

Energy experts for encouraging power projects in private sector

Energy experts from home and abroad have recommended that the government should prepare a master plan on priority basis for the development of small hydropower projects in Bangladesh, keeping in view the objective of poverty alleviation, reports UNB.

At a four-day short course that ended at the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) yesterday, they suggested the government to encourage small, commercial hydropower projects in private sector and ensure facilities like banking and guaranteed buy-back.

Experts also suggested comprehensive survey of potential hydropower sites and to take up feasibility studies and pilot projects on urgent basis.

They felt the need of a separate cell or agency or board for the development of renewable energy, including hydropower plant up to 25 MW.

Some 26 experts from India, Nepal, Canada, Iran, UK, Japan and Bangladesh presented papers at the course, organised jointly by Centre for Energy Studies (CES), BUET and Alternative Hydro Energy Centre (AHEC), University of Roorkee, India.

Winrock International US-AID, New Delhi, and ICIMOD, Nepal sponsored the course.

About 125 professionals from different government, semi-government and autonomous bodies, and non-government organisations (NGOs) attended the course.

Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak, inaugurating the course on Thursday, acknowledged the potentials of small hydroelectric plants in Bangladesh and sought specific suggestions from the experts.

BUET Vice-Chancellor Prof Nooruddin Ahmed and profes-

sor of the university's Mechanical Engineering Department Dr M A Taher Ali also spoke at the inaugural session.

After detailed deliberations over four days, energy experts yesterday came up with a set of recommendations.

They suggested that the rural community and the NGOs must be involved in the small hydropower projects that should also incorporate rural irrigation and water supply.

Experts felt that the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), Power Development Board (PDB), Water Development Board (WDB) and Rural Electrification Board (REB) should cooperate extensively for speedy development of small hydropower in the country.

The Centre for Energy Studies at BUET needs to be strengthened to act as a facilitator in the field of renewable energy, they said.

Ex-education minister Jamiruddin Sircar says Projects for spreading education being closed down

Former education minister Jamiruddin Sircar yesterday held "politicisation of the examination conducting system" by the government responsible for massive adoption of unfair means in the on-going HSC examinations, reports UNB.

"Politicisation in appointing investigators, and Deputy Commissioners and magistrates in overall supervision are the root cause of unfair means in the HSC examinations. Change of examination centres also contributed to it," he observed.

At a press conference at BNP central office, the former education minister read out a five-page statement listing various steps of the past BNP government to improve education sector.

He said many steps taken by BNP government, including stipend for female students of class VI to X, and various projects for spreading education are being closed down.

Sircar said retirement bene-

fit for non-government teachers introduced during Begum Khaleda Zia's govt has been stopped.

He said it was the BNP government which increased government contribution to the salary of non-government secondary school teachers to 80 per cent from 60 per cent.

Replying to a question, he said BNP did not support the Quid-e-Khuda Education Commission report as its contents did not consider general education with modern science and computer education.

Asked for his remarks on a government plan for handing over primary schools to NGO's Sircar reacted sharply, saying, "It would be a suicidal step. There would be natural death of primary schools."

BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said educational institutions would be freed from terrorism if his party returns to power. He said education system would be simplified to bring it within the

reach of the common people.

He said BNP would reintroduce teachers' retirement allowance, increase the number of teachers, facilities for students, ensure free education for females up to intermediate level.

Bhuiyan said the government in a planned way is trying to destroy the educational institutions. "Most of the educational institutions have been turned into arms depot," he added.

"Ruling party backed students and terrorists are brandishing arms and killing students. But no action is taken against them."

Depicting a grim situation in education arena, BNP secretary general said a small portion of students are going abroad for education at the cost of hard earned foreign currency while at home 99.5 per cent students are passing their days in utter frustration.

Amanullah Aman MP also spoke at the press conference.



Artist performing a dance-drama 'Kazal Rekha' on the opening day of the cultural festival, organised by the Greater Mymensingh Cultural Forum, at the Shishu Academy auditorium in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Zillur calls for social resistance against terrorism

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Zillur Rahman yesterday called upon all cultural organisations to build up a strong resistance against terrorism and social repression for making a happy and prosperous Bangladesh, reports BSS.

