

# Tough Times for Tiger-protection Project

India's grand plan to conserve its remaining Bengal tiger population is in trouble, as corruption and government neglect leaves Project Tiger nearly helpless to combat the growing power of poachers. Gemini News Service reports that unofficial estimates show the number of tigers to be dropping at an alarming rate. A J Singh writes from New Delhi

THE celebration was muted during the recent 25th anniversary of Project Tiger, a government conservation programme in national parks across India. Prime Minister A B Vajpayee declined to attend the project's Silver Jubilee festivities. He chided officials, asking whether enough tigers were left in the country to warrant a celebration. Project Tiger has delayed the release of its 1998 tiger census, prompting fear that the state of the big cat in India is worse than expected. Official statistics say 4,334 tigers roamed India in 1989. Today, the estimates is 3,000, although many observers fear the figure is lower.

"India is soon to lose the distinction of having the largest share of tiger population in the world," says Sutapa Basu, a wildlife expert.

The late prime minister Indira Gandhi launched Project Tiger in 1973. It has since

spread to 23 national parks in 12 states and is funded by national and international agencies. The central government has budgeted 750 million rupees for Project Tiger during the current five-year plan, an increase of 300 million rupees from the previous plan.

But money from New Delhi has often not reached the project authorities and was instead used by states as collateral to secure loans from the World Bank and western donors.

As a result of the money troubles, a lack of political will and little public support for tiger conservation, Project Tiger is in dire straits. As many as 535 on-the-ground staff posts are vacant. The only telephone at the headquarters in Indirawati National Park in Madhya Pradesh has been out of order for a year. In Bandipur National Park in Karnataka state, the Project Tiger field director has no access to the area because a special police task force

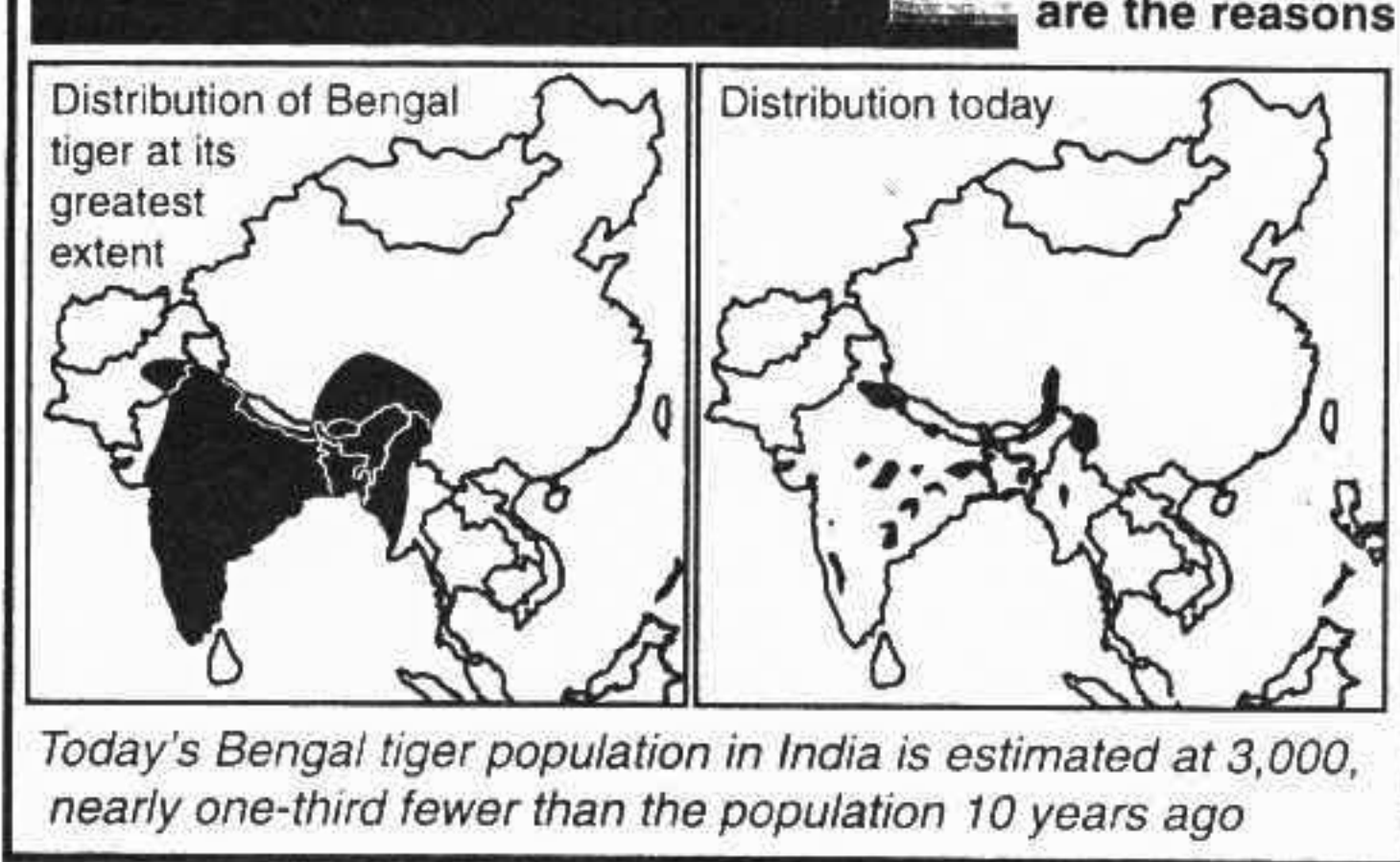
has camped there for two years trying to catch a sandalwood smuggler.

