats along a one km stretch of the river took holy dips, reciting mantras.

The Narayanganj district administration organised special police security, toilet facilities and three medical centres on the occasion while about 80 private organisations including the Red Crescent Society and the Ram Krishna Mission provided volunteers.

In keeping with tradition a village fair was organised at the site.

At places devotees and Sadhus were seen singing devotional songs.

The local DC was present on the occasion. BSS adds: Jute Minister A S M Hannan Shah yesterday urged the people to maintain the age-old tradition of religious harmony in the country.

He was speaking as the chief guest at a gathering on the occasion of Astami Snan at Dhandia Ghee Ghat on the bank of the river Brahmaputra in Kapasia.

Hannan Shah said, the government will renovate the places of all religious interest in phases.

Massive development programmes were implemented this year at the Dhandia Ghee Ghat by the Local Government Engineering Department with the financial assistance of Gazipur Zila Parishad.



Visiting Governor of the Indian State of Tripura, Romesh Bhandari, called on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday. — PID photo

Water sharing

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government has taken all measures for proper rehabilitation of the returnees and ensured adequate security for them.

She said the government will provide necessary support and full security to those refugees still staying in India and hoped that they would come back home soon.

Begum Zia urged the Governor of Tripura to remain alert about any confusion and provocation which may jeopardise the on-going process of the repatriation.

The Prime Minister lauded Romesh Bhandari's role in the repatriation process and hoped that he would further play his role to send back the rest of the refugees. Bhandari termed the existing relations between the two countries as 'good' and expressed the hope that the bilateral 'problems would be resolved through negotiation.

"Both India and Bangladesh will be benefited if good relations exist between us," he said and lauded Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's efforts towards resolving bilateral issues.

Bhandari said the long-standing problems are being steadily resolved under the leadership of Begum Zia. He mentioned that the Tin Bigha Corridor problem had already been settled and the refugee problem is now under process.

Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh K Raghunath, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister A N M Yusuf and Foreign Secretary Osman were present during the meeting.

ADAB seeks protection for NGO projects

By Staff Correspondent

The Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB) has said the on-going development projects carried out by the NGOs have been seriously threatened because of the recent violence, 'false fatwa' and intimidation of the development workers.

Leaders of the ADAB have also appealed to the government to take immediate steps to ensure smooth functioning of the programmes and arrest those trying to foil the projects.

The appeal was made yesterday, one day after ADAB held its annual general meeting in the capital.

The general members attending the ADAB meeting expressed grave concern over the law and order situation at some places of the country and harassment of the development workers by vested quarters.

The ADAB leaders said the 'reactionary forces' were out to foil different NGO projects in education, social forestry, public health, human rights and credit sectors by pronouncing false fatwas (religious edicts) and perpetrating violence, arson, looting and through intimidation.

More than hundred schools have been set ablaze, lakhs of saplings planted by the NGOs uprooted and normal lives of the women workers of the NGOs have been disturbed in Chittagong, Bogra, Chandpur and several other places, they said.

As a result, employment of poor beneficiaries was now at stake, observed a resolution taken at the ADAB general meeting.

It said that the NGOs functioned under the existing laws and the right to justice of the development workers was guaranteed by the Constitution.

"We cannot understand how these reactionary forces dare to flout the laws of the land despite having a democratically-elected government in power and a sovereign Parliament," it added.

Bhandari visits Khagrachhari today

From Staff Correspondent

KHAGRACHHARI, Apr 19: The Governor of India's Tripura state Romesh Bhandari, who arrived in Dhaka Monday, will visit Khagrachhari hill district tomorrow to oversee the rehabilitation of the repatriated Chakma refugees.

According to officials here, all preparations are afoot to welcome Bhandari, who is scheduled to arrive at Ramgarh by helicopter from Dhaka in the morning.

From Ramgarh he will go to Dighinala and Panchhari thana areas to talk to the Chakma returnees and know about their present condition. Then he will fly to the Khagrachhari district headquarters.

Paran's parents meet Khaleda

Parents of Aminur Rasul Paran, who was killed during Awami League's Secretariat siege programme on April 7, met Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday, reports UNB.

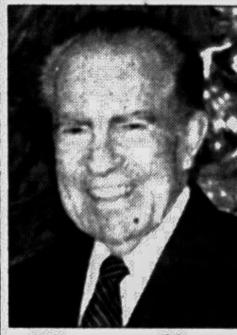
They expressed their gratitude to the PM for arranging a helicopter to send Paran's body to his village home at Bilbilash in Baufal thana of Patuakhali district and other cooperation.

Paran, an intermediate student of the New Model Degree College, was reportedly the Publicity Secretary of the college unit of the JCD and the joint secretary of the Lalbagh thana unit.

The Prime Minister expressed her deep shock at the tragic death of Paran and sympathy for the bereaved family. She assured that the killers would be brought to book.

She also called on the people to come forward to preventing recurrence of such incident.

