

Agricultural experts yesterday underlined preservation of plant genetic resources through biodiversity and massive afforestation programme to ensure a sound environment, reports UNB.

**Actual forest area now 5-6 pc**

Fortyfive species and some 500 medicinal plants of the country are now facing extinction as about 8,000 hectares of forests have been depleted annually during the last two decades disturbing ecological balance, said plant genetic resource expert Dr M Gul Hossain at a policy meeting on the Convention of Biological Diversity at the BARC.

Dr Hossain cited homestead establishment, urbanisation and deforestation as the main causes of forest depletion. "Poachers damage forest genetic resources more than natural causes like tidal surges, cyclone, drought, fire, pests etc."

Statistics show a current forest area of 12.8 per cent. But the actual forest area is estimated between 5 and 6 per cent only against the minimum requirement of 25 per cent, Dr Hossain said.

Forest types of the country, he said, are as follows: Mangrove forest 0.67 million hectares, hill forest 0.67 million hectares, unclassified state forest 0.73 million hectares and village groves 0.27 million hectares.

meeting attended by some 50 agri-experts. Executive Vice Chairman of the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council Dr MSU Chowdhury chaired the meeting, organised jointly by the FAO, IPGRI and BARC.

They stressed establishment of a national centre for plant genetic resources with appropriate infrastructure for conservation of orthodox and recalcitrant seeds, vegetatively propagated materials, including facilities for a cryo bank and a DNA bank.

Integration of national plant genetic resources (PGR) network including field gene-banks should be strengthened. Development of PGR documentation and data management systems is needed to facilitate local and regional use of PGR information, they said.

National variety improvement programmes and an integration of such programmes with PGR activities are needed, they said, adding evaluation of germplasm can be enhanced by encouraging bilateral and regional collaborative programmes.



Hillary Rodham Clinton and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia seen chatting before the dinner hosted by the Prime Minister at her Hare Road official residence in honour of the US First Lady yesterday evening. — PID photo

**The Midnight File**

**Iraqi lawyer meets US prisoners**

BAGHDAD, Iraq, Apr 3: An Iraqi lawyer met with two American prisoners Monday to prepare their appeal. Khaled Jarjees discussed the legal procedure with David Daliberti, 41, and William Barloon, 39, an associate at Jarjees's office said by telephone, speaking on condition of anonymity, reports AP.

**France, Japan sign deal**

PARIS, Apr 3: France and Japan signed a deal today aimed at improving the safety of a new generation of fast-breeder nuclear reactors, officials said today. The deal, signed by French and Japanese nuclear authorities, aims to complete studies into accidents which could lead to a partial or total meltdown in such reactors, reports AFP.

**Warmth transcends all**

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the wife of the US President. I am not allowed to. I hope to have my separate income once I leave the White House." Such were the intimate and personal-level conversation that the US First Lady had with the village women in Moishahati, Jessore, yesterday.

As if, like magic, she fit it off with the women residents of Moishahati. Within minutes of her arrival she appeared to be at ease. Wearing a dress made of Grameen Check (designed and made by internationally famed Bangladeshi model-turned-designer Bibi Russel) Hillary Clinton and her 15-year old daughter Chelsea mingled with our village women with amazing ease.

It was almost like friendship at first sight. Our village women took to her like an old friend, offering gifts, hospitality and courtesy for which our village society has been traditionally famous. Some offered her 'muri' (puffed rice) to eat. Some other placed a 'teep' on her forehead, saying, "We are putting the Rising Sun of Bangladesh on your forehead." Still others wrapped a Jamdani saree around her. The US journalists, accompanying the US First Lady, reportedly said they had seen nothing like this before during the current trip. By all accounts, this was the highlight of her whole trip to South Asia.

Parting kept on being delayed, both by Mrs Clinton and her eager hosts. It had to be firmly enforced by her time managers. "We are very happy that you came, but we would have been happier if you had brought 'Bhaishahab' (meaning her husband) along," was a parting comment. Mrs Clinton smilingly agreed to convey their invitation to her husband. She hoped he would surely come!