Experts say that New Delhi should send the funding directly to the project authorities and ensure that staff are trained and equipped with the latest weapons, vehicles and equipment to keep the parks free from poaching.

Although habitat destruction is to blame for much of the historical drop in India's tiger population, poaching is cited as the reason for the rapid decline since 1989, when poachers had wiped out tigers in China and started to look across the border.

Poachers "can wipe out the entire tiger population of a particular zone in one monsoon if they want to," says Brijender Singh, a former director of Project Tiger now a member of its executive committee.

No co-ordinated anti-poaching programme is in operation in India. Meanwhile, poachers



carry the latest weapons and courts have had limited success in punishing those who've been caught.

Lately, poachers have taken

# Abdus Samad: A Tribute

by A R Samsul Islam

ABDUS Samad, the wronged hero, passed away silently and surely on 29 January. He had for sometime past been suffering from cancer. World's best treatment was at his beck and call to declare clear and loud pathetic helplessness of much-vaunted man to the decree of fate. The calamity was not unexpected. Still when it really came it was realised that a world of difference is there between the certainty of a misfortune and the actual experience of the shock itself.

The following day the news was covered by only a few newspapers. The Daily Star however brought out the news in its issues of succeeding days somewhat atoning for earlier omissions touching on his bio-data and some achievements. Mohammad Farahuddin did a very fine and fitting job in correcting an information that designated him as an Ex-Addl Secy. He said: "Mr Abdus Samad was not Ex-addl. Secy. He was a Secretary to the government from 17 April 1971. He held this rank until the Martial Law Administration prematurely refused him in early 1988." (DS 1.2.99)

In fact the story that lies at the back of Late Abdus Samad's parting with his job at a time when the Martial Law was in full venom and vengeance is dropped to be mentioned here only because Abdus Samad is dead and nothing should be done that may give anybody any scope to throw him into contention.

Samad read in Pabna Zilla School. He was although First in class examinations till the Matriculation that positioned him Second in the Board. When the mark certificate was sent it was noticed, everybody's horror, that in one paper of English he was given only 59 marks out of 100 while in the other paper of the same subject he scored 81 out of 100 marks. The matter appeared fishy and some fuss also evolved on it. However, in those days of almost complaint-free academic arena Board's announcement of results reigned as correct and supreme. But probably it also rang out another clear indication that some evil star might be following Samad's future course of life.

Samad did Honours and M A in English. But he was not a First Class in either of the two. If memory does not betray, it was short of 05 marks out of 800 in Honours and 04 marks out of 500 in M A. Though in those days English Department of the Dhaka University was known for its avowed reluctance to grant a First Class, Samad's being kept so narrowly off the mark strongly suggested that the wrong that started with

Samad's star was yet to go. The same jinx might have cost him his job prematurely in 1989. It played a full and final course by snatching his life after battering him with cancer for years.