"You, the cultural activists can play an important role to build the county with the spirit of the War of Liberation by removing all sorts of terrorism and repression from society," he said while inaugurating a six-day Greater Mymensingh Cultural Festival in the Shishu Academy Auditorium in the city.

Chaired by eminent litterateur and president of the Greater Mymensingh Cultural Forum Rahat Khan, the inaugural function was also addressed, among others, by State Minister for Health and Family Welfare Dr M Amanullah, Vice-Chancellor of Jahangirnagar University Prof Alauddin Ahmed, Syed Aminul Haq, Rashidul Hasan Shelly and Engineer Mohammad Yunus.

Zillur Rahman said healthy practice of culture is very much needed to build a civil society. "Healthy practice of culture can play a vital role to build a secular nation by removing religious fanaticism and fundamentalism from society."

He said the national culture

Teachers urged to help protect environment

Environment and Forest Minister Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury yesterday urged the teachers, including social workers, to work together for sustainable development of the country by preserving the forest resources and maintaining the ecological balance, reports UNB.

She said this while talking to a delegation of Dhaka University teachers at the conference room of her ministry. DU Vice Chancellor Prof A K Azad Chowdhury led the delegation.

The minister also called upon all concerned to come forward to play their due role in building up the students as patriotic citizens and skilled manpower.

During the meeting, they also discussed the human capacity building for clean development mechanism and emphasised the importance of integrated training programme for the university students, teachers and government and non-government officials to raise their awareness level about the environment.

Referring to the government's efforts to make the people aware about the environment, the minister assured the delegation of all possible help of the government for protecting the environment.

Other members of the delegation are Pro-VC Prof Shahadat Ali, Prof Muniruddin Ahmed, Prof Kazi Shahidullah, Prof M Asaduzzaman, Prof M Muhibubur Rahman, Prof Khadaker Nazimuddin and Prof Shahed Hasan.

High officials of the ministry were also present.

Talks on demands of T&T unions soon: Nasim

Post and Telecommunications and Home Minister Mohammad Nasim yesterday said the authorities will hold dialogue soon with the trade union leaders of T&T board to resolve their various demands.

Talking to BSS, the Telecommunications Minister said if the demands of the unions were justified, the authorities would consider those and take necessary steps for their implementation in phases.

Bangladesh Telephone & Telegraph Board (BT&T) officials said the trade union leaders and the authorities have been in disagreement since mid-April this year following issuance of an order for transferring a number Sub-Assistant Engineers.

The officials alleged that seven trade unions of BT&T have simultaneously launched agitation programmes, "violating administrative norms," to press home their four-point demand including withdrawal of the transfer order.

The BT&T officials said the trade union leaders also allegedly ransacked the T&T Chairman office and "manhandled" some officials on April 19.

Explaining the four-point demands, President of T&T Sramik Karmachari Federation M A Hamid told BSS that the demands include discussion on master-roll workers, resumption of maintenance work and cancellation of the order of shifting revenue (South) office.

Commenting on the demands, the BT&T officials pointed out that these demands are "mere administrative matters" and have no relations with overall welfare of the general workers and employees of the board.

Hamid said the trade union leaders already discussed their demands with the Telecommunications Minister on April 24 and T&T Secretary on April 27 but no tangible results were achieved as yet.

Meanwhile, it was learnt that the donor agencies had been repeatedly putting pressure on the government to limit the trade union activities in view of the union's growing interference in T&T administrative affairs.

Fresh violence claims 22 in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, India, May 9: Thirteen Muslim guerrillas and nine others were killed in renewed separatist violence overnight in the northern Indian state of Kashmir, officials said here today, reports AFP.

The intensified violence came amid preparations to shift the headquarters of Kashmir's provincial government from the heated plains of Jammu city to cooler Srinagar for the summer, they said.

Security was up as senior state bureaucrats and politicians prepared to resume office in Srinagar's fortified government headquarters, which closes before the onset of the Himalayan winter in Kashmir in October.

Muslim militants murdered a police officer today in Srinagar, triggering a retaliation by personnel of the city police department in the area, officials and witnesses said.

Police constable Sabzar Ahmad, a Muslim, was shot at point-blank range in Srinagar's crowded Safakadal residential and commercial district while he was returning home.

