

The newly-appointed High Commissioner of Pakistan Iqbal Ahmad Khan presented his credentials to President Shahabuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban yesterday. — PID photo

'Use of GIS tech may help reduce havoc of disasters'

The use of remote sensing and GIS technology for advance flood preparedness will greatly reduce flood damages and tackle aftermath of flooding, reports UNB.

Noting with delight the benefits of advance technology, LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Zillur Rahman stressed the need for its application to reduce the havoc of the natural calamity.

The Minister was speaking at the inaugural session of a five-day training programme on 'Use of Remote Sensing and GIS technology in facing the flood and disaster' at LGED Bhaban in the city yesterday.

Some 21 officials from government and non-government organisations are taking part in the training. It was jointly organised by the Local Government Engineering Department and the Asian Institute of Technology in Thailand under joint auspices of Japan National Space Development Agency and Japan Remote Sensing Technology Centre.

The Minister expressed hope that remote sensing and GIS technology will provide important information ahead of the calamity. Advance information will facilitate the authorities to take adequate steps for saving lives, lessen the damage to

crops and properties, help conduct relief operation and significantly reduce adverse impact on environment.

The inaugural session was informed that some 20 organisations were using the modern technology in Bangladesh and LGED was playing a key role in introducing GIS technology.

Chief of application centre of ATI Dr Lal Samarakoon presented the keynote speech at the function.

Deputy Minister for LGRD Saber Hossain Chowdhury, former advisor of the caretaker government Zillur Reza Chowdhury and LGED chief engineer Monwar Hossain also spoke.

Zillur Rahman has said that severe flooding often hinders social, economic development and to address this problem, policies must be responsive to the changing resource base.

Deputy Minister for LGRD Saber Hossain Chowdhury said there is no other way to overcome the situation using latest technology that can yield much benefit for us.

In the keynote speech, Dr Lal Samarakoon said, 'It is observed in most part of this region that there is poor understanding among policy-makers and experts working on GIS and remote sensing.'

'One of our objectives is to

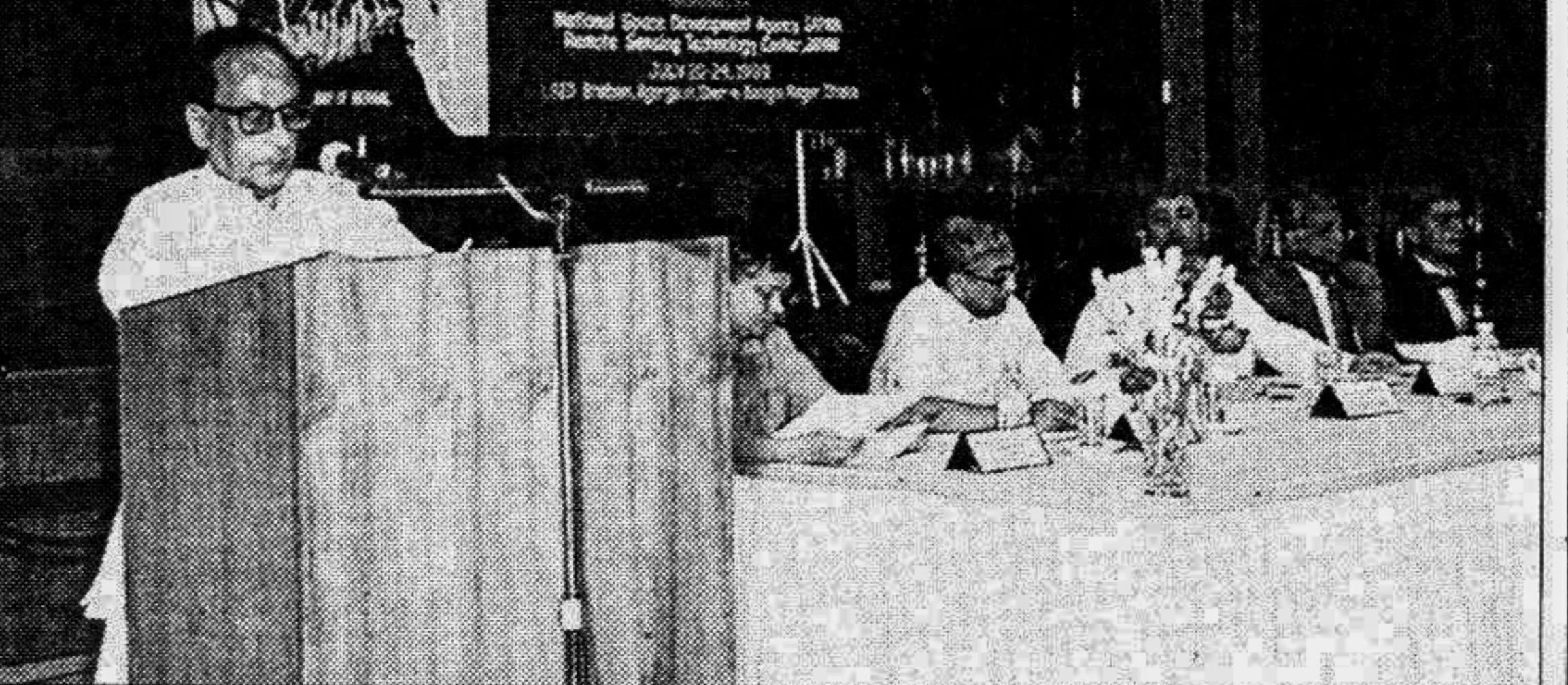
bridge the gap between these two groups providing an environment to investigate the utilisation of GIS database and remote sensing data for flood mitigation works,' he added.