Late Samad was hailed as a valiant Freedom Fighter. The compliments came very late as these were kept pending till his demise. The man who courted the risky, uncertain Liberation War having forsaken the guaranteed comfort of Deputy Commissioner of Sylhet, as pointed out by Mohammad Farahuddin, could not be recognised before death laid its icy hand on him. What a reward for a true Liberation hero!

Nor the lamentation of Deen Mohammad Khan over Samad's death — "A hero, unsung and unlamented" (DS, 1.2.99) — can be dismissed as a mere cynic's utterance.

The above speak certainly of our moral bankruptcy to acknowledge qualities of the celebrities.

Whatever responsibility was given to Samad he could perform it with amazing ease. This was because he was a very thorough man who would not stop unless and until A to Z details of his establishments were amassed on the tips of his fingers. His wonderful memory aided him in this pursuit. This is contrary to what has nowadays become a fashion for the heads of the establishments to ignore to know details belittling them as trifles unworthy of their attention.

Late Samad's thirst for knowledge drove him to be a voracious reader. His study encompassed varied subjects ranging from literature to kitchen recipe. He ran through books relentlessly and was a hot chaser of latest publications. He was readily receptive of new ideas and kept him updated on latest turns and twists of the globe.

This made him a wizard of general knowledge. He was a master of quiz-answers. If memory is not strayed, Samad scored record marks in general knowledge and Current Affairs papers of (central superior services) examinations.

Compared to his scale of reading his writings were small. This might have emanated from the belief that before taking to pen one should be conscientious to read and think quite a lot.

His book titled "Bangladesh: Facing The Future" published in 1983 contains valuable information and suggestions.

Mohammad Farahuddin has vouched: "As a creative writer Mr Samad earned widespread admiration through his book on administrative reorganisation..." (DS, 1.2.99)

"He was also a consultant for World Bank, US Aid and UNDP." (DS, 31.1.99)

His writings amply demonstrated his analytical frame of mind. They were a model of the type labelled as "maximum expressions in minimum words."

Before reading Mohammad Farahuddin's comment (DS, 1.2.99) practically few of us knew that significant contributions were made by late Samad to formulating in 1971 preliminary proposals on constructing the Jamuna Bridge.

"His research on fertiliser during his tenure as BADC chairman made a significant contribution to the development of country's agriculture." (DS, 31.1.99)

It may be remembered that prior to the great fertiliser crisis of the country in recent past he, as chairman of Bangladesh Fertiliser Association, whipped up repeated warnings to the government of the impending calamity suggesting the remedial measures that unfortunately went unheeded by the government.

As a defence secretary to the Mujibnagar government in exile Samad worked with extraordinary vision and skill to ensure a steady supply of arms, ammunitions, food to different war fronts.

While serving as the communication secretary he displayed prodigious energy in revamping the war-shattered communication system of the newly independent country.

After leaving service in 1983 he plunged into the excitements of business entrepreneurship and cut many exploits as a chairman of Sea Resources Ltd, a chairman of Bangladesh Fertiliser Association.

He was truly an accomplished man evincing lively interests in games, sports, arts, science. Till he fell ill he vigorously played tennis, went on huntings, enjoyed bridge games. He donned presidentship of Bangladesh Bridge Association for a long time.

He was a man of rare mental endurance and balance. Statically calm in victories he could remain phlegmatically cool in misfortunes. He was a votary of reasoning and built the castles of life on logic and practicality capable of bearing outward jolts and jostles. Probably to him may not be applicable the slogan that human mind is far from being a canon of logic, that the Arts never lagged behind to respond to the generous promptings of human heart.

No philosophy, no poem can relieve us of the grief and loss that Samad's demise has inflicted.

Profoundest homage to his memory. May his departed soul rest in eternal peace.

## Garfield



## James Bond



## Annual scientific confce of ICDDR,B begins today

The Annual Scientific Conference of ICDDR,B begins in the city today with the theme "vaccine research and environmental health," reports APB.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the two-day long 8th conference and a week-long programme marking the 20th founding anniversary of the ICDDR,B.