Besides Paran's father Badiul Huq and mother Hosne Ara, his sister and other close relatives were present during the meeting in the afternoon.



Nixon suffers stroke

NEW YORK, Apr 19: Former US President Richard Nixon, who left the White House in disgrace during the Watergate scandal only to emerge in retirement as an elder statesman, suffered a stroke that aides said left him unable to talk, reports AP.

The 81-year-old Nixon was stricken at his home in New Jersey while getting ready for dinner Monday night and was taken by ambulance to New York Hospital — Cornell Medical Centre, said his spokeswoman Kathy O'Connor.

His daughters, Tricia Cox and Julie Eisenhower, and the Rev. Billy Graham, a longtime friend, rushed to his bedside. His wife, Pat, died in 1993.

Nixon was in intensive care and his condition was described as stable. Kim Taylor, another Nixon spokeswoman, said this morning that he was 'awake, alert and attentive but unable to speak.'

Contraband sares seized in city

By Staff Correspondent

A Customs task force raided a market at Patuaty in the city and recovered contraband sares worth about Tk. 19.37 lakh yesterday.

The Customs men raided five godowns on the second floor of Ajmiri Market and seized 2,388 pieces of sares reportedly smuggled into the country from India.

A customs source said that the owners of the godowns failed to show any invoice for the purchase of the sares.

Departmental cases were lodged in this connection, the source said.

JU students allege harassment by guardian

By JU Correspondent

Students of the Pharmacy Department of Jahangirnagar University yesterday accused one Major Rafiq of the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), father of a student of the department, of harassing and threatening some students and their guardians.

The students disclosed this to the university reporters at a press conference on the campus.

"Rafiq's wrath fell upon the students, teachers and guardians when his daughter, Shameema, a third-year student of Pharmacy reportedly eloped with one of her classmates, Aftabul Huq Sachchu on April 16," the students said.

They said that police arrested Sachchu's mother, a teacher of the BAF Shaheen College, and one of his friends — Shahrier — and allegedly tortured them to find out the whereabouts of the missing couple.

Major Rafiq came to the campus several times along with BDR men and threatened the teachers and students of the Pharmacy Department, they claimed.

Shameema's uncle Colonel Sayeduzzaman lodged a kidnapping case with Savar police on April 17.

The Midnight File

Yeltsin demands withdrawal of Serbs from Gorazde

MOSCOW, Apr 19: Russian President Boris Yeltsin demanded today that Bosnian Serb forces withdraw from Gorazde and allow UN troops to enter the city, Russian television reported. Yeltsin also renewed his call for a summit between the leaders of Russia, the United States and the European Union to discuss the crisis in Bosnia, a commentator said, citing a presidential statement, reports AFP.

13 killed in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, India, Apr 19: Overnight violence in the troubled state of Kashmir left 13 people dead — mostly in raids on suspected Muslim rebels — including a trooper shot dead here today by snipers, police said. The paramilitary trooper was shot dead in the Lal Chowk commercial area by Muslim militants, police said, security guards fired in the air in retaliation, sparking panic in the crowded district which has been cordoned off, reports AFP.

Watanabe leaves path clear for Hata

TOKYO, Apr 19: Michio Watanabe, the aging power broker who had threatened to shake up Japan's political world by running for prime minister, withdrew from the race Tuesday, leaving the way clear for Foreign Minister Tsutomu Hata, reports AP.

Leaders of the seven-bloc ruling coalition, meeting for the 11th consecutive day since Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa announced his resignation, were still working out an agreement on policies.

The coalition has split over several key issues, most notably whether the national sales tax should be raised to pay for a cut in income taxes.

"It is not at all unprofitable to take some time in discussing policies," said Japan Renewal Party Secretary-General Ichiro Ozawa, the leader of the faction supporting a tax increase.

Once policies were worked out, the coalition was expected to formally approve Hata as its candidate, ensuring his election by Parliament as prime minister.

Due to the delay on the policy agreement, however, Scuffle at TV

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boys of the Jagannath Hall of the Dhaka University around 4:30 in the afternoon.

They said the chairman of the debate initially declared the Jagannath Hall speakers as winners but later announced that there was a mistake in the tabulation of the judges' scores.

He then changed the result in favour of the Mannujan Hall.

Angry Jagannath Hall students immediately protested. They ransacked the rooms and studios and engaged in a scuffle with some of the BTV staff and members of the audience.

Sabujbagh police said the situation was brought under control soon afterwards. There was no police case.

Students protest

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Police lobbed teargas shells and resorted to baton-charge on the agitating students, witnesses said.

The students of the Government Science College blocked the road to traffic near the busy Farmgate protesting the death of one of their mates. Witnesses said that the demonstrators damaged at least a dozen cars by pelting stones.

However, police manage to bring the situation under control.

Ramna police said that no further arrest was made yesterday. Masud was sent to the Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court and later to the Dhaka Central Jail.

Shopowners

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She told the shopowners that there would be no need for hartals had the radio and television correctly projected the opposition views and programmes. The government had politicised the mass media and thus forced the opposition to take recourse to agitation.