Eyewitnesses said enraged

colleagues of the killed constable cordoned the area and beat up residents and disrupted a private wedding party in progress.

"The policemen beat up elderly people, women, children and shopkeepers besides raiding a house where a marriage ceremony was in progress," a witness said.

A state government spokesman, meanwhile, said four Indian soldiers and six Muslim militants were killed and in three separate gunbattles in Kashmir's frontier Rajouri district on Saturday night.

A guerrilla belonging to the Hizbul Mujahideen group was blown up when he tried to set off explosives in nearby Poonch district, he said, adding that Kashmiri rebels also tried to destroy a police station.

Six more Muslim separatist guerrillas were gunned down by soldiers in separate encounters, while four civilians died during the past 24 hours elsewhere in Kashmir.

Bodies of three Indian soldiers abducted by Muslim separatists in October last year were

also found near the Pakistani border, officials said today.

Gunmen kidnapped the soldiers along with three Kashmiri labourers at a mountainous village in Uri district seven months ago. The labourers were released later.

The soldiers' badly decomposed bodies were recovered Saturday during a army search in a region about 130 kilometers (81 miles) north of Srinagar, Kashmir's summer capital.

Muslim guerrillas have been waging a bloody campaign since 1989 to break away from India. The separatist drive has left more than 25,000 people dead.

India and Pakistan dispute the ownership of Kashmir and each control part of the picturesque region. They have fought two of their three wars during the past 52 years over Kashmir.

India accuses Pakistan of arming and training the Muslim separatists. Islamabad denies the allegations but offers diplomatic and moral support to what it describes as the Kashmiris' just struggle for self-rule.

Cultural festival Seven awarded gold medals

The Greater Mymensingh Cultural Forum yesterday awarded gold medals and crests to seven persons for their outstanding contribution in different cultural fields, reports BSS.

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Zillur Rahman handed over the gold medals and crests to the recipients while inaugurating a six-day "Greater Mymensingh Cultural Festival" as the chief guest at the Shishu Academy.

As an organiser, Khandker Asaduzzaman, MP got Syed Nazrul Islam Gold Medal, Prof Al-Mujahedi received Poet Hasan Hafizur Rahman Gold Medal, industrialist Yusuf Babu secured Jahurul Islam Gold Medal and artist Biren Shome got Shilpacharya Joyntul Abedin Gold Medal.

Besides, Dr Ashraf Siddique received Poet Chandrabati award for his outstanding contribution in folk culture, Syed Aminul Haq was awarded crest as a good organiser while eminent actor Anwar Hossain received Sattayaji Roy crest.

The minister said the government has taken various pragmatic steps for the flourishing of our national culture. "The government of Sheikh Hasina for the first time has inaugurated 'Dhaka Nattaya Monch' for practising healthy cultural activities," he said.

He said steps have already been taken to build up another Nattaya Monch. "Steps have also been taken to expedite the activities of Shishu Academy and Shilpakala Academy at district levels," he said.

He urged cultural activists to expedite their activities against all undemocratic activities in the country.

Later, the Minister handed over gold medals and crests among the recipients for their outstanding contribution in different cultural fields.

Prof Muzaffar's call to build a non-communal Bangladesh

President of National Awami Party (NAP) Prof Muzaffar Ahmed yesterday urged all democratic, non-communal and progressive forces and individuals to come forward for building the country as a democratic and non-communal one in a true sense, reports BSS.

"We urge all political and social forces and individuals who believe on the four principals of the liberation war — Democracy, Socialism, Bengali Nationalism and Secularism — to come forward avoiding any sort of escapist mentality," he said.

Prof Ahmed was expressing his views on the existing socio-political issues of the country at a press conference in the afternoon at the party office.

Criticising the silent role of the masses he said, "Silence of the huge number of honest people is helping a few number of corrupt and dishonest men to exploit society."

He alleged that the present government as well as the major oppositions failed to solve the existing crises of the country.

Among others, party leaders Advocate Muhammad Nurul Islam, Amena Ahmed, Chowdhury Khurshid Alam, Dr Anisul Haque and Advocate Shamsul Haque were present at the press conference.