International experts will present key-note papers at the Annual Scientific Conference (ASCON), to be attended by over 300 delegates from home and abroad.

Dr George Curlin, Deputy Director of National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Maryland, USA, will present a paper on vaccine research on the concluding day of the meet tomorrow.

Prof R Bradley Sack of the Department of International Health, Johns Hopkins University School of Hygiene and Public Health, USA, will present a paper on environmental health and research.

A total of 57 papers will be presented by ICDDR,B researchers, government officials and NGO representatives.

Briefing newsmen at a press conference at ICDDR,B in the city, Interim Director of the Centre Prof George Fuchs said this year's theme has been chosen as "we want to create awareness for further research on vaccine in developing countries."

The ASCON will discuss prioritising vaccine research besides highlighting major environmental issues like arsenic contamination and water pollution in Bangladesh, he said.

Prof Fuchs said this will be the first time that the conference will be open for non-ICDDR,B scientists.

Dr Mohammad Sirajul Islam, Head of Environmental Microbiology of ICDDR,B gave a grim picture of lead pollution in the city air.

Dhaka is among the few cities in the world where air pollution level is very high.

Quoting a preliminary study on 200 pre-school children, conducted by the Centre in the city's Keraniganj, Mohammadpur and Tejgaon areas, he said 200 micro-gram per litre (MGL) lead contamination were found in them against the WHO standard of 50 (MGL).

The alarming lead pollution due to improper industrial waste disposal is anti-nutrient for children which affects their cognitive development, disrupt intelligence and may cause renal failure.

The press conference was also addressed by Dr Abdullah Baki of the Centre's Public Health Science Division, MA Wahed, Head of Nutritional Biochemistry and Dr Ishraq Zaman of External Relations office.

## Rotary dist confce begins today

By Staff Correspondent CHITTAGONG, Feb 12: The opening session of the Rotary district conference 1999 will be held at the Institution of Engineers here at 9 am tomorrow.

Justice Mustafa Kamal of the Supreme Court will attend the function as chief guest.

PDG capt. VVK Mani will represent Rotary International president James L Lacy at the conference.

## Ferdousi Mazumdar, Nirmalendu get Carey Award

By Staff Correspondent Noted actress and cultural activist Ferdousi Mazumdar and poet Nirmalendu Gun award for their outstanding contributions to their respective fields, said a press release.

William Carey Study and Research Centre, India, confers the award every year for outstanding contributions in the field of art, culture, literature, drama and other fields.

The award includes a gold plated medal, a certificate, and Indian Rs 3,000.

Dr J Russello Chandran of India was the other recipient of this year's award.

The award was handed over in a simple ceremony in Calcutta recently.

## Solo painting exhibition at Shilpangan

A solo painting exhibition of renowned painter and director of Institute of Fine Arts in Dhaka University Mahmudul Haque began at Shilpangan Art Gallery yesterday, reports APB.

Eminent artist Safiuddin Ahmed inaugurated the show while poet Shamsur Rahman and Prof Anisuzzaman were present.

A total of 85 works of the painter done in water and oil colours have been put on display at the 11-day exhibition, which will remain open from 10am to 8pm everyday.

## Urs of Biswa Zaker Manjil begins today

The annual Urs of Biswa Zaker Manjil at Atrashi in Faridpur begins today, reports BSS.

Several lakhs of devotees from home and abroad are expected to attend the four-day Urs of Shah Sufi Khwaja Baba Enayetpur.

Necessary arrangements have already been made for accommodation, food and sanitary facilities for the devotees under the direct supervision of Peer Saheb of Atrashi, Zaker Party sources in the city said.

## Labour minister in Singapore for treatment

Labour and Employment Minister M A Mannan was admitted to the Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore yesterday for treatment of heart disease, an official handout said, reports BSS.

He will undergo a by-pass operation today.

## Feni violence Citizens' rally in city today

A citizens rally to protest violence in Feni will be held today at Jatiya Press Club, reports BSS.

The rally in support of strong administrative measures to stop violence in Feni will be held at 10 am, a press release said on Thursday.

## Weather Temperature may rise

Dry weather is likely to prevail over the country during the next 12 hours, reports UNB.