**Students gherao Ukhia PS**

From Our Correspondent  
COXS BAZAR, Apr 3: Over five hundred school and college students gheraoed the Ukhia Police Station today protesting the assault on two students by constables.

The angry students also staged a demonstration demanding punishment for the police personnel responsible for the incident. They later submitted a memorandum to the officer-in-charge of the Ukhia thana. They left the police station after an assurance that action would be taken against the police personnel.

Oshayev Dayal, Hari Ghosh, a first year student of Ukhia College and Palash Ghosh, a class-X student of Ukhia High School, were picked up by police from near a police check post and beaten up.

Palash was admitted to the Ukhia Thana Health Complex while Dayal was released after first aid.

Police beat the boys on suspicion that they were hiding information about a truck which had fled away defying a signal at the Ukhia check post.

**Dacoits kill one in Barguna**

From Staff Correspondent  
BARISAL, Apr 3: One Nikhil Chandra Biswas, 65, was killed and his wife injured during a dacoity at north Sonakhal village under Amtali thana of Barguna district last night.

Police and witnesses said, a gang of 15 to 20 dacoits broke into the house Nikhil at the dead of night. They also beat up the inmates of the house mercilessly.

At one stage Nikhil Biswas was hacked to death. His wife Chabi Rani Biswas was injured seriously as she tried to resist them.

The dacoits also ransacked two other houses of Anil Biswas and Nikur Biswas the same night and decamped with the booties. A case was filed with Amtali PS.

**ANNOUNCEMENT**

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**Diarrhoea claims 90 in three months**

At least 90 people died of diarrhoea and 12,019 were affected by the killer disease in 10 districts in last three months, officials said, reports UNB.

The water-borne disease took a serious turn in the affected districts, mostly in southern region, last month. But it is now under control due to measures taken by the Health Department, they said.

The affected districts are Pirojpur, Moulvibazar, Barguna, Khulna, Bagerhat, Pabna, Bhola, Comilla, Patuakhali and Jhalakathi.

In Pirojpur, 37 people lost their lives while 1948 others were attacked by the disease since January 1 this year.

The control room in the Health Directorate said three people died and 456 others were affected by diarrhoea in last 24 hours ending 9 am yesterday. The latest deaths were reported one each from Moulvibazar, Pabna and Barguna.

Diarrhoea broke out in these areas mainly due to use of impure water, lack of sani-

tary latrine and deep tubewell and intake of adulterated food.

Some 556 medical teams are working in the affected areas and 23 additional teams monitoring situation in the worst-affected Matbaria and Sadar thanas of Pirojpur. Medicine and saline have been sent to the affected areas.

District-wise break-up of diarrhoea-affected people during January 1 to April 3:

| Dist        | Affected | Death |
|-------------|----------|-------|
| Bagerhat    | 2350     | 06    |
| Moulvibazar | 563      | 18    |
| Comilla     | 1335     | 02    |
| Patuakhali  | 447      | 00    |
| Khulna      | 1053     | 08    |
| Pirojpur    | 1948     | 37    |
| Pabna       | 1230     | 06    |
| Jhalakathi  | 216      | 00    |
| Barguna     | 1558     | 09    |
| Bhola       | 1319     | 04    |

Meanwhile, at least 111 people have been affected by diarrhoea in the worst hit Pirojpur district during the last 24 hours ending 9 am yesterday, official sources in Dhaka said.

**Fire at Islambagh**

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ago, at least one dozen people were injured and four hundred houses were burnt leaving 1500 families homeless.

Witnesses says yesterday's blaze that started at about 12-50 pm spread rapidly to all the tin-roof-and-bamboo houses.

Thousands of people in their frenzied efforts to escape death and damage began running in all directions screaming for help. The air was filled with bellowing smoke.

Chased by the fire, the slum-dwellers were seen madly bringing out their belongings and dismantling their houses most of which stood on bamboo stilts along the bank of the river Buriganga.

Men, women and children were seen jumping off their shanties and swimming ashore while rescuers on boats helped many who did not know how to swim.

Many person were seen waiting for their near and dear ones feared missing after the fire broke out. Many did not even know the magnitude of their losses as they were working elsewhere when the fire started.

Fire Brigade officials could not identify the cause of the fire, but said an investigation was on.

