

Govt firm to take more steps against pollution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Minister for Fisheries and Livestock Sadeque Hossain Khoka has urged people of all walks of life to join government efforts to build an 'environmentally safe' Bangladesh.

"Let us work together for a safe environment for all and particularly for the new generation," he said.

The minister was speaking as chief guest at the inaugural session of 9th biennial general meeting of the Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB) at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

The BNP government has already taken up massive programmes to protect the environment from various forms of disastrous pollution, Khoka said. The programmes began on the New Year's Day with an effective ban on production, marketing and use of polythene shopping bags in the capital. These had posed major environmental and

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2 shot as JCD, BCL clash at Sylhet

UNB, Sylhet

Two students were shot as the activists of Chhatra Dal and Chhatra League clashed in Pathantula area of the town on Thursday night.

Witnesses said the clash erupted at about 9 pm when the JCD supporters launched attack on a BCL activists of Ragib Rabeya Medical College in the area.

Later, the activists of JCD ransacked the college.

The clash spread in the entire Pathantula and tea garden areas creating panic among the residents.



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh Jatiya Mohila Ainjibi Samity (National Women's Lawyers Council) staged a demonstration in the city yesterday to realise rights of women workers at their work places.

No significant improvement in law & order since Oct

SHAIKH NAZRUL ISLAM

Despite the BNP-led four-party alliance government's efforts to improve law and order in the country, the situation has not improved much in the first three months of its tenure due to failure of the law enforcers in many fields.

The government which took over in October last prepared a list of 23 'most wanted terrorists' on December 23 and ordered police to bring them to book. It also announced awards for arrest of the terrorists, but none of them could be arrested till yesterday.

The number of killings in the country from October to December

last year was 934 while it was 1012 from July to September and 934 from April to June.

A total of 3153 incidents of repression on women and children took place during October-December period of the same year as against 3886 from July to September and 3325 from April to June.

In the first 25 days of October, 266 people were killed and 213 cases of violation of women were recorded with police, Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury told parliament. He also said 18,563 people were killed during the period 1996 to June 2001.

A total of 165 people were killed in political violence during the first three months of the present government. The number of political killings during the 75 days of the caretaker government was 131 and 68 in the previous 75 days (last days) of Awami League government.

Most of them were killed in firing during clashes between activists of

AL and the BNP-led four-party alliance.

Of the 131 people killed during the tenure of the caretaker government, 69 were leaders and activists of AL and 29 of BNP and its front organisations. More than 600 political clashes took place during the period, leaving several hundred people injured.

Of those 68 killed during the last 75 days of Awami League government, 42 were leaders and activists of Awami League and 17 of BNP and its fronts.

During the tenure of the caretaker government, the highest number of 13 killings took place in Bagerhat. Political clashes during the period left 11 people killed in Dhaka, eight in Feni, seven in Sylhet, five each in Fatikchhari, Kushtia, Khulna and Bhola and three each in Noakhali, Sirajganj, Chittagong,

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Outlawed partymen raising heads in 10 dists again

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

Members of the outlawed PBCP (Purbo Banglar Communist Party) and BCP (Biplobi Communist Party) have intensified their activities in all 10 districts of the southwestern zone of the country.

According to sources in the intelligence branches of police and other departments of the government, law and order in the area has deteriorated alarmingly with murders and extortion on the rise.

People of different sections of the society however blame the corrupt practices of police and lawyers as contributing to the 'freedom and immunity' enjoyed by the outlaws in several districts such as Khulna, Bagerhat, Satkhira, Jessore, Magura, Jhenaidah, Kushtia and Chuadanga.

A high official of the Khulna Range Office of the DIG blamed the loopholes in the laws as the outlaws often obtain bail 'very easily'.

"We catch the outlaws and send them to court where they obtain bail and simply walk away," said the disgruntled official.

On the other hand, advocate Abdul Malek, president of Khulna District Bar Association put the blame on police. He said the court is left with no other choice except granting bail to the criminals because of the faulty reports submitted by police, particularly by investigation officers (IOs) of cases. Magistrates and judges and lawyers have nothing to do, Advocate Malek defended.

Meanwhile, of the 1905 outlaws arrested over the last one-and-a-half year from ten districts of the southwestern region, 1240 belonging to four outlawed parties are currently out on bail, police sources said.

Cadres of these four outlawed parties, PBCP, BCP, Gano Mukti Fouz and Sarbahara Party, have long been engaged in committing murders for money from different political parties, police intelligence sources said.

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ASM NURUNNABI

The burgeoning shops of various categories in the city is a notable feature of metropolitan life. Here there is no zoning for commercial areas as distinct from residential areas. While in the cities and towns of developed countries, it is not easy to find a shopping centre close to residential areas, the picture is quite different in Dhaka city on account of the absence of zoning of specific areas for specific urban activities.

Every day new shops are cropping up along lanes, by-lanes, streets and boulevards in the metropolis. Here one will find a shop not far from one's drawing room. From frequent newspaper advertisements, one gets the impression that quite a good number of high-rise shopping complexes are going to set a trend of commercialisation of the fast growing metropolis. Some of the high-rise complexes even in prime residential localities of the city shopping malls on the floors below, most of which have air-conditioning, lift and even escalator facilities.

The proliferation of shops in the

DOWN TO EARTH

Rapid growth of shops in the city

city is such a staggering phenomenon that its nearly nine million residents are virtually choked by them. The once quiet residential areas are not spared from the rampant commercialisation. A large part of the Dhanmondi residential area has already been transformed into a commercial hub. The same is the case with Gulistan, Banani and Uttara areas, although they are developing gradually. The most galling feature of the trend is that the big shopping complexes, combined with the numerous existing shops at the important city points, contribute to the horrendous traffic jams almost throughout the day.