Chairing the function, secretary of ministry of water resources, Dr A T M Shamsul Huda Chowdhury said, 'Since 1980 flood we have achieved a tremendous success, both strategically and technically, to address flood but there is lack of coordination among the various related institutions.'

Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury emphasised the need for a national centre for GIS and remote sensing that will help refrain from a lot of duplication that is taking place in different agencies.

Chief Engineer of LGED Monwar Hossain Chowdhury said that GIS Unit of LGED has completed digitalisation of thana base map at 50,000 scale for the whole country which comprise of various layers including administrative boundaries, physical infrastructures, educational institutions, settlement pattern and other agriculture and socio-economic infrastructure.

Now these thana digital data set are being combined to produce district base map at 1:150,000 scales.



The five-day long 'Caravan Training Programme on Flood Disaster Mitigation using Remote Sensing and GIS' began in the city yesterday. LGRD Minister Zillur Rahman inaugurated the training programme which was jointly organised by LGED and the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) Bangkok.

US Army Gen leaves

Commanding General of US Army Pacific Lt Gen Edwin P Smith left yesterday after a four-day goodwill visit to Bangladesh, reports UNB.

Chief of Army Staff Lt Gen Muhammad Mustafizur Rahman and other senior military officers saw him off at the Zia International Airport, says an ISPR press release.

The Charge d'Affairs of the US Embassy in Dhaka Theodore A Nist and other embassy officials were also present at the airport.



Kaikobad's death anniversary today

By DU Correspondent
The 48th death anniversary of the great poet Kaikobad will be observed today with due respect.

A poet of Bengali nationalism and Muslim renaissance, Kaikobad was born in a village of Nowabganj thana in the district Dhaka in 1857.

Kaikobad wrote 13 verses, of which eight were published in his life-time and five after his death in 1951, said a press release.

To mark the day, Kaikobad Shahitya Mojlish will organise a discussion on July 24. Poet and researcher Abdul Mannan Syed and poet Al Mujahed will be the discussants at the function presided over by Dr Ashraf Siddique.

Sayeed to open Bangla TV channel in London July 25

Bangla TV Limited (BTL), a London-based Bangla Television channel, will be launched on July 25 in fulfillment of the long aspirations of Bengali community living in Europe and North American states, reports BSS.

State Minister for Information Prof Abu Sayeed will formally inaugurate the channel, putting on air the BTL programmes and news bulletins to be produced on the basis of the current happenings. Prof Sayeed left here for London last night, an official handout said.

The BTL, as per an agreement signed here in February last with the government, will purchase entertainment programmes from Bangladesh Television (BTV) for telecast.

'With this, the revenue income of BTV will increase,' the handout said adding, BTL will telecast daily news bulletins and programmes on current events free of cost.

It is expected that BTL will be able to uphold the image as well as values and spirit of the War of Liberation, culture, tradition and heritage of Bangladesh abroad through its programmes.

Dhaka Collegiate School honours 7 ex-students

Dhaka Collegiate School has honoured its seven former students of 1961 Matriculation Batch who have earned fame at home and abroad, reports BSS.