The extent of the damage could not be ascertained immediately.

Eleven fire engines, including a river unit, rushed to the spot from different stations.

Fire Brigade sources say, seven of their fire-fighters were injured by angry people who alleged that the Fire Brigade personnel were late in arriving at the spot.

Narrow alleys obstructed fire fighters and engines from entering the area, according to the officials.

The slum dwellers at Islambagh also complained about looting of their personal effects by a section of hoodlums.

**CEC thanks parties for keeping Tongi out of hartal**

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Justice M Abdur Rouf yesterday urged upon the voters to remain vigilant in safeguarding their voting rights, reports BSS.

Justice Rouf was addressing three separate projection meetings of the candidates for the offices of the chairman and commissioners of Tongi purasabha model polls which will be held on April 10.

Justice Rouf thanked the political parties and the leaders concerned for keeping the Tongi purasabha out of hartal jurisdictions on April 10, the election day.

**43 hurt in clash over Azam's visit to Sirajganj**

SIRAJGANJ, Apr 3: About 43 people, including three police men, were wounded as opposition activists banded with the ruling BNP men and fought Jamaat supporters in the town today, reports UNB.

According to witnesses, the clash erupted when some agitated activists of the Jatlyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), the student wing of the BNP, stoned the Jamaat-e-Islami office at Dargapatti during a demonstration.

The JCD activists brought out a procession to protest the scheduled visit of Jamaat Ameer Prof Golam Azam to address a party meeting on April 7 at the Darul Islam Academy premises.

Opposition Awami League, CPB and JSD lent support to the BNP against the 'anti-liberation force', Jamaat, soon after the clash ensued.

Earlier, a 'Sangram Parishad (action council)' had been formed by the major political parties to resist the planned visit of the Jamaat chief in the town.

Police picked up four Jamaat-Shibir activists from the spot.

**2 killed in road accidents in city**

By Staff Correspondent  
Two persons were killed in two road accidents and an armed gang severed one leg of a man in an incident in the city yesterday.

Md Baset, 60, a former sub-inspector of police, was killed when a minibus knocked his motor cycle near Bishwa road crossing on New Airport Road around 10 in the morning.

Police arrested driver Shahidul Islam and seized the minibus.

A 7-year old boy, Al Amin, injured in a road accident at Meradia Sunday evening, succumbed to his injuries at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday.

In another incident, some armed hoodlums cut off the right leg of a man from under the knee and took it away. He was also stabbed in his left leg. The gang attacked Bashir Ahmed, 35, of Kathalbagan area on the Panthapath when he was returning from Dhanmondi thana Sunday night.

**Shamsul praises Radio Bangladesh**

Minister for Information and Commerce M Shamsul Islam yesterday praised the activities of the News section of Radio Bangladesh, saying it was carrying out a great responsibility through disseminating news to the people everyday, reports BSS.

"You are doing your duty with sincerity and devotion, which deserves praise of all," he said while addressing as chief guest the Eid-reunion of officials, employees and newscasters of Radio Bangladesh at its auditorium.

Information Secretary Dr Ekram Hossain attended the function as a special guest. Besides, senior officials and employees of the News section and other sections of Radio Bangladesh attended the function.

The function started with a popular patriotic song sung by senior newscasters.

**Grameen activities**

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also staged a cultural function portraying life in rural Bangladesh.

State Minister for Women Affairs and minister-in-waiting Begum Sarwari Rahman, deputy chief of the US embassy in Dhaka James Nach and a White House press corps accompanied Mrs Clinton.

Braving the searing heat of Chaitra, Hillary Clinton went round the neat little village, heard stories from the Grameen Bank members and exchanged views with the women.

She was told how the village women lived before the bank started operating there and how their lives had changed since they started their self-reliance programmes.

Some of the women narrated stories about their improved lifestyle, their means of livelihood, their increased purchasing power and better position in the family.

The Grameen Bank members informed the US First Lady that not too long ago, many newly-wed women were deserted by their husbands because their families could not pay the dowry, but that has now changed.

Husbands and wives are now living happy lives and women are now more respected and their opinions valued in the family, the villagers told Mrs Clinton.