One may wonder whether the fast growing shops at every conceivable city space carry any indication that the purchasing power of the city dwellers has marked a significant rise. Economists, however, tend to hold the view that the mushroom growth of shops has nothing to do with the strength of the country's economy. Citing economic indicators, they say the growth in manufacturing sector has not been a definite pointer and that the purchasing power of the people has not improved to any substantial degree. The question still remains how the viability of the big shops, particularly the big shopping complexes,

can be explained. Are they running at a loss in most cases, or are there invisible mechanisms for utilisation of black money that may have been invested in such big enterprises. True, the manufacturers of indigenous products are benefiting from the increasing number of sales outlets. But there is the sombre picture that under the policy of free economy, sometimes unnecessary imports come into the market. Smuggling adds to the woes of the economy. Since a wide range of consumer goods are imported into

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Form independent body to probe alleged corruption by AL, BNP: WP

UNB, Dhaka

Workers Party of Bangladesh has demanded formation of an independent inquiry commission to look into the corruption charges brought against ruling BNP and opposition Awami League by each other.

"Publication of white papers by BNP and Awami League have exposed the corruption committed by the two parties. Bangladesh has been identified as the number one corrupt country in the world due to the plundering of wealth by them in the last 30 years," said Rashed Khan Menon at a party meeting in Narayanganj yesterday.

"The country's interest is not safe at the hands of these corrupts. Although BNP opposed the 'unequal production sharing agreement' signed by Awami League for gas export, the ruling party has now become anxious to export gas, the party president alleged.

Menon observed that BNP-led coalition government could give the people nothing but price hike of essentials during its 100-day programme. He said a list of terrorists was made but they were not arrested rather identified terrorists were now coming out of jails and committing murders.

Bomb attack by extortionists in Khulna: 2 hurt

UNB, Khulna

Two members of a family were critically injured when extortionists hurled bombs on them at Dakhindih village in Fultala upazila here on Thursday night.

Police said the extortionists led by Akram stormed into the house of Rabindranath Das in the area and demanded toll of Tk 20,000.

Hearing the hue and cry of the family members, local people rushed to the spot and chased the extortionists. While fleeing the scene the hoodlums hurled bombs on the people leaving two injured.

The injured Sundari Sur, 45, wife of Deepak Kumar, Sur and her daughter Polly Sur, 17, were admitted to Fultala Upazila Health Complex.

Later, police arrested two people -- Billal Gazi and Moinul Islam Mintu -- in connection with the bomb attack.



PHOTO: STAR

Visitors stand in long queues to buy tickets for entry to Dhaka International Trade Fair (DITF) at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the city yesterday. The month-long fair will continue till February 12.

Delhi working with UAE on raid on US office: Advani

Video camera provides 'vital clues'

REUTERS, New Delhi

India is working with the United Arab Emirates over a Dubai-based man suspected of masterminding an attack on police outside a US cultural centre in Kolkata, Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani said yesterday.

Advani suggested that either extradition or deportation could be options for the man Indian officials have named as Farhan, otherwise known as Aftab Malik and Aftab Ansari.

Police in Kolkata where five policemen died in an attack outside the American Center on Tuesday, say he telephoned them to say he

planned the raid to avenge the death of an associate who died last year trying to escape police custody.

Advani told a news conference the Indian government was pursuing the matter with the United Arab Emirates.

"It depends on what kind of request would be appropriate," he said. "Extradition is a process. Deportation is a matter in which the concerned government takes a decision," he said.

Meanwhile, Interpol has informed India's top investigatory body, the Central Bureau of Investigation, that it has issued a warrant for Farhan Malik's arrest

and extradition to India. Indian officials say Malik, who allegedly has ties to Pakistani intelligence and organised crime, telephoned officials Kolkata after the attack to claim responsibility and vow more strikes.

India also holds Malik responsible for arranging the kidnapping last year of a Kolkata shoe mogul who was released for a 37.5 million-rupee (780,000 dollars) ransom.

Indian officials say Malik was issued a Pakistani passport in March 2000 and directed to establish a "covert terrorist network" in India.

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Triple murder: Two arrested in Tongi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two persons were arrested yesterday for their alleged involvement in triple murder at Tongi on Thursday morning.

The arrested persons are Sukkur Ali and Swapon.

Haris Ahmed, 35, Jubo Dal leader and two other assailants -- Partho, 29, and Mohammad Mizan, 19, were killed in an armed attack induced by the intra-party rivalry at Arispur Masjid road near Tongi Bazar at about 9:30 am on Thursday.

India go in front again

AFP, Madras

India beat England by four wickets in the third one-day international to gain a 2-1 lead in the six-match series here on Friday.

Brief scores: England 217 in 48 overs; India 221 in 46.4 overs.

Correction

In our January 24 issue, name of former communications minister Anwar Hossain Manju was inadvertently mentioned in the report headlined "Hasina, most ex-ministers linked to 40 cases of graft."



PHOTO: STAR

The number of GrameenPhone users has reached half a million in the country. This was disclosed by company's Managing Director Ola Ree (2nd from right) at a press conference in the city yesterday. Company's Director-Sales & Marketing Division Mehboob Chowdhury (2nd from left), Additional GM-Information Syed Yamin Bakht (extreme right) and DGM-Marketing Intekhab Mahmud (extreme left) are also in the picture. (Story on page 6)



PHOTO: STAR

Customs officials at ZIA yesterday recovered 100 gold bars worth about Tk 70 lakh from the toilet in an aircraft.