The school at a function on July 15 honoured Asif Ali, Controller General of Accounts, Habibur Rahman Khan, Chairman of Bangladesh Forest Industries Development Corporation, Dr A M Shafiqul Alam, Professor of Chemistry of Dhaka University, Musarrat Hussain, Vice-Principal of the Academy for Planning and Development, Engineer Haifuzur Rahman, now in United Kingdom, Shafiqur Rahman Khan, working with the United Nations in Vienna and Manjurul Ahsan Khan, president of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB).

On July 22, the Finance Minister will exchange views with the local people at Golacharhi and discuss with the local representatives and the high government officials about the progress of work of different development projects at the local Circuit House.

He will return to Dhaka in the afternoon.

16 get life term for murder in Sherpur

SHERPUR, July 20: A court here today sentenced 16 people to life imprisonment with a fine of Tk 2,000 each, in default to suffer one year more rigorous imprisonment in a murder case, reports UNB.

The convicts were Joynuddin, 77, Khoyeruddin, 50, Chooyeruddin, 70, Akkas Ali, 68, Sultan Miah, 30, Chan Miah, 40, Mustafizur Rahman, 28, Golum Mostafa, 25, Altaf Miah, 40, Tofazzal, 65, Alaluddin, 25, Helaluzzin, 20, Motaleb, 50, Motif, 35, Jomshed Ali, 35 and Miaz Ali 32.

The District and Session Judge also acquitted two other accused — Kala Miah, 30, and Sajjad, 22 — as the offence was not proved against them.

According to the prosecution, the accused people attacked Mizanur Rahman at Biharpur village in Nokla thana when he tried to prevent them from harvesting crops from his paternal land on March 31, 1996.

Meanwhile, Minister for Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs, Karpa Ranjan Chakma, Chairman of the task force on repatriated tribals and internal refugees rehabilitation affairs, Dipankar Talukdar, MP and Chairman of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board, Bir Bahadur, MP have already reached here to receive the visitors.

According to the tour programme made available to BSS, the team would likely to exchange views with the chairman and councillors of Chittagong Hill Tracts regional council tomorrow at the beginning of the team's business.

The Minister will leave M A Hannan International Airport for Rangamati by road after his arrival.

He will address a meeting of CHT Regional Council at the council office and review the development activities of three Hill Districts at a meeting of the government officers and autonomous bodies at the Rangamati Zila Parishad Hall in the afternoon.

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A discussion meeting was held at Bheramara Thana Parishad premises on the occasion. Dr Moshfiqul Islam, Thana Health Administrator, presided over the meeting.

Pak envoy presents credentials to President

Pakistan's newly appointed High Commissioner to Bangladesh Iqbal Ahmad Khan presented his credentials to President Shahabuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban yesterday, reports UNB.

Welcoming the High Commissioner, the President said Bangladesh and Pakistan enjoy cordial bilateral relations based on common perceptions on the matters of mutual, regional and international concern.

Both the countries share common views which helped in further consolidating the bilateral relations. There are ample scopes of strengthening cooperation in the fields of trade, commerce, and investment and the private sector have a special role to play in this regard, Shahabuddin said.

Iqbal said Pakistan attaches highest importance to the relations with Bangladesh, which plays a prominent role in regional and international affairs.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that the state of Bangladesh-Pakistan relations is excellent. It has become imperative that the two countries do their utmost to promote and strengthen bilateral economic and commercial ties, the Pak envoy said.

He said the economic cooperation between the two countries is further complimented by the strong commitment to regional economic cooperation as envisaged by SAARC.

Earlier, on his arrival at Bangabhaban, the High Commissioner was given a guard of honour by the President's guard regiment. He took salute and inspected the guard.

Shifting of courts from Old Dhaka demanded

By Court Correspondent

Speakers at a meeting demanded yesterday at the auditorium of Dhaka Bar Association (DBA) shifting of the courts from the old part of the city.

The meeting was presided over by Special Public Prosecutor Momtaz Uddin Mehdi. Among others, secretary of DBA Advocate Abdullah Abu, former presidents of the association Syed Rezaur Rahman, Sarder Suruzaman and former secretaries Altafuzzal Ahmed, Nuruzzaman Nami attended the meeting.

Speakers said that the present court building is located at such a place that is in a corner of the old city. Lawyers and at least ten thousands of people, who gather at the court premises for litigation purposes from different parts of the city, have to face huge traffic jam everyday at the surrounding areas of the court premises.