Slight rise in night temperature is expected over the country during the period, according to the Met Office.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 34.2 degree Celsius was recorded at Sylhet and the lowest 13.5 degree Celsius at Srimongal.

The sun sets today at 5.52 pm and rises tomorrow at 6.33 am. Maximum and minimum temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in Percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	32.2	19.0	67	60
Chittagong	32.8	18.4	72	60
Rajshahi	31.5	15.8	74	58
Khulna	31.3	17.0	71	72
Barisal	31.2	16.8	75	85
Sylhet	34.2	17.4	56	49
Cox's Bazar	33.0	20.0	61	56

## News



A group of artists from Dharmarajik Lalitkala Academy present a chorus song at a cultural programme at the Central Shahid Minar yesterday, the 5th day of the cultural event organised by the Sammilito Sangskritik Jote. — Star photo

## Bangladesh Festival in UK from July 7

The Bangladesh Festival featuring the country's arts and culture will begin in the United Kingdom on July 7 under the auspices of the arts worldwide, reports BSS.

The three-week gala event, predicted to be the largest and most comprehensive celebration of arts and culture of Bangladesh ever held in Europe, will encompass exhibitions, music, cinema, theatre, dance, poetry, crafts, photography, outdoor events and a food festival featuring the Bangladeshi cuisine, according to a message received from London.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Prime Minister Tony Blair are the partners-in-chief of the festival.

The opening celebration of the festival will take place in the heart of 'Bangla town' at East End of London. Over 80 artists will perform at more than 20 venues including some of London's most prestigious arts centres.

Artists with select events will also tour other UK cities like Birmingham, Bradford and Oldham. The second and third generations of British-Bangla artists and young people are playing a vital role in all areas of the festival's production and performance, the message added.

Bricklane, the main hub of most of the Bangladeshes living in the United Kingdom, will be spectacularly transformed into a summer promenade area with the streets closed to traffic during the festival. Visitors and residents will even be able to take a ride on the rickshaws.

The Bangladesh British Chamber of Commerce, Bangladesh High Commission in the United Kingdom, Board of Investment, British Council and British High Commission in Bangladesh are jointly sponsoring the Bangladesh Festival.

The Arts Worldwide, considered to be one of UK's leading promoters of non-European arts, is a registered charity organisation set up in 1982 to foster better understanding between people of different cultural backgrounds.

Since its inception, Arts Worldwide has arranged tours of more than 80 groups of artists internationally, from countries or regions as varied as Algeria, China, Eritrea, Georgia, Guinea, Peru, Tunisia, Venezuela and Zimbabwe, many of them appearing in Europe for the first time.

## Rajpunnah begins

BANDARBAN, Feb 12: The new tribal king of Bomang circle here today began a three-day function for receiving 'najrana' (gift) from his subjects, reports UNB.

Flower petals were showered on King Aung Shwe Prue Chowdhury, dressed in traditional costume, as he arrived in the local Rajbari maidan palace ground with bodyguards in the morning.

Tribesmen, led by their respective headmen, as well as non-tribal people offered their gifts — cock, rice, wine or money — to the king with their heads touching his feet as a mark of respect. The king blessed them.

The programme, locally known as 'Rajpunnah' is an annual event. But it did not take place after King Mong Shwe Prue Chowdhury died two and a half years ago leaving a conflict over who will succeed him.

The matter went up to the High Court and the present king won a legal battle against another claimant, KS Prue, only recently.

## Study circle for BCL activists

State Minister for Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs Obaidul Quader yesterday inaugurated the newly introduced study circle to provide political education and training to the members of Bangladesh Chhatra League on the Dhaka University campus, reports BSS.

Members of different units of BCL will meet in the study circle at least once a week.

Inaugurating the circle, the former president of the BCL, Obaidul Quader, said there was no alternative to appropriate training for the members of the student bodies to change and develop the prevailing socio-political situation of the country.

Presided over by president of the BCL Central Executive Committee Bahadur Bapary, the inaugural function, held at the UCS's Cafeteria, was also addressed by general secretary Ajoy Ker Khokon and assistant secretary of the study circle Gollam Sarwar Mamun.

BCL will observe the "Shaheed Basunia Day" today in a befitting manner. The then student leader Raufun Basunia was killed during the anti-autocracy movement.