Kalim Sharafi accorded reception

On his completing 75 years of age, a legend was fondly given a tumultuous honour with grand reception by artists and art connoisseurs in the imposing auditorium of National Museum in the city yesterday evening, reports BSS.

Kalim Sharafi, a soul dedicated Rabindra Sangeet artiste as well as a fearless soldier who relentlessly fought all evils and backwardness during his whole life, completed 75 years of his age on Saturday with pride and struggle crowning his glorious career.

Rabindra Sangeet Shilpi Sangstha and National Museum jointly accorded the reception for the living legend marking the platinum jubilee of his chequered life.

As he was stepping slowly up the auditorium flanked by Prof. Kabir Chowdhury, Prof Mustafa Nurul Islam, Poet Shamsur Rahman, Mahbub-ul-Alam Chowdhury, Prof. Abdul Mannan Chowdhury and Shamsuzzaman Khan, 75 candles poured their soft light on the already beaming face of Kalim Sharafi.

The occasion soon turned into a serene beauty with the eye-catching smile of Prof Nowshin Khatun, the proud wife of Kalim Sharafi, who calmly followed her dear old husband up to the main dais to the repeated claps and applause of the cheering packed audience.

The ardent fans and music lovers received their most beloved Kalim Bhai by showering rose petals and singing 'Ore Sundara Mori Mori' and Tumi Je Surer Agun Lagye Dile Mor Pranay', two famous songs of Tagore which soon created an atmosphere of ever new inside the large auditorium.

Bank account for helping Kosovar refugees

By Staff Correspondent

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has opened two bank accounts with American Express Bank in the city to receive donations for the Kosovar refugees.

A press release issued from Dhaka office of UNHCR yesterday said that prospective donors can send cheques in favour of "UNHCR Special Account Kosovo" to account numbers: 75609967 (US dollars) and 71733787 (Taka). Besides, account payee cheques may be sent to UNHCR Dhaka office at House No NE (N) 8, Road No 90, Gulshan circle two.

UNHCR took this initiative in line with the request made by State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abdul Hasnain Chowdhury during a discussion on Kosovo in Dhaka on May 5, the press release added.

According to UNHCR, the estimated number of refugees and displaced people in Kosovo has reached more than 7.18,000.

English teachers want to improve their standard

Teachers of English have demanded a separate and exclusive training academy in the country to enhance their professional competence, says a press release.

The demand was made at the Eid reunion meeting of Bangladesh English Teachers' Association (BETA) on Friday at the Officers' Club in the city with its president Professor Anisur Rahman in the chair.

Tom Hunter, Team Leader, English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP) was the guest of honour. A good number of English teachers representing secondary colleges — both government and non-government — attended the function. Two expatriate training advisers of ELTIP — Andrew Morris and Jules Morris — were present as special guests.

English teaching has to be learner-centered so that learning English becomes a joyful experience, Hunter observed.

BETA president appealed to the English teaching community of the country to play a more role effectively to stop copying in the ongoing HSC examinations across the country.

The reunion was rounded off with solo and chorus presentation of Bengali and English songs.

BETA organising secretary Ahmed Ahsanuzzaman conducted the meeting.

Cultural troupe enthalls Delhi audience

A brilliant performance by a Bangladesh cultural troupe enthralled the Delhi audience at the packed Kamani auditorium here Saturday evening, according to a message received here, reports BSS.

The 30-member troupe led by Azad Rahman, Director-General of Shilpakala Academy presented to the delight of the crowd the centuries-long cultural heritage of Bangladesh through songs and dances.

The troupe is in India on a week-long visit at the invitation of the Indian Council for Cultural Relation (ICCR). The troupe will present two more shows in Haldia and Chandan Nagar in West Bengal.

Among others present at the Saturday evening's show were former chief minister of West Bengal, Siddhartha Shankar Roy, Bangladesh High Commissioner to India, Director-General of the ICCR, journalists of Delhi and a large number of Bengalee speaking Indians.

The function opened with "Sangeet Motirri Bandhan (song knows no boundary)," a song which captured the power of music as a bond of human relationship throughout the world.

It was then followed by different number of songs and dances ranging from folk to classical to modern ones. Renowned singers like Sabina Yasmin, Abida Sultan, Shakile Zafra, Subho Dev, Kiran Chandra Roy, Rathindranath Roy, Yasmeen Mushtary and Mohiuzzaman Chowdhury enchanted the huge audience with their brilliant performance.