This jam causes waste of time, money and suffering of the people who come to the court for litigation purposes, the speakers said.

They urged the government to shift the courts at a suitable place in the city.

Outer anchorage

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Several hundred mechanised boats are engaged in carrying the smuggled goods to Patenga, Sitakundu, Anwara, Patiya, Muraliagh and Cox's Bazar.

The smuggled goods are unloaded from the mechanised boats whose owners have 'secret deals' with police also, the sources claimed.

Most of the city markets are flooded with smuggled goods, which are also supplied to Dhaka and other places.

Heads of dev missions visit Rangamati today

RANGAMATI, July 20: The heads of development missions in Bangladesh are due here tomorrow on a two-day visit to take stock of the development activities being carried out in the region and possible expansion, reports BSS.

The heads of World Bank, Asian Development Bank, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Children Emergency Fund and World Food Programme missions in Bangladesh were stated to be in the entourage of Finance Minister, Shah A M S Kibria during his two-day visit to the hilly town of Rangamati.

Meanwhile, Minister for Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs, Karpa Ranjan Chakma, Chairman of the task force on repatriated tribals and internal refugees rehabilitation affairs, Dipankar Talukdar, MP and Chairman of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board, Bir Bahadur, MP have already reached here to receive the visitors.

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A discussion meeting was held at Bheramara Thana Parishad premises on the occasion. Dr Moshfiqul Islam, Thana Health Administrator, presided over the meeting.

Population Day observed in Bheramara

BHERAMARA, July 20: International Population Day was observed here recently in a befitting manner. Health and Family Planning Department and different non-government organisations arranged various programmes to mark the day, reports BSS.

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The outgoing French Ambassador to Bangladesh Renee Veyret made farewell call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office yesterday. — PID photo

Gas exploration inadequate

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Unocal/Occidental, Ocean Energy/UMC and Tullow/Oakland hardly ensure an additional production of 300 mmcf/d of gas by 2004-2005.

'Power sector is the major consumer of natural gas. It consumes around 44 per cent of the total gas produced now. In the coming years, we are also expecting growth in the industrial sector that is currently consuming 10 per cent,' said another expert.

Considering growth in other sectors, including the fertiliser sector that consumes 36 per cent, the additional demand for gas may exceed 600 mmcf/d in 2005, he maintained.

The demand for power and gas grows by 10 per cent per year. This means a lot. A demand for 5000 MW increases to 5500 MW in the next year and to 6050 MW in the following year and so on. The demand rises at an ever increasing rate,' the expert said.

The government is now pursuing a number of private or independent Power Projects (IPP) which will generate 1330 MW of power by 2003-2004. Government agencies are also going on with a number of gas-based projects which will produce 1179 MM of power.

Besides these, the government is negotiating with some private companies for setting up of four more gas-based power plants with 400 MW generation capacity.

'To generate 100 MW of power for 24 hours, we need 25 mmcf/d gas. So we will be needing 332.5 mmcf/d gas for all these private sector power plants to generate 1330 MW,' said a source.

But as per practice, the plants will operate at 75 per cent capacity on an average and we will require around 232 to 250 mmcf/d gas,' said the

source.

'All these power plants are being built for 25 years. So we will have to ensure gas for all these plants for 25 years.

'We are hoping that foreign oil companies working in blocks 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 21 will discover and develop at least a few new gas fields within the next five years so that the power projects do not become crippled from the beginning,' the expert said.

It is projected that demand for power will exceed 4500 MW in 2005. With a safety margin of 20 per cent more power than the demand, 5500 MW will have to be generated at that time. The projects now under implementation will only keep the generation at the level of the projected demand after five years.

'Yet, it is surprising that PSC operators like Shell, Unocal and UMC are openly advocating for gas export,' said an expert of Petrobangla. 'They have also suggested that we export 2 trillion cubic feet of gas in the next 20 years.'

Due to the influence of oil companies, a 'gas utilisation study' sponsored by the USAID, is underway to 'justify' gas export for the Petrobangla expert.

'We have to be down to earth regarding gas export. Of course, gas export will earn us Dollars. But while we are energy starved, why should we export gas before addressing our problems?' said a local representative of an oil company.

'We need to concentrate on more economic returns from gas which will be extracted under PSCs. Other than power plants, we should also concentrate on export oriented fertiliser plants. In this way, gas can not only earn dollars but also ensure more employment of the country,' said a source.