The Awami League leader urged the leaders of shopowners to be vocal to force the authorities to cancel the results of Magura by election which, she alleged, was won by the government through 'vote dacoity.'

Dacoity in Sylhet

SYLHET, Apr 19: Masked dacoits stormed a house at Hadarpara near Shahjalal satellite town here early today and looted valuables and cash, reports UNB.

Police said seven to eight armed dacoits forced into the house of one Suleman Ali breaking the collapsible gate and doors of the house at about 4 am.

They tied up the hands and legs of the family members of Suleman, who is now living in London, and committed the robbery.

They decamped with television, radio and VCP sets and the receiver of dish antenna, ornaments and Tk 22,000, family members said.



Jatiya Party acting chairman Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury addressing a party rally at Gulistan in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Nawaz ordered to surrender encroached land

LAHORE, Apr 19: Pakistani opposition leader Nawaz Sharif has been ordered to surrender 3,24,000 square feet of public land he has fenced in around his residence here, officials said today, reports AFP.

"We hope the encroachments around the residence of the opposition leader would be voluntarily demolished," Punjab province Chief Minister Manzoor Ahmad Watto said, adding that failure to do so would result in legal action.

The Jatiya Party will take united decision with all opposition parties in Parliament whether or not to continue boycott of Parliament sessions.

He called upon the people to observe April 26 hartal and intensify the agitation to free Ershad from jail.

Addressing the meeting Moudud Ahmed said the present government had ruined the economy, made thousands of workers jobless and let the country's market be flooded with Indian goods.

The SAPTA agreement and wrong economic policy of the government have benefited India, and if the government goes ahead with its economic policy, more industries will be closed down and more people would become jobless, he said.

Kazi Zafar Ahmed said rural economy stagnated as the upazila system had been abolished and demanded revival of the system.

Shah Moazzem Hossain demanded immediate release of

JP to boycott polls

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Ershad and called upon the government to hold a referendum to ascertain whether the people want release of Ershad or not.

He criticised the government for staging a 'farce' in laying the foundation of the Jamuna Bridge 'for the second time'.

The meeting, chaired by Mizan Chowdhury, was also addressed by Khaledur Rahman Tito, Col (ret'd) Abdul Malek, Shah M Abu Zafar and Saifur Rahman.

Construction site

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fice bare-foot at about 11:30 last night. On Sunday night, a six-storey building tilted precariously in the city's Shantinagar area.

Another resident, Saiful Islam, said that heavy down-pour last night had also eroded the soil of a narrow strip of land between his house and the construction site, blocking the way for the residents.

Because of the ditch, an exposed gas line in the neighbourhood had leaked at about 10:15 pm, spreading methane gas all over the area, local people said. Water supply had also been snapped, they said.

Serbs storm UN depot

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Nations commander says threatens to become "a major humanitarian catastrophe."

Meanwhile, the breach between Russia and the Bosnian Serbs widened Tuesday, with Moscow putting on hold its longstanding bid to get UN sanctions against the Serbs lifted.

"When promises are not kept — promises made at the level of foreign minister — we must take that into account," Foreign Ministry spokesman Mikhail Demurin said.

Russia also sent scores of fresh replacements Tuesday for its paratroopers in former Yugoslavia, signaling a determination to maintain its presence despite a humiliating betrayal by Bosnian Serb leaders.

The Serbs attacked the Muslim enclave of Gorazde just a day after Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev said they had promised to halt their offensive. His assurances led NATO to cancel plans for air strikes against the Serbs.

It was a public slap in the face," the daily Izvestia said Tuesday, "a nightmare for Russian diplomats."

Kozyrev warned Serbs today not to test the world's patience as his deputy lobbied lawmakers for a tougher stand

against Moscow's troublesome Balkan allies.

"I strongly recommend the Bosnian Serb side not to push the patience of the international community to the limit, Kozyrev told reporters.

25 killed as Rwandan troops shell stadium

NAIROBI, Apr 19: At least 25 civilians were killed and 56 others wounded when Rwandan government forces shelled a Kigali stadium sheltering about 5,000 displaced people today, United Nations officials said.

The UN assistance mission in Rwanda lodged a 'very strong protest' with the military after four or five shells hit the Amahoro stadium," UN spokesman Mocar Gueye told AFP by telephone from Kigali.

A battalion of Bangladeshi peacekeepers is based at the stadium, in a north-eastern district of the capital, controlled by the rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front, dominated by the minority Tutsi tribe.

Inkatha

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well have been saved from "disastrous consequences of unmanageable proportions" and had been put on a course which he hoped would lead to lasting peace, democracy and federalism.

Mandela said the agreement was vital to stem spiralling political unrest, mainly between Inkatha and ANC supporters, ahead of the elections.

"Nothing is more precious than saving lives of human beings, nothing is more important than this agreement which deserves the support of all the leaders and all those who love South Africa," said Mandela.