Buses, trucks stay off Sirajganj roads

SIRAJGANJ, May 9: Following two separate incidents, buses and trucks stayed off the road here as the transport unions went for wildcat strike leaving passengers and cargo stranded, reports UNB.

The bus drivers stopped plying their vehicles to all routes from Sirajganj Bus Terminal after one of their colleagues coming from Enayetpur was beaten up by some students in Khukun area in the morning over delay in giving side to a motorcycle.

Injured driver Jabbar, 35, was admitted to hospital. The agitated drivers said they would not operate buses until the culprits were arrested.

Xinhua Dhaka Bureau blasts NATO attack on Chinese Embassy

Xinhua Dhaka Bureau condemned NATO bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade in which one of the news agency's correspondents was killed, among others, reports UNB.

In a statement, the Chinese news agency expressed "utmost indignation at the barbarian NATO raid" on the embassy in Yugoslav capital.

"The attack is a severe violation of Chinese sovereignty and a random violation of the Vienna Conventions of Diplomatic Relations and norms of international relations, as well as a series trampling of the right of journalists worldwide," said the Xinhua bureau.

Diarrhoea claims 38 in Patuakhali

PATUAHALI, May 9: Diarrhoea broke out in the district in an epidemic form, claiming 38 lives and affecting some 4,000 people in six thanas in last month, reports UNB.

Health officials said the situation is getting worse day by day as the waterborne disease continued to engulf new areas of the district, affecting 70 people on Saturday.

However, District Civil Surgeon office confirmed 38 deaths and put the number of affected people at 2,893.

Officials said five people died in Sadar thana, 18 in Galachipa, nine in Baulfal, four in Dashmina, one in Mirzaganj thana and another in Patuakhali General Hospital.

They said diarrhoea affected 474 people in Sadar, 281 in Galachipa, 688 in Baulfal, 425 in Dashmina, 245 in Mirzaganj and 250 in Kalapara thanas.

As of today, some 530 diarrhoeal patients were admitted to Sadar Hospital and of them one died.

Civil Surgeon Dr Mohammad Saidur Rahman told UNB that 99 medical teams have been working in the affected areas to combat the disease.

Rahman said he has sent a proposal to the authorities concerned for setting up of a separate diarrhoeal ward in Sadar Hospital.

Health officials attributed the widespread breakout of the waterborne disease to scarcity of pure drinking water and absence of sanitary latrine in rural areas.

Local sources said some 5,000 tubewells in the affected areas remained out of order for long forcing the rural people to drink pond water.

They said short supply of IV saline and lack of accommodation in hospitals added fuel to the sufferings of the patients.

25 DU teachers urges trial of war criminals in special tribunal

Twenty-five pro-Pink Panel teachers of Dhaka University yesterday called for setting up of a special tribunal for the trial of 1971 war criminals, reports UNB.

In a statement, they also urged the government to take steps for withdrawal of the "so-called cases" filed against those involved in presentation of the programme," they said.

"These rajakars and al-badars could not dare to resort to such behaviour if they were tried for perpetrating barbaric acts against the Bangalees during the Liberation War," the statement said.

"Being frightened by the process of unfolding the truth, this identified national traitors led by Golam Azam, have recently filed a defamation case of Tk 17 crore with a First Class Magistrate Court in Dhaka against those involved in presentation of the programme," they said.

"These rajakars and al-badars could not dare to resort to such behaviour if they were tried for perpetrating barbaric acts against the Bangalees during the Liberation War," the statement said.

The signatories to the statement include Prof KM Saad Uddin, Prof Muntasir Mamun, Prof Ahsanul Haq, Prof AFM Khodadad Khan, Prof M Abu Zafar, Prof Kazi Nurul Islam, Prof Hashem Khan, Prof Rawshan Ara, Prof A K Monwar Uddin Ahmed, Prof Zarina Rahman Khan, Prof Azizunnahar Islam and Prof Syed Manjurul Islam.



Students of the Dhaka University brought up a procession in the city yesterday demanding effective role of the United Nations in bringing back the refugees of Kosovo to their homeland and holding trial of the war criminals.