

Kyodo to host OANA conference in Tokyo

Kyodo News Agency of Japan will host the next conference of the Organisation of Asia-Pacific News Agencies (OANA) in Tokyo from October 21 to 25, a OANA release from Tehran said yesterday, reports BSS.

Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS), the national news agency of Bangladesh, is an active member and regular participant in the discourses organised by the OANA.

The upcoming OANA conference in Tokyo will include discourses on the specific country papers on the "role of national news agencies or media organisations in the wake of economic crises," and "prospects of OANA news exchange via the Internet and modern communications technology," the release added.

Concerted efforts needed to face flood: Sayeed

State Minister for Information Prof Abu Sayeed yesterday emphasised the need for taking up coordinated efforts involving the people's representatives and officials to face the deteriorating flood situation, reports BSS.

"The present government is working hard with sincerity to resolve the problems of the people," he said, while addressing the joint meeting of the officials of Water Development Board and Bera thana and the local representatives.

Prof Sayeed instructed the concerned officials to ensure health services and supply of pure drinking water in the flood affected areas of Bera and Sunagar.

He also directed to maintain law and order in the areas.



Flood-hit people in Kamrangir Char seen leaving their homestead hiring a country boat in search of a safer place. — Star photo

Arsenic contamination in Bangladesh attributed to failure of western scientists

By Staff Correspondent

Western scientists who prescribed to sink tubewells for pure drinking water are responsible for widespread arsenic contamination in Bangladesh if the proposition stands true that the problem was due to over-extracting of ground waters through tubewells.

This was stated by visiting former US Congressman Herb Klien at an international conference on "The Problem of Surface and Ground Water Management, Arsenic Contamination and Desertification Syndrome in Bangladesh" held at the Institute of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) auditorium yesterday.

Quoting David Kinniburgh of the British Geological Survey, Herb Klien said "Much is already clear — and it is deeply embarrassing for western scientists and engineers, for this crisis is entirely due to their failures."

The two-day conference was jointly organised by the IEB and a US-based environmental organisation International Farakka Committee (IFC).

Minister for Water Resources Abdur Razzak inaugurated the conference as chief guest while Herb Klien attended as the guest of honour.

IFC chairman Atiqur R K Eusufzai, general secretary Syed Tipu Sultan, IEB general secretary Akhter Hossain, Dr A K M Zahiduddin Chowdhury of BUET among others addressed the inaugural session with IEB president Prof M A Hannan in the chair.

Abdur Razzak said the government is seriously pursuing studies for a National Water Plan and have taken initiative of undertaking studies for building a barrage and a dam over the Ganges in the southwest.

"Besides helping to review the dying Ganges distributaries in those parts, which affects the Sunderbans, some experts believe the project may help solve the arsenic problem in the southwest by raising the groundwater table with dry season recharge," he said.

Termining the arsenic problem as an "eco-disaster of very serious kind," the minister expressed apprehensions that arsenic contamination may irreparably injure public health across the country.

Razzak said flooding in monsoon and water scarcity in the dry season are two vagaries of nature that people of this country have been living with for generations.

"Creeping salinity and falling water tables affecting vegetation and human habitat have been identified as additional problems arising from developmental interferences in surface water dispensation within the country and in the region as a whole," the minister said.

"When the government and international development agencies were becoming happily assured that Bangladesh by its rural tubewell networks had practically solved the problem of access to pure drinking water

for all, the arsenic menace was discovered," he continued adding "it is said to be caused by falling water tables in the groundwater system inter-linked with surface water system."

Abdur Razzak referred to the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty with India and hoped that the predictability about water flow in our part of the Ganges will help domestic planning of water management in the Ganges basin area.

Former US Congressman Herb Klien said the people of

Bangladesh are the victims of what may be the worst case of arsenic poisoning in history.

"At least 30 to 50 million people in Bangladesh are at risk of arsenic poisoning."

"About 30 known deaths have been attributed to arsenic poisoning so far and over 200,000 persons have already exhibited symptoms of the condition," Klien continued.

"With its wonderful natural resources, Bangladesh may emerge as a leader in South Asia if it can ensure proper utilisation of Ganges water and the

elimination of deadly arsenic from drinking water," he said.

IFC chairman Atiqur R K Eusufzai said his organisation has been lobbying in the USA to help arrest Bangladesh's environmental problems including arsenic contamination and surface water pollution.

A numbers of papers on various issues concerning environmental degradation and arsenic contamination in Bangladesh were presented by experts in two working sessions in the first day of the conference yesterday.

Law & order situation deteriorates alarmingly Sabujbagh turns into a safe haven of terrorists

Sabujbagh, a densely populated thana of Dhaka Metropolitan area, has turned into a safe haven of terrorists, reports UNB.

A teeming area of middle class people and slum dwellers, Sabujbagh has been wrecked by murders in last few weeks.

At least eight murders were committed in the area this month and of them two were housewives. They were slaughtered in separate incidents.

The thana has recently outnumbered other parts of the city in terms of terrorist acts like snatching, extortionism and murder.

According to the inmates of

Sabujbagh, the law and order situation in the area has deteriorated in an appalling proportion.

"We have become hostage in the hands of terrorists... police can hardly take action against them," said a local resident wishing anonymity.

On July 14, three people were killed by some miscreants but police could not yet arrest anyone in connection with the murders.

Local elite told the UNB correspondent that on an average 50 incidents of snatching take place in the area every night.

"Don't think that the mugger are unknown faces... everybody knows them and even police are aware about their misdeeds," said an inmate who fell victim at least twice in the last three months. "But I didn't lodge any complain with the police, you can guess why I didn't," he added.

There have been allegations that the slums of the area are the dens of drug dealers and addicts.

They are trading heroin, phensidyl and other drugs every day with the help of a section of dishonest members of the law-enforcing agency.

A senior police official of the zone told that the government has taken initiatives to establish a new police station in the area with a view to improving law and order there.

'HR efforts of states must be backed by UN system'

Ambassador Anwarul Karim Chowdhury on Friday said the efforts of states in the promotion and protection of human rights must be supported by the United Nations System, reports UNB.

According to a message received in city yesterday from New York the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations said this in his written statement at the Co-ordination Segment of the 1998 Substantive Session of ECOSOC on coordinated follow-up and implementation of the Vienna Declaration of Programme of Action at New York.

"The international community must treat human rights globally in a fair and equal manner on the same footing with same emphasis," he added.

Earlier while he was appreciating the High Commissioner for Human Rights for her initiative to brief the delegation in New York on regular basis he said that the right to development should be the omnipresent central to any human rights initiatives and without which effective implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action are not possible.

The working group on the right to development should reflect the views of the developing countries and induction of LDCs in the working group is essential, he said.

He also stressed the need of wide efforts for the eradication of poverty and described extreme poverty as a serious violation of human rights.

He also urged for the allocation of adequate resources and called for greater coordination throughout the UN system for more effective promotion and protection of the rights of the child.

DU introduces new Hons course

By Staff Correspondent

A Bachelor of Science course in Food and Nutrition Science was formally launched with 25 students of 1997-98 session at the Dhaka University yesterday.

Vice Chancellor of the university Prof A K Azad Chowdhury attended as the chief guest in the inaugural programme of the new honours course at the Institute of Nutrition and Food Science of the university.

Prof Chowdhury urged the teachers, researchers and students of the institute to keep a pioneering role in saving a large number of people specially the mothers and children of the country suffering from a malnutrition.

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