Replying to a query, Mrs Clinton said she and her husband Bill were impressed by the success story of the Grameen Bank projects and had also introduced replicated models in their home state of Arkansas.

The US First Lady went round a number of stalls set up by Grameen Bank members who displayed the products of different projects, which included handicraft, pottery, jamdani saree, nakshi kantha and hand-woven textiles.

She also visited Uttar Churamankathi village to see one of the country's 29,000 non-formal primary education projects run by the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC).

BRAC Executive Director Fazle Hasan Abed received Mrs Clinton at the school premises.

Abed explained to her how BRAC had introduced the private non-formal education programme in 1985 with only 22 schools.

Mamata Rani Biswas, a perfectly, were designed and made specially for Mrs Clinton and Chelsea by the internationally renowned Bangladeshi fashion model-turned-designer Bibi Russel. The measurements were earlier obtained from the White House itself.

Bibi used all Bangladeshi materials for the khaki-coloured dresses with black and blue checks.

While visiting the jamdani stall, a group of women diligently wrapped Mrs Clinton in a jaridanti saree, the traditional ladies' apparel, woven by them.

Hillary Clinton was so delighted that she gladly posed for the accompanying media, flashing her trademark smile.

**PM : Hillary**

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teacher of the school, described to the US First Lady the functioning of the school.

Mrs Clinton praised the idea of the BRAC-run school, saying "this is a remarkable achievement, and I am happy to see the performance of the children."

She also visited the Panchbaria Balladanga school to see the government's Food-for-Education programme aimed at increasing enrolment of children and reducing drop-outs in rural areas.

Later, she walked through the village road to visit a satellite clinic run by the Concerned Women For Family Planning in the village.

The social workers at the clinic showed her how they encouraged people as regards family planning and child care.

Before her departure for Dhaka, Hillary Clinton posed for pictures with Bangladeshi and US soldiers taking part in a joint disaster preparedness exercise at the local BAF base.

**Ex-adviser**

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Motiul Hossain on the above charges against eight persons, including Rafiquzzaman who had left the country just before Ershad's downfall in 1990. The Bureau described him as the principal accused in the case.

He was reportedly picked up yesterday from his Banani office.

Ramna police confirmed last night that Rafiquzzaman, who was appointed Ershad's advisor for computer affairs with the rank of a deputy minister, was being detained at the station and said that he would be produced before the CMM's court today.

**Heart hospital**

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roaches could be found creeping on the beds," she added.

Some others alleged that doctors and nurses on duty often engage in loud and noisy conversation inside the unit where comatose patients fight for life.

Prof Akhteruzzaman, Director of the Institute, told The Daily Star that the hygiene problem at the hospital is due to the unawareness of the patients.

"Patients throw foodstuff and other left-overs everywhere on the floor. This attracts the insects," he said.

Inside the hospital, no signboards were seen for creating awareness among the patients and their relatives to keep the place clean.

The toilets in the units are dirty and some are broken. In the PCCU (Post Coronary Cardiac Unit), the only toilet with commode facility, vital for patients with arthritis and other physical disability, remains unusable.

The busiest section of the hospital is the outdoor unit. According to hospital officials, 200 to 300 patients with heart ailments visit the unit everyday.



US Secretary of Defence William Perry (R) shakes hands with his Russian counterpart Pavel Grachev (L) during their meeting in the Defence Ministry in Moscow yesterday. Perry and Grachev signed bilateral military agreements. — AFP/UNB photo

**GUL-KHANI**

Our most Beloved Mohammad Abdullah Helal, (40) breathed his Last at 6-15 morning, 2nd April, 1995, due to prolonged Critical illness. He left behind his Wife, two little Daughters, Parents, Brothers and Sisters, Friends & Wellwishers to mourn his Death. The Almighty Allah most Gracious & Merciful Be Pleased on his Departed Soul.

All the relatives, Well-wishers and his Friends are requested to attend his "GUL-KHANI" on Thursday the 6th April, 1995 after 'Asar Prayer'.

Venue-13, Larmini St., Wari, Dhaka-1203. Parents: Mr. & Mrs. Ismail AND all Brothers & Sisters.

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